**“The Soldier”**

“The Soldier” is one of the poems of “1914 and Other Poems” collection written by Rupert Brooke in 1915.

Looking at the title the reader makes some questions and so hypothesis that may answer his interrogatives: who is the addressee of the poem, if a specific one or the soldier in general. In particular if the addressee is an English soldier or, also other Nations soldier.

Considering the layout the poem is divided into two stanzas: the first is about eight lines; the second is about six lines. The reader considering the paragraphs also understands the predominant structural element and poetical one will be the enjamblement which confers to the poem more fluency. An additional element fundamental for the rhythm of the poem is the punctuation: the colon at the first line contributes to fix into the reader mind what the speaking voice is going to say. Furthermore commas and semicolons, make the rhythm slower and stop a bit the fluency of the enjamblement, fixing images into the reader’s mind.

Looking at the content of the two stanzas, the reader understands in the first one the speaking voice speaks in a more material way and, in the second stanza, in a more spiritual one. Indeed firstly the speaking voice asserts that wherever a soldier should die, it will become a piece of England; secondly it is told that there will be an “eternal mind” free of all evil which might be war or pain made by wounds, “hearts at peace, under an English heaven”.

Let’s make a deeper analysis of each stanza. The speaking voice is clear: he states he wants the reader thinks some “concepts” of him. He wants the reader thinks that there will be a foreign place that will become England if a soldier die there. Important to notice is the quotation of the Bible into the fourth and fifth and sixth lines: “In that richer earth a richer dust concealed; a dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware, gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam. ”It recalls“ remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return” so, in a way or another, these lines are an invite to the soldier to fight because of their destiny is made yet by God: they sooner or later die so it is worth they die for their homeland, England. Moreover England is personified: she is the Mother of every English soldier; she is who shaped English dust. In addition when the speaking voice speaks about England he uses the subject pronoun “her” in spite of “it”. So the intelligent reader is able to answer his question: the soldier who the speaking voice is referring to are English soldiers and the poem will be an invite to all of them to take part into the conflict and fight for their homeland. The repetition of the adjective “rich” firstly at positive degree then in the superlative one, makes the idea of the fertile land deeper.

Considering the second stanza, the speaking voice recalls the reader’s attention by the repetition of the first line of the poem: “and think” which contributes to confer weight to the following words. The idea of good war is reinforced into the second stanza in which the speaking voice says how an heart, an English heart and eternal mind, will “live” at peace under an English heaven. Furthermore that land in which every soldier could die will be blest and all evil will shed away. In addition the “pulse” in the eternal mind conveys the idea of something vivid, alive even if the material body is wounded and suffering. The repetition of the sound “s” at line number twelve gives to the poem the idea of a better life after the death if one have fought for his country.

The intelligent reader understands the poem is an exhortation to all the men to take part in the conflict in order to become one who is ready to die for his country and this is what makes one a great man.

Considering the poem and its analysis, the reader can identify five key-words for war: to die, dust, evil, dreams, peace.

Also he can identify five key-words for the role of women if the reader consider England as the Mother of whole soldiers: rich earth, to love, breathing, home, heaven.

**“In Flanders Field”**

“In Flanders Field” is a poem written by John Mc Crae, Canadian lieutenant and colonel, on May 1915.

Considering the title, the reader can make some conjectures: the poem might be a commemoration of the victims of the last great conflict during the year 1914 in the first World War. Indeed the intelligent reader also knows that “Flanders Fields” refers to the first Ypres conflict (in 1914).

Looking at the structure, the poem consists of three stanzas: the first one is about five lines, the second one is about four lines, the last one is about six lines. The irregularity of the number of the lines represents a clue to the intelligent reader which understands that the writer is more interested in conferring more importance to the content or the message of the poem than to search a “structural perfection.” Furthermore the length of the stanzas is functional to the content of each one. Indeed the intelligent reader notices that the central stanza is the shortest so he will understand that there will be the focus of the poem. The first one as the function to fix into the reader’s mind the “landscape” where the victims of the First World War live and last but not least, the third stanza has the function to create a point of contact between the victims and who is still alive and is fighting. Moreover, it is the longest stanza because here the intelligent reader can stop and reflect on what it has been said till now and what he is reading.

Looking at the first stanza, the reader fixes into his mind the “landscape” where the victims of the First World War live: it seems to be a relaxed place in contrast with the frenzy of the front. Indeed the speaking voice offers to the reader the image of poppies that blow between the crosses, the larks fly still bravely singing and they are heard scarcely amid the guns below. The intelligent reader once more, can make an hypothesis: as the crosses and the poppies are representative for each victim, also the larks do. So the larks are the victims who are flying on the sky after their death and their singing might be: or their souls that are realising from their bodies or it is their memory into the soldiers which are still alive.

