THE DUSTON SCHOOL 4-19

Knowledge Organiser

Year 8: Unit 5

War Poetry

Name:

Class:

Big Questions

The big question for the unit is: How are voices reflected through war poetry?

Our study of war poetry will follow the structure below:

Week 1	▪ How has war acted as an inspiration for poetry through history?
Week 2	▪ How did poetry reflect public attitudes at the start of WW1?
Week 3	▪ How did soldiers use poetry to express a patriotic view on WW1?
Week 4	▪ How did soldiers use poetry to express a cynical view on WW1?
Week 5	▪ How is heroism portrayed in poetry of WW1?
Week 6	▪ How did the poetry of WW1 convey the physical and psychological effects of war?
Week 7	▪ How does poetry reflect the impact of war on those left behind?
Week 8	▪ How has war poetry changed since WW1?

Poems you will study during this unit

For each poem, here is a brief summary of what the poem is about:

Week 1	▪ *The Battle of Maldon* by Anon. – The poem is the story of the Battle of Maldon which pitted the Anglo-Saxon defenders of England and the invading Vikings against each other. The story is told from the point of view of the English and Lord Byrhtnoth is their leader; he is courageous and raises his troops to meet the Vikings at the shore. ▪ *The Man He Killed* by Thomas Hardy – The speaker considers how under different circumstances the man he is faced with killing could be a friend. He cannot fully justify his actions, and the poem discusses his struggle with trying to rationally explain his actions other than it just being what happens during conflict.
Week 2	▪ *Who's for the Game* by Jessie Pope – The poem was published in a U.K. newspaper during World War I. It asks its target audience—young men—whether they are brave enough to go and defend their country through armed conflict. The poem is not subtle: it is pro-war and by implication argues that people should love (and be willing to die for) their country. Anything less than that, the poem argues, is a form of cowardice. ▪ *Recruiting* by E.A. Mackintosh – The poet really seeks to praise the men with whom he serves and to urge others to find the same comradeship, trust and loyalty that he has discovered in the trenches.
Week 3	▪ *The Solider* by Rupert Brooke – The poem explores the bond between a patriotic British soldier and his homeland. Through this soldier's passionate discussion of his relationship to England, the poem implies that people are formed by their home environment and culture, and that their country is something worth defending with their life. ▪ *In Flanders Fields* by John McCrae – The poem is written in the voice of a group of soldiers who have recently died in a World War I battle. By speaking as a group and asking the reader to join in their struggle, these speakers suggest that war is a shared responsibility that affects everyone.
Week 4	▪ *Dulce et Decorum Est* by Wilfred Owen – The poem illustrates the brutal everyday struggle of a company of soldiers, focuses on the story of one soldier's agonizing death, and discusses the trauma that this event left behind.
Week 5	▪ *The Hero* by Siegfried Sassoon – The poem dramatizes society's attempt to maintain an ideal about war and honour inapplicable to modern warfare. In the poem, an officer delivers news to a soldier's mother about her son's death using romantic old-war rhetoric.

	▪ *Anthem for Doomed Youth* by Wilfred Owen – The poem was written by British poet Wilfred Owen in 1917, while Owen was in the hospital recovering from injuries and trauma resulting from his military service during World War I. The poem cries the loss of young life in war and describes the sensory horrors of combat.
Week 6	▪ *Suicide in the Trenches* by Siegfried Sassoon – The poem was published in 1918 in Sassoon's collection, ' Counter-Attack and Other Poems. ' It explores the soul-destroying psychological effects of the War through the tale of a 'simple soldier boy' who took his own life. ▪ *Disabled* by Wilfred Owen – The poem explores the tragedy of war through a description of the conflict that occurs in the trenches and through the emotional trauma a young soldier faces as he mourns his old life.
Week 7	▪ *A Wife in London* by Thomas Hardy – The poem is an anti-war poem that seeks to illuminate the absurdity and tragedy that go arm-in-arm with violent conflict. It is a message of war's hopelessness—how war cuts life short needlessly, affecting not just those immediately involved but those back home as well. ▪ *Manhunt* by Simon Armitage – The poem is about a soldier who has become seriously injured whilst fighting in a conflict-zone. It's written from the perspective of the soldier's wife, who is attempting to come to terms with what happened.
Week 8	▪ *If This is a Man* by Primo Levi – Levi compares two distinctly different forms of humanity: those who are free and those who are locked up in the concentration camp, undergoing all kinds of horrible things, and dying at someone else's control.

Prior knowledge

Before you begin learning about poetry: What do you know about poetry? Have you read any poems before you started this unit? Brainstorm your knowledge below.

Knowledge learned throughout the unit

As you are learning about poetry, add any new knowledge in a brainstorm below.

