

Wilfred Owen, Selected Poems:

(d) *Sonnets*

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 refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore how Owen uses sonnets to communicate his views on war.
 - ❖ **Opening exercise:** Refresh the class's understanding of the sonnet form. (A-Z: general definitions > sonnet)
 - Students create a glossary of terms including:
 - Sonnet / Octet / Sestet / Volta / Couplet
 - For poets, what are the benefits and downsides of using the sonnet form?
 - From memory, which of Owen's poems use this form?
 - ❖ **Textual examination:** Re-read 1914 and recap its meaning (see **Student worksheet d)i**).
 -  (1914 > Synopsis and commentary)
 - Dissect/annotate all the features of form and structure:
 - Letter the rhyme scheme
 - Scan the lines for length and rhythm
 - Label the octet, sestet, volta, and closing couplet.
 - Highlight the key words/themes in the poem and consider how they develop from the octet to the sestet. Eg.
 - Seasons/cycles
 - Place names
 - Personified concepts, etc.
 - Analyse what gives the closing two lines their impact.
 - Consider how the sonnet form helps deliver the ideas in the poem – why is it appropriate for this poem?
 -  (1914 > Language, tone, and structure)
 - ❖ **Discussion ideas:** Allocate Owen's other sonnet poems (see **Student worksheet d)i**) to pairs/groups:
 - *Hospital Barge*
 - *Anthem for Doomed Youth*
 - *Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action.*and use the following questions as prompts for discussion:
 - How is the poem recognisably structured as a sonnet?
 - Identify the octet, sestet, volta, and closing couplet
 - Are the ideas in the octet changed or developed in the sestet?
 - If so, how?
 - What is the significance of the closing couplet?
 - Is there any evidence of Owen adapting the sonnet form? Eg.
 - Use of parhyme or sight rhyme
 - Longer or shorter lines, etc.
 - How does this form help Owen to present his views on war?
 - Then jigsaw the groups and compare ideas.
 -  (*Hospital Barge* > Language, tone, and structure)
 -  (*Anthem for Doomed Youth* > Language, tone, and structure)
 -  (*Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action* > Language, tone, and structure)
 - How realistic a picture of life at the front does the reader get from the 'unedited' version?
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Use the rhymes from the octet of an Owen sonnet to try to write a new poem. (For example, from *Sonnet On Seeing a Piece of Our Heavy Artillery Brought into Action* you would select: 'arm', 'curse', 'rehearse', 'charm', 'harm', 'worse', 'disburse', 'storm')
 - How restrictive is this pattern?
- ❖ **Critical task:** 'The sonnet is the most powerful vehicle for Owen's anti-war message.' To what extent do you agree?
- ❖ **Extension task:** Go through all the poems by Owen you are studying and catalogue the different forms he uses.
 - Consider how different themes and topics use different forms and why
 - Or conversely, how the same theme is presented in two different forms and the impact this has.