

# Poetry of world war i assignment

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Excerpted from *Collected Poems, 1949* or the soldiers who went off to fight in World War I, literature was the main form of entertainment. “ In 1914 there was virtually no cinema,” writes historian Paul Fussler in *The Great War and Modern Memory*; there was no radio at all; and there was certainly no television. Fussler continues, “ Amusement was largely found in language formally arranged, either in books and periodicals or at the theater and music hall, or in one’s own or one’s friends’ anecdotes, rumors, or clever structuring of words. For British soldiers in particular, writing poetry was one of the chief sources of pleasure. Britain formed its army with volunteers, and many of these volunteers came from Great Britain’s high-quality public school system, the British equivalent of private preparatory high schools and colleges. I have a rendezvous with Death/ At some disputed barricade/ When Spring comes back with rustling shade/ And phlebotomy’s fill the air-?? I Death/ When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

From *I Have A Rendezvous with Death* by Alan Seeger 115 Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) English poet Rupert Brooke is perhaps the most famous of the patriotic poets, poets who celebrated England’s entry into World War I. Born on August 3, 1887, to a family of educators, Brooke excelled at school. He became part of a circle of poets at Cambridge University who rebelled against the poetry of their parents’ generation and hoped to create new verses that were realistic, bold, and vital.

They were known as the Georgian poets. Brooke published his first collection of poems in 1911 and made his name by contributing to *Georgian Poetry*, a book containing selected works by different poets, published in 1912. British poet Rupert Brooke. (Corgis Corporation. Reproduced by permission. ) Like <https://assignbuster.com/poetry-of-world-war-i-assignment/>

many other educated young Englishmen, Brooke responded to the declaration of war in 1914 with patriotic fervor. He had tired of “ a world grown old and weary’ and hoped to find glory in the war.

His sonnets (fourteen-line poems) about the thrill of going off to war to fight for his country were published and became wildly popular in England. Brooke never saw action in the war; he was on his way to fight the Turks at Gallipoli when he contracted blood poisoning from an insect bite on his lip. He died on the island of Lemnos in the Aegean Sea on April 23, 1915. Many British soldiers were therefore well-educated men who appreciated poetry. British soldiers had a special relationship with literature.

British schooling was based on the idea that understanding the poetry of the past makes people good citizens. Thus, all British students were familiar with a wide range of poets, from ancient Greek poets to those more recent, such as British writer Thomas Hardy. Many soldiers carried with them to the front a standard volume called the Oxford Book of English Verse, a collection of 116 World War I: Primary Sources important poetry; others had recent publications of poetry sent to them. Such books were extremely popular at the front, for they provided a diversion from the horror and tedium of war.

Fusel quotes the story of Herbert Read, who was mailed a copy of a book of verse by poet Robert Browning: “ At first I was mocked in the dugout as a highbrow for reading The Ring and the Book, but saying nothing I waited until one of the scoffers idly picked it up. In ten minutes he was absorbed, and in three days we were fighting for turns to read it, and talking of nothing else at meals. ” Schooled in poetry, many British soldiers turned to writing

poetry to record their reactions to the war. And as it turned out, World War I produced more poetry than any war before or since.

Hundreds of volumes of war poetry were published; according to John Lehmann, author of *The English Poets of the First World War*, There was a period, during and directly after the War, when almost any young man who could express his thoughts and feelings in verse could find a publisher and a public. ” Poets-?? including Rupert Brooke, Siegfried Swanson, Wilfred Owen, Edmund Blunder, Alan Seeker (the rare American), Robert Graves, Isaac Rosenberg, and many others-?? recorded all the various ways that soldiers experienced the war, from the first longings for glory to the final sickening confrontation with death.

Many of these poems are now forgotten, but many others-?? such as the ones included below-?? are still remembered and taught. These poems eating view of the first modern war. Alan seeker (1888-1916) The only major American war poet, Alan Seeker was born in New York City in 1888. Seeker attended Harvard College, where he dabbled in poetry and began to develop a reputation as a freethinker (someone who does not follow the conventions of his peers).

