Analysis of In Flanders fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Right from the start the reader may ask why poet refers to the field of Flanders; anyway interesting is to notice the alliteration creates by the two terms.

The first element reader can notice is the opposition between the blowing of poppies (image of birth) and the image of death(“between the crosses, row on row, that mark our place” line2-3).

Moreover, the second opposition is between the larks that “still bravely singing, fly scarce heard amid the guns below”(line 4-5) and again the crosses that are underground.

The intelligent reader may think there is not a real opposition, indeed the poet wants to compare the three elements to give an example of how soldiers have to be: even if they will day, they have to be brave, as the larks, and they have not to surrender as poppies that always blows.

Thanks to the personal pronoun “our”, the reader understands the narrator is inner the narration.

Even in the second stanza there is the first plural person narrator: “we are the Dead” (line 6) and “we lived” (line 7).

The second stanza represents a vivid image of death thanks to the first phrase: “We are the Dead”(line 6). Moreover the real opposition between the past, when the soldiers were lived (“Short days ago/We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,/Loved and were loved”; line 6,7,8,9)and the present, when the soldiers are the dead provokes in the reader anguish and fear because of an imminent death.

At the contrary the poet thinks the death of the soldiers is an element of responsibility for the following soldiers: “Take up our quarrel with the foe:/To you from failing hands we throw/
The torch; be yours to hold it high” ;line 10,11,12)

By saying torch John McCrae may refers to the statue of liberty: it hints at the fact that the statue of liberty holds up the torch lighting a path way into America.

This is a poem of remembrance, a call for those living not to forget the dead who are buried in a foreign land. It demands that the living remember why the fallen died, so that they did not die in vain. This is one of the most famous poems of the First World War.