**Dulce et Decorum Est -**Literature Notes

**Please note that the information given on this poem is not meant to replace any material given in the classroom setting. It is a very BASIC giude to enable a literal understanding of the poem. Metaphorical interpretations should be sought in the classroom.**

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| **The physical structure of this poem has been altered from the original layout in the text.**  3.Bent double, 1.like old beggars under sacks Knock-kneed, 1.coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge, Till on the 4.haunting flares we turned our backs And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  2.Men marched asleep. 2.Many had lost their boots But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind; Drunk with fatigue; 5.deaf even to the hoots [[[[[‘Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.  Gas! Gas! Quick boys! - 6.An ecstasy of fumbling, Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time; But someone still was yelling out and stumbling, And 1.flound'ring like a man in fire or lime ... 7.Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light, As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.  In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, 8.He  plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.  If in some smothering dreams you too could pace Behind the 9.wagon that we flung him in, 2.And watch the white eyes writhing in his face, 1.His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin; If you could hear, at every jolt, the :”P  blood  Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs, 1.Obscene as cancer, 1.bitter as the cud Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,- My friend, you would not tell with such a high zest To children ardent for some desperate glory, The old Lie: 10.Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori.  Owen, W. 'Dulceet Decorum Est' in A World of Prose. Edited by Mark McWatt and Hazel Simmonds McDonald. Pearson Education Ltd, 2005. | **This is the OPINION of one individual, which might not coincide with the views of others.**  LITERAL MEANING [Wilfred Owen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilfred_Owen), the poet, tells of his first hand experience in war. He tells the tale of tired and wounded soldiers walking through dirt and sludge. Suddenly, there is a warning about [gas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemical_weapons_in_World_War_I), which the soldiers hurriedly and awkwardly heed by donning their[helmets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Various_gas_masks_WWI.jpg). Unfortunately, one soldier is too late in donning the helmet and his companions watch him 'drowning' in the gas. The unfortunate soldier was thrown in the back of a wagon, where it is implied that he was left to die. The persona points out that if you (the reader/ listener) could have witnessed these events, then you would not tell children the old lie: dulce et decorum est pro patria mori (It is sweet and honourable to die for one's country).  Picture  LITERARY DEVICES 1.SIMILE   * Stanza 1, line 1: This simile introduces the exhaustion of the soldiers. * Stanza 1, line 2: This emphasizes not only the tiredness of the soldiers, but the fact that they might be sick as well. * Stanza 2, line 19: This device gives a visual image of how the soldier physically reacted to the gas. Floundering implies flopping about, therefore, the soldier was flopping about violently. We know it was violent because fire and lime illicit excruciating pain. * Stanza 4, line 39: This device gives a visual image of the expression on the soldier's face. This is a particularly grotesque image that highlights the soldier in the throes of death. |

* Stanza 4, line 39: Cancer is a horrible disease that takes many lives on a daily basis, therefore, to compare this dying soldiers face to this disease is to emphasize the agony that the soldier was going through, which was reflected on his face.
* Stanza 4, lines 39-40: This is another graphic comparison that compares the soldier's face to incurable sores. 'Sores' is a disgusting visual image of degradation which, in turn, highlights the soldier in the throes of death.

ALLITERATION

* Stanza 1, line 7: This device points to the level of fatigue that the soldiers were undergoing.
* Stanza 1, lines 7-9: This highlights not only the fatigue that the soldiers were feeling, but the fact that they were injured as well.
* Stanza 4, lines 29-30: This device highlights a visually graphic death mask. The soldier is in the throes of impending death.

IMPORTANT WORDS/ PHRASES  
3.'Bent double'  
The soldiers are bent over with fatigue. It is very significant that the poet/ persona initiates the poem by highlighting the exhaustion of the soldiers. He is trying to emphasize the harsh realities of war.  
4.'haunting flares'  
flares are typically used to signal distress. The flare is fired from a flare gun, in the air, where rescue crafts, at sea or in the air, can have a general idea of the location of the soldiers who are in distress. Therefore, to describe the flares as haunting implies that the soldiers are severly distressed by their situation.  
5.'deaf even to the hoots of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.'  
Five-nines are German 5.9 artillery shells. This means that bullets were firing around them while they were walking. The extent of the soldiers' tiredness is also emphasized at this point because the soldiers do not hear the shells going off around them.   
6.'An ecstasy of fumbling'  
The word ecstasy, that is used to describe the fumbling, implies the level of panic that this one word (gas) elicits. The soldiers' were so tired that they could not even hear the five nines, but this one word immediately wakes them up.   
7.'Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light, as under a green sea, I saw him drowning.'  
This describes exactly what the outside world looks like through the lens of a gas mask. The effect of the gas is seen in the mention of the word 'drown'. It implies that the unfortunate soldier could not breathe.  
8.'He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.'  
This is the very graphic result of breathing in the gas. It is a very violent reaction, as seen in the word 'plunge'. The dying soldier did not simply reach for the persona/poet, but he did so in a desperate manner, while all the time being unable to breathe.  
9.'wagon that we flung him in'    
The statement implies that the soldier was left for dead in a wagon. No regard was shown to him, through the use of the word 'flung'. This implies that war is heartless and tragic.  
10.'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.'   
This statement literally means it is sweet and honourable to die for one's country. The persona/ poet clearly does NOT believe this to be the case.

[](http://www.bulbsoup.com/uploads/6/0/8/4/6084140/1248548_orig.jpg)

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MOOD/ ATMOSPHERE  
The [mood](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is reflective. The persona/ poet is thinking about his experiences in WW1.  
  
TONE  
The general [tone](http://www.bulbsoup.com/ln-comprehension.html) of the poem is both sarcastic and ironic. The persona/ poet tries to present a visual of the realities of war while using the haunting Latin words that contradict that reality. It is , in fact, NOT sweet and honourable to die for one's country.