

Candidate 4 evidence

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	<u>part 12</u>	
12)	<p>In the harrowing yet enlightening poem "Exposure", Wilfred Owen explores the futility of warfare, an issue with significant moral importance. The poem explores the struggles soldiers face in icy, muddy trenches, whom often die from exposure, and then he presents them as ultimately meaningless. He encourages readers to think about warfare and whether it is morally just to send out millions of men in the freezing cold, for them to just sit & rot.</p>	
	<p>Wilfred Owen uses personification to portray the weather as a greater enemy, in doing so he also highlights the great amounts of pain the soldiers had to endure. The soldiers had to face the "merciless ied eastwinds that knife" them, the word "merciless" has connotations of unforgiving, depicting the wind as an unfeeling, antagonistic and violent force that makes life incredibly difficult and painful for the soldiers on the front line. The unusual verb choice of "knife" serves to personify the wind and portray it as an enemy who chooses to inflict great amounts of pain. By making the wind out to be the soldiers biggest worry, it detracts danger from the real army, making it seem less of a threat. The writer uses personification further to exacerbate this point. The snowflakes "come feeling" for the soldiers faces. Of course they aren't purposefully seeking out the soldiers to attack them with it's painful viciousness.</p>	

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	<p>However, by suggesting the snowflakes went to inflict pain, Owen supports the comparison of nature to an enemy the soldiers ^{went} to avoid. By presenting the enemy combatants as the second threat, after the weather, Owen stresses the pointlessness of war. There is so little action and fighting, the wind is a greater threat to life. There is no way people can feel content with the decision to send soldiers out to these dreadful weather conditions, if they can't even fight. This waste of life draws significant attention to the futility of war.</p>	
	<p>Owen presents the day-to-day reality of war as a tiring, empty draining & deeply stressful. The soldiers must remain vigilant, so much so their "brains ache". The word "ache" connotes a dull pain, suggesting the soldiers cannot shake away the discomfort. By using "brain" instead of the common phrase of headache, the writer implies that the pain has penetrated past the skull and into the brain. The tedious task of staying vigilant brings actual physical pain. By displaying how little the soldiers do at war, Wilfred Owen challenges their presence. The sentries are further described as "nervous" and "casual", with the second word implying that they are almost eager for real combat - yet are denied the chance. The soldiers are so bored & drained, they would rather risk taking a bullet than spend another night in silence. The poet's presentation of war being futile is massively important because it challenges the traditional view that war is a</p>	

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	<p>respected act of fighting for the king, the country and for God. Instead of the bloody battles they were promised, they were greeted with hypothermia & gangrene. The writer urges readers to stop romanticising war & take it for what it is. A waste of life.</p>	
	<p>The writer uses other literary techniques such as metaphors & sibilance to emphasise the reality of war. The soldiers describe the distant gunfire & bombs as a "dull rumour of some other war". Just as a rumour often loses its clarity and truth, so too the war is merely a suggestion. The soldiers are so far removed from the fighting they are beginning to wonder if there even is a war. The soldiers then describe the surrounding as "sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence", with the sibilance mimicking the whizzing of bullets. This image transports the reader to the battle field, however, despite the constant smattering of gunfire it's still "less deadly" than the true enemy - nature. By making the bullets out to be powerless and the enemy cutting the danger right after, Owen helps us to realize that the bullets are far less deadly than the weather. Despite the fact they aren't fighting, despite the brutal weather conditions, the soldiers are still sent out and left to die. This emphasises war's utter futility & begs us to think about other ways to resolve conflict that doesn't involve the sacrifice of millions of young, innocent men.</p>	

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	<p>As the days and nights merge into one, the writer presents the soldier's struggles as ultimately meaningless. At one point the soldier asks "what are we doing here?" This question refers to their immediate conditions, stuck in a trench, dying from exposure with no enemy to fight. The fact that this question is never answered in the poem suggests that there is no answer - there is no real reason for the soldiers to be there. Wilfred Owen then repeats the same statement at the end of 4 different stanzas. The soldiers repeatedly insist, "but nothing happens", implicitly criticizing war for its futility and unnecessary suffering. The soldier remains vigilant, waiting to be put out of their misery, just something other than the endless waiting. The repetition of this statement is key in highlighting war's futility as it tells the reader to think harder, each time it appears in the poem. Practically begging the reader ^{to} condemn war instead of praising the morally unjust loss of lives.</p>	
	<p>The poem is extremely successful in pulling at the heart strings of readers and getting them to recognize that war is futile. Instead of following the crowd and admiring war, Owen challenges its existence and states the brutally immoral loss of lives. This recognition is pivotal because it persuades to think about war as a whole, and encourages us to stop and think before another war arises. It portrays war as a massacre, as a tragedy tragedy and as a waste.</p>	