

# World war 1 poetry

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At the beginning of the 20th century the world was at the brink of destruction, greed had overcome many of the nations as the earth plummeted in turmoil and anarchy. Each country was determined to become stronger economically, politically and militarily, in order to become the major European power. This desire was the growing opinion of many of the civilians in each nation, leading to immense levels of nationalism and imperialism. Then one day a solitary gunshot and the assassination of Arch Duke Francis Ferdinand triggered what would be one of the most bloody and horrific wars the world had ever seen.

It is believed that the actual assassin was a member of the a Serbian gang known as ' The Black Hand. ' This intense rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Serbia was only a small part of the big picture. It was transformed into a general European struggle when Germany declared war against Russia on August 1, 1914. In a short time over 30 separate nations had joined this tyrannous war, which spanned for 4 years, starting in 1914 and ending in 1918. Around 28 of these nations were known as the Allies or the Associated powers, it consisted of Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy and the United States of America as well as many others.

The opposition to this coalition were known as the Central powers, which were made up of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. The effects of the war were dire. Millions of people were held victim to this devastating war. Many losing close friends, and even loved ones. Food was also in shortage at the time and had to be carefully rationed. For the soldiers themselves, we cannot even begin to imagine the torture they faced. When

the cry of war broke out all the countries involved were in desperate need of troops, Great Britain was no exception.

So many had fallen that they were prepared to take any willing man, regardless of age. The sound of war was not very appealing to much of Britain's youth so, in order to attract them Britain used various techniques. One way, which they used to gain recruitments, was through propaganda. It was used in films, adverts as well as posters. However, I will be looking at its use in poetry. Propaganda is a way in which people try to persuade others, a way in which they are able to promote their point of view. Propaganda can be communicated in the form of messages, which are prejudice against the enemy.

The poems that used propaganda were recognised as patriotic poems, as they encourage war, and promote it as an unforgettable adventure. As a consequence these poems were highly regarded by the government. When the war started the government also introduced censorship. This meant nothing could be written or published on the subject of war without the consent of the government, this significantly helped their cause, as they were able to hide the explicit gore soldiers faced from those back at home. This led to many young men being induced, as they had no real idea of what was actually happening.

The only way the true horrors of the war could escape censorship was through the letters that soldiers would write to their friends and relatives, however, the government ensured none of their real feelings or experiences of the war escaped by insisting all letters were checked by high-ranking

authorities, usually officers. Though not everyone's letters could be censored and inevitably some officers were able to send letters back home, which showed their true feelings and opinions. These soldiers wrote realistically, many in the form of poems. However none of their work was truly noticed until after the war, when it was too late.

In this coursework, I will compare, the styles, the contrasting descriptions and the different attitudes that poets that wrote patriotically and realistically had. I will be looking at and considering the effectiveness of two patriotic poems. Firstly, ' Who's for the game? ' written by Jessie Pope and secondly, ' Into battle' which was put together by Julian Grenfell. Although they are on the same subject, war, with the same aim, to show war in all it's glory, they approach their subject in extremely contrasting ways. Jessie Pope was a poet who was renowned for writing patriotic war poems for a newspaper called The Daily Mail.

Her perception of war was exceedingly positive; she strongly felt that it was right to fight for your country, a privilege. Her high level of national pride was always strongly emitted in her poetry. This was mainly due to the fact that she had never been to the western front and hence had never seen the torment a soldier would face. ' Who's for the game? ' was one of Jessie Pope's most famous pieces. Throughout this poem Jessie Pope uses strong comparisons between war and a game (metaphorical comparisons), as the title already suggests. However she extends the basic metaphor by listing the similarities between the two.

She describes it as ‘ the biggest that’s ever played. ‘ This instantly attracts the attention of the reader as not many people would refer to war as a game, the terms she uses makes it sound both interesting and intriguing. The sport that war is compared to in this poem is rugby. Jessie Pope intentionally links the two, as it was a game, which, at the time was very popular amongst young upper class men. She exploited this fact and used phrases such as ‘ Who’ll grip and tackle the job unafraid? ‘ and ‘ The red crashing game of a fight? ‘ to link the two.

