

Poems by wilfred owen



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

War in general is a vastly expansive topic. It is an inclusive universal experience, which involves people of all ages. As a result of this universality it triggers many feelings in a person to express their emotions; this is normally shown through poetry or novels. Being such an emotive topic, which shall result from the dire consequences of injury and death of loved ones. War is passed on via the word of mouth, through stories or ballads, which are usually rhythmical; as it enhances one's ability to memorise.

Until poetry was written down as the rhythm became more complex. Now leading to modern day when media have been our source of information. However, because of this, the war poetry we have now is even more emotive and precious to us. Pre-1900 poetry was written such as 'Henry V', 'Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'Vitai Lampada'.

Each of these poems shows a different side to war, 'Henry V' shows encouragement and patriotism. Shakespeare ends the speech with a very emphatic line: 'Follow your spirit, and upon this charge Cry, 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George'' Whereas in both the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'Vitai Lampada' we are shown more the realities of war, and the fatal outcome of unfortunate mistakes. An ideal example of this is in 'The Charge of the Light Brigade, 'Someone had blundered,' portraying that if there was acknowledgement of a mistake, which usually is insignificant, meant it must have had fatal consequences. Which are further explained in the poem.

Henry V's battle in comparison seems flawless which emphasises his courage as a leader. Henry V differs from the other two poems, as Shakespeare has

written it in the style speech rather than a poem. At the beginning, the use of short vowel sound, are used to convey the sense of urgency. These monosyllabic words show the reader an emphasis on the urgency and the fierce side of war.

But rather than being forward and sharp about the dangers, Henry V is able to bluntly portray the reality. Despite Henry being the King and considered close to a god-like figure, he does not hesitate to raise the morals of all his men including the lower class workers, ' and teach them how to war. And you. Good yeomen. ' From this I am able to depict that, the main message that is supposed to be bought out is, that of encouragement. Not only to the higher status soldiers, but every man willing to fight and risk their life for England.

One of the most vital sides of war, other than the combat is the preparation beforehand. Henry V is preparing his soldiers in the line; ' Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide. ' Which is not only to prepare the soldier but also the reader in warning that an important battle is about to be fought. Shakespeare was writing in an era when belief in God was a critical element of everyday life.

The last lines I quoted earlier ' God for Harry, England, and Saint George! Show a familiarity and empathy and community between all the soldiers, despite the possible class divisions. Henry V's speech has direct ties with the poem ' Vita Lampada', or ' The Torch of Life'. ' Vita Lampada', presents war as a ' game,' which they long to win, the first stanza compares it to a comprehensive schools cricket match. Being a very emotive poem it is able

to stir a patriotic view in the reader and cause a sense of longing to help the country, as it looks at the young boys playing cricket, but then shifts to see them later on in life defending some outpost of the British Empire.

From the very beginning the reader is forced into the core of the action, creating a huge impact. On the other hand, the imagery, becomes more severe and graphic as the outlook changes from a public school to the desert, where a sense of misfortune is stressed through the phrase: ' Sodden red' and ' river of death', indicating the scale of bloodshed, and going into immense detail on the over-flowing blood. Nostalgia within the poem helps to portray a sense of duty to your county, which reminds the reader that you grew up and were raised in England, therefore being obliged to defend it. This is underlined by the way that school is presented as a mother figure, referring to the boys as " her sons". This personification puts forward a sense of duty, or debt, not to let ' her' down. The use of ' But' signals a change from crisis to salvation, and is immediate through the use of direct speech.

At this point the leadership, which is a heavy duty is passed down to a young soldier as he fulfils the dead colonels role. A strong sense of heroism is conveyed here, by putting the lives of those who remain on this man's shoulders. This poem could be deemed as propaganda, as it appeals to the experience of war, glorifying the more gruesome realities of war. In contrast to this, many poems by the poet Wilfred Owen took a distinctly opposed view of war, and aimed to shatter these ideals that the public may have been given through propaganda. ' The Charge of the Light Brigade' is a poem that really addresses the issues of honour and futility of war.

It portrays the famous charge of the British cavalry, when they mistook orders to retake some guns in Russian possession, and instead charged the main Russian position, killing and wounding two thirds of his men. The 'Charge of the Light Brigade' consists of six stanzas, each of which has an irregular rhyme pattern. Some lines are indented whereas some loosely rhyme with the word, 'hundred'. By ending each stanza with 'the six hundred!' he firstly emphasises the degree of slaughter of the British cavalry, presenting to the reader in a outline how many lives may well have been lost, and eventually, how many were. He secondly makes a stable suggestion to these gallant men, and in a small way conserve their honour and memory, immortalising them through the poem. The poem has been cunningly written, so that even as the reader reads of the tremendous loss of this charge, he/she is still uplifted and inspired to fight for England as those men did.

