


Wilfred Owen: Investigating *Hospital Barge*

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Barge

Investigating *Hospital Barge*

- ❖ There are two poems which tell the story of the last hours of King Arthur which you might like to explore: the medieval text: *Morte d'Arthur* by Thomas Mallory and *The Passing of Arthur* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, extracts of which can be found at: <http://www.crossref-it.info/textguide/Poetry-of-Wilfred-Owen/36/2602>

Investigating language and tone in *Hospital Barge*

- ❖ *Hospital Barge* is a very different poem to most of Owen's war poems, owing to its lack of gruesome detail. Make a list of the negative words and phrases he uses in the poem.
 - Make a list of the positive words and phrases.
 - Compare the two lists of negative and positive words. Which sort dominate?

Investigating structure and versification in *Hospital Barge*

- ❖ The sonnet form traditionally was used by poets for romantic purposes. Remind yourself of *Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of Our Artillery Brought into Action*.
 - Compare how Owen uses the sonnet form in *Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of Our Artillery Brought into Action* with the *Hospital Barge*.

Investigating imagery and symbolism in *Hospital Barge*

- ❖ Arthur and Avalon are symbols of heroism and paradise. The latter is also symbolic of healing. Merlin suggests magic and mystery. How effective is this imagery in communicating Owen's pity of war?
- ❖ 'The dark barge which Merlin dreamed' l.14 is very different to Owen's dreams in *Dulce et Decorum Est*, *The Sentry* and *Strange Meeting*. Compare Owen's dreams in those poems with the one in *Hospital Barge*.

Investigating themes in *Hospital Barge*

- ❖ In *Hospital Barge* Owen compares the wounded to the Romantic King Arthur who, legend said, would return to save England. However, Owen said his poetry was not about heroes. Can you reconcile this poem with that view?