


Wilfred Owen: Investigating *Spring Offensive*

 refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

Wilfred Owen: Investigating *Spring Offensive*

Investigating *Spring Offensive*

- ❖ This is Owen's last complete poem. Some critics say it is his best. Why do you think they say this?
 - What makes it a more reflective and mature poem than any of his previous work?
- ❖ There is great pathos in *Spring Offensive*. Explore the ways in which Owen creates the pity in this poem.
 - How does the poetry come out of the pity?
- ❖ Owen had written that English poetry was not yet ready to write about heroes. Siegfried Sassoon said that war was not glorious, however superb the lads were. Do you think that *Spring Offensive* is about heroism?
- ❖ How does Owen balance the bravery of the men with the horror of the war?
 - Explain why this final poem is/is not Owen's masterpiece?

Investigating language and tone in *Spring Offensive*

- ❖ Owen looks at the events in *Spring Offensive* almost at a distance. He does not write directly about his own responses and emotions. How does the language Owen uses in the poem contribute to this more objective approach?
 - ❖ Compare the tone of *Spring Offensive* to the tone of *Dulce et Decorum Est* where Owen is a much more central figure.

Investigating structure and versification in *Spring Offensive*

- ❖ Owen's versification in *Spring Offensive* demands careful study. Read the poem aloud with a friend, scanning each line so as to identify where the lines of irregular length occur.
 - Try to establish why Owen chose to alter these particular lines.
- ❖ Look at the pattern of rhyming in the poem.
 - Which, if any, take you by surprise and why?

Investigating imagery and symbolism in *Spring Offensive*

- ❖ *Spring Offensive* is as much about the 'few' who survive as about the dead. Compare Owen's presentation of the few 'crawling back' from the edge in this poem to the 'few, too few' who creep back in *The Send Off*.
- ❖ Compare the survivors in *Disabled* and *Mental Cases* with the survivors in *Spring Offensive*.
- ❖ In *Spring Offensive* Owen uses the eye to symbolise seeing the truth of the situation as the men see it before the attack. Revisit the way in which Owen uses the eyes of men in the following poems:
 - *Dulce et Decorum Est*
 - *Mental Cases*
 - *The Sentry*
 - *Strange Meeting*.

Investigating themes in *Spring Offensive*

- ❖ What does this poem say about Owen's thoughts and feelings for his men?
- ❖ The last line of the poem is the last question Owen poses about his main theme: the pity of war. What do you think is the answer?