

 refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

Investigating *Futility*

- ❖ Both *Futility* and *Exposure* were based on Owen's experience with his platoon on the Western Front in January 1917, though Owen tells a very different story in the one poem from the other. In comparing the narrative arcs of each poem, what do you notice is similar and what is different?
 - Compare Owen's own role in each poem.
- ❖ In a first draft Owen used the title 'Frustration' then later changed it to 'Futility'. Explore the connotations of both words.
 - Look for evidence of both feelings in the poem.
 - Do you think Owen's final choice was right? Write a couple of sentences to support your view using quotations from the poem.

Investigating language and tone in *Futility*

- ❖ The tone of a poem is best tested by reading it aloud and listening to how expression helps with understanding. Read the poem out loud and emphasise the 'f' sound of 'futility' and 'fatuous'. Put as much scorn in to your voice as you can to reflect Owen's feelings about the death.
 - Now read the poem concentrating on the soft tone of the first stanza. Notice how you have to change your mood and expression between reading the first line of the second stanza and the second line.

Investigating structure and versification in *Futility*

- ❖ The regular stanza pattern of the poem contrasts with the irregular pattern of its rhymes and rhythms. Print off a copy of the poem from Crossref-it and divide each line into feet to decide on the metre Owen is using.
 - Annotate them with hard/soft stresses to identify either trochaic or iambic feet and see if you can spot any patterns that emerge.
 - Try to say how the variance in stress, metre and rhythm affects the emotion of the poem.

Investigating imagery and symbolism in *Futility*

- ❖ The sun, the snow and the ploughed fields of England are the main images in the poem. Make a spider diagram with the sun written or drawn as the centre and identify all the words and phrase which belong to that image.
 - Do the same for the snow and the fields.
 - Identify similar images that Owen uses in other poems and add them to your diagram. This will make a useful revision sheet.

Investigating themes in *Futility*

- ❖ The futility of war and of life itself is the main theme of the poem. How does this bleak theme link with Owen's other theme, the pity of war?
 - Write about the way in which Owen links pity and futility in this poem.