This is mainly accomplished through the use of repetition and exclamation marks, which portrays a sense of enthusiasm. This is also accomplished through the use of phrases such as 'Boldly they rode on' and 'flashing sabres', which praise the deeds of these men. The 'Charge of the Light Brigade' presents a heavily patriotic view of the occurrence, restoring the men's nobility and honour by showing his enthusiasm for the war and by depicting a scene where so many 'heroes' fall for their country. He emphasises this through intense imagery and emphatic language so as to engage the reader and put his point across successfully. There is a very distinct rhythm to the poem, which imitates that of galloping horses, as if trying to replicate the image of soldiers charging into battle.

Even in this small detail the writer's views on the subject matter are made clear, as this implies that the writer is trying to slightly glamorise the prospect of war, even though this terrible tragedy has occurred. It also gives out a message that although war will result in many losses, men must fight for their country regardless, and if they must die in battle, then their memory will be preserved forever. The cavalry knew the mistake that had happened, but did not evade their duty and instead galloped on for the country. This view of the event is heavily patriotic, and highlights the writer's respect and admiration for the men involved. Imagery is used extensively in this poem to depict a sense of intense foreboding and ominous atmosphere. The writer uses phrases such as 'jaws of death' and 'mouth of hell' particularly, indicating how the soldiers will be 'swallowed' by the tragedy and may never return.

The writer also uses emphatic words to underline the intensity of this event, for instance the use of the words 'volleyed and thundered' and 'plunged' and 'stormed' show the extent of the confusion amongst the men. Owen once again looks at war poetry but this time it is in the form of a sonnet, 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'. However, simply because it takes the form of a sonnet does not mean that it necessarily conforms to constrictions of viewpoint or subject matter. The two poems take very different approaches to the subject of death. Rupert Brooke personalizes it by means of words like 'I' and 'me', and by making the subject matter precise to one incidence. This dissimilarity to Wilfred Owens's poem, where he generalizes a total cohort, and talks of the defeat of millions of people.

Brooke uses imagery in his poem that is very vibrant and evocative, and gives a somewhat idealistic view of death, such as when he talks of England; he talks of 'her flowers to love, her ways to roam'. This representation is underlined later on, with the phrase: 'whom England bore', where England is portrayed as a mother figure. Also, in the second stanza, the line: 'A pulse in the eternal mind' Brooke presents the possibility of an after-life, a encouraging thought for a man considering death. Images of peace and tranquillity tone down the callous reality of death.

Owen purposely does not protect the reader from the realism, but instead uses expressions such as: 'Only the monstrous anger of guns' to hold the reader. Owen uses 'O' sounds frequently to make the connection with the word 'no', giving the poem a very negative, almost pessimistic feel. Instead of making his view negative, they long vowel sounds create a smoother, slower pace, emphasizing the contemplativeness of the poem. Even though the subject matter is the same, the two poets take very different slants on it. Owen condemns the act of war because of its huge, fatal consequences that take the lives of so many innocent men. In the opening line: 'What passing bells for those who die as cattle?' Owen suggests that war is like a slaughter, and this underlines the futility of war that Owen is trying to present.

However, in Brooke's poem, he glorifies war, making it seem an act of honour. In his opening line: 'If I should die, think only this of me:' The ending statements of the two poems differ greatly also. Owen ends on a patriotic note, with the closing words: 'English heaven' implying that God is with England, and that heaven is exclusive to only the English. Wilfred Owens's

poem ' Disabled' tells story about a young boy who loses both his legs and one of his arms in war. Which is almost contrary to ' the soldier'. The age of this boy isn't specified, but the reader is told that the young man is under aged, as the man who signed him up for the army willingly lied about his age.

However, the fate of this boy is more drastic than his disability. As a consequence he is socially outcast, and the reader can clearly see from the line: ' To-night he noticed how the women's eyes passed from him to strong men that were whole! ' This poem does not follow chronological order, but instead skips from the present to the past, giving it a reflective feeling. It also makes the reader feel like they are listening to the man telling his story personally, as the language used is very contemplative as well as informative and sentimental. Another thing that makes this poem more personal is the subject matter. Whereas many poems such as ' Anthem for doomed youth' talks of the loss of a generation, ' Disabled' talks of the main loss, therefore creating a larger impact on the readers.

The poem mostly talks in the past tense, but the only time the writer focuses completely on the events that happened beforehand is in stanza four, which is considerably longer than the other five. This is to give the effect that the man is getting lost in his memories, and how he will never be able to experience these experiences again. There actually is a brief reference to the boy's future near the end. When the poet talks of how he must become dependant on those around him who survived. The poem is written in Iambic Pentameter, which is a pattern very close to normal speech. This means

when this familiar pattern is broken, it has a greater affect on the reader, such as in the line: ' Now, he is old.

