

Dulce et decorum est

Psychology



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The irony in the poem Dulce et Decorum Est is that it is not sweet and fitting to die for one's country when you have actually experienced war. Owen is describing how psychologically and physically exhausting war was for the soldiers that had to endure such a cruel ordeal and not how patriotic and honorable it was. In the first stanza Owen describes how the soldiers are trudging back to camp from battle. We see the soldiers, fatigued and wounded, returning to base camp: Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge, Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs And towards our distant rest began to trudge. Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind; Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots... Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind. The way Owen describes the trudge back to camp allows the reader to open their minds to the events that are occurring. This allows them to see the cruel reality that the war was for the soldiers. I believe Owen's use of these images are aimed at discouraging the mere thought of war. In the second stanza Owen is describing a gas attack on the soldiers as they are trudging back to camp. Owen describes the soldiers fumbling to get their mask fastened, all but one, a lone soldier. He is struggling to get his mask on but doesn't get it fastened quick enough and suffers from the full effects of deadly gas: Gas! Gas! Quick boys!-An ecstasy of fumbling, Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time; But someone still was yelling out and stumbling And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime... Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light, As under a green sea, I saw him drowning. The way Owen describes a comrade watching as a lone soldier is struggling to get his mask fastened awakens the minds of the readers to see the psychological effect that this had on the

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soldiers. Making the reader see that war is cruel and unjust. In the third stanza Owen is describing the dead soldier. This allows the reader to view war in its full affect: In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. If in some smothering dreams you too could pace Behind the wagon that we flung him in, And watch the white eyes writhing in his face, His hanging face, like a devil's sick sin; If you could hear at 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,- To children ardent for some desperate glory, The old lie: Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori. The way Owen description of the image of the lone soldier dying awakens the minds of the people who read the poem to the reality of war as being a terrifying way for young people to die, and that idea of patriotism and honor is the cause of such revolting circumstance. Wilfred Owen's thoroughly criticizes the idea of war being a sweet and glorious way to die for one's country. It is presented through a series of images which are designed to destroy the notion of war being patriotic and honorable. His graphic detail reveals war as the hideous thing it is.