

Wilfred Owen



Module B

Close Study of a Text

Rubric

Module B: Close Study of Text Rubric

This module requires students to engage in detailed analysis of a text. It develops students' understanding of how the ideas, forms and language of a text interact within the text and may affect those responding to it. Students engage with the text to respond imaginatively, affectively and critically.

They explore and analyse particular characteristics of the text, considering how these shape meaning. They also consider the ways in which these characteristics establish the text's distinctive qualities. Composition focuses on meaning shaped in and through the text. These compositions may be realised in a variety of forms and media.

Unpacking the rubric:

What do the sentences mean?

a) Engage in detailed analysis of text

b) What are ideas?

c) What is form?

d) What language techniques can be found in poetry?

e) How can ideas, form and language techniques in poetry affect us?

f) What might be the characteristics of war poetry?

g) What is meant by a text's distinctive qualities? What does 'distinctive' mean?

h) How do composer's shape meaning? What does shape meaning mean?

Exam Questions and Notes from the Marking Centre

1. Wilfred Owen, *War Poems and Others* - 2014

Explore how Owen's use of dramatic imagery highlights the carnage and destruction of war.

In your response, **make detailed reference to the extract from 'Mental Cases'** (not on HSC list any more) and ONE other poem set for study.

Discussion points:

- What does imagery refer to?
- What is the major theme/idea being addressed?
- Could you pick any poem you wanted?
- What happens if you did not know what carnage meant?
- What words in the question link to the words in the rubric?

2. Wilfred Owen, *War Poems and Others* - 2013

Owen's poems present the reader with a powerful exploration of the impact of human cruelty on individuals.

How does Owen achieve this in his poetry? In your response, make detailed reference to your prescribed text.

Discussion Points:

- What words in the question link to the words/expectation in the rubric?
- What major idea do you have to discuss? How would you approach it?
- How many poems would you have to write about?

Notes from the Marking Centre in 2013

This is what the HSC examiners thought of how students answered the 2013 Owen question:

Candidates showed strength in these areas:

- exploring the impact of human cruelty on individuals
- using their knowledge of poetic details and the structure of poems
- selecting textual detail to support their response
- discussing two or three poems that allowed them to integrate ideas and textual references.

Candidates need to improve in these areas:

- addressing all elements of the question
- identifying the impact and/or source of human cruelty rather than equating cruelty with war
- understanding how poetic and structural choices create meaning in Owen's poems
- not just relying on a descriptive recount of soldiers' experiences
- sustaining their argument throughout the response.

3. Wilfred Owen, War Poems and Others - 2012

How does Owen's portrayal of the relationship between youth and war move us to a deeper understanding of suffering?

In your response, make detailed reference to at least TWO poems set for study.

Discussion points:

- a) What words connect to the rubric?
- b) What does the word 'portrayal' mean?
- c) What might be the relationship between youth and war?
- d) What can suffering refer to?
- e) How many poems should you discuss?

In most responses, candidates addressed 'suffering', often demonstrating a broader awareness of its implications. Aspects of suffering included the physical, psychological and emotional suffering of the soldiers, as well as the effects of war on those at home. In many responses, candidates genuinely engaged with the language, content and themes of Owen's poetry and were able to offer a personal response.

In better responses, candidates made textual references central to an elaborated discussion which successfully established the connection between 'youth and war'. In these responses, candidates demonstrated an awareness that the effect of the poetry is to lead the responder to a better understanding of suffering. Knowledge of Owen's context was evident in many of the responses and this was effectively used when selectively integrated into the discussion.

In weaker responses, candidates tended to include their knowledge of Owen's context as a recount. Techniques were often listed without connection to the question and ideas were expressed in a simplistic manner based on description.

Points to Remember:

- 1) Your understanding of the poems is crucial – themes/ideas, language techniques, structure and purpose
- 2) Your understanding of the historical context of World War 1 is important only in so much as it assists your understanding of the poems and Owen's purpose. Avoid writing about the historical context at the cost of the poems themselves.
- 3) You must know ALL the poems
- 4) You must show an understanding of the overarching message across the poems. The poems are ONE text so you have to consider the patterns that are evident across the poems. Considering connections across poems will help you compose a sophisticated analysis.

