

Wilfred Owen, Selected Poems: (b) *Disabled* (contrasts and pity)

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☞ refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore how Owen uses contrasts to create pity in the poem *Disabled*.
- ❖ **Opening exercise:** Students draw and label a stereotypical 'manly' man (it might be helpful to think about how men are presented in modern adverts, for example).
 - Display photos/pictures of soldiers:
 - Going to war
 - Returned from war (injured)
 - How do these pictures compare with our ideas of masculinity?
- ❖ **Textual examination:** Read the poem and establish the story.
 - ☞ (*Disabled* > Synopsis and commentary)
 - Using two highlighters, colour code the poem for the events before the war, and the events 'now' (since the soldier returned from war).
 - Examine how Owen creates contrasts between the past and present, thinking particularly about:
 - Positive and negative language
 - The soldier's appearance
 - His relationships with women
 - How people respond to him
 - Use of light and dark.
 - Reread the closing lines of the poem and consider what techniques Owen is using to make the lines powerful – for example:
 - Reported thought
 - Exclamation
 - Repetition
 - Questions
 - Enjambment
 - Simple language, etcConsider what impact these lines have on the reader.
 - ☞ (*Disabled* > Language, tone, and structure)
- ❖ **Discussion ideas:** In groups, create a still image / tableau to represent each stanza of the poem. Choose some words from the stanza to read aloud to accompany the image.
 - Present these still images to the class and discuss how each stanza/still image helps create pity for the soldier.
 - ☞ (*Disabled* > Language, tone, and structure).
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Write a monologue for the soldier, either written:
 - Before going to war (expressing his motivations and hopes)
 - Or after he returns (expressing his thoughts about his current life).
- ❖ **Critical task:** Prepare an answer to either of the following essay questions:
 - 'My subject is War, and the pity of war.' Explore how Owen uses contrasts to present 'the pity of war'.
 - *Disabled* was to be the title of Owen's entire collection of war poems. To what extent do you agree that this would have been an effective title and why?
 - ☞ (An overview of the themes in the poetry of Wilfred Owen > War)
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- ❖ **Extension task:** Examine some of the other poems in which Owen presents injured soldiers.
 - Which poems do you find most pitiful and why?
 - ☞ (An overview of the themes in the poetry of Wilfred Owen > War > Injuries in war)