

# The speaker's importance in poetry

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The speaker can be the most important aspect of a poem. The speaker allows for a more active voice in the poem, and can often serve as a mouthpiece to communicate the ideas of the poet to an audience. Much like an actor, the speaker can tell or act out a first-hand account of what occurs. The speaker is also a voice that can provide another perspective. With evidence from "Dulce et Decorum Est," "A Man Who Had Fallen Among Thieves," and "The Man He Killed," this essay will highlight the similarities and differences of a speaker to help establish the definition of a speaker.

It will be shown how speakers serve a variety of roles in poetry, and can help readers gain a better understanding of universal issues. The speaker in "A Man Who Had Fallen Among Thieves," takes on the role as a Good Samaritan for a man in need of help and abandoned by others. The speaker acknowledges society's unjust acts against a man who "lay by the roadside on his back dressed in fifteenth-rate ideas" (16). The speaker tells of citizens who "graze at pause then fired by hypercivic zeal sought newer pastures," and left the weak man to go elsewhere (17).

The speaker, the Good Samaritan, rescues the punished man while the other citizens deny assisting the helpless man. While the poem illustrates themes like the importance of doing the right thing despite one's own desires, the speaker serves as a voice to reiterate the point the poet wants to communicate to the audience. Because of the speaker, this poem offers a more of a realistic point of view and a different perspective from the citizens and the helpless man.

Using powerful and graphic diction in such lines like "of pinkest vomit out of eyes," to describe emotions throughout the poem, the speaker helps to stir

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up emotions within the reader by offering a vivid first-hand account of the situation (17). Like the speaker in "A Man Who Had Fallen Among Thieves," the speaker in "The Man He Killed," uses vivid imagery to illustrate his feelings, helps to communicate the writer's ideas to an audience, and offers a first-hand account of what is occurring in the poem. The speaker talks about his own confusion.

He is confused because he cannot understand why the person he has killed is dead. In his state of confusion, the speaker tells of the intimacy between himself and the person he has killed when he mentions the phrases "staring face to face" (34). In addition, the speaker tells of the hostility between the two men, for they are both firing guns at each other. The speaker says "I shot at him as he at me"(34). The speaker knows that he would've been killed otherwise, and he goes on to say "and I killed him in his place. I shot him dead because-because he was my foe"(34).

Here, the speaker shows a conflict between his feelings and actions and he is questioning it. Later in the poem, the speaker says "Just so: my foe of course he was; that's clear enough; although," which shows that he understands that he had to kill his enemy because of the tradition of war (34). He begins to think about what he did when he says "he thought he'd list, perhaps offhand-like-just as I- was out of work"(34). Here, the speaker offers additional insight into reasons why men enlist to fight in war. In this case, the speaker suggests that the man he kills was unemployed just like the speaker was.

The reader gets to take another peak at the speaker's inner turmoil as he mentions "You shoot a fellow down You'd treat if met where any bar is," thus <https://assignbuster.com/the-speakers-importance-in-poetry/>

concluding that one kills another in war despite the possibility of knowing the person in the past or future (34). All in all, it is as if the reader gets a front row seat to experience the inner chaos the speaker suffers as he tries to fully grasp the concept and tradition of war. The speaker provides a realistic and familiar voice that could be any person during any war era.

As a result, the speaker helps bring to life the atrocities of war to readers who may have never experienced it. The speaker in "Dulce et Decorum Est," describes a gruesome war scene involving enemies using gas to kill victims. Here, the speaker watches someone die because he didn't wear a gas mask. The speaker offers readers first-hand vivid descriptions of the young men that have become filthy, weary, and helpless when he describes the men as "bent double, like old beggars under sacks, knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge"(27).

The speaker paints a picture with his words to illustrate what is happening. In one scene, the speaker shows the men heading towards lodging when he says "and toward our distant rest began to trudge" then in an instant, gas-shells are dropping and the men must put on their helmets (27). One of the men did not put on his helmet. Through the poet, the speaker uses vivid imagery to describe the man's death when he says "as under a green sea, I saw him drowning"(27).

The speaker tells an audience "my friend, you would not tell with such high zest to children ardent for some desperate glory," meaning that he would not suggest children go to war to become heroes, or die honorably for one's country, because it is not "sweet" or "fitting" to suffocate in gas (27). Obviously he disagrees with the old saying "Dulce ed decorum est Pro patria  
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mori," because the speaker refers to dying honorably in war as the "the Old Lie (27). Like the speakers in the previous poems mentioned, the speaker of "Dulce et Decorum Est," illustrates a moving picture in order to help an audience understand the atrocities of war.

Here, the speaker once again serves as a familiar mouthpiece that awakens emotions within the reader. Through the speaker, the writer tells this horrible memory because he is informing future generations not to fight in wars for a false feeling of accomplishment because being killed in war can be in no way heroic, but gruesome. The speakers all have certain aspects in common. One thing they all have in common is reacting under social pressure. In "A Man Who Had Fallen Among Thieves," and "Dulce et Decorum Est," the speakers both rebel against the social pressure and struggle with society's often inhumane teachings.

In other words, the speakers question universal issues like whether or not to follow the prevailing social code. In "The Man He Killed," the speaker struggles with the social pressure to kill, and while he questions what he did, he doesn't try to stop the war. Another similarity is the speakers are all first-hand participants in the action of the poems. For "A Man Who Had Fallen Among Thieves," the Good Samaritan speaker sees the citizens ignoring the man who had been robbed and opts to rescue the helpless man.

In "The Man He Killed," the speaker is "face to face" with another human being and kills him simply because their countries are at war (34). In "Dulce et Decorum Est," the speaker informs future generations and the reader that war is not always heroic and valuable, but it can be cruel, and immoral. In addition to reacting under social pressure, another similarity of the three

poems is all the speakers sense the injustices committed, and they all wish they could relive the situations and possibly change the outcomes.

For instance, in "The Man He Killed," the speaker accepts social pressure as a way of life, and he does this to escape the guilt he is feeling and by taking what some may feel is the easy way out. In "Dulce et Decorum Est," and "A Man Who Has Fallen Among Thieves," both speakers challenge the crowds to acknowledge injustice and go against social pressures. The speakers throughout these three poems also convey differences. The main difference is how they respond to social pressure. In "A Man Who Had Fallen Among Thieves," and in "Dulce et Decorum Est," both speakers rebel loudly against the social code.

In other words they are more opinionated, and while they aren't scared of social pressure, both speakers are aware of the often, brutal social code. In "The Man He Killed," the speaker succumbs and accepts the ways of society. While he does question his error, he doesn't do anything rebellious like the other speakers. To conclude, the speaker is crucial in getting the point of the poem across. Although the speaker is often anonymous, the poet uses an insightful, familiar speaker as a tool to impart different points of view, wisdom, or whatever the writer is seeking to tell an audience.

The speaker often offers a first-hand experience in order to help evoke feelings within a reader. The speaker is also important because while he or she is not factual, nor omnipresent, the speaker offers a different perspective and helps readers get a better idea of why war is not "sweet and fitting," or why it is better to do what is morally just for instance (27). The poet uses the speaker to create irony and tension in the poem. Overall, the speaker is

valuable to both the poet and an audience in order to achieve a better understanding of an occurrence, universal issues or any ideas the poet seeks to illustrate to an audience.