

# Year 9- The Poetry of WW1.

## 1 Poem Summary

**Anthem for Doomed Youth by Wilfred Owen**  
 This sonnet contrasts the violent deaths of soldiers in battle with the traditional rituals of mourning, such as church services and funeral processions. The poem's octave focuses on the brutality of war, while the sestet shifts to the quiet sorrow of loved ones left behind.  
Compare to:  
 - Futility (shared reflection on the tragedy of soldiers' deaths)  
 - Suicide in the Trenches (bitterness about young lives destroyed by war)

**The Dead by Rupert Brooke**  
 This poem glorifies the sacrifice of soldiers who died in war, portraying their deaths as noble acts that bring meaning to their lives. Brooke suggests that their loss enriches the living and elevates human dignity.  
Compare to:  
 - The Soldier (similar patriotic sentiment)  
 - The Falling Leaves (contrasts the cost of sacrifice with Brooke's idealism)

**The Glory of Women by Siegfried Sassoon**  
 A criticism of the way women idealise soldiers and romanticise war from a safe distance. Sassoon contrasts their admiration for the wounded with their ignorance of the true horrors of battle. The poem ends with an image of a German mother mourning her dead son, highlighting the shared suffering of soldiers and their families, regardless of nationality.  
Compare to:  
 - Who's For the Game? (Jessie Pope's optimism is a sharp foil to Sassoon's bitterness)  
 - Disabled (both highlight the disconnect between civilian and soldier experiences)

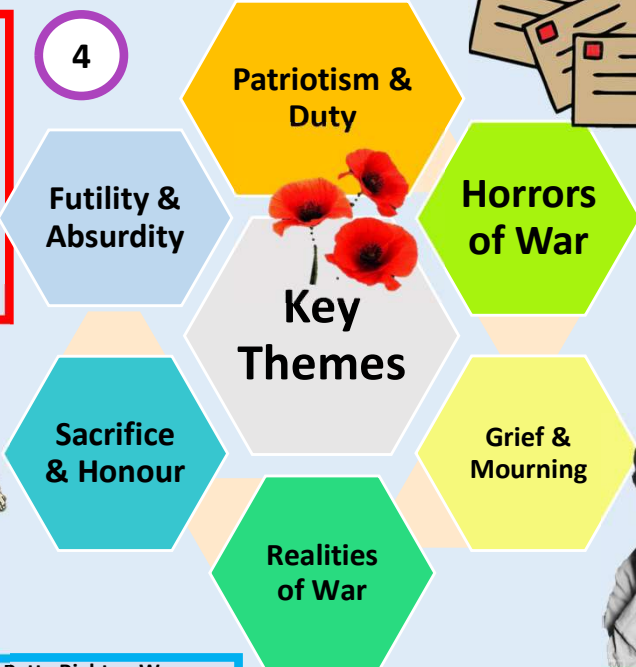
**The Soldier by Rupert Brooke**  
 This sonnet expresses a patriotic and romanticised view of death in war. Brooke imagines his grave as a piece of England, suggesting that the sacrifice of life ensures the immortality of English values. The poem's tone is serene and idealistic, focusing on the spiritual rewards of sacrifice. Written early in the war, it reflects widespread optimism before the realities of trench warfare were fully realised.  
Compare to:  
 - May, 1915 (both mourn the war's loss, though Mew's tone is more sombre)  
 - Break of Day in the Trenches (opposite focus on war's grim reality)

**Disabled by Wilfred Owen**  
 Owen explores the loneliness and regret of a disabled soldier, whose pre-war vitality contrasts sharply with his current abandonment. The poem critiques society's neglect of injured soldiers.  
Compare to:  
 - Suicide in the Trenches (personal suffering due to war)  
 - Anthem for Doomed Youth (mourning war's impact).

