

Name _____

Three poems on war | Analyzing Imagery, Tone, and Purpose

Read and analyze the following three poems about war. Annotate the poems as you read them, paying attention to images, the effect of the images (tone), and specific word choice (diction). In the margins, write what you think each poet is trying to express; that is, put the idea of the poem in a sentence or two. Do all of this on your own **before** you work with your group on the chart that follows. Each student turns in his/her own work.

Death of a Soldier

by Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

Life contracts and death is expected,
As in season of autumn.
The soldier falls.

He does not become a three-days personage*.
Imposing his separation,
Calling for pomp.

Death is absolute and without memorial,
As in a season of autumn,
When the wind stops,

When the wind stops and, over the heavens,
The clouds go, nevertheless,
In their direction.

*three-days personage: famous

Dulce Et Decorum Est

by Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

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 disappointed shells that dropped behind. (Continued on page 2; there is a stanza break)

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering 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.

*from the Roman poet Horace: "It is sweet and becoming to die for one's country."

The Man He Killed

by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have set us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin*!

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

I shot him dead because--
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although (Continued on page 3; there is no stanza break)

He thought he'd 'list*, perhaps,
 Off-hand like--just as I--
 Was out of work--had sold his traps*--
 No other reason why.

Yes; quaint and curious war is!
 You shoot a fellow down
 You'd treat, if met where any bar is,
 Or help to half a crown.

*nipperkin: a half-pint cup (of beer)
 *'list: enlist
 *traps: belongings

Images and Tone

| | |
|---------|--|
| | <p>List the most concrete (easily seen, felt, heard, etc.) images in the poem. Connect them with a feeling; that is, what feeling does each evoke? If you think there is more than one, list them. Use your G&G for a list of tone words to help you. List the actual image, and not just the line number.</p> |
| Stevens | |
| Owen | |

| | |
|-------|--|
| Hardy | |
|-------|--|

Poet's attitude

Each of these poems is, in its own way, an anti-war poem.

| | Poet's attitude toward war? | Lines that most strongly support your claim? Write the lines, not the number of the lines. |
|---------|-----------------------------|--|
| Stevens | | |
| Owen | | |
| Hardy | | |

Which poem is most vivid (imagery and tone) for you? Why?

Which poet achieves his anti-war purpose best? Why?