Research Owen's Life and World

<http://www.wilfredowen.org.uk/Biography>

Early Life

-

Influences

-

Experiences throughout the war

-

The Challenges of War

- Sophistication in machinery

Any other relevant research:

MAJOR THEMES/IDEAS IN OWEN'S POETRY

1. The futility and pointlessness of war
2. The brutality and horror of war
3. The dehumanisation and depersonalisation of youth
4. The corruption of those in authority – the duplicity of men
5. The indifference of governments who use youth as pawns for strategic purposes
6. The pity (feelings of sadness and sorrow) of war
7. The devastating impact of war – physical and psychological
8. The loss of dignity
9. The loss of innocence and the birth of disillusionment
10. The debilitating impact of war on the battlefield and the home front

Owen was both a soldier and a poet. How does his dual roles impact the way we read his poems?

Dulce et Decorum Est'

1. Read the poem at least three times.
2. Owen wrote this poem in response to a pro-war poem by Jessie Pope.

Who's for the Game?

by Jessie Pope

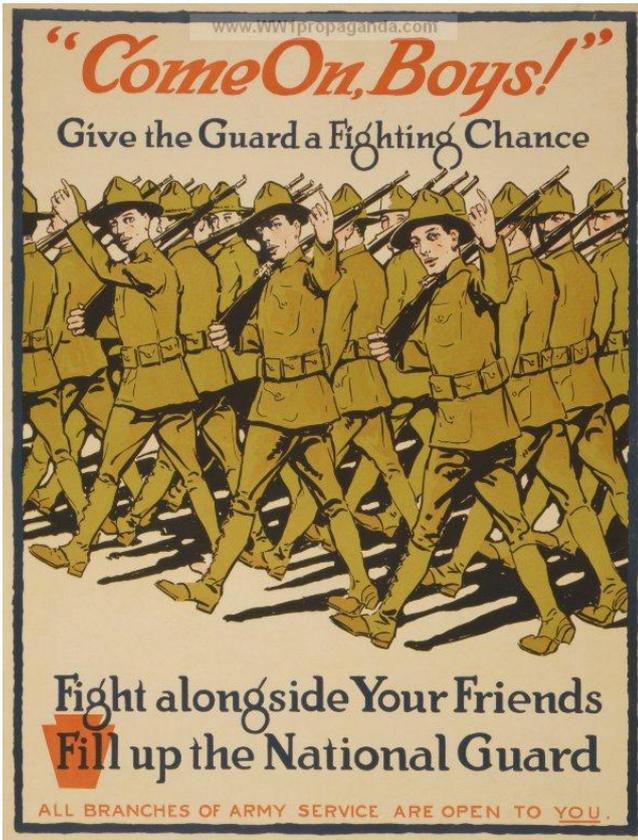
<http://allpoetry.com/poem/8605785-Whos-for-the-Game--by-Jessie-Pope>



Who's for the game, the biggest that's played,
The red crashing game of a fight?
Who'll grip and tackle the job unafraid?
And who thinks he'd rather sit tight?
Who'll toe the line for the signal to 'Go!'
Who'll give his country a hand?
Who wants a turn to himself in the show?
And who wants a seat in the stand?
Who knows it won't be a picnic - not much-
Yet eagerly shoulders a gun?
Who would much rather come back with a crutch
Than lie low and be out of the fun?
Come along, lads -
But you'll come on all right -
For there's only one course to pursue,
Your country is up to her neck in a fight,
And she's looking and calling for you.

How does Jessie Pope represent war? How is it different from Owen's perspective on war?

Consider the following poster- a form of propaganda- being distributed before Owen’s poetry and experiences came to light.



Question:

After reading ‘Dulce’, how does Owen’s representation of the soldiers differ from the poster opposite? Use textual evidence to support your answer.