As well as that these quote gives the impression to the reader that only the most elite men will be able to fight for their country. This feeds the reader with self-determination as they begin to feel that they have something to prove to themselves, and others around them. Pope follows up this phrase ‘ And who thinks he’d rather sit tight? ‘ which makes the reader feel that if they don’t go to war and fight for their country the might as well not exist. She also carries on showing the contrast in the feelings of a soldier at the war, a man staying at home and the status they have.

Who wants a turn to himself in the show... who wants a seat in the stand? ‘ it almost gives the reader a sense of guilt but in particularly shame, as they are not fighting for their country (or as Jessie Pope would put it ‘ in the show,’) but is at home or ‘ in the stand. ‘ Jessie Pope uses a lot of rhetorical questioning, which includes ‘ The biggest that’s played... the red crashing game of a fight? ‘ This technique is very effective and plays an influential part in the poem as the reader not only reads the poem but also is forced to think and imagine.

Rhetorical questions tend to stick in peoples minds for longer rather than just a normal sentence, they force the reader to consider what the poem is trying to say. There is one particular phrase in the third stanza, which sums up Jessie Pope's attitude towards war. ' Who would much rather come back with a crutch Than lie low and be out of the fun? ' It shows how little she cares about the soldiers that are risking their lives to fight for what she believes is right, but also shows how much she cares about her own well-being. Jessie Pope constantly uses slang language in the poem. This is mainly because of the audience this piece is aimed at.

She uses terms that they are familiar with and so often use such as ' sit tight' and ' up to her neck,' which make the poem sound more interesting and appealing to the youth. Near the conclusion of the poem Jessie Pope personifies Britain calling it ' she. ' This is effective because men were believed to be the protectors of women, and yet they are allowing Britain, their homeland to be destroyed, without even putting up a fight. Giving Britain the qualities of a living object makes the young men feel as though it is their duty to fight and shield their country. ' Who's for the game? ' consists of a steady, alternating rhyme scheme, (ABAB ect. This helps add to the enjoyable, cheery tempo that Jessie Pope tries to create in an attempt to lure and persuade young, unsighted men to fight.

It has a structure of four quatrain stanzas too. Another technique Jessie Pope used to make the poem sound lively was her effective use of sound. In ' Who's for the game? ' Jessie Pope used a regular number of syllables for each line in a quatrain. For example, in the first stanza, ' who's for the game,

the biggest that's ever played,' this line has a total of nine syllables, and correlates with line three of the stanza ' who'll grip and tackle the job unafraid? Now I will consider another patriotic poem and study the poets' attitude to war.

Julian Grenfell wrote ' Into Battle'. Unlike Pope, Grenfell had been to the western front and lived the life of a soldier. In actual fact, his death, which was sadly before The Times published this poem, came about to the deep, piercing wounds he suffered at war. In this poem he clearly shows his willingness and his passion for war and country. Throughout this poem Grenfell makes strong comparisons to war and the wilderness. This shows that he thought war was natural.

Jessie Pope's technique strongly contrasts Grenfell's. Pope tries to play with the readers conscious for example when she says ' Who wants a seat in the stand? ' Instantly, in the first quatrain Grenfell says, ' The naked earth is warm with spring. ' This contrasts what war actually is, as it is a time of death and destruction, whereas spring is a time of hope and rebirth. Grenfell sees war as a new beginning, which is exactly what spring is, as the bare trees are now becoming ripe, the days of dullness are coming to an end and bringing with them new life.

This shows the importance of spring to Grenfell and is also a perfect example of how he describes the struggle for survival nature is faced with. A similarity between the two poems is how they both compare war to positive things to strengthen the effectiveness of their message. Pope calls war the biggest game ' That's ever played' and Grenfell to natural things such as ' the

woodland trees' (also personification). As we approach the end of the second stanza Grenfell states ' And he is dead who will not fight, And who dies fighting has increase. '

This is Grenfell's viewpoint and clearly shows the importance war had to him as well as society. This is also an example of how he tried to persuade the reader by showing them that they are born to fight and defying the reason of their existence will inevitably make them ' dead. ' ' Has increase,' which I included in the quote earlier seems to mean that those who are lucky enough to die fighting increase their stature and significance. From this poem it is strongly evident that his opinion is that if you don't fight, there is no reason for your existence.