Key Terminology

	Term	Definition
1	Allusion *from Latin 'alludere', meaning to play/make fun of. 'Ludere' = to play*	A word or phrase designed to call something to mind, without mentioning that thing explicitly.
2	Celebratory *from Latin. Originates from religious Mass, 'celebratus'.*	Something which celebrates.
3	Cynicism *from Greek 'kynikos' meaning dog-like, supposedly referring to the sneering attitude.*	A belief that people are only interested in themselves and are not sincere.
4	Heroic poetry *from Greek, 'hero'.*	Narrative poetry (poetry that tells a story) that describe the deeds of great warriors. They were traditionally told orally rather than written down.
5	Idealistic *From Latin, 'idealis', meaning 'existing as an idea of archetype'.*	Believing that good things can be achieved, often when this does not seem likely to other people.
6	Irony *from Greek '*eironeia*' = assumed ignorance.*	A situation in which something that was intended to have a particular result has the opposite or a very different result.
7	Jingoism *from the expression 'by jingo' ,with Jingo being a term for Jesus.*	The extreme belief that your own country is always best, often shown in enthusiastic support for a war against another country.
8	Meter *from Greek 'metron', meaning to measure.*	The pattern of stresses of syllables in lines of poetry. A steady meter creates a steady rhythmic pattern.
9	Nationalistic *'National' comes from the Latin 'nationem'. Originating from 'natus' – to be born.*	Strongly supportive of your country and its political standpoint.
10	Patriotism *from the Greek 'patros', meaning father, as you are showing love for your 'fatherland'.*	Love and devotion to your country.
11	Propaganda *from Latin 'propagare' meaning to grow, spread and multiply. 'Propaganda' was first used to refer to a committee of catholic cardinals in charge of missionary work: 'propagating the faith'.*	Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.
12	Satire *from Latin 'sated' meaning to satisfy.*	A piece of writing which criticises people or ideas in a humorous way, especially in order to make a political point.
13	Sonnet *from the Italian for 'little song', which comes from the Latin, 'sonus' meaning 'sound'.*	A 14-line poem, written in iambic pentameter, with a specific rhyme scheme and containing a *volta* or turning point.

Additional Terminology

	Term	Definition
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Example analytical writing

How is war presented in *Manhunt* and *Dulce Et Decorum Est*?

In both *Manhunt* and *Dulce et Decorum Est* the mental and physical trauma of war is presented.
In *Manhunt*, told from a soldier's wife's perspective, Armitage lists the gruesome injuries that the soldier has sustained with a range of metaphors; Armitage describes the "blown his of his lower jaw", "the fractured rudder of a shoulder blade" and "the parachute silk of his punctured lung". The repeated powerful verbs like "blown", "fractured" and "punctured" all have connotations of physical injury and serve to reinforce just how physically damaged the soldier is by the war. Furthermore, all of the verbs have a military sound to them with references to gunfire and explosions which emphasises the fact that the injuries were not sustained in a car crash or accident but in a battlefield that became the soldier's home whilst he was away from his wife. The pronoun "his" before the body part that was affected demonstrates that the speaker is the soldier's wife who is struggling to come to terms with the physical and mental trauma that her husband has experienced which is something that sets it apart from *Dulce et Decorum Est*. Whereas Owen focusses on the physical injuries, which Armitage partly does, Armitage also explores the mental suffering of the wife and soldier who has a "sweating, unexploded mine buried deep in his mind." The militaristic language "unexploded" has clear links to IEDs but, metaphorically, it suggests that the real suffering comes from the soldier's PTSD. Due to the horrific things that Eddie has seen and experienced, he is trying to suppress the thoughts and feelings but he has been left as somebody who could "explode" at any time and the pressure that this places on his relationship can be seen to be the most significant impact of the war.

In a similar way to Armitage, Owen also depicts a harrowing portrayal of war with gruesome injuries being sustained by many soldiers but does not focus on the mental impact as much. Owen describes once youthful "boys" who were thrown into the most brutal conflict imaginable which has left them "bent double, like old beggars under sacks". The fact that they are "bent double" implies that the men are so physically exhausted that they are struggling to keep themselves upright. Furthermore, the simile "like beggars under sacks" suggests that the exertion placed on the soldiers has left them resembling a group of malnourished homeless people and not a group of young and energetic soldiers that they were when the war started; now they are trudging through the mud in uniforms that have become too big for them. The struggle that the soldiers went through day after day, like Eddie in *Manhunt*, is horrific but the depiction of a soldier 'guttering, choking, drowning' conveys the extent of the injuries that the soldiers sustained. The rule of three emphasises the sheer scale of suffering experienced by the soldiers. The verbs "guttering, choking and drowning" all have connotations of a futile struggle for survival as the man chokes on the mustard gas. Furthermore, "drowning" can be seen to be an extremely unpleasant way to die which, like Eddie in *Manhunt*, causes an extreme amount of distress and pain before the inevitable demise of the soldier which is something that Eddie was lucky to escape.

Although Owen was writing about WW1, the scale of suffering and physical injuries can be compared to Armitage's poem *Manhunt*. However, whereas Owen focusses on the physical injuries, Armitage also refers to the mental trauma that war can inflict.