Dulce follows narrative structure which is why it is quite engaging for the audience. Using the table below, identify how his poem follows the conventional narrative structure.

Narrative Convention	Section in poem
Orientation/Exposition	
Increasing tension through series of events	
Climactic moment	
Falling action and coda (moral)	

Language Techniques

First Stanza

Representation of soldiers and war experience	Identify the language technique and elaborate on its effect
Soldiers are represented as exhausted and in severe pain	
Soldiers are portrayed as prematurely aged and weak	
The landscape is depicted as hellish and arduous; it is filled with discordant sounds.	

Second and Third Stanza

Representation of soldiers and war experience	Identify the language technique and elaborate on its effect
The soldiers are unprepared for the horror and brutality of war	
Modern warfare accentuates the horrific and prolonged suffering of victims	
The horror of war is not only in the loss of life but the witnessing of loss of life; the psychological trauma of being an observer	

Last Stanza

Representation of soldiers and war experience	Identify the language technique and elaborate on its effect
The soldier experiences an undignified and disturbing death	
The soldiers are forced to engage in the dehumanisation of their comrade	
The soldiers have been deceived and betrayed by those they trusted. They are ill-prepared for the horrific reality of the experience of war; an assumption of glory, which was the ideal that drove them to war, is challenged.	

Owen's use of sensory imagery and purposeful structure enables him to gain the responder's empathy and many share the contempt for war that is evident in Owen's poems.

How have you reacted to this poem? What images are quite powerful? Do you agree with the message and the accusatory tone used towards authority?

Analysis of 'Dulce Et Decorum Est'

By Wilfred Owen

Wilfred Owen is a famous poet known for his ability to

_____.

_____ by _____ is a poem about Owen's anger and critique towards

_____.

Using evocative language and a narrative structure to his stanzas, Owen provides his audience with a visual of

_____.

Owen explores a number of themes in his poem: the physical and mental impact of war and the distrust of authority.

The physical impact of war is clearly explored in this poem. Owen uses various techniques to highlight

the exhaustion and deadening of senses that the soldiers experienced as they trudged towards their

'distant rest'. The use of _____ in the line _____ shows

_____.

Another example of the fatigue of the soldiers is communicated through the use of _____ which

reinforces

_____.

Furthermore, the ultimate physical impact is the death of the soldier who was unable to wear his gas

mask and suffered the torturous suffering brought on by the use of modern war technology in the

Great War. Owen forces his audience to visualize this horror by using language devices such as

_____ and _____ in the lines

_____.

Owen presents an emasculated vision of the soldiers in the line _____

which would have contrasted with the propagandist images of 1914. Owen's use of language enables

him to evoke sympathy and pity in his audience and draw them into agreeing with his viewpoint that

war is filled with unnecessary suffering.

Another major theme Owen explores is that of the mental ramifications of war. Although Owen is able to use descriptive language to portray the devastating last moments of a soldier's life, he very cleverly uses a witness, the persona, to suggest that war also results in suffering to those who witness death. This is most clearly evident in the line _____, the technique _____ illustrating the persona's distress. The dehumanization of the soldier, implied through Owen's description _____ further communicates this idea that war results in a series of negative impacts upon individuals and clearly results in prolonged suffering away from the battlefield. The audience is persuaded through Owen's use of narrator and his intense descriptions.

In addition, this poem highlights Owen's belief that governments have exploited vulnerable young men and employed propagandist lies to further their own ambitions. Owen represents the government as deceitful through the use of his ironic title. The title is ironic because _____

_____. Another example of his negative representation of the government is when he uses the technique _____ in the line _____ to communicate the idea _____ that _____

_____. Modern audiences are more cynical of governments than those pre the *Great War* and we therefore find the representation of a duplicitous government more credible than Owen's audience. Owen's structure also reinforces his critique because he outlines the action and intensifies, building towards the overall lesson that war _____.

Write your own conclusion

How has Owen's language, structure and the poem form enabled him to evoke emotion within the audience and persuade them to adopt his viewpoint about war?

