

The People's Pilgrimage – Does the text promote War or Peace?

In order to decide if the text mentioned above promotes war or peace, I am going to analyse a quotation from the book "The Unknown Soldier", by Neil Hanson from the point of view of the language used

In his book, in particular in the chapter "**The People's Pilgrimage**", Neil illustrates the new meaning associated with of the poppy d after the WWI. The following quotation is taken from that chapter, and in my opinion sums up the writer's idea of war.

*"Poppies first became intimately associated with the war **dead** in the **devastated** battlefields of the Somme, where the **wastelands** of **grey-brown mud and earth** erupted in **vivid splashes of crimson**, as numerous as the fallen soldiers who lay beneath. When the **wind blew**, the **fallen petals carpeted the ground like the blood spilled in the same torn earth.**"*

In the quotation, the writer conveys a negative meaning of the war to start with the juxtaposition of the words meaning that almost overlaps. The destructive power of war is underlined by the adjective "**devastated**" and by the alliteration sound "**d**" ("**dead**", "**devastated**").

Almost surely the reader creates a negative image of war in her/his mind. The writer describes the battlefields of the Somme after WWI. What remains after war is only "**wastelands**". It is an arid and desert environment. It is a landscape where trees, vegetation and therefore life are absent. Evoking such particular landscape underlines the power of war of killing everything it meets.

Subsequently, the writer associates some **colours** to war. The first is the "**gray-brown**" of the "**mud and earth**", a dark color, lacking in brightness and thus a sign of death. The second color is the "**Crimson**", a **metaphor** for the blood of the fallen soldiers. The verb "**erupted**", reminds the explosive strength of a volcano, and the name "**splashes**", an **onomatopoeia** reinforces the extreme violence of the war, while the adjective "**vivid**" makes **the image even more lively and almost real**.

Finally, the novelist compares "**the fallen petals carpeted the ground**" with "**the blood spilled in the same torn earth**". With the **simile**, the writer evokes two opposite feelings in rapid sequence. The first sensation evoked is the peace of a natural phenomenon thanks to the verb "**covered**" while the second, with the verb "**torn**" conveys to the reader **the dead soldiers' extreme suffering and pain**. After the image of a specific landscape communicated with suitable colours, the writer now **appeals to hearing**. And indeed, the reader perceives the **soft sound of the wind** that is now blowing, however, it turned in the **deafening sound of a silent mortuary**.

From the analysis, a terrifying image of war destroying everything and everyone that leaves behind only a desert trail of silent death. In conclusion, it can be said the text invokes peace condemning war.