


Wilfred Owen: Investigating *Insensibility*

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Investigating *Insensibility*

- ❖ In *Insensibility* Owen is influenced by the views of earlier poets. Compare Owen's view of the warrior to that of Wordsworth's in *Character of the Happy Warrior* which you can read at: <http://www.crossref-it.info/textguide/Poetry-of-Wilfred-Owen/36/2702>.
- ❖ How far do you think Owen reflects Shelley's view of a poet as an acutely aware ('sensible', as in, 'alive to all one's senses') mediator of the sublime, who himself must be morally noble?

Investigating language and tone in *Insensibility*

- ❖ *Insensibility* is a poem packed with emotive words and phrases which have a powerful impact on the reader. Compare the language and tone of *Insensibility* to that of Owen's last complete poem, *Spring Offensive*.
 - In what ways are these two poems similar?
 - In what ways are these two poems very different?

Investigating structure and versification in *Insensibility*

- ❖ *Insensibility* has irregular rhyme and rhythm schemes which create a sense of unease and discord. Identify the rhyming couplets Owen uses in the poem and the places where Owen uses different rhyme patterns.
 - Choose one of each and explore the way in which the different patterns work on your emotions as a reader.
- ❖ Look carefully at where Owen has chosen to use short lines and then pick out the extra-long lines in the poem.
 - How does Owen communicate the horror and the pity of war in this way?

Investigating imagery and symbolism in *Insensibility*

- ❖ The imagery of *Insensibility* is harsh. Copy out the three most brutal images in the poem.
 - How might you use these quotations in an essay?
 - Find comparable images from other Owen poems.

Investigating themes in *Insensibility*

- ❖ *Insensibility* is a poem about hopelessness. The 'eternal reciprocity of tears' suggests that the living will exchange tears with the dead for ever. *Disabled* is another Owen poem about the hopelessness of war. Compare and contrast it with *Insensibility*.
- ❖ Compare *Insensibility*, as one of Owen's longest poems, with another long poem, *Strange Meeting*.
 - Which do you find is the more effective of the two poems?
 - Can you say why one is more effective than the other?