After graduation he returned to New York City, but he grew to dislike life in America; he felt that Americans were uncivilized and incapable of enjoying life’s true pleasures, such as fine wine, good food, and art. In 1912 Seeker moved to Paris, France. When World War I began, Seeker leaped at the chance to enlist in the French Foreign Legion, a division of the French army that accepted enlistments from foreigners. Seeker hoped to find in war the

intensity and excitement that he craved. Seeker served in the foreign legion for nearly two years, seeing action in battles at Gaines and Champagne, but he was bored whenever he was out of battle.

He soothed his boredom in part by writing poems; his only collection of poetry was published in 1916. On July 4, 1916, Seeker took part in one of the major battles of the war, the Battle of the Somme. Pushing forward on the first day of the attack, he was gunned down by German machine-gun fire, crawled into a hell hole, and died. Provide a fascia- Literature of the Great War: Poetry of World War I 117 The poetry of World War I closely reflects the attitudes that many soldiers had toward the war.

The first poems-?? including those by Brooke and Seeker-?? brim with the confidence of soldiers who believe that they are embarking on a glorious adventure. For the first year or two of the war, many poems spoke of honor, glory, and patriotism; they compared the duties of modern soldiers with those of warriors celebrated in the epic poems of the ancient Greeks. Yet the slowly dawning horror of the continuing war began to shape war poetry, just as it reshaped the attitudes of everyone involved in the war.

As the war wore on, poets such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Swanson began to write bitter, cutting verses about the horror of war and the failure of patriotic visions. After 1916, writes Lehmann, “ the dreams were shattered, and patriotism became a matter of grim endurance against all odds, of despairing hope almost buried beneath the huge weight of disillusionment, of the need not to be defeated existing beside the belief that

it was increasingly not merely stupid but almost criminal not to negotiate an end to the slaughter.

Things to remember while reading the poems of hope and glory by Rupert Brooke and Alan Seeger: ; The poems by Rupert Brooke and Alan Seeger hint at the attitudes poets had toward the war during the first period of war poetry, the period of hope and honor and glory. In these poems the poets speak of leaving the petty pleasures of civilian life for the exalted life of a soldier; they are romantic and hopeful. ; Literature and warfare went hand in hand during World War I.

Many of the war poets composed their poems while sitting in the trenches waiting for a battle to begin; novelists and essayists also imposed their works under the most difficult conditions. Reading was a common way of passing long hours between battles. ; Poetry can be difficult. Poets use uncommon and sometimes old-fashioned words to convey their ideas; they often refer to ancient myths or to other poems that most people today do not know. Poets condense meaning into tight knots of words, and it can be difficult to untie those 118 knots.

But the very things that make poetry difficult also make it rewarding. It may help to read the poems several times or to read them aloud. Think of a poem as a puzzle and see if you can solve it. The poetry of World War I (that many sold. Errors had to include those by Brooke and believe that they are emblem of the war, many poems spoke the duties of modern soldier the ancient Greeks Yet the reshape war poetry, just as As the war wore on. Poets write their. Outing verses c After 1916, writes Lehmann matter of grill endurance a

the huge weight tot dullness; ere belief Tar was Increase negotiate an end to the slat T megs to remember while poems of hope and glory b) ; The power: by Rupert Brock attitudes poets had toward of war poetry, the period of these poems the poets spec of Ill for the exalt; Literature and warfare we War L Van of the war poet sitting IM the trenches wait turnpikes their works undue passing long hours between ; Poetry can be difficult Poe car Vive their Ideas: they toot people today do not know, tight knots of words, and it World War I: Panama Sours knots.

But the very things t make It retarding. It may h times or to read them Alcoa ant see If you can solve it, Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour, And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping, With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power, To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping, Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary, Leave the sick hearts that honor could not move, And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary, And all the little emptiness of love!

