

# Wilfred owen

[Experience](#)



Wilfred Owen's poetry, shaped by an intense focus on extraordinary human experiences, compels us to look more closely at the nature of war. Wilfred Owen, having experienced WW1, skilfully conveys to us the nature of war and the horrific experiences and circumstances which come hand in hand with WW1 in particular. Owen's intense focus on these experiences compels its readers to understand and empathise with both the men at war and the people back at the home front. The horrific conditions and extraordinary experiences in which the men had to endure were unimaginable to any human who has not experienced it firsthand. We grasp a sense of the war participant's vile experiences and physical demands through his extensive use of vivid imagery in *Dulce et Decorum Est*. "An ecstasy of fumbling", "clumsy... stumbling...floundering", Owen uses these powerful adverbs to highlight the frantic and stressful situation which arises as a result of a gas attack, an extraordinary experience to any normal being. These adverbs encourage the reader to read at a faster pace, generating a connection to the urgency of the situation. "Gas! GAS! Quick boys" generates a strong sense of immediacy and a fast pace to the stanza. The gas attack gives the reader a clear insight into the treacherous experiences surrounding these men. We empathise with the gas attack victim and its witnesses as a result of the metaphor "us under a green sea, I saw him drowning". This shows us how the gas engulfs the men and causes great struggle. "Guttering, choking, drowning", the description of the dying, suffering man is written in a dispassionate manner suggesting that this became a part of everyday life in the war. We learn that war, particularly through Wilfred Owen's eyes, is dehumanising and immoral. "Bent double, like old beggars" opens this text in a negative tone. "Knock-kneed, coughing like hags" reinforces the poor

<https://assignbuster.com/wilfred-owen/>

state of the men; these similes compare these once bright young men to “old hags” and “beggars”. This generates a clear sense of association to weary, exhausted men who have been beaten by war, conveying its harsh nature. Besides from the composer, no individual is singled out, suggesting that these experiences and conditions are being experienced by an entire group or mass of people. Owen conveys the images of the suffering man to be haunting the persona’s dreams. “In all my dreams, before my helpless sight...if in some smothering dreams you too could pace”. Owen does this to highlight the heartless and unforgiving nature of war and the discerning way it still haunts the persona even after the experience is over. “White eyes writhing in his face...like the devil’s sick of sin” the dying man is described as though the observer is unmoved. This alone strongly conveys both the extreme experiences that occur on a day to day basis and how the men are forced to disconnect from compassion and become numb to experiences of death and destruction. The ironic nature of war is emphasised by the title and closing line of the text “Dulce et Decorum Est pro Patria mori” meaning ‘it is sweet and right’, suggesting that Owen is making a mockery of the romanticized view of war which was had at the time. A strong sense of irony and romanticised options are also evident in Wilfred Owen’s text Disabled. It is conveyed through the contextual attitudes, social pressures and naivety that were had by the young men of the 1910 era. “He’d thought he’d better join-he wonders why” the persona felt this because someone said “you’d look a god in kilts...and may be to please his Meg”. Owen has incorporated this into the text in order to communicate the false sense of valour and bravery which had been injected into the men and women, as a result of the intense propaganda promoted by the politics of that era. The appalling

<https://assignbuster.com/wilfred-owen/>

nature of war and the horrifying, extraordinary experience which go hand in hand make for very unpleasant surroundings which, in most cases, have devastating effects on the individual. The title of the text Disabled makes it instantly clear that the protagonist in the text has been the result of severe injury both physically and mentally. "wheeled-chair" in the opening line reinforces this idea and helps the audience to make an easy association with a disability. "Legless, sewn short at the elbow" communicates to us that this man has lost his arms and legs as a result of war. This communicates how the men at war have to submit to and deal with the extreme and unpleasant experiences that occur on the war front. The loss of limbs and loss of quality of life seems very extreme to some however, war participants are lucky to even make it home. The isolation that this man feels, as a result of his injuries, is communicated to us through sensory imagery, plosive and alliterative sounds "voices of play and pleasure after day", it is clear what he has lost, his pleasure and play from life. Colour imagery "dark...grey" and the line "till gathering sleep had mothered them from him" this sets a very depressing tone. The man's disability has forced him into a sad state of depression where he is isolated from the joys which surround him. The war has metaphorically stolen his life from him. Owen has intended on evoking this empathy towards the persona in order to encourage the audience to look more closely at the nature of war and the effects that it has on its participants especially the aftermath of the horrendous experience. Loss and change are two important themes of Disabled. Juxtaposition is used to convey this through contrasting the present state of the persona to the person's life prior to the war, making it clear how the war has changed his life. Visual imagery and colour imagery is used to encourage the audience to

<https://assignbuster.com/wilfred-owen/>

visualise “ town used to swing so gay”, when the “ glow-lamps...budded in the light blue trees”, we associate this with enjoyment, frivolity and youthfulness. This time of beatitude is strongly contrasted with the existence which he endures, as “ now he will spend a few sick years in institutes”. We empathise with the persona and his situation as he acknowledges his misfortune “ tonight he noticed how the woman’s eyes passed from him to the strong men that were whole. ” “ Why don’t they come and put him into bed? ” this final line leaves the audiences filled with sorrow and empathy for the man. This line leaves the reader thinking. Owen has intentionally done this so the reader is compelled to look more closely at the nature of war and what it does to individuals and even humanity. This suggests that the title Disabled acts as a metaphor for all men whom are shipped away to war, for their families and for society as they are left to deal with the repercussions of the extraordinary experiences which are thrust upon them. In studying Owen’s texts Dulce et decorum Est and Disabled we are exposed to the reality of war and the extraordinary experiences and situations which arise at war. Owen’s emotive texts compel us to look more closely at the horrific nature of war and its effects on the individual on the war front, the family on the home front and the scars that affect an entire community. Owen is collectively communicating to the readers that war is an unforgiving, dehumanising and horrific experience that shows no compassion, empathy or any sense of moral decency towards its participants. Word count: 1257