


Wilfred Owen: Investigating *Sonnet on Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action*

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- ❖ An Italian sonnet has two parts that propose and answer an argument. In the octet Owen seems to be glorifying the great gun, yet in the sestet he curses it. What is surprising about this poem compared with others written by Owen at a similar time?
 - How is Owen making his anti-war message stronger by seeming to praise the gun?
- ❖ In stanza one Owen concentrates entirely on the actions and purpose of the 'great gun'. In your own words write a description of this piece of heavy artillery from the evidence Owen gives us.
 - How does Owen use the characteristics he has employed in stanza one to turn the argument in stanza two?

Investigating language and tone in *Sonnet on Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action*

- ❖ This sonnet uses the sort of archaic language Owen employs in *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*. Which poem do you find more effective as an anti-war poem?
 - Compare the tone of each poem. Which is the more powerful and why?
 - Look for similarities in Owen's use of archaic diction in both poems.

Investigating structure and versification in *Sonnet on Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action*

- ❖ Owen adjusts the sonnet form to good effect in *Anthem for Doomed Youth*. In *Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action* Owen keeps much more strictly to the traditional form. Compare this sonnet with *Anthem for Doomed Youth*.
 - Do you have a personal preference and if so can you explore the reasons why?

Investigating imagery and symbolism in *Sonnet on Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action*

- ❖ The personification of the gun in this sonnet reminds us of the personification of the weapons in *Anthem for Doomed Youth* and *The Last Laugh*. Read both poems and make a note of the metaphors used in each.
 - Compare the way in which Owen uses weapons to show the horror of war.
 - Which poem makes the most effective use of the personification of weapons?

Investigating themes in *Sonnet on Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action*

- ❖ This is an unusual poem because, at first reading, Owen seems to be glorifying the gun and all it stands for. How does Owen present his theme of the pity of war and of man's inhumanity to man to us through this sonnet?
- ❖ How far do you agree that Owen could understand the need for the Great Gun in an attempt to win the war which would end all wars?
 - How did his attitude change in the later poems he wrote?