

The soldier and the dead both by rupert brooke

Literature



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People's attitudes towards war changed as the war progressed and this is shown in the war poetry which reported about war to the civilians back in Britain. At first these war poems praised war, but when the soldiers realised the truth about war, their poetry changed to show the horrors of war.

Eventually poets began writing to ask for the war to stop. The early World War One poetry was written in praise of war. This is because the poets had not yet experienced the horrors of war. They believed the propaganda which led them to believe that war was glorious.

Two examples of such poetry are 'The Soldier' and 'The Dead' both by Rupert Brooke. Both of the poems are sonnets. Sonnets are traditionally love poems so through using this form Brooke shows his love for his country. The poems say that it is glorious to die at war: 'Dying has made us rarer gifts than gold,' 'The Dead' This means that the people who die at war are more precious than gold because of their sacrifice. Brooke believes that they have become better people through dying for a cause.

'The Soldier' glorifies death at war by saying 'If I should die... There's some corner of a foreign field that is forever England. ' Brooke cares more about the glory of England than for his own life. Brooke regards death at war as a glorious thing although the word 'If' shows that he does not expect to die. Each poem uses personification. 'The Dead' personifies the 'Dead' by giving the word 'Dead' a capital letter showing respect. 'The soldier personifies England by calling it 'her. ' This also shows patriotism because Brooke thinks of England as a person. 'The Soldier' repeats the word 'England' and 'English' throughout the poem showing Brooke's patriotism.

The sestet of 'The Soldier' portrays an 'English Heaven' showing patriotism. Rupert Brooke writes as if England was his mother: " A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware. " This shows why he is so patriotic; England has helped him so much he is repaying the country by risking his life for it, he does not care if he dies for England because he believes that without England he would not have lived in the first place. 'The Dead' displays patriotism because it mentions 'heritage' showing he is proud of England's military past. Rupert Brooke is naive as he thinks he will not die at war.

However, he believes that if he does die at war it will be a glorious and beautiful event. In 'The Dead' he starts off the poem with the words 'Blow out, you bugles! Over the rich dead. ' Brooke is celebrating the fact that they have died. This conveys how much he believed death at war was good because he celebrated it. The word 'Rich' suggests that the dead have gained from dying. Poetry written on the front line expressed the differences between the fake image of war which the propaganda created and the truth. The poems described the poor conditions and the number of casualties on the front line.

Two examples of such poetry are 'A Working Party' by Siegfried Sassoun and 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' by Wilfred Owen. These poems use irony to show how different reality was to the image of war created by propaganda. Sassoun says that there are " nimble rats" in the trenches. This shows that the rats have more energy than the exhausted soldiers. It also indicates that the conditions must be poor in the trenches for rats to be thriving. " Dulce Et Decorum Est" has an ironic title. It is taken from a Latin saying meaning " it is sweet and fitting to die for your country".

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It is an ironic title because the poem shows that it is far from sweet and fitting to die at war. In these poems the irony contrasts emphasises the contrast between the propaganda and reality. Both the poems show the disabling effects of war and how the conditions are dehumanizing for the soldiers. Sassoun uses strong words such as "blundered" and "wretchedly" to show how the men have been disabled by war. The word "grunt" conveys how the conditions have caused them to become animalistic. Owen describes how war has had a disabling effect on the men in the opening lines of the poem.

Owen describes the men as "Bent double, like old beggars under sacks. / Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed our way through sludge." This shows how the soldiers have been transformed into sick, angry old men by the war. They are described as "drunk with fatigue" because they are so tired and overworked that they cannot work or behave normally, but act as if they were drunk from alcohol. Owen and Sassoun make use of direct realism and show panic in emergencies. In "Dulce Et Decorum Est" the soldier shouts "Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! The monosyllabic words and exclamation marks show the panic when the gas shell explodes.

The speech comes suddenly after a slower description of the trenches and soldiers. This takes the reader by surprise and makes us feel the soldiers surprise when the gas bomb came. In "A Waring Party" the soldiers say "Keep to your right - make way!". This shows that the trenches were crowded. The short sentences and monosyllabic words show urgency. The exclamation mark emphasises the urgency and frustration of the men as they hurry to get through a trench. The poems have bitter and angry tones.

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This shows the poets' anger at having to go to war. The anger and bitterness is shown in the negative words used throughout the poems. Sassoun uses negative words to describe the conditions and feelings of the soldiers such as " sodden", " wretchedly" and " chilly". He shows the soldiers individual anger at the war when he says that a soldier " stooped and swore / Because a sagging wire had caught his neck". This angry the soldiers are that they will swear at something so little as a sagging wire just to release some of the anger. Wilfred Owen is also angry and bitter at the war.

He uses negative words to show this such as " haunting", " blood-shod", and " Bitter as the cud". Owen also shows the mens anger at war by saying they " cursed through sludge". Both the poems use repetition to emphasise certain points. " A Working Party" uses repetition to emphasise how quickly a soldier can die. The poem starts off with the words " Three hours ago he blundered up the trench. " Half way through the poem the Sassoun repeats this using the word stumbled instead of blundered.

The repetition halfway through reminds us how short ago it was when the soldier was alive. Dulce Et Decorum Est" also uses repetition. The word " drowning" is repeated to emphasise the death of the soldier. Both the poems show how quickly the soldiers die. Sassoun saysthat the man was alive " Three hours ago". Owen describes the mans death as it happens in a few seconds when gas kills him suddenly. Owen and Sassoun show that in reality there is no honour in death at war. In " Dulce Et Decorum Est" Owen describes how the dead corpse is " flung" into the wagon. Owen describes the mans " white eyes writhing in his face,/ His hanging face like a devil's sick of sin".

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The dead is not treated like a hero but like he is merely another casualty of many in the war. He is not treated with respect but he is treated like a piece of rubbish in a dump. In "A Working Party" the man's death is not glorious. We know he did not want to die because he "thought of getting back by half-past twelve" He was stacking sand bags when a shell exploded nearby causing his head to split open. This is not the glorious death that we would expect from earlier poems. He is not killed while shooting down enemy troops or in some other glorious heroic way but he is killed stacking sand bags.

The Poems have pathos. They both focus on just one death making it stand out from the millions of other casualties. The pathos is extremely effective in "A Working Party" because Sassoun describes the man's life in Britain: "He was a young man with a meagre wife And two small children". This makes us pity him more because he had family that he has left behind. Sassoun also describes the man's character. He was "a decent chap who did his work and hadn't much to say". This makes the man seem more of an innocent victim than he would if he hadn't been described at all.

The man's actions leading up to his death are also described. Irony is used to make us sympathise with him because "He thought of getting back by half-past twelve". Wilfred Owen also describes just one death but also focuses on the effect it has on Owen. There is a gas attack on a group of men. All the others manage to get away but "someone still was yelling out and stumbling". This makes us pity the one man more because he dies alone. Owen tells us the effect the death had on him: "In all my dreams before my

helpless sight / He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. This makes us pity not only the man who died but also Owen.

It also shows that death was such a terrible thing that it had more than one victim, it traumatised the living who would carry the memory for the rest of their lives. As the war progressed the poetry became increasingly bitter. Poets became determined to show the truth of what went on at the front line. They wanted to stop people believing the false image the propaganda had given them so that they would think twice about enlisting. Two of these poems were 'Disabled' by Wilfred Owen and 'Does it matter?' by Siegfried Sassoun.

At the time the poems were written many people believed that if they were disabled at war they would be treated as heroes but these poems show that in reality there was no glory in being disabled at war. Siegfried Sassoun shows that there is no glory through his sarcastic tone. The poem asks " does it matter? - losing your legs?... / For people will always be kind. " This will make the reader realise that even if people are always kind, it is little compensation for having no legs. The third stanza is about the psychological scars of war.

The poem suggests sarcastically that it would not matter to go mad as a result of the war because " people won't say that you're mad; For they'll know you fought for your country / And no one will worry a bit. " This will make the reader see that the idea of people treating you with respect if you are disabled by war is an unrealistic one. The words " And no one will worry a bit" are effective because the sarcasm suggests they won't worry because

they know why you are disabled and will respect you, whereas in reality people won't worry about you because people won't care.

In "Disabled" the soldier's welcome home is far from heroic. Owen writes: "some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer goal. Only a solemn man who brought him fruits." The man is not welcomed back as a hero but is greeted by just one "solemn man." He will not be treated as a hero. Instead he will "spend a few sick years in institutes." He is lonely and abandoned now shown by the last lines of the poem which ask "Why don't they come?" Owen and Sassoun show that disabled soldiers rely on pity. They would have expected to have relied on respect after they return but people no longer respect them, they pity them.

They rely on people's kindness as they cannot look after themselves anymore. Sassoun writes that "people will always be kind". This is a sarcastic statement because they won't always be kind and if they are it is for the wrong reasons. "Disabled" shows that the man is abandoned by society. The man is lonely as "he sat in a wheelchair waiting for dark." If he was a hero he would be attractive to girls, but instead they "touch him like some queer disease." He is neglected as he wants to go to bed but no one comes leaving him on his own, asking "Why don't they come?"

