“Generals Die In Bed”

Poem: In Flanders Fields By John McCrae

We were poppies to sympathetsize with the victims of war. These poppies also generate revenue to help support veterans. John McCrae was in his late 30s when he wrote the poem. He served as a medical officer in the first world war. Harrison dedicates the text to the bewildered youths, and they are British, Canadian, Australian, etc. The poem is very rhythmic in the beginning, and Harrison’s text is disruptive and questions societal norms. Harrison’s text does not romanticise war but criticizes it. The last three lines of McCrae’s poem sends a message: Don’t forget what they did, and send a message to those who break faith in patriotism. The war it self is questioned. There are a lot of oxymoron in the book. The men raise a lot of questions, and a lot of things contradict each other.

Poem: America’s Answer By R.W. Lilliard

This poem is America’s answer to war. It is an agreement that war is a novel endeavour. Harrison talks about machineries and fragility of human bodies where human senses are confounded.

Poem: The Fallen By Duncan Campbell Scott

3rd, 4th stanza; master of god – in whose eyes can war be justified

Poem: The Somme Valley 1917

Prewett was a shell-shocked Canadian soldier who was recuperating in the same hospital as Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfrid Owen in the Craighlockhart War Hospital. The war dragged on for almost 4 years. The ending is: “why do you weep?”.

Poem: Violets

The reality of war can lead to a different conclusion based off of the poet’s interpretation.

Poem: “In The Trenches”

The title is a direct reference to Harrison’s text. The poppies that were once free and blowing in the wind are now smashed, and lying on the trench floor. The poppy is not a novel symbol but a fake one.

Poem: Dulce et Decorum Est

Blood shod: Soldier’s shoes are filled with blood. This poem is very dark. It is written on the front line. How come McCrae did not write about his experience? The power of the myths about war overcame the lies and truth. This poem is very dark.

Poem: Break of Day In The Trenches

Poppy is a symbol of war that needs to be dealt with. This poem de-romanticises war. As far as the narrator is concerned, the English soldiers are the same as the German soldiers. “It seems you inwardly grin…” rats have higher chance of surviving than the soldiers.

Poem: Suicide In The Trenches

Siegfried Sassoon is the son of the founder of the Sassoon company. One of the things Harrison was really concerned about was the relationship between the civilians and the soldiers.

There are a lot of negative comments toward the book. They were bashing and extremely rude to Harrison. A lot of negative comments were from people who were invested deeply and involved in wars. The novel is a disturbing novel, and it offends people who had given their lives to the very thing that Harrison was troubled about. However, there were a lot of positive comments about the book. A lot of people admired and appreciated the realty of the book. There were two opinions about this text.

Harrison sees the enemy as the same as his friends. He sees the german soldiers in the same way as the Canadian soldiers. In his mind, they were all disadvantaged and their actions do not represent themselves. Harrison’s book is dedicated to the enemy, and this upset a lot of people.

War recruitment posters were… 1. Soldiers were happy, smoking a pipe, and lolly-gagging. 2. Toward a specific descent of people (i.e. jewish, irish, etc.), but targeted young, white, males. 3. Played the guilt card in order to force people to enlist. Showed a picture of a guy fighting and asked why aren’t you? 4. Romanticized war and death in war = heroicness. Anyone who did not sign up is a coward.

p.19: “We leave the piles of rubble that was once a little Flemish town”

The technology of war has turned a town into a field of rubble. Artist A.Y. Jackson paints a picture of this. In the middle he draws the military and frames them using broken house. The result of war is death, and destruction as everything and everyone gets bombarded. Nature is at risk in war.

p.6: “… sack of potatoes… “

The trains can be seen as trenches. Soldiers spent most of their time traveling in trains and ships. They rarely had time to train and practice and get better. A lot of soldiers were unexperienced and untrained. There is no preparation for war. The training does not make a difference because the power of bombs trumps training.

Chapter One: Recruits

“… dribble… carousal… down the line”

“Red lights” = Brothel and prostitution

“… regulation Army issue” = Acting out of order

“jaundiced” = Yellow, sick, and liver damage

“… I dips into her pocketbook and sneaks me two bucks” = Commodification of women

“… God didn’t make your bodies for that” = Sex outside of marriage is bad

“Sleek men” = Upper class and don’t need to go to war

“The floor is slimy and wet” = Trench life was slimy and wet. The train’s setting was already resembling trench life

“… sacks of potatoes…” = Unable to change anything. No way to prepare for war

“… shell traveled faster than its sound” = Training is useless because everything happens so fast

“… artillery duel” = Language is critical

Harrison always takes it a step further than he needs to and continues on moving the stakes just a little further. He continues to do this each time, line after line to shake the reader.

p.36: Two descriptions, one of vehicle, and one of the horses. Reference to famous painting by Picasso.

Chapter: “Bombardment”

p.60-61: Trench scene: Living a sub-terrainian life. Guns are fired all the time at the soldiers. When you are face to face with chaos it doesn’t matter if you are alone or in a group, the inevitable disorder will ruin everything.

Harrison always uses language to diminish human beings. They are underground, beneath, etc. However, he always shows the human side of the enemy. This is a huge theme in the book: Humanization. Harrison always change perspectives and asks the audience to be in his shoes. He wants the audience to see the battlefield from his perspective inside the trenches.

This book was bashed for being to violent and graphic. But this gruesome nature is what gives this book the raw truth about war. This is a very dark passage and it has to be dark to describe the truth about war. The posters advertise about being a good solider, but the two words cannot be used together in a sentence b/c it is ironic and opposing. War is a chaotic, violent, and gruesome event.

p.71: The major theme: Allowing people to believe that war is not terrible. And if you are a soldier then you are good. If you take prisoners and kill the enemy, you are a good soldier doing the right thing.

Chapter: London

Gladys is a companion for the soldiers on leave. Gladys is a sex worker who provides soldiers with comfort.

p.94: “You silly boy. I thought you had really murdered some one”

Harrison never judges the hookers for being hookers. He never brings up the issue of selling her body and it is completely irrelevant. Harrison is more concerned that Gladys does not understand what war is about. She does not understand that the enemy is human too and the system is corrupt for murdering people. Harrison never condemns women for being hookers.

Chapter 11

A few months before the end of the war. Relationship between the authority and how they respond to authority has changed – Canadian Arms.

p.118: Language can be used to make people do things that is not in their best interest. The lesson of the text is how language can be used to control people.

p.138: It is easy to get people to do things by marketing and using appropriate language. Language is more than descriptive, it is prescriptive. It tells us how to behave.

p.121: Everyone on both sides is making a profit out of the war. It’s a radical position to come to. The novel’s about to end, and now the soldiers are asking questions about what they’re really doing.

p.133: Soldiers are in control if they stop following orders, and there will be no wars. People who invested money into the war were disappointed by this novel. The soldiers understand that they are pawns and used to fight wars.

Watch what you are told and understand how you can be manipulated by language.

p.149: