

## Poems

The war gave people experiences far beyond the range of their normal lives. Many used poetry to express their feelings about these new experiences.

**D** From 'The Soldier' by Rupert Brooke.

'If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth and richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
A body of England's breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.'

**E** From 'Dulce et Decorum Est' by Wilfrid Owen.

'Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge...

...Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,  
A flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...  
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,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, -  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.'

('Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori' means 'It is sweet and noble to die for your country'.)

**F** From 'Suicide in the Trenches' by Siegfried Sassoon.

'You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye  
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,  
Sneak home and pray you'll never know  
The hell where youth and laughter go.'

**Fact:** Your generation could be the last generation to have living relatives who fought in either World War in this century. That means that you have a very important job in making sure that their story is told to future generations, and learning from past mistakes.

### Task 1:

Trench-foot was a disease caused by the muddy and water-logged conditions of the trenches. Soldier's legs went septic and sometimes had to be cut off. Shell-shock was another condition you may have heard of.

**Imagine you are a soldier in this war.**

**Write a diary entry dated November 8<sup>th</sup> 1914 relating what you did on that day. Try to capture some of your thoughts and feelings, and describe the conditions you are living (and fighting) in.**

### Task 2:

**Write a letter addressed to your future children (as if it were to be locked in a box until their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday). What things about the 20<sup>th</sup> century would you tell them about?**

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