

Dulce et decorum est

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The picture in my mind of war has always been terrifying and brutal, however after studying "Dulce et Decorum Est," cleverly written by Wilfred Owen, I realised that war is much more devastating than I could ever imagine. The poem has been bombarded with skilful and vivid imagery, a range of carefully chosen words and wonderfully constructed sentences. He has created a moving piece of poetry to convey to me the pity and horror of war. Throughout the poem, Owen has used a variety of similes to illustrate a vivid picture of the horror and suffering he was forced to endure.

At the very beginning of the poem I am faced with a compelling simile leaving me not only pitiful towards the soldiers but also appalled by the conditions they had to endure, "Like old beggars under sacks." Owens use of imagery shatters any ideas I may have had of soldiers being well-groomed, polished and respectable young men and recreates a picture of helpless, dirty, senile old men, who would sometimes be looked down on in society. Owen revealed to me the despicable conditions the soldiers found themselves having to live in.

I was horrified at their situation and had always imagined soldiers as brave and strong and I felt slightly scared to hear that in reality they were nothing more than injured, dirty, homeless old men. Owen's immense use of metaphors really captures the horror of his emotions. "Drunk with fatigue," forms a picture of men so tired that they are not in control of their actions as if they were drunk. I felt tremendous pity towards the soldiers, as they would have been unable to respond quickly if a gas bomb fell or something else horrific happened.

Owen shows me that the men almost had to hold themselves up and force themselves to keep walking. I was appalled at the way the soldiers were treated and almost ashamed that at the time of the war my ancestors would have encouraged this. The use of the word "drunk" reveals to me that this feeling of tiredness was very strong, the word alone caused me immediately to think of staggering and uncontrolled gestures. Before reading Owen's work I thought soldiers were always strong, aware and generally in quite good condition.

However Owen teaches me the real horror of what the war did to people and their lives. Onomatopoeia has been used frequently in the poem to create an aural image along with the visual images the similes and metaphors provide. Owen uses this imagery in the word "hoots" to convey the sound of gas-bombs falling behind him. I feel Owen used this word as it is associated with quite an eerie and ghostly sound, which is heard late at night. This comparison reflects the fear the soldiers would have felt, while listening out for the bombs in case they were to fall anywhere nearby.

I think that it is quite a powerful word to use in the circumstances he was faced with. This use of imagery held men in a sense of pity towards the soldiers and Owen maintains this pity that I felt for them right to the end of his work and thereafter. Much of the imagery used creates a devastating portrait in my mind of the horror of war and I was sickened by Owen's breath-taking use of words. "His hanging face like devils sick of sin" provoked quite a sinister feeling in me; furthermore the comparison to the devil made me feel a little apprehensive.

Moreover, I have always related the devil with sin, so I was troubled that Owen thought it was so bad, even the devil would be sickened by it. Owen made me feel extremely pitiful not only for the man dying but for Owen having to encounter the sight of this man drenched in so much pain. Owen has used a fantastic variety of sentence structures to reflect on the mood of himself and his fellow soldiers. At the start of his poem, Owen has used long, slow, tedious sentences. This is used to convey to me the exhaustion and fatigue of the men.

Till on haunting flares we turned our backs and towards our distance rest we began to trudge. " Suddenly at the opening of the next verse the sentences are short, sharp and to the point. " Gas! Gas! Quick boys. " This contrast in the sentence structure emphasises the hurry and panic the men would be experiencing when the gas bomb fell. When I first read this passage I felt desperate to discover if all the men would survive and I felt distraught to learn that one man was too tired, even to save himself.

Wilfred Owen has constructed a dynamic and thought provoking poem. He has cleverly manipulated his horrific experiences into original and intense imagery. His similes provide a vivid picture for me of the painful way war treated him. The use of metaphors creates a vast mental image of his emotions and his selective choice of words and variety in sentence structure helps describe for me the terror of his experiences. I was left with the truth of the horror and pity of war.