

Section II Q 5.6 - Poetry.

Good Morning, Teachersⁱⁿ and fellow students.

In our previous study of Wilfred Owen and his war poems, we have come to the understanding of the various issues and beliefs that Owen chiefly set out to illustrate and convey. These issues, while intertwined ~~in~~ ^{with} his experiences at war, clearly depict his beliefs and feelings on the use of war as an eventual road to peace.

Many of his grievances are illustrated using poetic techniques, such as simile's, personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration, imagery, and many more.

"Anthem for Doomed Youth", before even being read ~~it~~ conveys his attitude on war. ~~An~~ An anthem is usually a prolonged song of praise and ^{the poem} seems to promise an anthem. This is ironic, as Owen

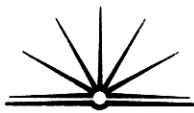


clearly illustrates that no another will ~~of~~ can be sung at war. That it is youth that is doomed completes the tragic implications in reference to the war.

He starts the poem with a devastating line, which outlines the mood of the poem, "What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?" A passing bell is that which tolls, slowly on a shrill note and is an old English custom used to represent a ~~the~~ ^{the} death of a member of the community. The simile "who die as cattle" creates a gruesome image of the slaughtering of cows, and in reality likens the soldier's death to that of animals.

He then answers this rhetorical question with noisy onomatopoeic ~~and~~ alliteration, ^{and personification} as he depicts the conditions of war. "Only the monstrous anger of the

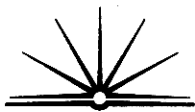
The poem is a sonnet, which Owen uses as a technique to split the poem into octave and sestet. The octave represents the brutality of war, while the sestet is more tender and poignant as it reveals the mourning and sadness of loved ones.



guns, only the stuttering rifles rapid rattle
can patter out their hasty orisons..." The
guns are given human qualities (eyes) while Owen
uses alliteration to create a sense of ~~the~~ immediacy.

This is then continued with a series of negatives
as Owen displays his negativeness of war itself.
"No mochantes now for, no prayers nor bells, No
any voice of mourning save the choirs. Here
we are surprised by the ~~word~~ word "choirs"
as Owen as already dismissed the ideas of
"Orisons" and "passing bells." We associated choirs
with churches and a pleasantness, but this is
deflated by Owen in his next line, "The shrill
demented choirs of wailing shells..." The ~~use~~ use
of onomatopoeia creates sounds in our heads that
Owen wishes us to hear so as to dismiss the
propaganda ^{given} to young men at home.

The sestet ~~starts~~ begins with another rhetorical



question, "What candles may be held to speed them all?" But it is to wish them God-speed on their spiritual journey. The rest of the sextet is more like an anthem as Owen speaks of the bereavement and grief of the loved ~~one~~ ~~that~~ ~~who~~ who have lost someone, "... shall share the holy glimmers of goodbyes, the pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall..."

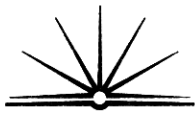
Owen then aptly closes the poem with vivid imagery, "And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds". This not only refers to the closing of blinds in the evening, but also is an English custom where a house in mourning draws their blinds.

While displaying the brutality of war in the octave of "Anthem for Doomed Youth", Owen has counteracted this with poignancy in illustrating

The grief and sadness that is brought by war.

Owen's experiences of war are evidently portrayed in "Dulce Et Decorum Est" where he explains ~~the~~ ~~about~~ the vile side of soldier's dying from gas poisoning. The title is in Latin, as you all know, and is taken from Horace's odes which means that it is a sweet and decorous deed to die for one's country. Owen clearly dismisses this notion in the poem as he recounts the dreadful gassing of soldiers.

The opening lines of the poem create imagery for the responder as Owen likens the soldiers to "hags" and "beggars" in two similes that illustrate that the soldiers have been prematurely aged as they are compared to old ladies. This is followed by a more vivid description of the soldiers; "Men marched asleep... All went lame, all



blind, drunk with fatigue, deaf even to the
hoots of fired outstripped five-nines that
dropped behind." This imagery shows that
even though the 5-9 calibre shells ~~fell~~
fell so near, the soldiers seem to not react
to them as they are so ~~and~~ exhausted.

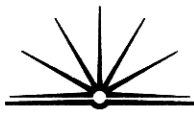
Owen then brings immediacy to the poem
with, "Gass! Gass! Quick boys, ~~and~~ an ecstasy of
fumbling." Here Owen, brings the soldiers
back to life as they are referred to
as "boys." Owen then begins to illustrate one
of the ^{major} ~~most~~ horrors of war as he describes
the soldier's gassing, "Dim through the milky
panes and thick green light, As under a
green sea I saw him drowning. In all my
dreams, before my helpless side he phases at
me, guttering, choking, drowning." These verbs
enveloped in the sickly colour of the
poison gas create a disturbing and



nightmare vision for the responders. This is then followed by more - "smothering", "withering", "hanging", "gargling". Our flesh creeps as we read it, the hairs on the back of our necks freeze upwards.

Owen then succeeds in sickening the responders as his imagery becomes more vile, "If you could have felt every jolt, the foetus come gargling from the blood corrupted lungs, obscene as cancer, bitter as the curl of vile incurable sores on innocent faces". As revolting as this sounds, Owen achieved his plan of deflating the romantic heroism of war and the propaganda flowing to those naive, young men at home.

"... The old Lie: Dulce Et Decorum est, pro patria mori." The capitalisation of the word "Lie" emphasises its falsity as Owen



firmly dismisses the notion that it is
sweet and glorious to die for one's country.

Owen's poems, through the use of poetic techniques, clearly illustrate his attitude and ~~dep~~ portray the issues that ^{he} critically despises. They act to recount his experiences of war and attitudes of those individuals at home.

Thank you for listening.