Only on the second stanza the intelligent reader can confirm his first hypothesis (the poem is a commemoration of the victims of the Ypres conflict): on the first line of it the speaking voice shows up and introduces himself. The reader understands that the speaking voice isn’t one but represents who is died during the conflict: “We are the Dead”. The speaking voices offers once more to the reader an image to better understand their “situation”: “felt down, saw sunset glow”; [probably they saw their death glow.]. Reading the line number eight the reader wonders who the dead soldiers loved and who loved them; the reader is obliged to make some conjectures: the subjects the soldiers are revering to might be or their families or God.

Last but not least, taking in consideration the third stanza, the intelligent reader understand that the soldiers want their alive mates to finish what they have started, in addition the victims will not sleep if their mates and probably their fellow countrymen don’t remember them. This means that the victims “aren’t worth” if they will not be remembered. In addition the speaking voices leave the intelligent reader with a final image: the growth of the poppies in Flanders Fields. The reader knows poppy is a flower dedicated to the victims of the First and the Second World Wars and it is used mainly in Britain.

Considering the poem and its analysis, the reader can identify five key-words for war: poppy, gun, dead, love, foe.

**“They”**

“They” is the title of a poem written by the ex-soldier and poet Siegfried Sassoon. It was firstly published in *The Old Huntsman and Other Poem*, the Sassoon’s second collection of poems ended in 1917. The main topic of the work is the great difference between the war idealized by the religious authority and the real consequences on soldiers of the First World War.

The tile is particularly interesting thanks to its conciseness: it’s made by only one word, the personal pronoun “they”. The intelligent reader conjectures about who is represented by the pronoun: are “they” a real group of people? Or “they” is a symbol used to identify a category in particular? Reading the poem, it comes clear that “they” is a synecdoche: “they” represents all the idealized soldiers of the First World War.

The poem is structured into two identical stanzas of six lines. The rhyme scheme is also the same (ABABCC). Moreover, both the stanzas starts with the same idea that boys returned from war will not be the same. The intelligent reader also notices that the incipit and the explicit of the poem coincide: so he understands that the two stanzas are specular but the second probably subverts the meaning of the first one.

The first stanza consists in a sermon by a bishop about the heroic and honorable military services of soldiers during the war. The intelligent reader understands that the “Bishop” is a symbol that represents actually the Church of England and the misrepresented thought of that kind of authority that wanted to encourage soldiers’ services. Indeed the use of the personal pronoun “they” by the bishop conveys the idea of distance between the religious authority and the real soldiers’ life. The repetition of the terms “the boys” or “they” underlines moreover the idealization of soldiers by religion. The rhythm of the first stanza also highlights the insincerity of bishop’s words. Indeed recurring sound alliterations at the end of the lines (for example the letter “b” in the first and fourth lines) and run-on-lines that distribute sentences into two different verses make the bishop’s sermon very rhythmical and mechanic, suggesting the idea of its insincerity and poor conviction. The bishop explains the (false) belief that after the war soldiers has changed thanks to their commitment for a right cause and their fight against Evil. He also quotes Darwinism asserting that their honorable sacrifice will contribute to a better human race.

The second stanza has the function to subvert the bishop’s thought, revealing the true reality of soldiers’ life after war. Indeed, this sestet contrasts with the previous one in its construction and its meaning. First of all, the stanza starts recalling the first line of the first sestet, but now the soldiers are speaking (“the boys reply”). The use of the personal pronoun “we” contrasts with the vagueness of “they” and suggest that something was really experienced, as well as forces the reader to identify with the soldiers’ point of view. Moreover, the undefined name “boys” is substituted with the soldiers’ real names. As a consequence, the idealization of war is broken and the true reality is revealed in all its atrocity. Indeed, the adjective “some” is underlined by the use of cursive and suggest how ironically soldiers confirms to the bishop that they really changed: they have lost their legs, they have gone syphilitic and blind, they are now dying. The meaning of the stanza is totally subverted from the previous one: war must not be idealized and considered something that elevates man, but it must seen throughout the eyes of who fought and lost his family and his friends or his health.

In conclusion, Sassoon’s poem is a critic to the idealization done by the religious authority in order to encourage man to be soldiers. Sassoon strongly believe that war is something terrible and atrocious and that it’s unfair that too much soldiers’ dead aren’t acknowledged by someone. The end of the poem underlines the stubbornness of the Church of England. Indeed the bishop justifies the soldiers’ health problems with the exclaiming how the way of God are different and strange.

Considering the poem and its analysis, the reader can identify five key-words for war: boys, to fight, just cause, blood, death.

**“Glory of Women”**

“The Glory of Women” is a poem written by Siegfried Sassoon in 1917.

