

Wilfred owen - war

[War](#), [World War 1](#)



The nature of war is horrific and dehumanising. It is an extreme experience that deals with the obscenity of death and sacrifice for your country that pushes the individual to their emotional and physical limitations. Wilfred Owens poetry is a passionate expression of outrage at the horrors of war and of the pity for the young soldiers scarified in it, this is shown through a variety of poetic techniques. Owen explores the physical horror that war represents in "Dulce et Decorum Est", this poem condemns those who glorified the war and tempted men to join the army with heroic rhetoric and looks at the realistic physical outcome of war. In "Disabled" Wilfred conveys the physical and long lasting effects that war leaves on the individual. By exploring these poems it compels the reader and gives them a better understanding of the experiences and harsh nature of war. Owen experienced the horrific nature of World War One. His vivid descriptions of the soldier's conditions and the trauma of witnessing death compel the reader to look at the futile nature of war and the physical damage that is done to its participants. The Gas attack is the main event in this poem "GAS, GAS!" the repetition and use of the exclamation mark emphasises the dangerous nature of the gas, it quickens the pace for the reader this shows the frantic struggle they are faced with as they try to "fumble" to safety. The mass devastation of death and loss is shown as he reminisces in his dreams of his friend dying "Guttering, stumbling, Drowning" these polysyllabic terms make evident their helplessness. The vivid vile imagery "come gargling from the froth — corrupted lungs" describes the visual and audible sounds associated with the dying man help the reader visualize the confronting truth of the horrific nature of war. There is nothing glorious in their physical, emotional or mental

state. We see this in the first stanza where their ill health is shown through similes such as “ coughing like hags” and “ like old beggars” which is a direct contrast to the men who were sent away to war as the best and brightest. The conditions of the trench welfare were very poor, many of the soldiers got diseases for example trench foot the metaphor “ blood-shod” and the quote “ all went lame; all blind” reinforces this. The dangerous and horrendous experience physically leaves the soldiers “ Drunk with fatigue” and left with no glory as the nature of war destroys all hopes for these men. People back home on the home front hadn’t experienced or seen the unique devastation in World War One. Owen through his poetry educates the people back home that the nature of war is a heartbreaking experience, which challenges the jingoistic attitudes of the warmongers. Through the political rhetoric and the propaganda they created the idealistic notions of patriotism, duty, honour and glory but Owen criticises those in charge and the propaganda for making war appealing to young, enthusiastic boys “ children ardent”. They were only children looking for “ desperate glory” and because of their youthful naivety they were eager to be seen as honourable however the poem demands that there is no such glory in death and sacrifice “ like a devils sick of sin”. Owen suggests that the real “ sin” is in the warmongers for romanticising the nature of war. The Latin title of the poem “ Dulce Et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori” is highly ironic and contrast with the realistic experience of war. Like in “ Dulce”, “ Disabled” explores the betrayal from the Propaganda and the consequences of joining up. The metaphor “ he threw away his knees” portrays the youthful reckless of enlisting without the thought of the consequences, this epitomises the scorn Owen feels for those in charge.

Youthful naivety had misguided these “ children” to join, he enlisted to show off to the girls “ to please his meg” when now his appearance drives them away and the only attention he gains is the “ pity they may dole” due to the outcomes of war. Selling their jingoism attitudes to these young men through the misguided interest in enlisting is used to emphasise the extent the “ lie” was told, the metaphor “ he’d look god in kilts” implies the ideal “ glory” is the reason he joined the war. Owen is vitriolic in his condemnation of those who support war and puts the guilt and blame onto those in charge. The nature of war had a flawed idealism to the participants that joined up and Owen blames the Propaganda for not educating the soldiers about the reality of war. When war finished people were able to go on living without a change, this was not the case for so many of the soldiers. Due to the harsh nature, the tragedy and experience of war continues long after the battle has ended. Owen explores the extraordinary experiences and the consequence of a man “ Disabled” by war. At the start of the poem we see the persona is incapacitated confined to a “ wheeled chair”, he is unnamed as he represents all victims whose lives have been ruined by war. The Colour imagery “ dark” and “ grey” establish the disorientating mood, and is symbolic of the depressiveness of his life. His physically broken “ legless, sewn short at elbow” he is seen as “ like some queer disease” this highlights aspects of his physical reality. Once a strong, healthy man, he is now helpless due to his injuries and must live with them for the rest of his life. “ Waiting for dark” this ironically provides a sense of comfort for this man, and highlights the horrible nature he now must face. The repetition of “ Why don’t they come” captures his physical entrapment and reinforces the

helplessness he is now faced with. The negative connotations of "No, Not and Never" reinforces that there is nothing left for him besides spending years in "institutes" being helpless whilst the warmongers on the home front may go back to their happily lived lives. Due to the nature of war soldiers suffered horrific injuries from the experiences at war and must deal with them for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately the after effect of the nature of war is not only physically but it was also emotionally and socially devastating for the soldiers that were able to return home to normal society. Through sexual imagery we see the obvious difference of the once energetic youth that thought that his experience would help him "please his meg" and what is has become now "disabled". He didn't think of the consequences when he joined because of social expectations but because of this consequences "he will never feel again how slim girls waist are or how warm their subtle hands" this tactile imagery shows the irony of joining war, instead of pleasing girls he is now "stared at like some queer disease". His dismissal of "the women's eye" foregrounds his social alienation, bed provides the only escape. The elegiac tone of things he "use to" do and the reality of his existence "now" juxtapose the past and the present. The anonymity of "they" in the questioning "why don't they come" serves to further separate him from society. The attitudes to war whilst he was away fighting for the country changed "he was drafted out with drums and cheers" this is a direct contrast to when he arrived home "some cheered him home", he didn't gain anything from going to war, he hardly even got recognised as a hero. Due to the extreme experiences of war and believing the propaganda has he smiled "they wrote his lie" just like in "Dulce" he has been emasculated as

everything has been taken away due to the dehumanising nature of war, this compels the reader to sympathise with the victims of war. From the personal extraordinary experiences, Wilfred Owen shows the flawed idealism of often associated with war. He reveals the confronting truth and shows the effects of war on the participants and the after effects physically, socially and emotionally. The nature of war deals with death, destruction and the mass devastation on the individuals and their families. Owen blames the political romanticism and propaganda for the loss of the children's life, this compels the reader to get a realistic view of the nature of war and the effects it has on its individuals.