

The Soldier
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Se dovessi morire, pensa solo questo di me:
che c'è qualche angolo di un campo straniero
che è sempre Inghilterra. Dovrebbe esserci
in quella ricca terra, una più ricca polvere nascosta
una polvere che l'Inghilterra generò, a cui diede forma, rese consapevole
diede, una volta, i suoi fiori da amare, le sue vie da esplorare,
un corpo inglese, un'aria inglese che respira,
lavata dai fiumi, benedetta dal sole di casa.

E pensa, questo cuore, liberatosi da tutto il male,
una pulsazione nello spirito eterno, niente meno
ritorna indietro i pensieri dati dall'Inghilterra;
ciò che ha visto e ciò che ha sentito. I sogni felici come i suoi giorni;
e la risata, imparata dai suoi amici; e gentilezza,
in cuori in pace, sotto un cielo inglese.

1. What traits do you think a good soldier should possess?

To my mind, a good soldier should be loyal and faithful to his earth, should be able to cooperate with his mates and indulgent to those who has defeated. A good soldier should also be courageous and respectful.

2. Read and say:

- who is speaking: the poet is
- if he is afraid or not: no, he isn't. He thinks life is the best thing to give back to England for all her beauties.
- where his grave will be: his grave will be English herself
- How his dead body will enrich the soil: He will have left a monument of England in a foreign land, transforming a foreign soil into England
- Whether there is any emphasis on war: Yes it is. The soldier says that dying for England gains the status of religious salvation, wherever he dies. His death for England will be a salvation of his soul. It is therefore the most desirable of all fates.
- who do you think the poet is speaking to: he is speaking to English people

3. The rhyme scheme and what kind of poem it is

The rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCD EFG EFG; it is a sonnet.

4. Find the images referring to death. What idea do they suggest?

In line 1 the poet says "If I should die". The reader can imagine the protagonist is fighting with the army so it suggests a precarious life. Moreover, if the protagonist will die, he will probably have a glorious death since he has fought for his country. The images referring to death portray death for one's country

as a noble end and England as the noblest country for which to die. The soldier-speaker of the poem seeks to find redemption through sacrifice in the name of the country.

5. List the images connected with England under the following headings:

- landscape: richer dust, English air, rivers, sun of home
- inner growth and private feelings: only life will be the appropriate thing to give to his great motherland in return for all the beautiful and the great things she has given to him, and made him what he is.

6. Define the tone of the poem and summaries its themes.

"The soldier" is an elegy on sacrifice. The subject is ostensibly war but there is nothing in the poem that suggests warfare as such. Instead the poem justifies the soldier's willing sacrifice on "a foreign field" an explanation that has more to do with idealized concepts about oneself and a one's country than the causes of war. There is nothing about the enemy or fighting and only one direct reference to death. It reflects the strong sense of nationalism throughout Western civilization in the early twentieth century.