Example analytical writing: the reading mark scheme

KS3 READING MARK SCHEME [Y7, 8, 9]

Success Criteria	Nothing to reward (0 marks)		(1 mark)		(2 marks)		(3 marks)	
1 – Task and Big Ideas	*Not evidenced*		Some relevance to big ideas and task. Simple approach to task and discussion.		Clear, relevant and supported approach to task and big ideas.		Thoughtful, developed approach to task and big ideas. Engages fully with the task.	
2 – Quotations and references	*Not evidenced*		Some quotations and/or references used but will be limited.		Relevant, clear quotations that are embedded into sentences.		Fully embedded, judicious quotations and consistent references with more than one explored per paragraph.	
3 – Subject Terminology and writers' methods	*Not evidenced*		Identification of some methods used by the writer with some possible use of subject terminology.		Subject terminology is used to explore a range of writers' methods.		Sophisticated and ambitious use of subject terminology to explore writers' methods. Consideration of language, structure and form.	
4 – Zoom on key words + discuss effect	*Not evidenced*		Some exploration and discussion exploring single words.		Clear exploration and discussion considering the connotations of single words.		Perceptive and insightful exploration linked clearly to the big ideas.	
5 – Analysis of writer's purpose/ intentions	*Not evidenced*		Some understanding although often explains rather than analyses. Simple comment on writer's intentions.		Clear understanding and analysis shown. Clear and relevant ideas and comments on writer's intentions.		Developed interpretation of the text. A considered and exploratory approach where layers of meaning and links between context and text are consistent.	
6 – Focus on the question	*Not evidenced*		Little focus on the argument throughout – tends to drift off topic at times.		Some clear focus on the argument throughout – although this is not sustained and can lose focus at times.		Consistent focus on the argument throughout – clearly addresses the question.	

Homework.

Knowledge is power, so the more you know, the more secure you will be in your learning.

Year 8: Unit 5 Homework: *War Poetry*		
Task 1: Week 2	Due date:	• Read 'Wider Reading 1' on page 10. • Complete the reflection activities on page 14. • Answer the 10 knowledge retrieval questions on page 15. These questions will be peer assessed in class and your teacher will check that you have completed your homework.
Task 2: Week 4	Due date:	• Read 'Wider Reading 2' on page 16. • Complete the reflection activities on page 19. • Answer the 10 knowledge retrieval questions on page 20. These questions will be peer assessed in class and your teacher will check that you have completed your homework.
Task 3: Week 6	Due date:	• Read 'Wider Reading 3' on page 21. • Complete the reflection activities on page 23. • Answer the 10 knowledge retrieval questions on page 24. These questions will be peer assessed in class and your teacher will check that you have completed your homework.

If you have 'no homework', or you have finished all of the above, try these tasks on a weekly basis to ensure your understanding of the poems is secure.

1. Research the poets and make some revision notes on the poems that you have read so far. These notes could include information about the poet, themes associated with the poems and any context linked to the poems.
2. Research other poems that the poets you have studied have written. Can you identify any similarities or differences?

Wider reading 1: Reframing First World War poetry

https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/reframing-first-world-war-poetry

Dr Santanu Das considers how the examination of war poetry has changed and looks beyond typical British trench lyric to explore the varietry of poetic responses.

Dr Santanu Das gives an introduction into the poetry of the First World War, providing fascinating commentary on a range of topics, supported by literary manuscripts and historical footage. How do we define the genre of First World War poetry and what makes it unique? Why is war poetry so powerful and so effective at describing traumatic experiences? What are the limits of language – can the experiences of war ever properly be communicated? Why do we still read the poetry of the First World War and how has this enduring legacy affected our overall understanding of World War One?

In some papers found in his kit after his death in the Battle of Loos on 13 October 1915, the twenty-year-old Charles Hamilton Sorley had scribbled in pencil what would become one of the most celebrated sonnets of the First World War:

When you see millions of the mouthless dead
Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
Say not soft things as other men have said,
That you'll remember. For you need not so.
Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
Say only this, 'They are dead.' Then add thereto,
'Yet many a better one has died before.'
Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you
Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,
It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
Great death has made all his for evermore.

[…]

Often regarded as the 'transitional' figure between the early and later soldier-poets, Sorley, like his poem, was unusual for the time. Yet, the poem provides one of the earliest examples of what we now regard as the classic features of First World War poetry: the lyric testimony of the broken body – mouth, eyes, the 'gashed' head – set against the abstract rhetoric of honour; the address to the reader ('you') that we associate with the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, as opposed to the egotistical 'I' of Rupert Brooke; the 'pale battalions' haunting the shell-shocked dreams of veterans, John Singer Sargent's dream-like *Gassed* (1919) and Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and becoming the iconic image of the war. Robert Graves found Sorley's poetry so powerful that he introduced it to Sassoon, who in turn introduced it to Wilfred Owen. And spook-like, First World War poetry knows no habitation or rest. Mixing cultural memory with linguistic desire, First World War poetry has ranged far beyond the covers of the book. It appears on postcards, posters and in politicians' speeches, in memorials and epitaphs, and has inspired every art form, from Sean O'Casey's play *The Silver Tassie* (1928) and Benjamin Britten's musical tribute *War Requiem* (1962) to the BBC TV series *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989) and Pat Barker's novel *Regeneration* (1991).

Over the last hundred years, the image of the First World War soldier as damaged but resilient has remained etched on British cultural consciousness, partly formed and periodically reinforced by the reading of a handful of soldier-poets, particularly Owen and Sassoon. Other important soldier-poets include Edmund Blunden, Ivor Gurney, Robert Graves, Edward Thomas, David Jones, Francis Ledgwidge, and Isaac Rosenberg, and of course the golden-haired young man whose 'begloried' war sonnets they all opposed and yet one who haunts their work: Rupert Brooke. More than any other genre – fiction, memoir or film – it is the poetry of the trenches, as represented by a small group of 'anti-war' soldier-poets, that has come to dominate First World War memory. We seldom read such poetry; it is usually a matter of re-reading, remembering, returning – with familiarity, surprise, sometimes resistance. We associate it with a part of our former selves. Today, the poetry of the soldier-poets has coalesced, beyond literary history and cultural memory, into a recognisable structure of feeling. Herein lies an undeniable part of its power and some of the larger critical problems.

