

A dead boche essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Say how far you agree with the views that Drummer Hodge is presented in a romantic, idealised way, and that Graves' German soldier is presented with stark-realism. Hardy wrote 'Drummer Hodge' as a poem depicting the way in which a young drummer boy from Dorset dies and is then buried without ceremony, on the South African plain, during the War. Unfortunately for the young child, and tragically, he died for reasons he wasn't aware of and for matters he probably didn't understand.

Similarly, Graves' poem, 'A Dead Boche' also concentrates on the theme of the War, however his poetry reflects and is written from his own personal experience of the war. Hardy writes about the 'Young Hodge' with a great amount of emphasis and expression. By doing this, Hardy makes his readers even more sympathetic with the young drummers tragic fate, 'They throw in...'. Similarly Graves too emphasises' his words with a sense of anger as well as passion. Graves' unlike Hardy looks at a broader view of war and its devastating effects on people, 'Dribbling black blood from nose and beard'.

Both writers use alliteration within their writing and the usage adds extra effect when the poem is read. In Drummer Hodge, the first line contains an example of alliteration, 'They throw...' and this highlights the anonymity of the gesture of burial, we ask ourselves the question who are 'they' that Hardy refers to here. Similarly Graves also uses alliteration in his poetry again to emphasise the effect of his words used. For example 'Big-bellied'. When reading this in the context of the poem, we can almost picture the image that Graves is trying to convey through his words, an image of a soldier with a big belly.

The opening lines of a poem are critical and set the 'scene' of the poem. Hardy's opening line of the 'Drummer Hodge' makes it sound impersonal and anonymous. The use of the word 'throw' sounds as if the boy's body was treated very harshly and that the soldier's didn't have any value for his life. A coffin should be lowered, whereas it is rubbish that needs to be thrown. The ending of this first line is contrasting to the beginning and comes unexpectedly, 'to rest' is a juxtaposition of the word 'throw' and doesn't quite fit into the word syntax.

On the other hand, 'A Dead Boche' begins with a personal, more directed opening, 'To you....' He opens his poem with a way, which immediately addresses the reader, like a greeting card. The first line ends with the word 'War' in capital letters. The usage of the capital letter emphasises the bigger picture of War. By just reading the first few lines of the poem, as a reader we are able to establish the emphasis and expression Hardy has written about an article he read in a local newspaper and is not directly addressed to war.

The callous words 'just as found' sound as if they have been extracted from a report which is ironic since the poem itself is based on an article read by Hardy. However, on the other hand, for this reason it doesn't have the same detail and imagery that Graves' describes about the death of the soldier in his poem. Graves has written his from a personal experience, which adds an element of truth about what exactly he saw 'propped against a shattered trunk'.

The word 'propped' seems as if it has been set up like a stage, and the word shattered could be referring to the state of the dead soldier's body. In his

poem, Hardy constantly refers to the 'foreign' place where the drummer boy is buried, and also mentions South African words, 'veldt', 'kopje', 'the Broad Karoo' and drawing our attention to the 'foreign constellations' that will nightly rise over his body, Hardy makes us aware of the significance of home and language in proving identity.

Hardy follows a regular rhythm throughout his poem, three sixed-lined stanzas reflecting the marching sound to the boy's drum. This also has the effect of making use realise that the poem is referring to the war. He also includes the use of dashes in certain parts of the poem, e. g. 'uncoffined-just as found'. This creates a pause and makes you think about the 'feeling' of being uncoffined. Comparing this to Graves' poem, which consists of 2 stanzas, but is more visual, more immediate and makes you engaged as a reader. The use of exclamation marks within the line 'War's Hell! , sounds like a slogan, as if he is advertising the war. Both poems are of a regular length, and contain enjambement, which offsets the meaning of the line, and carries on to the following line. The titles of the poems convey a lot about the poem's content. 'A Drummer Hodge' indicates that the poem may be concerned with a drummer and Hodge is the nickname name given to the typical country bumpkin during the time the poem was written. 'A Dead Boche' seems to be at first glance about a dead German (Boche was slang for a German used by the French).

To an extent, I would agree that Drummer Hodge is presented in a romantic, idealised way. In my opinion the death of the drummer boy is very tragic and sad. Hardy writes with passion and his choice and order of words emphasise how life can be short, 'the Drummer never knew....' 'The young boy should

have been able to live longer and experience life, but now his body lies in an unmarked grave where it feeds and nourishes the African soil. However when compared to A Dead Boche, I would question what is ‘romantic and idealised’ about a body being ‘thrown’ into a grave.

I would certainly agree that the German soldier is presented with stark realism. This is because that because of the fact that Graves’ has written his poetry from a personal experience, which adds a sense of reality and authenticity to what he writes about the soldier having a ‘sodden green’ face, whereas Drummer Hodge refers to no physical details of the dead drummer boy. Graves also adds a personal touch to his poem by using words like ‘spectacled’ and saying ‘Today I found’ making it immediate, a real event, not one day, but today.