


# Wilfred Owen: Investigating *The Dead-Beat*

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### *Dead-Beat*

#### **Investigating *The Dead-Beat***

- ❖ As an officer Owen cared deeply for the men under his command. Where do Owen's sympathies lie in this poem (remember he is the officer who threatened the man with his revolver)?
- ❖ Compare *The Dead-Beat* to *The Letter* which is also about death on the front.
- ❖ Acknowledging Sassoon's significant influence, how important is Owen's own role in this poem?
- ❖ How do the man's dreams relate to his breakdown?
- ❖ How effective is Owen's use of actual speech in the poem?

#### **Investigating language and tone in *The Dead-Beat***

- ❖ The ambiguity of the title *The Dead-Beat* adds to its impact as an anti-war poem. Divide a sheet of paper in half lengthways.
  - On one side note the words and phrases which back up the view that the man was a 'no good'.
  - On the other side do the same to support the view that he was 'dead-beat' as a result of the war.

#### **Investigating structure and versification in *The Dead-Beat***

- ❖ Owen's versification in the poem creates an uneasy response when read aloud – try doing so to a friend.
  - Discuss the irregular lines. Why does Owen want us to take note of them in particular?

#### **Investigating imagery and symbolism in *The Dead-Beat***

- ❖ The only images Owen uses in *The Dead-Beat* are the two de-humanising similes at the start of the poem. Compare this with the opening simile in *Anthem for Doomed Youth*.
  - In your opinion which is the worse: 'die as cattle' or 'heavy like meat'?

#### **Investigating themes in *The Dead-Beat***

- ❖ This is a very dark poem in which we can identify many of the major themes of Owen's later poems. Decide which theme is dominant, collecting quotations from *The Dead-Beat* to back up your conclusion.
  - Using your evidence write a paragraph on the effectiveness of *The Dead-Beat* as an anti-war poem.