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Form and history

One of the achievements of war poetry has been to democratise poetry itself. Its centrality in the school curriculum means that, for many, it represents their first encounter with poetry – and not just in Great Britain. When I was a student in Kolkata, the former capital of British India, the figures of the two 'Tommies' standing guard by the city's Cenotaph-like First World War memorial always blended in my mind with Owen and Sassoon whom we read at Presidency College, which claimed to have the oldest English department in the world. In India, as in many other countries, First World War poetry spoke with a British accent. And of all the literary genres, it was one that remained most tightly cling-filmed around an event, and conjured up the iconic images – trenches, barbed wire, gas, rats, mud. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss has argued that the substance of myth 'does not lie in its style, its original music, or its syntax, but in the story which it tells'.

In the classroom, First World War poetry often ceases to be poetry and begins to look like history by proxy. Neither the transparent envelope of experience nor just language whispering to itself about itself, First World War poetry represents one of those primal moments when poetic form bears most fully the weight of historical trauma. Art and testimony are often yoked together by real-life violence, leading to formal realignment, invention or dissonance. Categories such as 'pro-war' and 'anti-war' often prove inadequate, when tested against the complexity of individual poems. Similarly, combatant, non-combatant and women's poetry operated within a larger poetic field and shared common ground. For many scholars, the very term 'war poetry' is problematic: indeed, a 'war poem' contains much besides the war. As Simon Featherstone has noted, the label may confine the poem, artificially, within the parenthesis of the war years. War is crucial to the poetry and its intensities of meaning, but it is not the only – or isolated – focus of attention or analysis. First World War poetry looks before and after the war, joining past and future, and combatant and civilian zones; it speaks in varying cadences not just of combat, but also of life at large – of beauty, longing, religion, nature, animals, intimacy, historical change, poetic responsibility, Europe and Englishness, race, democracy and empire, or what it is for women to have 'years and years in which we shall still be young'[5] – all touched directly or indirectly by the war.

Jessie Pope's War Poems

A constant tension in writings on First World War poetry is whether the accent should fall on war or on poetry, on cultural history or on literary form. If the surrounding material world was important to the soldier-poets, so was a sense of poetic tradition. Investigation into the literary culture of the trenches – from Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1972) to Jon Stallworthy's *Survivors' Songs: From Maldon to the Somme* (2008) – shows the intense engagement of this group of soldier-poets with a vast range of literature, from *The Iliad* through Shakespeare, Milton and the Romantics to Hardy and

Housman. The finest trench poetry revels in the meeting of tradition and innovation: in Gurney's exquisite handling of meter, punctuation and sibilance in the terrifying image of 'Darkness, shot at: I smiled, as politely replied – ' ('The Silent One'); in Sassoon's powerful rhymes which compact visceral horror and religious blasphemy while conjuring up the commonest trench expletive – 'And someone flung his burden in the muck/Mumbling: 'O Christ Almighty, now I'm stuck' ('Redeemer'); or in Owen's intricate negotiation with Keats's 'To a Nightingale' as he relocates sensuousness in the frozen landscape of the Western Front: 'Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us ...' ('Exposure'). Similarly, a number of women-poets both inherit and interrogate different traditions of lyric verse with remarkable power as they try to represent the war and its effects on civilian spaces and minds. Consider the following poem 'Afterwards' by Margaret Postgate Cole – at once a poignant elegy, a powerful critique of the war and a negotiation with the pastoral tradition – as it moves beyond the battlefields or the actual years of the war to a post-war sense of futility and desolation:

And peace came. And lying in Sheer
I look round at the corpses of the larches
Whom they slew to make pit-props
For mining the coal for the great armies.
...
And if these years have made you into a pit-prop,
To carry the twisting galleries of the world's reconstruction
(Where you may thank God, I suppose,
That they set you the sole stay of a nasty corner)
What use is it to you?

The canon: its formation and expansion

The 'war poet' and 'war poetry', observed Robert Graves in 1942, were 'terms first used in World War I and perhaps peculiar to it'. From Anglo-Saxon times to the Boer War, war poetry in English was written largely by civilians and did not have a clearly defined identity; with the extraordinary outpouring between 1914 and 1918, it established itself as a genre and the soldier-poet became a species. On Easter Sunday 1915, when Dean Inge read out 'The Soldier' by Brooke from the pulpit at St Paul's Cathedral, he was at once creating and anointing a secular saint: the 'poet soldier'.

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[…]

In spite of this, however, colonial war poetry remains barely visible even in the recently expanded canon. Colonial war poetry, coming out of different political, social and cultural contexts, is a remarkably copious and varied body of work: it ranges from volumes by individual soldier-poets to anthologies such as *Soldier Songs from Anzac* (1915), *Indian Ink* (1915–16) and *Canada in Khaki* (1917) to poems by established figures such as Rabindranath Tagore in India, Robert Service in Canada and Clarence Dennis in Australia. For a variety of reasons, such poetry – with the exception of John McCrae's ubiquitous 'In Flanders Fields' – has proved resistant to assimilation within the war canon. Indeed, the project of recovering colonial or non-white First World War verse is not so much a matter of trying to find an Indian Owen or an Arab Sassoon, but trying to understand how the war affected the colonial poetic cultures more widely.

