

An essay on Wilfred Owen's war poetry: advice about comparing his first poems with those written later in the war

Stop worrying about writing pages and pages of appreciation, picking out every detail about the development of Owen's poetry! The following are a few points that you could look at, and are only suggestions, but remember for each point: point, quotation analysis, MOVE ON.

'1914' is a sonnet. How has Owen used it? Where else has he used this form and for what purpose? Does he subvert the form in his later use?

Look for references to death in '1914'? Can't find any? Is that because Owen has used euphemisms instead of referring to it directly? Find an example of death in one of Owen's later poems - how explicit is it?

How has Owen used nature and the seasons in '1914'? In what other poems does he refer to these two and for what effect?

For what purpose has Owen used weather in '1914'? Is it a metaphor? Look at another poem where he refers to weather.

In the extract from 'The Ballad of War and Peace' how does Owen refer to soldiers? What contrasting references to soldiers can you find in one of his later poems?

What is the message of '1914' and the extract from 'The Ballad of War and Peace'? Is Owen's message the same in his later poetry?

Which, if any, of your senses does Owen appeal to in these two early poems and how does he do this? How does this affect your 'enjoyment' of the poem? Do you feel engaged, shocked, unmoved by the poetry?

What are the sounds of the words like in these early poems? How do the sounds affect the pace or rhythm of the poem? What effect do they have on you as you are reading? Think of a later poem where Owen uses sound/word length for an effect and compare it to these.

Who is Owen 'speaking' to in these early poems? Why do you think the poems are addressed to this audience? In the later poetry who is he speaking to and in what tone? Is there a change in his audience?

What, if any, rhyme scheme is there to these early poems? How does Owen use rhyme in his later poetry and, in particular, how does he employ para-rhyme?

Is there a sense of optimism in these early poems? How is this expressed? Is this still present in the later work? If not, what is it replaced with and how does Owen make you aware of this different mood?

In the early poetry who appears to be the enemy Owen refers to? Who is the enemy in the later poetry?

In '1914' what is being destroyed by the war? In the later poems does this remain the same and if not what is now being destroyed?