

# Anthem for Doomed Youth

## Wilfred Owen

Wilfred Owen was a soldier during WW1 and therefore gives us a firsthand experience of war. He was against war and was appalled by the effects of war on people and their families.

## Use of Sonnet style and Irony

- The conventional function for a sonnet is love, but this poem has a sort of anti-love, or rather, a love that turns bad.
- The young male population has so much patriotic love, and is so eager to serve, but this love turns sour. Instead they rot in the wastes of the trenches, mown down in the blink of an eye by a machine-gun
- Lives gone without the holy rite of a funeral ("no mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells"), the lives of their loved ones at home are also ruined
- "Anthem" is a praise, and poem discourages idea of war
- Christian religion, with its loving God, can have nothing to do with the deaths of so many thousands of men ("no prayers or bells")



## Literary Devices

- "Die as cattle" i.e. mercilessly slaughtered
- "anger of the guns" personification, guns are evil
- likens their deaths to a funeral, but one where the bells are shots, and the mourning choirs are the army's bugles
- The drawing down of the blinds, the traditional sign to show that the family is in mourning, has been likened to the drawing of a sheet to cover the dead
- "Doomed Youth" = assonance, intended to be drawn out, long and melancholy, as melancholy as the subject of war itself
- Onomatopoeia: "stuttering rifles", "rapid rattle", "patter out", and "wailing shells"

## Poem Structure

- Hybrid Sonnet: combines the structure of the Petrarchan sonnet with the rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet

except for lines 11 and 12

- In the octet a question is asked in the first line and answered in the remaining seven lines
- Same technique in the sestet, asking a question in the first line and answering it in the remaining five lines
- Octet focuses on the realities of war on the battlefield, giving us an experience of what it is like to see and hear the disturbing sounds and visuals
- Sestet focuses on the effects that the war had on the families of the soldiers