In his poem, 'The War Graves', Michael Longley writes, 'There will be no end to cleaning up after the war'. The war's debris – both physical and metaphorical – will be inspected afresh in the next four years. War poetry is often too neatly aligned with a political and moral agenda. While it is crucial to recognise the political force of First World War poetry, individual poems can be more complex and

disturbing. Indeed, why does that strange word ‘ecstasy’ (‘Gas! Gas! An ecstasy of fumbling/Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time’) appear in the most grimly realistic of war poems – Owen’s ‘Dulce Et Decorum Est’? Indeed, ‘strange’ remains one of the most recurring words in First World War poetry, perhaps testifying to the strange fact that the traumatic debris of war would inspire, energise and even excite poetic language. Powerful war poems, such as Owen’s ‘Dulce’ or Hardy’s ‘I looked Up from My Writing’ often ask the most difficult ethical questions. As we approach the centennial commemoration of the war with ceremony, and young men and women continue to get killed in action, these poems bring us no immediate hope or assurance or comfort, but in their combination of pity, anger, moral complexity and linguistic pleasure, remind us as readers what it is to be idealistic, thoughtful, mortal, guilty – and make us question what it is to be human.

As part of homework task 1, you will be completing a knowledge retrieval quiz based on your understanding of the wider reading. Before you complete the quiz, consider the following questions to help your knowledge of the text.

1. How does wider reading 1 fit with the 'War Poetry' unit so far? Do you notice any overlaps or similarities to the content you have been learning in class?

2. Summarise how war poetry has changed over time.

3. Why do you think poets don't just want to describe war itself in their poems?

Additional note space:

Homework Task 1

	Write your answer in the box below each question.	✓ ✗
1	Who wrote one of the most celebrated sonnets of the First World War?	
2	Name two places World War poetry appears.	
3	Over the last hundred years, what has the image of a First World War soldier been shown as?	
4	Across the world, what accent is First World War poetry usually presented as or spoken in?	
5	Why is the term 'war poetry' problematic?	
6	What else does First World War poetry contain aside from war itself?	
7	What does Margaret Postgate Cole's poem *Afterwards* describe?	
8	From Anglo-Saxon times to the Boer War, who typically wrote war poems?	
9	What is the problem with colonial war poetry?	
10	According to the writer, what is war poetry typically influenced by?	
	TOTAL	

Wider reading 2: Shell-shock

https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/shell-shock

Recent estimates suggest that up to 325,000 British soldiers may have suffered from 'shell-shock' as a result of the First World War. Dr Tracey Loughran reflects on the encounters between Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and W H R Rivers at Craiglockhart War Hospital, and how other doctors attempted to treat 'shell-shock'.

You're quiet and peaceful, summering safe at home;
You'd never think there was a bloody war on! ...
O yes, you would ... why, you can hear the guns.
Hark! Thud, thud, thud, – quite soft ... they never cease –
Those whispering guns – O Christ, I want to go out
And screech at them to stop – I'm going crazy;
I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns.
– Siegfried Sassoon, 'Repression of War Experience' (1918)

In July 1917, Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967) issued a statement of protest against the continuation of the war. He hoped that this act of 'wilful defiance of military authority' by a decorated soldier and well-known poet would spark a public debate about the legitimacy of the war and in this way hasten its end. His hopes were not to be realised. His friend, the officer and poet Robert Graves (1895–1985) intervened to convince the military authorities that Sassoon was suffering from 'shell-shock'. This explanation suited the military authorities: once he had been diagnosed with a mental illness, Sassoon's declaration could be dismissed as the ramblings of an unsound mind. Instead of facing court-martial, Sassoon was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, a specialist institution for the treatment of officers.

Siegfried Sassoon's statement of protest against the war, and related letters

'I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it.'

Sassoon's time at Craiglockhart proved a pivotal moment in his own life, and the lives of others. The editor of Craiglockhart's patient-produced magazine *The Hydra* quickly recruited Sassoon as a contributor. This editor, Wilfred Owen (1893–1918), was also an aspiring poet, and Sassoon helped him hone his poetical skills. The result was one of the most powerful poems of the First World War, Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'.

The poet and the psychiatrist

Sassoon's encounter with the psychiatrist W H R Rivers (1864–1922) also profoundly affected both men. Rivers immediately recognised both that Sassoon's anti-war stance was entirely rational and that his traumatic experiences had left him teetering on the brink of psychological breakdown. Rivers was deeply troubled by his own complicity in the War Office's attempt to neutralise Sassoon's protest. Treating Sassoon forced him to confront the ambiguous role of the military doctor in wartime. As long as Rivers wore the military uniform, he could not interact with Sassoon as a free agent, but had to try to convince him to return to the war – a position that was difficult to square with the doctor's first duty of care to the patient, and difficult to maintain in relation to a man he liked and respected.

