


Wilfred Owen: Investigating *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*

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Investigating *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*

- ❖ Read the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-14. Notice where the differences lie between this and the poem.
- ❖ Look on the internet for some of the paintings there are of this story (for instance one by Rembrandt and another by Caravaggio).
- ❖ In a letter he wrote on 31st March 1918, Owen says of his young French friend Johnny de la Touche: 'He must be a creature of killable age by now.' Go through all the Owen poems you are studying and note all those in which he mentions the young or youth.
 - Make a note of the phrases used about youth and learn some off by heart to use in an exam.

Investigating language and tone in *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*

- ❖ The archaic language of *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young* works to give the poem dignity but it can also make it more difficult to understand. How do you feel about Owen's use of biblical language in *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*?
 - Does it detract in any way from the message?
 - Does it support the message in any way?

Investigating structure and versification in *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*

- ❖ The final rhyming couplet pulls the story of *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young* into the twentieth century. How does it contrast with the rest of the poem?
 - How important is that final rhyming couplet?
 - Can you think of a reason why Siegfried Sassoon left the latter part of the poem out of his edition of Owen's poetry?

Investigating imagery and symbolism in *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*

- ❖ Owen uses the image of the seed in *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young* as a symbol for the future. He also uses it in the poems *1914*, *Futility* and *Exposure*.
 - Make a note of the image of seed in each of these poems.
 - Why do you suppose Owen limited his image to *half* the seed of Europe in a *World War*?

Investigating themes in *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young*

- ❖ Owen presents the part played by God in the war in a more positive way in *The Parable of the Old Man and the Young* (written in 1918) than he did in the autumn of 1917 when he wrote *Soldier's Dream*. Look at the different approaches Owen takes to divine intervention in the two poems.
 - What do you think may have caused Owen to write in such a different way about such a fundamental theme?