Each poem compares the disabled men to able-bodied men showing the contrast between what they are and what they were. "Does It Matter?" says about the activities the other men take part in which the disabled man cannot participate in: "The others come in after hunting to gobble their muffin and eggs." This makes the reader pity the disabled man more

because he is left out and forgotten while the able bodied men are having fun. " Disabled" contrasts the man in the wheelchair with the boys in the park.

The man is also contrasted with the way he was before he went to war:

There was an artist silly for his face, For it was younger than his youth, last year. Now, he is old. " This shows how in just one year he has turned from a handsome young boy into an elderly man. Both " A Working Party" and " Does It Matter" use rhetorical questions to encourage the reader to think. Sassoun asks " Does it matter? - Losing your legs? ", " Does it matter? - Losing your sight? " and " Do they matter? - " Those dreams from the pit? " After each question there is a pause to make the reader think.

These questions are sarcastic because they make it seem like it doesn't matter when the poem shows that in reality it does matter. By repeating the question " Does it matter? " the reader is constantly reminded that it matters a lot to be disabled by war. Disabled repeats a question at the end: " Why don't they come And put him to bed? Why don't they come? " By making the question the last part of the poem the reader is left thinking about it. By repeating the question it emphasises the loneliness and despair of the soldier. Both the poems are angry at the war and at the attitudes of people in Britain.

Wilfred Owen is angry that the army recruited a man who was drunk and underage. The poem says " smiling they wrote his lie; aged nineteen years". The fact that the men were smiling makes them seem evil as they were sending a boy off to war. Owen is angry at the war. He sees the war as

pointless because the boy "threw away his legs" suggesting that he did it for no good reason. Sassoun is angry at the attitudes of British civilians towards the war and towards the disabled. This is shown in his angry sarcastic tone. The poems show the disabled men remembering when they were able bodied.

This shows that remembering better days is all they can do now as they will never have those happy experiences of their youth again. In "Disabled" the man remembers when he was popular with girls, he remembers playing football and he remembers why he signed up for the war in the first place. He remembers when the "town used to swing so gay." In "Does It Matter?" Sassoun says if you lose your sight you can "sit on the terrace remembering". This shows that if you lose your sight all you will have to go by is memories of vision. "Disabled" and "Does It Matter?" both focus on the disabling effects after a soldier returns to Britain.

Does It Matter?" shows how you can lose limbs, lose your sight and be psychologically affected by war. "Disabled" shows how a single man has been affected by losing his legs and one arm at war. Towards the end of the war the poets began to ask for the war to stop. They prayed to God for an end to the violence. Two examples of such poetry are "Futility" by Wilfred Owen and "How Long O Lord" by Robert Palmer. They both use rhetorical questions to make the reader think about the purpose of the war. Robert Palmer makes the title of his poem a rhetorical question.

Palmer asks God twice in the poem how long the war will last. He asks "How long, O Lord, how long, before the flood / Of crimson-welling carnage shall

abate. " He also asks " How long / Shall Satan in high places lead the blind / To battle for the passions of the strong? " This is the same question but in each one war is described differently to show that there are so many bad things about war. The questions show how desperate Palmer is for the war to end. Wilfred Owen also uses rhetorical questions.

He asks " Are limbs so clear achieved, are sides Full nerved - still warm - too hard to stir? He is asking that if the sun once brought life to the earth why it can't bring life to the dead soldier. Owen hopes that if he moves the dead body into the sun it would bring him back to life. This shows how desperate Owen was that he was willing to try to wake the dead this way. Owen asks a second rhetorical question. He asks " Who is it for the day grew tall, O what made fortuous sunbeam toil To break earths sleep at all? " This question shows how war has caused Owen to give up hope and ask what was the point in God creating the world if he would only let it be destroyed by war.

The poems are both asking for miracles. Owen is asking for the sun to awake a dead man. Palmer is asking for God to end the war. Both the poems use personification. Robert Palmer personifies feelings of hate and pride: " Hate their most hateful, pride their deadliest foe. " This means that the soldiers biggest enemy is not the Germans but it is their own hate and pride. If they did not have hate for the Germans there would be no war. If they did not have pride they would not have signed up for the war. Owen personifies the " kind old sun".

This shows that the sun is the only thing Owen has to be thankful for during the war, he looks to it like a friend as he desperately wants the man to

awake. Thus to conclude during the four years of World War One the poetry changed to reflect the changing attitudes of the soldiers. At first poets glorified war, as the war progressed they wrote about how they had been lied to by propaganda and about the terrible reality of war. The poetry became increasingly bitter throughout the war and eventually the same poets who glorified war began pleading for the war to stop.