Rivers did eventually persuade Sassoon to give up his protest and return to the war. But he also undoubtedly gave Sassoon greater insight into his own mental processes. Sassoon's poem 'Repression of War Experience' recounts the internal monologue of a soldier 'summering safe at home' and trying not to 'lose control of ugly thoughts' that could drive him mad. The poem is named after an influential article by Rivers, published in the medical journal *The Lancet* in February 1918. In this article Rivers argued, against the dominant medical opinion of the day, that many soldiers broke down *because* they tried so hard to repress their memories of the war. The key to recovery was remembering and understanding why these memories haunted them. Sassoon's poem is a vivid first-person account of the desperate attempt to forget; but his borrowing of Rivers's title and brutal admission that he is 'going stark, staring mad because of the guns' also demonstrates his new understanding of the effects of the war on his mind. Sassoon never lost this understanding, and always referred to Rivers as his 'saviour'.

The story of this encounter between Sassoon and Rivers is very famous. Sassoon wrote about it in his own memoirs and fictionalised autobiographies, and it formed the basis of Pat Barker's historical novel *Regeneration* (1991) and the subsequent film of the same name (dir. Gillies Mackinnon, 1997). Schools still teach the powerful poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, and their work inevitably shapes how we think about the effects of the First World War on soldiers' minds and bodies. However, the experiences of Owen and Sassoon were in no way typical.

How did doctors treat 'shell-shock' during the First World War?

Recent estimates suggest that up to 325,000 British soldiers may have suffered from 'shell-shock' as a result of the war. The term 'shell-shock', which is now often perceived as synonymous with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), incorporated diverse symptoms. These included headaches, nightmares, hallucinations, and distressing and intrusive memories – all symptoms we associate with war trauma today. But 'shell-shock' also included hysterical disorders, such as mutism and paralysis, amnesia, and even 'personality loss', as in the case of one man who seemed to develop an entirely new identity, including a different accent, after he had been hit by a shell. Victims of 'shell-shock' might have very little in common, except that they had been damaged in some way by the war.

Doctors struggled to understand what had caused 'shell-shock' and how best to treat it. They recognised very early on that the grief, fear and horror of war could cause men to break down. But they also wondered what effects high explosive artillery, never previously used in such quantities for prolonged periods, might have on the delicate human nervous system. Some medical men argued that the vibrations of shell explosions caused invisible, molecular damage to the brain. In more recent years, the memory loss, depression and anxiety of some troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan has been explained in a similar way, as a result of the mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI) caused by high velocity explosions. By the end of the First World War, many doctors believed that both psychological and physical injuries could be found in many cases of 'shell-shock'.

Because doctors were not sure what caused 'shell-shock', it was difficult to find an appropriate cure. Sassoon was extremely lucky to be sent to a doctor like Rivers, who practised psychotherapy. Few institutions offered this form of treatment. In fact, the majority of men were treated by conservative methods such as rest, diet, massage and drugs. These treatments were unlikely to have effected permanent cures, but at least they did no active harm. The same cannot be said for the electrical 'treatment' offered by neurologist Lewis Yealland inflicted electric shocks on his patients at Queen Square, London. Yealland believed that hysterical patients had an unconscious resistance to treatment, and that the pain caused by electrical shocks could break down this resistance The war also saw a vogue for dramatic 'cures' via hypnosis, as practised by Arthur Hurst at Seale Hayne in Devon. Yet while Hurst successfully removed visible hysterical symptoms, restoring movement to paralysed soldiers and

speech to those who had been mute, such treatments did not tackle the root causes of these men's disorders. We have no way of knowing how many of these men subsequently broke down again.

Nowadays, 'shell-shock' is part of the story of the First World War that students learn about in school, and that Remembrance Day memorialises every November. We are aware of the psychological costs of war. Between 1914 and 1918, many men painfully learnt those costs at first hand. In the aftermath of the war, they and their families struggled to cope, often with little support from governments that were keen to avoid paying out pensions for psychological damage. Indeed, the government was so keen to save money by cutting the pensions bill that in some cases, it created a very hostile environment for traumatised men who were unable to find or hold down employment, and could not pick up the threads of their pre-war lives. Some men had to repeatedly prove the extent of their disabilities, and make the case again and again that these disabilities were the result of their wartime experiences, in order to retain their pensions. Many lost this battle, and struggled to scrape by. Perhaps the best tribute to men who suffered 'shell-shock' in the First World War is to realise that we still do not know exactly what causes similar disorders, or how to cure them. While the suffering of soldiers like Owen and Sassoon speak to us powerfully through their writings, their lesson is not to complacently assume that people today know better. Rather, it is to confront honestly the horror and suffering that war still causes.

As part of homework task 2, you will be completing a knowledge retrieval quiz based on your understanding of the wider reading. Before you complete the quiz, consider the following questions to help your knowledge of the text.

1. How does wider reading 2 fit with the 'War Poetry' unit so far? Do you notice any overlaps or similarities to the content you have been learning in class?