Anthem for the Doomed Youth

This poem highlights how a soldier in war experiences an undignified burial and farewell in comparison to funerals in time of peace.

Read the poem at least three times.

Questions

1. Consider the emotive words used in the title and consider how they immediately evoke a sense of pity.

a) **Anthem** means:

b) Why is anthem ironic in this poem's title?

c) **Doomed** means:

d) What are the connotations associated with the word choice of 'youth' and 'doomed'?

2. The structure of this poem follows that of a sonnet (14 Lines). The octet (first 8 lines) is one of anger and the sestet (next 6 lines) is more sombre and bleak. The sonnet reflects the tight structure of an anthem. How is this tonal shift an authentic representation of what happens when people experience grief over the death of others?

3. Deconstructing the poem

Line	Technique	Effect
<i>What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?</i>		
<i>Monstrous anger of guns</i>		
<i>Stuttering rifles' rapid rattle</i>		
<i>No mockeries... no prayers nor bells</i>		
<i>Shrill, demented choirs</i> <i>Wailing shells</i>		
<i>Bugles calling them</i>		

Line	Technique	Effect
<i>What candles may be held to speed them all?</i>		
<i>In their eyes/ Shall shine the holy glimmer of goodbyes</i>		
<i>Pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall</i>		
<i>A drawing-down of blinds</i>		

4. How has the use of sound techniques been used to contrast the two types of funerals? You will need to look at both stanzas.

5. What similar/dissimilar ideas are shared with *Dulce et Decorum Est*?

FUTILITY

In a letter Owen wrote home to his family, he mentions an incident that occurred in February 1917 when one of his men actually froze to death before he could be got back. Futility explores the emotions of pity and hopelessness that men feel in such a situation.

Read the poem at least three times.

Idea	Techniques and quotes Structure	Effect
<i>Owen represents life before the war as pastoral and idyllic. Images of warmth and fertility are present. This then allows him to effectively juxtapose the consequences of war on the individual highlighting his message that war breeds only destruction and loss.</i>		
<i>Owen represents the hopelessness of the individuals who witness the physical suffering of their comrade. In turn, they experience mental anguish at their inability to save him.</i>		
<i>Owen uses the death of this soldier to raise existential questions about the purpose of life. He presents nature as both the source of his hope and his anger.</i> <i>Is Owen angry at the sun or at God?</i>		

The Next War

The poem was written in 1917 when public sentiment at home was beginning to turn against the senselessness and seemingly unending tide of slaughter.

Explain what is meant by the sentence above.

After discussing the poem as a class, fill in the following cloze passage.

Owen _____ the way we normally view Death, as something to _____ or shun. Instead of fear, Death is presented as a 'chum' on the battlefield. Could it be that Death represents a form of _____ from the pain of the real world on the battlefield?

By 1917 those who have been fortunate enough to survive have at least outwardly become battle hardened and _____ to Death's traits and habits. Because Death is always a strong _____ on the battlefield, he has come to be known as a companion. This is the one unifying idea of the sonnet.

Readers recognise that Death is inglorious but that the _____ enemy are those who _____ the soldiers' daily meeting with it. They are mere _____ whose lives are forfeited by military leaders instead of being saved and fought for.

Pawns	Desensitised
Orchestrate	Challenges
Fear	Presence
Real	Release

The poem deals with the theme of _____, the ability to survive in such a hellish world. The fact that these men can survive and still look at Death in such a _____ way earns our admiration rather than our _____. The alliteration of 'we whistled while' adds to this light-heartedness but it is really a _____ strategy in a nightmarish world. It also mocks the sound of falling shells. Monosyllabic words such as 'cool', 'thick' and 'wept' are used to _____ the short staccato sounds of battle.

Owen speaks with a certain _____ when he describes how the men's courage does not waver even though 'our eyes wept' in response to the conditions they are forced to endure. The phrase 'out there' stresses that the war front is a _____ environment- not everyone is capable of _____.