Grenfell then repeats this viewpoint once more in the second stanza when he explains, ' And when fighting shall be done, Great rest, and fullness after dearth. ' This basically means, although you may die fighting you will be fulfilled. This is a viewpoint shared by Pope, she states ' who wants a seat in the stand? ' Grenfell also shows what he believes a soldier gains from fighting. ' All the bright company of Heaven Hold them in their high comradeship,' his opinion seems to be that with war comes religion, and friendship with heaven. This emphasises to the reader that war is right.

In the fourth quatrain of the poem, Grenfell uses various metaphors linking nature's struggle to that of a soldier, and also showing how they are alike this creates the positive atmosphere of the poem. ' The woodland trees that stand together. ' This is one of the ways Grenfell shows the similarities between nature and humans as the trees represent the way soldiers stand,



united and as one. Then Grenfell continues, ' They stand to him each one a friend,' this is how he shows that war is natural and nature itself has been designed to encourage it as by ' friend' Grenfell means a source of camouflage for the soldiers.

Grenfell also gives ' the woodland trees' human qualities (personification), ' They gently speak in the windy weather,' this helps create a picture in the mind of the reader and is particularly effective as it shows a strong link between nature and soldiers. Then Grenfell shows the qualities a bird of prey has and compares them to the skills of a soldier. ' The kestrel hovering by day, And the little owls that call by night, Bid him be swift and keen as they, As keen of ear as swift of sight' Grenfell sees a soldier as a hunter that hunts by day like a kestrel, and by night like an owl, which are both completely contrasting conditions.

A soldier needs good hearing, sight, speed and agility to survive. Grenfell uses nature effectively to persuade soldiers. ' The blackbird sings to him, ' Brother, brother," this emphasises the link that soldiers and nature have as the term ' Brother' is more likely to be used whilst talking to someone that is quite close. The poem then continues, ' If this be the last song you shall sing, sing well for you may not sing another; Brother, sing. ' This shows that the soldiers and nature are a family, and ' sing well... Is the kind of advice that you are more likely to receive from your family, as nature says to do your best, as this may be your last chance.

This shows that Grenfell realises the downfall of war, unlike Jessie Pope who is more ignorant to death. The seventh stanza is very negative, this quatrain

begins dramatically, Grenfell alliterates ‘dreary doubtful’ the repetition of the ‘d’ sound slows down the pace at which the reader is reading, and also emphasises the negative atmosphere. Grenfell then says, ‘The horses show him nobler powers, O patient eyes, courageous heart!’

This shows that the horse is his inspiration. As the battle finally begins, it is described as an abrupt burst of heat ‘And when the burning moment breaks,’ In the next lines Grenfell explains what the soldier is going through, ‘All things else are out of mind, and only joy of Battle takes Him by the throat, and makes him blind,’ this description makes the reader feel almost excited and also therefore encourages and persuades the reader. When the battle commences all other thoughts disappear, and that fighting is a joyful and blinding experience.

Grenfell also personifies battle by calling it ‘Battle’ this is effective as by giving battle human qualities it creates a picture in the readers mind, here Grenfell is at least showing the reader the realities of fighting for your life, something which Pope never does. Grenfell then decides to repeat his idea of what a soldier feels, as he is about to go ‘into battle’ in the following stanza, ‘Through joy blindness he shall know,’ this repetition is useful to persuade as it enforces what Grenfell is saying into the readers mind.