2. In your own words, what is shell shock?

3. Why would having shell shock be particularly difficult during World War One?

Additional note space:

Homework Task 2

	Write your answer in the box below each question.	✓ ✗
1	Approximately, how many British soldiers suffered from shell shock as a result of the First World War?	
2	Why did Siegfried Sassoon protest against the war?	
3	Siegfried Sassoon helped Wilfred Owen with his poetry. Which poem, written by Wilfred Owen, became one of the most powerful poems of the First World War as a result?	
4	What was the name of Sassoon's psychiatrist?	
5	What did treating Sassoon force River to deal with?	
6	What is Sassoon's poem 'Repression of War Experience' about?	
7	Name two symptoms of shell shock, now known as PTSD.	
8	What did some doctors predict could happen if a shell exploded close to a soldier?	
9	Why was finding a cure for shell shock difficult for doctors?	
10	What did neurologist Lewis Yealland do to try and cure shell shock?	
	TOTAL	

Wider reading 3: ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’, a close reading

https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/a-close-reading-of-dulce-et-decorum-est

Santanu Das examines the crafting of one of Owen’s most poignant poems, ‘Dulce et Decorum Est’, and shows how Owen’s war poems evoke the extreme sense-experience of the battlefield.

[…]

One of the most important – and poignant – manuscript-drafts of the 'gas poem' is now housed in the British Library. In September 1911, the eighteen-year old devotee of John Keats had visited the old British Library reading room at the British Museum. There he spent two hours in 'subdued ecstasy' as he read 'two letters of J.K.'s and two books of manuscript poems' and identified with his mentor's hand: '[His] writing is rather large and slopes like mine – not at all old fashioned and sloping as Shelley's is. He also has my trick of not joining letters'.[2] Today, the manuscript of 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' teases us with its combination of meaning and materiality as we find his 'large and sloping' hand thinking and feeling its way through the shape and sound of words with many crossings-out and revisions into his 'charred' senses. At one point, Owen replaces the word 'clawing' with 'haunting'. The poem itself is a 'haunting', marked as much by his memories of the front as by his growing sense of duty as a war-poet: 'My subject is War and the Pity of War. The poetry is in the pity'. Yet, in a paradox characteristic of the First World War, the war-haunted document is also an ode to literary friendship forged at Craiglockhart. The manuscript bears traces of Sassoon's hand too, brushing against Owen's, pencilling in suggestions, meeting ours, as we leaf through the manuscript – each alone.

Owen and the theatre of pain

Wilfred Owen is considered the quintessential anti-war poet, and with abundant reason. After three weeks at the front, Owen wrote to his mother, ‘I have not seen any dead. I have done worse. In the dank air, I have perceived it, and in the darkness, felt’. Horrified by what he had seen and felt, he refashioned poetry as testimony, as missives from the trenches, to 'warn' future generations. But Owen the pacifist icon can come in the way of fully understanding Owen the poet. The power of his finest poems lies not just in its anti-war polemic or realism or even pity (each of which deeply informs his poetry) but in something far more subtle, more risqué, more disturbing.

[…]

'Dulce Et Decorum Est' is possibly the most famous 'war poem' which, since the First World War, has come to mean 'anti-war' poetry: the image of a young man coughing up his lungs remains the classic example of 'war realism' in its full-frontal shock value. Yet, to read the text as 'history', as a transcript of trench-horrors, is to ignore its singularity as poetry. Neither the transparent envelope of trench experience nor just language whispering to itself about itself, 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' is one of those primal moments in the history of not just English but world poetry when lyric form bears most fully the trauma of modern industrial warfare.

The poem was originally dedicated, with bitter irony, to 'Jessie Pope etc' which is then crossed out and revised as 'To a certain Poetess'. Nonetheless, the dedication, rather unfairly, has consigned the author of sentimental, patriotic and popular volumes such as *Jessie Pope's War Poems* (1915) to eternal shame in the annals of First World War history. Jessie Pope is possibly the addressee ('My friend') too in the final stanza, though Owen could have meant writers of heroic war verse more generally, particularly those producing wartime variations on Horace's hallowed theme.

In sharp contrast, in 'Dulce Et Decorum Est', he sets the war-ravaged body and mind against the abstract rhetoric of honour and sacrifice. In the process, he plays three separate experiences – a night march, a gas attack and traumatic neurosis – along an almost single vertical bodily axis as he traces the very pulse of pain as it moves from exposed feet in the first stanza to exposed nerves in the final one. Time is held in suspense as one nightmarish experience follows, and blurs into, another until the final part of the poem is literally about a nightmare: the repetitive rhythm of the march gives way to the traumatic compulsion to repeat.

At first glance, the poem may seem to bear out the theme of 'passive suffering' which led W B Yeats to object to war poetry ('passive suffering is not a theme for poetry') and attack Owen in particular ('all blood, dirt & sugar stick'). When Yeats witheringly notes that 'somebody has put his worst & most famous poem in a glass-case in the British Museum', the object of disdain may well have been the manuscript of 'Dulce'! But any simple notion of 'passivity' that he reductively levels at Owen is countered in the poem not by the 'tragic joy' that Yeats privileged but by an altogether new kind of aesthetic and empathy.

[…]

A hundred years on, 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' - somewhat like the Last Post - has moved, beyond literary history and cultural memory, into a structure of feeling in the English-speaking world. For some, it is their first encounter with poetry. We seldom *read* 'Dulce': it is usually a matter of re-reading, returning, remembering, with pain, pleasure, pity, even resistance. Poetry makes nothing happen, Auden famously noted, but its long-term political and affective power cannot be underestimated. The whole tradition of British anti-war poetry, built on poems such as 'Dulce Et Decorum Est', may have played a part, as Jon Stallworthy reminds us, in the extraordinary protest marches in London against the Iraq war in 2003. Combining realism, fantasy, *j'accuse*, protest and war-haunted testimony, it is also a poem *par excellence* as politics and aesthetics are yoked together through real-life violence.