Different	Pride
Endurance	Surviving
Sympathy	Coping
Imitate	Light-hearted

Death is another theme in this poem – it is an extended _____ that represents loss and waste. Death is an inevitable _____ for many and the men know it. The repetition of 'we' in 'we laughed at him' and 'we leagued with him' stresses their _____ of Death.

Owen uses the personification of Death to show us the horror of this current war. These include gas attacks: 'green thick odour', bullets and artillery fire; 'coughed/shrapnel', as well as the ever present _____ of rotting bodies that made the men's eyes weep.

The soldiers quickly learn that Death is a force that cannot be fought against and so it is _____ to 'kick against his powers'. Death is accepted because he cannot be ignored- he will come whether the soldiers try to stop him or not.

Death is seen as 'male' which works with the normal roles of men in war – they _____ one another.

Acceptance	Stench	useless
Destroy	Reality	Metaphor

Senses of sight and sound have effectively been used to put the reader into the _____ of battle and give them some sense of what it must be like to live amidst the debris and atmosphere of _____.

The language includes terms of _____ jargon, such as 'mess-tins' and 'old chum'. This serves to highlight the comrades' experiences and the _____ of war.

The use of apostrophe, inversion and exclamation, 'Oh, Death was never enemy of ours' emphasises that Death is not the soldiers' hated enemy. It is merely part of the environment they must endure.

The men seem to cope but it is only a _____ that is worn; an outward show of _____ that thinly films their cynicism and despair. Siegfried Sassoon's summation that 'War's a joke' implies that the best way to deal with it is to cope by a combination of _____ and stoicism.

In this poem, comparisons are made between the _____ wars of now and those dreamed about in the future. Then it is hoped by the soldiers that Death itself will become the foe rather than poor soldiers for whom he is a constant companion.

Military	Gruesome
Bravado	Mask
Laughter	Environment
Midst	Slaughter

How is The Next War similar or dissimilar to the previous poems?

Answers

Owen **challenges** the way we normally view Death, as something to **fear** or shun. Instead of fear, Death is presented as a 'chum' on the battlefield. Could it be that Death represents a form of **release** from the pain of the real world on the battlefield?

By 1917 those who have been fortunate enough to survive have at least outwardly become battle hardened and **desensitised** to Death's traits and habits. Because Death is always a strong **presence** on the battlefield, he has come to be known as a companion. This is the one unifying idea of the sonnet.

Readers recognise that Death is inglorious but that the **real** enemy are those who **orchestrate** the soldiers' daily meeting with it. They are mere **pawns** whose lives are forfeited by military leaders instead of being saved and fought for.

The poem deals with the theme of **endurance**, the ability to survive in such a hellish world. The fact that these men can survive and still look at Death in such a **light-hearted** way earns our admiration rather than our **sympathy**. The alliteration of 'we whistled while' adds to this light-heartedness but it is really a **coping** strategy in a nightmarish world. It also mocks the sound of falling shells. Monosyllabic words such as 'cool', 'thick' and 'wept' are used to **imitate** the short staccato sounds of battle.

Owen speaks with a certain **pride** when he describes how the men's courage does not waver even though 'our eyes wept' in response to the conditions they are forced to endure. The phrase 'out there' stresses that the war front is a **different** environment- not everyone is capable of surviving.

Death is another theme in this poem – it is an extended **metaphor** that represents loss and waste. Death is an inevitable **reality** for many and the men know it. The repetition of 'we' in 'we laughed at him' and 'we leagued with him' stresses their **acceptance** of Death.

Owen uses the personification of Death to show us the horror of this current war. These include gas attacks: 'green thick odour', bullets and artillery fire; 'coughed/shrapnel', as well as the ever present **stench** of rotting bodies that made the men's eyes weep.

The soldiers quickly learn that Death is a force that cannot be fought against and so it is **useless** to 'kick against his powers'. Death is accepted because he cannot be ignored- he will come whether the soldiers try to stop him or not.

Death is seen as 'male' which works with the normal roles of men in war – they **destroy** one another.

Senses of sight and sound have effectively been used to put the reader into the **midst** of battle and give them some sense of what it must be like to live amidst the debris and atmosphere of **slaughter**.