**What is War? by Weiburg Lahn**  
 Lahn questions humanity's embrace of war, presenting it as destructive and senseless. The poem's rhetorical tone invites readers to reflect on why society allows such violence.  
Compare to:  
 - Futility (questions war's purpose and death).  
 - Break of Day in the Trenches (shared philosophical tone).

**Perhaps by Vera Brittain**  
 Brittain expresses hope for personal healing after losing her fiancé in war, balancing grief with resilience. Her understated tone conveys deep pain and a desire for eventual recovery.  
Compare to:  
 - "May, 1915" (shared personal loss and mourning).  
 - "The Soldier" (contrasts personal grief with patriotic ideals).

**Suicide in the Trenches by Siegfried Sassoon**  
 Sassoon criticises the romanticised view of war, recounting the tragic story of a young soldier who commits suicide due to despair. His tone is bitter, condemning society's indifference.  
Compare to:  
 - "Disabled" (focus on personal suffering).  
 - "The Glory of Women" (shared critique of societal attitudes).



**Hospital Sanctuary by Vera Brittain**  
 Brittain reflects on the suffering of wounded soldiers, offering a personal, empathetic perspective drawn from her experiences as a wartime nurse. The poem highlights the physical and emotional toll of war.  
Compare to:  
 - Perhaps" (female grief and loss).  
 - "Disabled" (focus on injured soldiers' suffering).

**Break of Day in the Trenches by Isaac Rosenberg**  
 A soldier observes a rat in the trenches and reflects on its survival compared to human lives. The poem mixes dark humour and a stark critique of war's senselessness.  
Compare to:  
 - Futility (shared philosophical reflections).  
 - Anthem for Doomed Youth (shared commentary on death and loss).



**Futility (Wilfred Owen)**  
 Owen questions the point of war and life itself as he reflects on a soldier's death. The poem juxtaposes the nurturing warmth of the sun with the lifelessness of the fallen.  
Compare to:  
 - Anthem for Doomed Youth (shared sense of mourning).  
 - Break of Day in the Trenches (reflective tone and bleak themes).

**My Boy Jack (Rudyard Kipling)**  
 Kipling laments the loss of his son, killed in war, expressing personal grief while justifying his sacrifice. The poem reflects parental love and the pain of losing loved ones to duty.  
Compare to:  
 - Perhaps (shared personal grief from a female perspective).  
 - Disabled (focus on personal loss through war).

**This is No Case of Petty Right or Wrong by Edward Thomas.**  
 Thomas explores complex feelings about war, rejecting simple patriotism. He values love of country while questioning blind nationalism. His reflective tone and nuanced ideas highlight internal conflict.  
Compare to:  
 - What is War? (shared questioning of war's purpose).  
 - Here Dead We Lie (similar themes of sacrifice and national identity).

**Who's For the Game? By Jessie Pope**  
 Pope uses a cheerful, recruitment-poster tone to encourage young men to join the war, comparing it to a sports game. The poem simplifies war, aiming to inspire rather than reflect on its reality.  
Compare to:  
 - The Soldier (shared patriotic enthusiasm).  
 - Suicide in the Trenches (Sassoon's critique contrasts Pope's optimism).

**Here Dead We Lie by A.E. Housman**  
 Housman's poem honours soldiers who died in war, acknowledging the inevitability of their sacrifice while avoiding sentimentalism. The straightforward language reflects a resigned tone, portraying death as necessary for the survival of others. Housman captures the stark reality of wartime loss, focusing on duty and endurance rather than personal grief.  
Compare to:  
 - The Soldier (both explore sacrifice, though Housman is less idealistic)  
 - The Falling Leaves (both reflect on death with a sense of acceptance)

### The Falling Leaves (Margaret Postgate Cole)

The poem compares soldiers' deaths in war to autumn leaves falling, using quiet imagery to reflect on the naturalness and tragedy of death. The tone is reflective and resigned.

#### Compare to:

- "Futility" (shared imagery and questioning of life and death).
- "Here Dead We Lie" (themes of sacrifice and inevitability).