As part of homework task 3, you will be completing a knowledge retrieval quiz based on your understanding of the wider reading. Before you complete the quiz, consider the following questions to help your knowledge of the text.

1. How does wider reading 3 fit with the 'War Poetry' unit so far? Do you notice any overlaps or similarities to the content you have been learning in class?

2. Why is Wilfred Owen considered an "anti-war poet"?

3. Why do you think *Dulce et Decorum Est* is still so famous today?

Additional note space:

Homework Task 3

	Write your answer in the box below each question.	✓ ✗
1	Where is one of the most important manuscript drafts of *Dulce et Decorum Est* kept?	
2	Why is the poem 'haunting'?	
3	Where did Wilfred Owen meet Siegfried Sassoon?	
4	What is Wilfred Owen considered as?	
5	How long did Owen last at war until he wrote a letter to his mother admitting how horrific the realities were?	
6	Why did Owen decide to write poetry whilst at war?	
7	Which poem is argued to be the most famous war poem?	
8	Who was the poem originally dedicated to?	
9	Name 1 of the 3 experiences described in the poem.	
10	How do people feel when they re-read *Dulce et Decorum Est*?	
	TOTAL	

Wider reading list

Fictional books about World War One

- 'Private Peaceful' by Michael Morpurgo – When Thomas Peaceful's older brother is forced to join the British army, Thomas decides to sign up as well, although he is only fourteen-years-old, to prove himself to his country, his family, his childhood love, Molly and himself.
- 'War Horse' by Michael Morpurgo – Joey the horse recalls his experiences growing up on an English farm, his struggle for survival as a cavalry horse during World War I and his reunion with his beloved master.
- 'Soldier Dog' by Sam Angus – With his older brother fighting in the Great War, 14-year-old Stanley runs away to join the army and is assigned to the War Dog School, and given a Great Dane named Bones to train.
- 'Velvet Undercover' by Teri J. Brown – A World War I era spy novel about a British girl who is sent undercover into the heart of enemy territory to rescue Britain's most valuable (and secret) spy.
- 'Poppy' by Mary Hooper – In 1914-15 England, fifteen-year-old Poppy works as a parlour maid until she is transformed by forbidden love and a war that sends her to the front line as a nurse.
- 'All Quiet on the Western Front' by Erich Maria Remarque – Paul Baumer enlisted with his classmates in the German army of World War I. Youthful, enthusiastic, they become soldiers. But despite what they have learned, they break into pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches.

Books including war and conflict

- 'You Don't Know What War Is: The diary of a young girl from Ukraine' by Yeva Skalietska – Everyone knows the word 'war'. But very few understand what it truly means. When you find you have to face it, you feel totally lost, walled in by fright and despair. Until you've been there, you don't know what war is.
- 'As Long as the Lemon Trees Grow' by Zoulfa Katouh – Salama Kassb was a pharmacy student when the cries for freedom broke out in Syria. She still had her parents and her big brother; she still had her home. She was even supposed to be meeting a boy to talk about marriage. Now Salama volunteers at a hospital in Homs, helping the wounded who flood through the doors.
- 'The Valley of Lost Secrets' by Lesley Parr – September 1939. When Jimmy is evacuated to a small village in Wales, it couldn't be more different from London. But then he finds a skull hidden in a tree, and suddenly the valley is more frightening than the war. Who can Jimmy trust?
- 'D-Day Dog' by Tom Palmer – Jack can't wait for the school trip to the D-Day landing beaches. It's his change to learn more about the war heroes he has always admired. But when his dad is called up to action and things at home spiral out of control, everything Jack believes about war is thrown into question.
- 'The Boy at the Top of the Mountain' by John Boyne – When Pierrot becomes an orphan, he must leave his home in Paris for a new life with his Aunt Beatrix, a servant in a wealthy household at the top of the German mountains. But this is no ordinary time, for it is 1935 and the Second World War is fast approaching; and this is no ordinary house, for this is the Berghof, the home of Adolf Hitler.
- 'Dead End Kids' by Bernard Ashley – Closely based on historical fact, Bernard Ashley has created another gripping account of wartime London, and the experiences of its children, providing a welcome alternative view of the Home Front. During the Blitz in 1941 those children who weren't evacuated called themselves Dead End Kids.

Instructions for the Star Reading Test

Step 1: Log on the Computer

- Username will be your school username: Example: 23CRobinson
- Enter your password (you created this in your IT/Computing lesson)

If you have not had a computing lesson

- Password: dustonp456 OR Duston1234 (these are default passwords if you have not had an IT/Computing lesson.
- Create a new password (this step is for students who have NOT had IT lessons)

Your password must include: 8 letters, 1 capital letter, 1 number and 1 special character. Don't forget to write down your new password!

Step 2: Search the Renaissance website

- In the search box on the desktop type: TDS
- Click on the link that says: TDS Accelerated Reader

Step 3: Log into the Renaissance website

- Enter the username and password that your teacher has provided to you

Step 4: The Star Reading Test

- Click on the blue icon that says Star Reading and begin the reading test.