Considering the title, the intelligent reader can expect the poem will convey something worth about women because “glory” is a word that evokes celebration. He can expect he poem will celebrate women but he will also understand the speaking voice is playing irony. Generally sonnets are lyrical poetry, so the reader expects he will read something intimate.

Looking at the structure, the poem seems to be made up by only one stanza of fourteen lines. However the reader understands it is a sonnet made of an octave and a sestet: in particular it is made of two quatrain and a final sestet.

In the first quatrain the speaking voice is a soldier or more so it express soldiers’ point of view about women. The speaking voice represents, summarize other human being or other soldiers. Their point of view about women is that women love them when them become “heroes”. Women appreciate the honorable aspect when they take part in war; the speaking voice is criticizing women’s behaviour because they are more interested in what makes men famous. There is an aspect that women don’t take in consideration: they don’t understand what war is really like and this is outlined right from the first line of the poem. Another behaviour of women criticized by the speaking voice is that more a soldier’s story is “hard” more they seem to think to be “complete”. Women think soldiers’ experience at war is something ideal.

The second quatrain expresses the word “glory” of the title. The second quatrain reveals the contradiction of the first one; women don’t seem to understand the real meaning of war: the contradiction is conveyed by the juxtaposition of each word opposite by their significance. Women don’t realize the atrocity of war because they are at home, they are in a way or another distant from the conflict reality. “Love”; “worship”; “live”; “crown” are verbs that express the way women don’t go in depth and the reasons why they don’t realize what war is really like. Words juxtaposition also conveys two different points of view about war: men and women ones. Even the choice of the sonnet as a metrical structure is ironical: there is no love story any lyrical aspect; the sonnet is about suffering and mud.

The function of the sestet is to express that women don’t want to see reality: this is the reason why the reality of the war is made up only by alliteration and others sounds as the repetition of the letter “t” which conveys the idea of shots and bombs. Into the last tercet the addressee of the speaking voice is a “German mother”: the sonnet coherence is kept by the way women love their husbands or boyfriends. Considering the twelfth line of the sonnet, the reader understand he is in front of a vocative use of the language: it precede the accusation to whole women to have a total unrealistic view of war because they dream to become somebody “worthy” by their men’s actions in the conflict.

So the reader understands an historical and social aspect: women built (and build) their identity depending on their men. The reader understands that the speaking voice quoted “mothers” to expand women accusation to mothers which behave as the first one.

Considering the poem and its analysis, the reader can identify five key-words for war: heroes, memories, horror, blood, mud.

Also he can identify five key-words for the role of women: glory, to love, to worship, to crown, to mourn.

**“Dulce et decorum est”**

“Dulce et decorum est” is a poem of “The poems of Wilfred Owen” written in 1920.

The intelligent reader looking at the title, immediately understands the writer quoted the Latin poet Horace, in particular the “Odes”: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori. The reader will be also interested in discover why the writer chose not to quote the whole line. In addition he will wonder what is sweet and honorable. Furthermore he wants to know who is the addressee and why the writer chose Latin words.

Considering the structure, the poem is divided into three stanzas: the first and the second are about eight lines both; the third is about twelve lines. Anyway the first stanza will be divided into two parts: the first one goes from the line number one to the line number four; the second one goes from line number five to the line number eight.

The first and the second stanzas are a sort of story about what is war, about the perception of the war of the speaking voice. It seems to be a memory of his war experience so that the reader may call these line an “introspective” ones. In the third stanza the speaking voice continues his reflection about war but at the same time he involves the reader referring to him directly. This is what makes possible the speaking voice conclusion.

Looking at the first stanza, the intelligent reader notices that the writer to create the image of war and fix it into the reader’s mind, uses a sum of similes: “bent double, like old beggars” “coughing like hags”; “limped on, blood-shod”. Soldiers during war lived in harder conditions than beggars, hags, they “shod blood”; the reader understands the poem is about the atrocity of war that becomes in a way or another a condemnation of it. Also the soldiers are connoted as ones who are “drunk with fatigue”; unable to hear even the hoots of “outstripped Five-Nines” as they became accustomed of them. The idea of the grenade that blows up is conveyed by the repetition of the sounds “r” and “t” and “d” into the words “hoots”; “tired”; “outstripped Five-Nines”; “dropped” and “behind”.

Into the second stanza, the rhythm becomes more fluent by the use of the exclamation: “Gas! Gas! Quick, boys”; also the intelligent reader understands an historical data indeed the term “boys” refers to young male. The writer wants to bring into first position that he major part of soldiers where young men that probably never see again their families. The second stanza better conveys the idea of confusion, of men that were yelling out and stumbling and “flound’ring like a man in fire or lime”. Also in the second stanza there is a reference to the green gas used by soldiers to confuse the enemy and to try to save their lives. These are images that add confusion: the reader tries to see between the green gas as the soldiers used to do but there is a scene, briefly described, about a man who is drowning into that gas while another one can only see. The scene is fixed into the soldier and into the reader’s mind but the difference is that the soldier lived this experience and dreamed to save his mate, the reader can only imagine.