Grenfell uses a lot of personification in this poem as well, I already showed how he personified ‘the woodland trees’ by saying that they ‘gently speak’ and also battle by calling it ‘Battle,’ he uses it very effectively in the final part of the poem. Firstly, ‘That it be not the Destined Will.’ This means that the soldier will die when his time comes, and they don’t need to worry about

it as God has already planned it. Then he uses it once more, ' And in the air death moans and sings;' this is Grenfell's personification of death.

His use of personification in this poem is particularly useful because it shows us his attitude that war is right, as it is a soldier's fate, which has already been planned by God. Grenfell also shows how he feels that a soldier is protect by ' Day' and ' Night', ' But Day shall clasp him withs strong hands, And Night shall fold him in soft wings. ' Grenfell feels that ' Day' looks after the soldier, and ' Night' is like an angel, which will also protect him. ' Into Battle' is intended for a far more intellectual audience than ' Who's for the game? ' which is more direct.

Pope uses rhetorical questioning throughout her poem. This is a more basic technique as it forces the reader to think; it also uses phrases such as ' And who thinks he'd rather sit tight? ' making the reader feel it is his duty to fight. Pope also uses slang such as ' sit tight,' making the poem more appealing to younger men, whilst Grenfell uses similes and metaphors. Still both writers have a very positive outlook on war. Grenfell shows this by creating a warm image, using words such as ' glowing earth. ' ' Into Battle' consists of an alternating rhyme scheme; this gives the poem a constant beat.

The way the poem is set out is very regular as it is made up of mainly quatrains. Grenfell also uses sound effectively in this poem. The first quatrain starts ' The naked earth is warm with spring' this line consists of eight separate sounds, or syllables. Then in the next line we also find the same number of syllables, ' And with green grass and bursting trees,' this

creates a steady, set rhythm which allows the poem to flow at a constant speed, helping create the positive tone of the poem. Now that I have looked at the attitudes of a couple of patriotic poets, I will compare them with that of realistic poet.

The realistic poems include; ‘ Disabled’ and ‘ Dulce Et Decorum Est’ which were poems both written by Wilfred Owen. As I have already explained these poems were written to show the realities of war. Owen was very critical of war, and its nature. However he still enlisted to fight on the western front in 1915, when he returned to England, from the continent where he was the tutor of an English family in Bordeaux, he visited a hospital for the wounded. Owen quickly established himself in the army and soon even had his own platoon. Though, in May 1917 Owen was sent home after it was discovered that he was suffering from shell shock.

He was admitted into CraigLockhart war Hospital in Edinburgh, where by some twist of fate he met Siegfried Sassoon, a man who was greatly responsible for nurturing Owen’s growing poetic talents. Sassoon was also being treated for shell shock at the hospital. He had a rich background and also shared the bitterness for war Owen had. With the guidance of Sassoon, Owen wrote some of his most effective and successful poems, some of which include; ‘ Anthem For Doomed Youth’ and ‘ Dulce Et Decorum Est,’ which were both anti-war poems, showing the realities.

Although Owen’s poetry was beginning to take off, in June 1918 he was classified as fit for service, and in August returned to the front line. On November 4, only a mere seven days before the armistice he was caught by

a German gun attack as he crossed the Sambre canal. ' I came out in order to help these boys – – directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a leader can. I have done the first. ' This was a quote taken from [www. emory. edu](http://www.emory.edu).

Owen clearly despised war, and in particular those that encouraged it and showed it as being a ' heroic adventure' without having the slightest idea of what war involved. He wrote his poetry to show the truth and what he has experienced. Firstly, I will look at ' Disabled. ' This poem is based on an ex-war soldier who was severely wounded whilst fighting on the western front and lost all of his limbs. The poem shows the contrasting lives the soldier led, before and after the war.

In this poem, Owen strongly attacks patriotic poets who advertised war as a harmless game, especially Pope in ' Who's for the game? In ' Disabled,' like ' Who's for the Game? ' Owen shows how war was portrayed as a game. However, in this poem, unlike Pope, Owen shows how the image of war being like a game led to millions going to war without any knowledge of the truth. As the poem starts, Owen uses some very cold, negative words, ' He sat in a wheel chair, waiting for dark, And shivered in the ghastly suit of grey,' The words, ' dark', ' shivered' and ' grey' instantly give an impression to the reader of the isolation the wounded soldier had been condemned to, this could also be Owen's metaphorical description of death.

