

Wilfred Owen, Selected Poems:

(c) Voices

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 refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore how Owen uses the voice of the soldier in presenting experiences of - and views on - war, with focus on the following poems:
 - *Inspection*
 - *The Dead-Beat*
 - *The Last Laugh*
 - *Wild with all Regrets*
 - *The Letter*
 - *Strange Meeting*.
- ❖ **Opening exercise:** Most of Owen's poems are written in first person narrative; Owen is the poet-narrator. In pairs, look back through Owen's poetry and identify all the other 'voices' heard in the poems. Feedback the list of voices.
- ❖ **Textual examination:** Enlarge (ideally up to A3 size) and photocopy enough copies of **Student worksheet c)i**, for each group in the class to annotate and use for comparison. Lead the class in exploration and annotation of the following points:
 - The language that characterises the voices (common themes, use of idiom, etc.)
 - The verbs used to describe the speech ('rapped', 'whined', etc.) and their impact
 - The use and impact of punctuation to present the voices (speech marks, apostrophes for omission, dashes, question marks, etc.)
 - Length of utterances and what that suggests about the characters
 - Any other clues about the characters who are speaking
 - Any commonalities between the voices represented in the poems
 -  (*Inspection* > Language, tone, and structure)
 -  (*The Dead-Beat* > Language, tone, and structure)
 -  (*The Last Laugh* > Language, tone, and structure)
 -  (*Wild with all Regrets* > Language, tone, and structure)
- ❖ **Discussion ideas:** Class discussion using the following prompt questions:
 - How does Owen present the soldiers' voices?
 - What techniques does he use?
 - How does 'hearing' the soldiers' voices help the reader better to imagine the experience of war?
 - How does 'hearing' the soldiers' voices lead the reader to sympathise with Owen's anti-war message?
 - Which of the voices do we find to be:
 - Most sympathetic?
 - Most realistic?
 - Most powerful?
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Experiment with reworking another of Owen's other poems than those on the worksheet, by including direct speech.
 - Does including another voice add to or detract from the impact of the poem?
- ❖ **Critical task:** Prepare an answer to the following essay question:
 - To what extent can Owen be considered the mouthpiece of the ordinary soldier?
- ❖ **Extension task:** Look at *Strange Meeting* – the voice here sounds strangely like Owen's own voice, in sharing his views and language. The narrator also uses biblical references.
 - What is the purpose and impact of this voice?
 -  (*Strange Meeting* > Synopsis and commentary; Language, tone, and structure; Imagery, symbolism, and themes)