

The charge of the light brigade and dulce et decorum est essay sample

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This essay is about two war poems. The Charge Of The Light Brigade and Dulce Et Decorum Est. The first poem is set during the Crimean war, and the second is set during world war one. I will explore the portrayal of war from both these poems in detail, and I will expose the differences. The Charge Of The Light Brigade is set in the 1850s. War was fought on horseback with rifles and sabres in that time period. It tells the story of a brigade of soldiers who rode on horseback into the valley of death, obeying a command to charge on an enemy that had been stealing their guns.

When the 600 arrived in the valley they rushed toward the enemy and well over 100 died within a few minutes. There had been a terrible mistake (someone had blundered) and they had charged in the wrong direction. The attitude towards war at the time of writing (1854) was unrealistic. They glorified war and made it sound romantic. The soldiers didn't think about war they thought it was their duty, – Theirs is not to reason why theirs is but to do and die. Tennyson's role is really just to document events; we will see later what Wilfred Owen has to say.

These attitudes are false, because when the survivors got home they were jobless and some even homeless, hardly a heroes welcome. The myth of war is very clear in The Charge Of The Light Brigade. It mentions that they are dying and manages to make it sound patriotic – while horse and hero fell. It draws attention to what a glorious war they had where so many had been killed – All that was left of them, left of the 600, when can their glory fade? It makes war sound exciting and thrilling, they were dicing with death – Boldly they rode and well, into the jaws of death, into the valley of hell.

The poem brands war as a great honour- honour the light brigade. The soldiers sound like untouchable heroes – the noble 600. Tennyson followed the myth to a tee. He made it patriotic, honourable and inspiring. He had to keep it this way so it would encourage people to join. However the realities were much more daunting. The poem clearly shows death: All in the valley of death and Theirs is but to do and die and, Into the jaws of death and all that was left of them. But it fails to describe the amount of destruction and horror that goes on.

I couldn't find one sentence in Tennyson's poem that described (in graphic detail) the type of horror the poor soldiers went through. The language of Tennyson's poem is very solemn. It is written like mini statements and doesn't really draw the reader into the poem. The actual poem consists of 6 numbered stanzas varying in length from 6 to 12 lines. Each line is in dimeter – it has 2 stressed syllables, furthermore each stressed syllable is followed by 2 unstressed syllables – Dactylic. Some examples; half a league onward (league is the stressed syllable.

All in the valley of death (valley contains the 2 unstressed syllables.)

Repetition goes on all through the poem, from the start – half a league, half a league to the end – honour the charge they made, honour the light brigade. This also helps to create the rhythm. The rhyme pattern in The Charge Of The Light Brigade is irregular. Sometimes on each line – Forward the light brigade, was there a man dismayed? And sometimes missing a line – Boldly they rode and well, into the jaws of death, and into the mouth of hell. The rhythm in the poem is definitely regular (dactylic).

I think Tennyson used the regular rhythm to match the type of war it was, - galloping horses go arm in arm with the rhythm. He also uses metaphors all the way through the poem. All in the valley of death and Into the mouth of hell. He uses these metaphors to make the war sound worse and the men sound braver. Into the mouth of hell, has more of an affect than up to the other soldiers in a field. The poem was a run of the mill (from that time) poem. It was mainly propaganda. And had no impact on me at all. Dulce Et Decorum Est is set during the 1st world war.

This war was fought on many fronts; this poem focuses on the trenches. There was artillery firing for 48 hours at times. They used machine guns, gas attacks and air strikes. This war was far more advanced than The Charge Of The Light Brigade. The attitudes towards war at this time were much more realistic than those in the other poem. There were graphic descriptions limpal on blood shod and froth corrupted lungs. As Owen was actually at war he had first hand experience and much more emotion was involved. He was describing what actually happened.

It associates war with hell (as did Tennyson's). But in The Charge Of The Light Brigade they rewarded the bravery of the men for marching into hell, in this poem the devil is used to describe a mans face - His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin. He thought of the soldiers as innocent, decent men, not heroes as described in Tennyson's poem - Incurable sores on innocent tongues. The myth of war in this poem clearly doesn't exist. There was no glory in watching your pals die before your eyes - He plunges at me, choking, drowning.

The poem says If you could hear, every jolt, the blood come gargling from the froth corrupted lungs, obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud of vile incurable sores on innocent tongues..... My friend you would not tell with such high zest, to children ardent for some desperate glory the old lie – which basically means that if you knew the truth, you wouldn't tell kid all the same old rubbish. That whole paragraph goes directly against this line from The Charge Of The Light Brigade – honour the charge they made, honour the light brigade. The realities of war in this poem are very obvious.

It starts off describing the soldiers as scruffy and dirty old beggars and then goes on to say that they could barely walk knock kneed. Coughing like hags – refers to gas. This is a lot more detail than Tennyson's poem. They rode back, but not the 600 – that was about as bad as Tennyson's poem got. Destruction and horror are also shown not destruction of the land but of the body – sores on innocent tongues and white eyes writhing in his face. It talks of a man who had not put on his gas mask – someone was still yelling out and stumbling. It carries on – he plunges at me, guttering, choking, and drowning.

Owen employs repetition, as did Tennyson – gas, gas! , The rhyme of this poem is regular. It rhymes on every other line – under sacks, through sludge, our backs. The poems are similar in that they both rhyme, but they are different because Owen's poem has regular and Tennyson's has irregular. Another difference is rhythm. In *Dolce Et Decorum Est* a rhythm is hard to detect, possibly slow (men trudging) then speeding

up(gas, gas). But in The Charge Of The Light Brigade there is a regular rhythm (horses galloping).

In both poems the commands are spoken by a person – gas, gas quick boys and Forward the light brigade. One other similarity is that they both compare war to other things (simile) – mouth of hell and Devil sick of sin. This poem's impact on me was very real. It made me think of relatives who had fought in that type of war. It made me hope that a war on that scale never happens again. It also genuinely shocked me. Wilfred Owen told the truth and it was not nice. So Alfred Tennyson's poem was about war. He was saying war is glorious and the most honourable thing to do.

While Wilfred Owen was telling of the horror and the mental struggle he went through. The 1st poem was strong, and sounded almost like a war chant. And the 2nd poem was like a person wrote it when they were crying, it was slow and meaningful. They made me think that war was horrible. Tennyson had to lie about war to get people to fight in one, and Owen was just blatant. I preferred Owen's poem because it was more real. Tennyson's poem was too much like propaganda, – he wasn't even there. Owen's poem was a personal account on what happened to him. That is more satisfying to read than what Tennyson had to offer.