

Looking at 'Dulce et Decorum Est'

First of all summarise what you think the poem is about (no more than 20 words).

How are the soldiers described?

Which verbs are used to describe their movements?

What is the rhyme scheme? Why?

How does the rhythm of the poem change?

How does Owen convey the youth of the soldiers?

How does Owen show his contempt for people such as Pope? He uses words ironically: which do you think are the words he uses in this way?

Why does he have the words 'dulce et ...' in Latin?

Consider the ways in which this poem is aimed at Jessie Pope. In what ways does the poem contradict those written by Pope?

DULCE ET DECORUM EST

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.
Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring 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.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.
If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
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.

Wilfred Owen