### May, 1915 (Charlotte Mew)

Mew mourns the loss of loved ones in war, expressing quiet despair and reverence. Her reflective tone conveys deep personal sorrow while honouring the dead.

#### Compare to:

- "Perhaps" (shared personal grief).
- "Anthem for Doomed Youth" (focus on mourning the dead).

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## The Purpose and Function of Imagery

### What is Imagery?

**Imagery** is a literary device that employs descriptive and figurative language to appeal to the senses and evoke mental pictures. It plays a crucial role in enhancing the reader's experience by creating vivid and relatable depictions. Here's a breakdown of its **purpose** and **function**, tailored to the tradition of British war poetry from the First World War.

#### **Purpose of Imagery**

- 1. Evoke Emotions:** Imagery can elicit strong emotional responses by drawing the reader into the world of the narrative.
- 2. Engage the Senses:** It engages the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell), making the scene more immersive and relatable.
- 3. Enhance Understanding:** By painting vivid pictures, imagery helps readers understand abstract ideas, complex emotions, or unfamiliar settings.
- 4. Set Mood and Tone:** Imagery can establish the mood (e.g., calm, tense, joyful) and tone (e.g., serious, playful) of the piece.
- 5. Symbolism and Themes:** Often, imagery is used symbolically to reinforce themes or deeper meanings.

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### Where can we see Imagery in the poetry of WW1 and what is its function?

**Visualisation:** Helps readers picture the stark contrasts between life, death, and the natural world. E.g. The Rear-Guard by Siegfried Sassoon: "*Groping along the tunnel, step by step, / He winked his prying torch with patching glare / From side to side.*" This vivid imagery evokes the claustrophobia and terror of moving through a dark and dangerous trench system.

**Sensory Appeal:** Activates the reader's sensory understanding of the trenches. E.g. Dulce et Decorum Est by Wilfred Owen: "*Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling, / Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time.*" The frantic sensory descriptions immerse the reader in the chaos of a gas attack.

**Emotional Connection:** Builds empathy with the soldiers' plight and humanises their suffering. E.g. Attack by Siegfried Sassoon: "*Lines of grey, muttering faces, masked with fear, / They leave their trenches, going over the top.*" The imagery of fear and resignation humanises the soldiers, drawing the reader into their shared dread.

**Foreshadowing and Symbolism:** Suggests deeper meanings or the inevitability of tragedy. E.g. The General by Siegfried Sassoon: "*Good morning; good morning! the General said / When we met him last week on our way to the line. / Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead.*" The cheerful imagery of the general contrasts with the grim reality of his soldiers' fate, symbolising the disconnect between leadership and the frontline experience.

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## Approaching Unseen Poetry

TITLE,  
OPENING AND  
CLOSING LINES

- What ideas/themes are suggested by the title?
- Mind map possible things a poem with this title could be about. Skim read the poem and see if any are plausible.
- Check the opening and closing lines- Are they linked or connected in any way?

SHAPE

- Look at the shape of the poem on the page. Does it have a recognisable form: sonnet, ballad, narrative?
- Does it have stanza? Are the regular or irregular?
- Are the lines of equal length/ syllables or do they vary?

VOICE

- Who seems to be speaking the poem? The poet or a character?
- What type and tone of voice do you imagine?
- Which parts of the poem are most powerful when you read it aloud?
- Do you notice any alliteration/assonance or other sounds as you read it aloud?

VOCABULARY &  
IMAGERY

- Are there any words or phrases that stand out? Do they have one or several meanings?
- Are any words/ phrases repeated? If so, why?
- Are similes and metaphors used? If so, what 2 things are compared and why?

PERSONAL  
RESPONSE

- Read the poem thoroughly and decide what you think the poet was trying to do.
- Is there a message?
- Is there an emotional response to an event or situation? Does the emotion shift and change throughout?
- Could the poem be interpreted in different ways?
- What do you feel as a reader?