

World War One

What was a soldier's experience like?

You have probably studied some poetry from the Great War in your English lessons.

The poems below give two very different impressions of what it was like to die as a soldier in World War One. They can give us a confusing picture of what it was like to fight in the trenches.

Anthem for Doomed Youth

By Wilfred Owen

What passing bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choir,-
The shrill demented choir of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.
What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

How Sleep The Brave

By Walter de la Mare

Nay, nay, sweet England, do not grieve!
Not one of those poor men who died
But did within his soul believe
That death for thee was glorified.

Ever they watched it hovering near
That mystery 'yond thought to plumb,
Perchance sometimes in loathed fear
They heard cold danger whisper, come!

Heard and obeyed. O, if thou weep
Such courage and honour, beauty, care,
Be it for joy that those who sleep
Only thy joy could share.

In groups of two or three, read these poems carefully and try to fill in the table below:

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How Sleep The Brave

By Walter de la Mare

This poem suggests that fighting in World War One was...

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