

*Owen's poetry reveals great compassion for the people whose lives were destroyed by the war, but great bitterness at those he held responsible.*

*Discuss with reference to at least TWO of the poems you have studied.*

Wilfred Owen's poems use the suffering of the soldiers at war, as well as the tribulation of the people left at home, to demonstrate the intense consequences of war, as a result of the callousness of the Government. 'Dulce et Decorum est' focuses on the reality of war as the horrific consequence of the arrogant pride of those who were willing to sacrifice youth for economic or geographical power. 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' exposes the suffering of youth and waste of life in war, as well as the irreconcilable mourning and grief with the responsibility of sending men to war. 'Futility' reveals the pointlessness of war, while representing the suffering of soldiers at war and the consequences for those who are left to survive. Therefore, Wilfred Owen intensely highlights the compassion for the suffering of soldiers at war and the bitterness for those who he held responsible, including the Government and humanity overall.

Owen's poem 'Dulce et Decorum est' reveals the horrific nature of war and gruesome suffering of the soldiers. The ironic title represents the 'Old Lie' that it is noble and right to die for your country, as falsely depicted in the Government propaganda at the time. However, the poem opposes this image by introducing a sense of age, weariness and suffering at war. This poem provokes the idea that the Government are to be held responsible for the misguidance of young men to war, and therefore their deaths. The intensity of the first hand account causes the reader to gain compassion and empathy for the experiences of the soldiers. The poem uses extended imagery to reveal the extent and elements of the soldiers' suffering, they "*limped on, blood shod*" and were "*drunk with fatigue*". Owen uses onomatopoeia to represent the "*guttering [and] choking*" of the soldiers, revealing their horrid experiences of bombings and gas attacks at war. "*Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!*" reveals the urgency of these situations and causes the reader to feel panic, as if they are experiencing the immediacy of a gas attack. These horrifying incidents contributed to shell shock and other psychological effects for the soldiers that consequently followed war. "*His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin*" presents powerful imagery to expose the extremes of human cruelty and depravity at war. This poem reveals that war is a pitiful reminder of man's inhumanity to man, and truth and integrity is lost in war, allowing the reader to recognise the awfulness of war, and the consequences on those whose lives were destroyed by it. Through the revelation of the intense experiences of soldiers at war, 'Dulce et Decorum est' causes the reader to recognise their suffering and feel compassion for them, while also feeling bitterness for the Government.

'Anthem for Doomed Youth' uses a sardonic and bitter tone to identify the consequences of war and force the reader to feel compassion for those who suffered and died at war, in particular the young soldiers whose lives were wasted. The opening line of the poem is a rhetorical question, identifying the lack of ritual afforded death on the battlefield. There are no "*passing bells*", alluding to the ritual of a church ringing slow bells, to mark the passing of a loved one, removing the purpose of life and recognition of death of the soldiers. The symbolism is made incongruous by the simile for those who "*die as cattle*". Owen uses this to express the dehumanising of young men, encouraging the reader feel compassion for the young soldiers who suffered and died in war. 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' emphasises the sounds of battle and use these to mock the funerary rites that are, in Owen's perspective, a mockery, serving only to perpetuate the propaganda of loss as a celebration of nation. The poem challenges the peaceful imagery of war that was presented through propaganda by avoiding the clichés of war, and rather, presenting the harsher chaotic realities of war and its resulting unimaginable loss of life. Owen uses aural imagery to emphasise that the choirs of war are "*the shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells*", allowing the reader to understand the brutal nature of war with constant, loud bombings and screams. The reference to "*sad shires*" emphasises the spread of grief across England with such extensive numbers of young men losing their lives at war, and compassion must be felt for the experiences and suffering of the women and children left at home while men go to war. "*Each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds*" reveals the absence of hope for the soldiers to return alive. Owen's poem 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' significantly represents the petrifying experiences of soldiers at war, and the consequences, not only on the soldiers, but also their families and friends left at home, resulting from the waste of life of the youthful soldiers who fought at war.

Owen's poem 'Futility' embodies the pointlessness of war and waste of life at war. In this poem, the soldiers are located in France, and their experiences of life and death are symbolically presented throughout. The sun and earth are personified in relationship to the life and death of the soldiers at war. The sun is referred to as kind and it's "*touch awoke him*", symbolically and metaphorically presenting it as life, whereas the earth is referred to as asleep, representing the soldier's asleep, or, even more horrifically, dead in the trenches within the earth. The imagery used in this poem, including the symbolism of seeds for growth and the personification of the "kind old sun", contribute to the experiences of the soldiers. The anaphora of sleep is used to refer to death, presenting a calm, slow tone and mood throughout the poem. The poem is evocative and personal, conveying grief and loss experienced first hand. The poem presents confronting rhetoric on the inhumanity, wasted sacrifice and hypocrisy of war. Owen argues that war is an unnatural and pointless end to the life of young men. 'Futility' causes the reader to feel compassion as it depicts war as wasteful, and challenges the notion

that peace can be brought through war. The sadness of this poem is the loss of faith in humanity that it represents. 'Futility' causes the reader to feel compassion for the soldiers' suffering and feel guilt for not working to avoid such pointless loss of life.

In conclusion, Wilfred Owen uses his poems, 'Dulce et Decorum est', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' and 'Futility' to represent the brutal and horrid nature of war and suffering of both the soldiers at war and the people left at home, leading to a sense of compassion for those whose lives were destroyed by the war. He reveals that war is a useless waste of life and bitterly challenges the idea that dying for your country is noble and right, as represented through Government war propaganda.