Oh! We, who have known shame, we have found release there, Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending, Naught broken save this body, lost but breath; Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there But only agony, and that has ending; And the worst friend and enemy is but Death. Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead! There's none of these so lonely and poor of old, But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.

These laid the world away; poured out the red Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be Of work and Joy, and that unopposed serene, That men call age; and those who would have been, Their sons, they gave, their

immortality. Who has matched us with His hour: Who has allowed us to be here at this important moment in history. Naught: Nothing. Save: Except.

119 Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth, Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain. Honor has come back, as a king, to earth, And paid his subjects with a royal wage; And nobleness walks in our ways again; And we have come into our heritage. Have a Rendezvous with Death” I have a rendezvous with Death At some disputed barricade, When Spring comes back with rustling shade And apple-blossoms fill the air-?? When Spring brings back blue days and fair. It may be he shall take my hand And lead me into his dark land And close my eyes and quench my breath-?? It may be I shall pass him still. On some scarred slope of battered hill, When Spring comes round again this year And the first meadow-flowers appear. God knows there better to be deep Pillowed in silk and scented down, Where Love throbs out in blissful sleep, Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath

Where hushed awakenings are dear... But Eve a rendezvous with Death At midnight in some flaming town, When Spring trips north again this year, And I to my pledged word am true, I shall not fail that rendezvous. Dearth: Shortage of, lack. Rendezvous: A prearranged meeting. Nigh: Near. I have sought Happiness, but it has been A lovely rainbow, baffling all pursuit, Baffling all pursuit: Always out of reach. 120 And tasted Pleasure, but it was a fruit More fair of outward hue than sweet within. Renouncing both, a flake in the ferment Of battling hosts that conquer or recoil, There only, chastened by fatigue and toil,

I knew what came the nearest to content. For there at least my troubled flesh was free From the gadfly Desire that plagued it so; Discord and Strife

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were what I used to know, Heartaches, deception, murderous Jealousy; By War transported far from all of these, Amid the clash of arms I was at peace. “ Sonnet X’: On Returning to the Front After Leave” Apart sweet women (for whom Heaven be blessed), Comrades, you cannot think how thin and blue Look the leftovers of mankind that rest, Now that the cream has been skimmed off in you. War has its horrors, but has this of good-?? That its sure processes sort out and bind

Brave hearts in one intrepid brotherhood And leave the shams and imbeciles behind. Now turn we Joyful to the great attacks, Not only that we face in a fair field Our valiant foe and all his deadly tools, But also that we turn disdainful backs On that poor world we scorn yet die to shield-?? That world of cowards, hypocrites, and fools. A flake in the ferment / Of battling hosts that conquer or recoil: As an individual soldier caught in a clash between great nations, the poet is comparing himself to a flake-?? perhaps of snow-?? caught in a ferment, or storm. Chastened: Subdued or worn out.

Apart: Apart from; other than. Things to remember while reading the poems of disillusionment by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Swanson: ; The following five poems by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Swanson take a very different view of war. These are poems 121 of harsh disillusionment. The authors seem to realize that there is no higher calling to war but merely a bitter struggle to survive. Though the romantic and optimistic poems of Alan Seeger and Rupert Brooke were very popular early in the war, the work of Owen and Swanson was much more popular late in the war and afterwards.

The change reflected in these memos is said to mark the emergence of modern literature, which focuses more on the perceptions of common people than earlier literature does. Wilfred Owen. (The Granger Collection.

Reproduced by permission. ) It seemed that out of battle I escaped  
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped  
Through granites which titanic wars had groined. Yet also there encumbered sleepers groined, Too  
fast in thought or death to be bestirred. Then, as I probed them, one sprang  
up, and stared With piteous recognition in fixed eyes, Lifting distressful  
hands, as if to bless. And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,-??

By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell. Groined: Opened holes in. That  
vision's face was grained: The man's face was etched with pain. Flues:  
Chimneys of of disillusionment by Wilfred Owe ; The following five poems by  
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