

Dulce et decorum est and charge of the light brigade analysis

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In this essay we must analyse and assess these two poets contrasting representations of the theme of war and the source from which they came. First we must research and discuss the historical background of the two poets. "The charge of the light brigade" by Alfred Lord Tennyson is a poem describing the account of British soldiers and their humiliating defeat at the hands of the Russians and all that it entailed. "Dulce et Decorum est" by Wilfred Owen describes the horror of existing inside a world war one trench. It gives a first hand account of how he watched his compatriots die alongside him in the struggle to defend against the German army. "Half a league, Half a league onward" This quote dictates a rhythmic marching tempo for the poem. This also is a good example of alliteration as it is a series of words with repeated sounds. "All in the valley of death rode the six hundred" This gives us a first harsh and unexpected sign of their impending doom. We see from this quote that they will end in death and destruction. We see this, as the valley is a characteristic of death itself.

"Forward the light brigade! Charge for the guns" This extract increases the tempo and tension of the poem and is deliberately added by Tennyson to make the battle sound exciting and heroic. As it was his aim to captivate the imagination of his audience, the male youth of Britain in an attempt to join the already sparse troops of the fear filled British army. "Not though the soldier knew, Some one had blundered: Their's not to make reply, Their's not to reason why, Their's but to do and die." This gives us an impression of a nameless, faceless commander barking orders at his troops.

This quote shows us that the typical British soldier had no rights whatsoever and was made to follow blindly, even if they knew their fate as pawns of the British Empire. " Cannon to the right of them, Cannon to the left of them, Cannon in front of them. " This reinforces the impending doom of the soldiers and sheds light onto the advantage of the enemy. " Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with shot and shell, Boldly they rode and well," This sounds the barrage of the enemy fire, which the troops are made to endure in the name of their country.

Into the jaws of death, into the mouth of Hell rode the six hundred. " Death is personified as being a beast; e. g. it's jaw. This is an oxymoron as death can not have a palpable jaw or a human quality as Hell is a myth and can not be seen in this form. This is yet again used to manipulate the youth of Britain into being excited and seeing these events as an adventure that is desirable to be a part of.

" Flashed, all their sabres bare, flashed as they turned in air. " This heightens tension and gives us another example of the fast paced action of the battle. Reeled from the sabre stroke, shattered and sundered, then they rode back but not the six hundred. " This shows the British troops were struggling, the enemy had overwhelmed them.

We have a good example of Onomatopoeia in this quote. " Shattered and sundered," Gives us a mental image of shattering glass. " Cannon to the right of them, Cannon to the left of them, Cannon behind them. " This shows they are surrounded and engulfed by the enemy. " Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with shot and shell, while horse and hero fell, They that had

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fought so well, Came through the mouth of hell. The implication of the word “Hero” gives a false, patriotic and heroic impression of these men.

Tennyson also uses hyperbole to describe just how brave these men were. “They came through the mouth of hell. “” When can their glory fade? O the wild charge they made! ” This quote suggest that the soldiers are immortalised, this rhetorical question is used deliberately by Tennyson as a tool of propaganda to make the young British males think that this great praise is a thing that by which they can attain through becoming a soldier. Honour the charge they made! Honour the Light Brigade, Noble six hundred! ” Tennyson acts as a commander to the young audience ordering them to honour the young men that took part in the event just as they honoured their commander’s own wishes to charge into battle. This is an attempt to grip his audience and make them feel certain patriotism and inspire them into following the light brigade’s example.

We can conclude from this that the battle was a futile attempt by the British Empire to regain some of their diminishing control on the world. Wilfred was a young poet who was manipulated by recruitment drives and patriotic poets such as Alfred Lord Tennyson into joining the British army. Owen attacks the sentimental, bogus patriotism of stay at home war enthusiasts. He, a witness describes the full horror that occurred during world war one inside the trenches.

“ Bent double like old beggars under sacks, Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,” We can already see the toll that war is taking on these men. They are bent double because of the heavy arsenal

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they were required to carry. Knock-kneed is an example of alliteration. They are coughing like hags because of the grime and cold they have to endure day by day. " Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots, But limped on, blood-shot.

" This shows that the men were ravaged by the lifestyle they had to endure to this point. Many of their feet were caked in dried blood because they had lost their boots. This along with the following quote is also a prime example of a rhyming pattern which alters the tempo and tone of the poem to give it a fastness and togetherness that is a testament to Owen's poetic writing skill." All went lame; all blind; Drunk with fatigue, deaf even to the hoots of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind. " This quote explains that the men were so delirious and exhausted with things that they lost control of their senses like drunken men and were running on empty, barely conscious of what they were doing or where they were going.

" Gas, Gas! Quick boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling," This quote sparks the troop's arousal from their sleep like state, into panic and uncertainty. The word ecstasy provides imagery of a surreal atmosphere where time is hard to measure because of the adrenaline that is flowing through the men in their attempt to secure their masks and prolong their fate for another day. " And floundering 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 word floundering represents how the soldier is out of his depth, in over his head like a fish out of water. The green represents septic infection, the infection and corruption of society and how the soldiers

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are drowning in this sea of corruption, one by one, it is only a matter of time before they all meet their end, suffocated by the hypocrisy of war. " And watch the white eyes writhing in his face, His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;" This shows that Owen witnessed one of his comrades die at the hands of the gas, this sight would have mentally destroyed him. The devil could not possibly become sick of sin, because the devil is sin personified. This is a paradox.

But the question is posed to us, would the devil himself become sick of sin himself, if he encountered war himself? " My friend you would not tell with such high zest, To children ardent for some desperate glory, The old Lie, Dulce et Decorum est pro patria mori. " This is a direct criticism of those who set out to glorify war, e. g. Alfred Lord Tennyson.

The Latin language is used to emphasise the old Lie, that war is a dignified endeavour. It is also ironic as it is being used to mock aristocratic hypocrites such as Tennyson. If we look at these two poems, " The Charge of The Light Brigade" and " Dulce et Decorum est. we see that they are completely juxtaposed, Alfred Lord Tennyson had a motive, to create a manipulative recruitment drive to entice the young British male into joining a futile war effort.

He uses hyperbole to try and capture the nation's imagination in a deluded attempt to make them believe that the Empire could be restored to its former glory. Wilfred Owen however sets out to create a warning to anybody who is enchanted by notions of war and patriotic glory. He uses real life experiences to justify this, and sets about deposing the views of ' stay at

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home' warmongers. Attitudes to war have changed throughout the ages, from the Elizabethan time, when ordinary civilians were not listened to and if a soldier were to make his view known he would be court marshalled and shot before a firing squad, to the more liberal times of the 21st century. Tennyson's rhetorical question can now be answered, their glory faded long ago as his prehistoric view of war has now been destroyed by the views of Wilfred Owen and other young revolutionaries who have witnessed war in all its full splendour and it's so called ' Patriotism and glory.

' It truly is ' Dulce et decorum est. ' ' The old lie. '