.. ' The poet follows a haphazard rhyming pattern, where rhyming words such as ' recruits' and ' fruits' can come within one to three lines of each other. Imagery is used to its greatest potential the whole way through the poem. This is most evident in stanza's three and four. In stanza three, Owen says ' he threw away his knees,' which highlights the carelessness of his actions, suggesting he didn't really think through thoroughly the potential consequences.

In stanza four he uses the metaphor of the boy pouring his blood down a shell-hole, with it his life. This also has a connection with the carelessness implies before. This image of blood is used further on in stanza five, where it is used to create a sense of irony in the line: ' one time he liked a blood-smear down his leg. This illustrates the drastic turn of events in the young boys life, and how once what he enjoyed has lead him to a meaningless life. This contrast in lifestyles throughout the use of colour, in great detail when comparing stanza's one and four.

Stanza one describes the dull, dark lifestyle the boy leads now through the choice of emotive words, such as ' dark', ' grey' and ' shivered'. By describing his clothes as ' ghastly', the writer makes a reference to his almost ' ghostly, existence, as the two words are so similar phonetically. However, in stanza four, vibrant and exciting colours and images are used to create an upbeat lifestyle where everything seems happy and good, especially in the lines: ' jewelled hilts... plaid socks'.

The main issue Owen is addressing through this poem is the youth's naivety in regarding the war, and he attacks the authoritative figures who signed boys up that were under aged in stanza four, in the line: ' smiling, they wrote his lie; aged nineteen years'. It has been mentioned earlier that he looked even younger than his true age, and this amplifies the extent of their corruption for signing him up for the war. Irony is also expressed by saying that the authorities were ' smiling' acting positive about such a serious consequence. In conclusion, this poem has a huge effect on the audience because of its personalised style, and its heavily emotive language.

Imagery and irony create vivid images in the readers mind, helping them to sympathise with the boy and creating a demonised view of the leaders of the war effort. Wilfred Owen was a very prominent war poet, who made his name recognized through using deplorable imagery, which is able to portray the brutality of war. In fact, he opposed the works of propaganda poets such as Jesse Pope. As we are shown but the sub-title, with the words ' To Jesse Pope', before changing them to ' To a Certain Poetess'. In his poem ' Dulce et Decorum Est', he focuses largely on language and imagery to draw a appalled and stunned responses from his readers. He instantly engages the reader with the opening line: ' Bent double, like old beggars under sacks' Giving the reader an abrupt view of the scene, describing in a few short words the setting of the poem.

The image of ' beggars' implies many things about the soldier's appearances, such as their tattered clothes, and the detail that they seem to be carrying all their belongings on their backs. It is inferred that they are firstly at the mercy of the actions, and most of all pity of others, for instance

their General and the enemy. It seems they have aged quickly as a result of their experiences by the use of the word 'old', and now all dignity, pride and ambition have vanished, leaving survival as their only concern. This is a great contrast to their send-off, which would have been celebrated and revered as a joyous event. The rhythmic iambic pentameter gives the effect of monotone movements.

illustrating their exhaustion and inability to do anything other than to march. This is further demonstrated in the line: 'Men marched asleep'. Owen gives the reader a subtle warning to the events that are about to occur with the phrase: 'drunk with fatigue', implying that their senses are dulled, their reactions slowed. This will verify fatal outcomes to a man who cannot make himself move fast enough in order to prevent his own death.

There is a dramatic change in tempo with the words: Gas! Gas! Quick boys! ' This prosody, or change in meter, together with the use of monosyllabic words conveys a sense of urgency that grasps the attention of the reader effectively. The rhythm changes here a second time, where it often breaks out of a regular pattern to give the feel of the awkwardness and difficulty of movement amongst the men. Owens's use of the word ecstasy is in comparison to the drug causing 'frenzied wildness' to give an image of many men scrambling over each other and themselves to reach their gas masks. The writer goes on to talk of how he watches the man 'drowning' through suggestive verbs like 'guttering, choking, drowning'. He feels 'helpless', because he cannot assist the wounded.

Also tying in with a later subject. Bringing these into focus so that expectantly the reader will be able to correspond on a personal level. Owen also approaches the reader's sensitivity to the subject of war by deliberately bombarding them with images, sounds and tastes that would disgust them. In the line: '...

If you too could hear with every jolt the breath come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs' Owen tries to shock the reader with both images and sounds that would sicken the reader. Which he manages effectively? The poetry I have analysed had been variations of either patriotic, blunt propaganda, or showing the reality of war. There are subtle differences between all of the poets because poets such as Wilfred Owen, who spent most of his time in combat has written, using vivid imaged of death and injury. In contrast to a poet such as Rupert Brook, who didn't see much combat, so unlike Owen, he wrote of the glorifying, optimistic views of warfare. War poetry on a whole covers many more aspects other than death and injury. It may also include aspects of propaganda and encouragement.

From all the poetry I feel personally that the most emotive poem, which caused the greatest impact, was Dulce et Decorum est. This is because of its forthright views against the propaganda, leading many young naive men to their deaths.