The language includes terms of **military** jargon, such as 'mess-tins' and 'old chum'. This serves to highlight the comrades' experiences and the **environment** of war.

The use of apostrophe, inversion and exclamation, 'Oh, Death was never enemy of ours' emphasises that Death is not the soldiers' hated enemy. It is merely part of the environment they must endure.

The men seem to cope but it is only a **mask** that is worn; an outward show of **bravado** that thinly films their cynicism and despair. Siegfried Sassoon's summation that 'War's a joke' implies that the best way to deal with it is to cope by a combination of **laughter** and stoicism.

In this poem, comparisons are made between the **gruesome** wars of now and those dreamed about in the future. Then it is hoped by the soldiers that Death itself will become the foe rather than poor soldiers for whom he is a constant companion.

Insensibility

Vocabulary

Word	Sentence from the poem	Meaning
Fleers	<i>No compassion fleers</i>	To smirk or laugh in contempt
Cobbled		Paved with cobbles
Reckoning		
Decimation	<i>They keep no check on armies' decimation</i>	
Constriction		
Cautery		An agent or instrument used to destroy abnormal tissue by burning, searing or scarring
Taciturn		Silent in expression and manner
Forlorn	The long, forlorn, relentless trend	
Besmirch		To make dirty/stain; to sully a reputation
Overmuch		Too much
Placidity		Quiet and undisturbed Pleasantly calm and peaceful
Dullards	But cursed are dullards	
Paucity		Scarce, few, insufficient
Hapless		Unlucky or unfortunate
Reciprocity		Two groups do something similar for each other

Questions

Use the notes provided to help you answer the following:

1. *Insensible* means 'incapable of feeling, deprived of sensation'. What do you think Owen is suggesting in his poem?

2. Go through each section of the poem and write down the different types of soldiers that he refers to:

a) 1 – Owen describes the soldiers who have become insensible because the death and destruction is so widespread that the soldier shuts down. Owen considers how everyone dehumanises everyone else because the losses are too great to really individualise death.

b) 11 – Owen describes the type of soldier who

c) 111- Owen describes the type of soldier

d) 1v –

e) v

f) V1 -

3.

Theme/Idea	Technique/structure in poem and the quote	Explain the effect
The dehumanisation of soldiers		
The massive and relentless loss of life; the sacrifice of life and sanity		
The dramatic irony of ignorant soldiers being sent to slaughter		
The psychological trauma of war		
The indifference of those who do not experience the battlefield directly		

Strange Meeting

Vocabulary

Word	Sentence from the poem	Meaning
Profound	<i>Down some profound dull tunnel</i>	
Groined	<i>Titanic wars had groined</i>	Grooved and shaped
Encumbered		Restrict in such a way that free action or movement is difficult
Bestirred		
Flues		Pipe or opening in a chimney
Distilled		Impurities have been removed
Stint	<i>I would have poured my spirit without stint</i>	
Cess		curse
Parried		To deflect or ward off

Questions:

1. *With whom does the persona have the strange meeting?*

2. *Where does the meeting take place?*

3. *Why is the meeting 'strange'?*

4. *Identify THREE examples from the poem that show Owen's critique of war. Explain the meaning behind the quote and technique.*

a)

b)

c)

COMPARING THE POEMS

Pairs: Consider the poems as one text and place a tick next to poems that share similar themes. We will discuss your choices so be ready to point to specific parts of the poem which support your answer.

Poem	Dehumanisation of the individual	The horror of war-graphic	The corrupt nature of governments/authority
<i>Dulce</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Anthem</i>	✓		
<i>Futility</i>	✓		
<i>The Next War</i>			
<i>Insensibility</i>			
<i>Strange Meeting</i>			

Poem	The senseless and unnecessary waste of life	The psychological and physical impact	The helplessness and vulnerability of individuals and groups
<i>Dulce</i>		✓	✓
<i>Anthem</i>			
<i>Futility</i>			
<i>The Next War</i>			
<i>Insensibility</i>			
<i>Strange Meeting</i>			