Waiting for dark' shows the reader how the soldier had nothing to look forward to but ' dark,' this shows the harm that the war had done to him not

just physically but psychologically also. ' Through the park voices of boys rang saddening, Till gathering sleep had mothered them from him' this is particularly saddening because the wounded soldier hears the cries of laughter that he knows that he will never experience he is now helpless and his days of happiness have disappeared.

This stanza clearly shows to the reader what not only this soldier has lost, but many other soldiers alike after going to war. Pope in ' Who's for the Game? ' shows how the soldiers life will be all the better for going to war, rather than ' lying low and being out of the fun. ' She also tries to show that going to war will have no effect on your life. ' Who would rather come back with a crutch? ' Disabled strongly attacks and shows the realities of view such as these, especially from women like Pope.

As we go into the second stanza, Owen contrasts the soldiers' life, after and before he went to war. This helps show the impact war has had on him. ' About this time Town use to swing so Gay, When glow-lamps budded in the light blue trees, And the girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim. ' This shows that women were once attracted to him, he also shows this once more in the third stanza, ' There was an artist silly for his face,' but now that he has become an invalid, ' women's eyes passed from him to the strong men,' and ' Now he will never feel again how slim girls' waists...

All of them treat him like some queer disease. ' Owen also shows the soldier as being full of youth before ' For it was younger than his youth last year. ' However, now ' half his life has lapsed in hot race' this shows that due to the war the soldier has literally lost half his blood, and so his life too overnight.

The way Owen compares the life of the soldier before the war to after it makes the poem more dramatic as the reader can clearly see the changes in his life.

Now that he has become crippled girls take no notice of him, and when they come in contact with each other there is no longer any sexual attraction. Owen further explains the suffering that the soldier had gone through later on in the poem ' Now he is old; his back will never brace, He's lost his colour very far from here,' Owen increase the impact of how the soldier lost his limbs by saying ' he threw away his knees' this shows that the soldier has lost his limbs without a real cause, and also shows that Owen thought war was horrific and foolish i. e. is attitude to war.

The way he describes how the soldier lost his limbs, using words such as ' threw away his knees,' and ' poured it down shell-holes till the veins ran dry,' suggests that they were lost in a particularly pathetic way. In the fourth stanza Owen continues contrasting the soldiers life to show the full extent of the damage that has been inflicted on him. ' One time he liked a blood-smear down his leg. ' This shows the soldiers athleticism, and is also extremely ironic as now he has no limbs and cannot bleed to make him feel courageous.

In this stanza Owen attacks Pope's message in ' Who's for the game? ' of war being a harmless game, and that many people were manipulated into believing it as a fact. Owen also shows its similarities, ' After the matches, carried shoulder-high, it was after football when he'd drunk a peg. ' This shows that he thought war was just the same as a football match. He was led

to believe that he would come back a national hero. ' And soon, he was drafted out with drums and cheers. ' However, in the fifth stanza we find that his dream was completely empty.

Some cheered him home, but not as a crowd cheer goal. ' Even though the soldier hadn't accomplished anything i. e. when he left, he was cheered. Now he has achieved something but at a great cost he is seen as being insignificant. Owen also talks about the reasons the soldier had for going to war. ' He thought he'd better join- he wonders why. Someone had said he'd look a God in kilts,' this shows that Owen felt soldiers didn't go to war for their own reasons but for others ' to please his Meg; Aye that was it, to please the giddy jilts.

This is also a direct attack at patriotic poets especially Pope, who in ' Who's for the game? ' tries to make people feel they have something to prove to themselves as well as others and can only be accomplished by going to war. Owen also shows the desperate state the government were in, knowing that millions had fallen, not being replaced by fresh men. ' Smiling they wrote his lie; aged nineteen years. ' This shows that they were well aware that the soldier was under aged but still decided to overlook this fact.