Into the lat stanza, the speaking voice refers to the reader and he invites him to dream what the soldier saw during the war in order to understand that it isn’t worth to die even if for his own homeland: it isn’t “Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori”. Now the intelligent reader understands that Owen didn’t cut apart of the quotation: he chose to put the remainder at the end of the poem giving to the reader more time to reflect about what he is saying and to better fix the poem message into the reader mind.

Considering the poem and its analysis, the reader can identify five key-words for war: blood-shod, dreams, peace, devil, glory.

**“Last post”**

“Last Post” is a poem written by the British Poet Laureate Carol Anne Duffy in 2009. It was commissioned by the BBC to commemorate the deaths of two British veterans from the First World War, Henry Allingham and Harry Patch. The poem was first broadcast on the BBC Radio 4 on 30 July 2009, the day of Allingham's funeral. It is an homage to all the British soldiers who fought and died in the First World War.

The title refers to a bugle call used by the British Infantry in military funerals and ceremonies, the “Last Post”. The choice highlights clearly the memorial function of Duffy’s poem, as well as is a significant sign of the poet’s intention. Indeed the intelligent reader can easily thinks the poem as the poetess’ personal greet to all war dead.

The poem is organized in one stanza of thirty irregular lines. The structure is functional to the development of only one main topic: imagine to tell backwards the First World War. The topic is built through a climax divided into three scenes. In the first one the speaking voice imagines that soldiers can run back from the battlefield to the trenches; in the second one that soldiers can form a cheerful crowd; in the final one that everyone is still able to live his life. The speaking voice chooses to present her dream in which time runs backwards as a cinematographic sequence. Indeed the intelligent reader can easily visualize the scenes thanks to sound alliterations and the use of common and easy language. Besides punctuation, made of frequents commas and pauses, gives to the poem a slow rhythm that is suddenly quickened sometimes by the recurring run-on-lines. The main effect is an high dramatization of scenes.

In the first part the scene of soldiers running back to their trenches to kiss their photograph from home is connoted as a beautiful dream. Indeed, the poem starts whit two lines taken from Wilfried Owens’s “Dulce et Decorum est”, a poem in which war is connoted as the terrible and atrocious thing it is. The speaking voice, using Owen’s work, obtains two results: to show her deep dislike about war and to create a contrast between Owen’s terrible dreams and her beautiful ones. Indeed Owen used to imagine dying soldiers suffering, while she imagines to save all the British soldiers from a sure war dead. The repetition of the verb “to die” at the eleventh line highlights the only one end possible during the First World War. Another quote from Owen’s work is represented by the twelfth line (“Dulce – No – Decorum – No – Pro patria mori”). The speaking voice clearly denies that war is sweet and appropriate, while she doesn’t contradict the death for one’s own country. In addition to Owen’s quotations, the alliteration of the sibilant sound “s”, prevalent in the section, contributes to render the scene as a dream whispered to someone.

In the second scene soldiers toss away their bayonets and get together to a square to eat Fench bread and drink coffee. Then they return home singing the “Tippeary” song. The scene is highly patriotic: firstly the name spoken at the sixteenth line are very British; secondly, the “Tippeary” song is a very well-known British hall song about the distance from home that became very popular during the First World War. The intelligent reader understands that quoting very popular elements in the British imaginary is both an homage to the speaking voice’s country and a choice functional to move the designed audience of the poem. Moreover, in this lines the beautiful dream of safe soldiers becomes more a desperate dream. Indeed this part is characterized by the resurrection of soldiers, conveyed by the words “dead” and “alive” and by the image of man “shaking dried mud from their hair”, that makes the dream even more unreal.

The third and conclusive part is shorter and characterized by an list of all the dead soldiers have lost and the speaking voice’s imagination tries to return to them. “Love, work, children, talent, English beer, good food” become symbols of all the great and small things that war has removed from thousands of man. The speaking voice’s dream becomes now what it is really: a moving use of imagination that allows all the dead soldiers to revive in her mind. Poetry is a great instrument to remember all the man that unfairly dead during the First World War and a nostalgic and evocative way to allow them to live, but it can’t really do that. The last line seems to coincide perfectly with the incipit of the poem to form a new sentence: “If poetry could tell it backwards, then it would”.

In conclusion, the poem is more than the great and moving homage to the dead British veterans that the BBC requested. It is also a demonstration of how the mind works: instead of moving forward our natural inclination when we lose someone is to move backwards to find them again. It is an invite for British people to not forget and to keep the soldiers alive in their mind.

Considering the poem and its analysis, the reader can identify five key-words for war: dreams, mud, blood, home, to die.