**Analysis of a letter belonging to the project “Letter to an Unknown Soldier”**

Poet: Edward F. Willmoth

Age: 90

Feature: WWII veteran (British forces)

Source: website “Letter to an Unknown Soldier”

I selected the letter of Edward F. Willmoth. The veteran sent to the Unknown Soldier of Paddington station’s platform 1 a text whose addressee is a friend (Jack) died alongside him in WWII in the Asian theatre where they fought against the invading Asian forces of Axis, he wrote 1946 as date of realization because makes it more realistic (one year after the war’s conclusion). I choose this letter because I am interested in WWII and I was curious to read a text of a British war veteran, the veteran knows what the Unknown Soldier could feel in trenches of WWI. So, despite the statue of Paddington station is referred to WWI, the veteran wrote a text about his experience in WWII, however, it is a war and therefore it presents lots of similarities with the previous world war. The text is a poem, it is divided in three parts and the first and the second are organized in quatrains (in the first there are eleven quatrains and in the second there are eight quatrains); in addition the quatrains presents an alternate rhyme. So the intelligent reader can understand that the poet, who is very old (90), spent a lot of time to realize the text.

In the first part the veteran tells about the meeting between him and Jack’s family in their farm in Wroxham (Norfolk county) as Edward promised: there is also a description of what he does with them, for example helping the father with the farm’s works or eating the mother’s cake. In this part the poet also marks the difference between the destruction of the war (as the reader can realize reading the first and the last quatrains) and the serenity of the countryside (underlined by the sixth quatrain for example), so after years of war he managed to return in England from the terror of the war to the peace of the English countryside. He tells that they commemorate his death with cuddles and tears of grief and pride. So the veteran specify that their tears have an ambivalent meaning, therefore the reader finds a contradiction in the writer’s thought. The reader understands that the veteran, as a veteran, doesn’t love war and war is the cause of his dear friend and comrades’ death, but he wanted also to remember his friend’s bravery and deeds exalting his patriotism, because differently from WWI, the second world war was not only a war of territorial ambitions, it was also a war of ideologies. So the reader understands that the veteran and his friend fought in the war also for their ideological belief.

In the second part the veteran tells a description of the battlefield and his actions: he specifies that they were in the jungle, because in the South – East of Asia the battlefields were jungles and cities, it reminds the reader that the battlefield was itself an enemy. Indeed the jungle is a particular battlefield and one of the hardest: if Germans and Soviets could die because of the cold in Stalingrad, in the jungle soldiers could die because of terrible and dangerous diseases or venomous animals, in addition it creates problems of visibility, spreads out disorientation between the soldiers and gets slower supplies. He tells that after his death he continued to fight in the jungle against the Japanese army (Dai Nippon Teikoku Rikugun) that was combative but wasn’t one of the best armies of WWII; their soldiers were known to be fanatic for their thought, indeed Willmoth used the expression “fanatic Japanese”. He mentioned some places where he fought in South – East of Asia and tells about the last place where Japanese surrendered in Thailand calling them “those of the rising sun” (the Japanese empire was named “empire of the rising sun).

In the last part he tells that has brought Jack’s medals and has put them in his bedroom and he wrote some notes in the end which underline his patriotism and devotion to his ideology. He tells he found an inscription on a hill in the Indian region of Assam, it says “When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today”.