

## Year 12 English – Melton Secondary College

### Reading and Responding Revision – Wilfred Owen ‘War Poems’

The Reading and Responding section is asking you to consider **what** the author wants the audience to think, see, feel, believe or question, and **how** they use the text to do this.

The VCAA exam criteria states the following:

#### Section A – Text response (Reading and responding)

- detailed knowledge and understanding of the selected text, demonstrated appropriately in response to the topic
- development in the writing of a coherent and effective discussion in response to the task
- controlled use of expressive and effective language appropriate to the task

Suggested Poems:

- Inspection
- With an identity disc
- Anthem for doomed youth
- 1914
- [I saw his round mouths crimson]
- Apologia pro poemate meo
- Miners
- The Letter
- Dulce et decorum est
- The Dead Beat
- Insensibility
- The Show
- Futility
- S.I.W
- The Next War
- Greater Love
- The last laugh
- Mental Cases
- The Parable of the old man and the young
- Disabled
- A Terre
- The Sentry
- Smile, Smile, Smile

This is by no means all of Owen’s poems, but should give you a wide range of poems to call on for the exam. If possible you should look at some of the other poems in the anthology.

The following tasks should be completed prior to the exam. You can do them in any order you like.

- Re-read all of the poems along with reading your annotations along with making any more annotations as you see fit. You should get into the practice of reading with a pen or pencil in your hand. It is not just about making notes, you may have some questions of the text you would like to explore.
- For each of the poems write a short summary that covers the main points of the poem. You should write in full sentences and practice using poetic terms along with extending your vocabulary. You should also include quotes from the text to support your point of view.

Eg. ‘In Dulce et decorum est’ Owen challenges the reader to put themselves in the battle and witness it from his perspective. He highlights the horrors of war and the impact it had on the common soldier ...

- The next step is to group the poems together to put the poems in groups that cover similar ideas or themes. This will help when trying to connect the poems in your essay. Complete the rest of the table.

• <b>Dying in war</b>	• <b>The Impact of war</b>	• <b>The pointlessness of war</b>
• Dulce et decorum est	• Mental Cases	• Anthem for doomed youth
•	•	•
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- You should also read through the introduction to the anthology so that you have a greater understanding of Owen and his role in the war. It would also be worth re-watching the Youtube clip that we watched in class. The link is: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0nGcsqU5yA>

- **Key Lines**

- For each of the poems that you have studied choose the most important lines from the poem. You will need to create sentences that discuss the importance of these lines. This will help to prepare you for including quotes in your writing.

- **Poetry techniques.**

- It is important when discussing the poetry of Wilfred Owen that you use the metalanguage of poetry to discuss the poems. For each of the following techniques write 2-3 different sentences that discuss the use of the techniques.
  - Personification
  - Onomatopoeia
  - Alliteration
  - Iambic Pentameter
  - Sonnet form
  - Similes
  - Metaphors
  - Allegory
  - Rhyme structure
  - Rhythm
  - Any other techniques you would like to discuss
  - Eg. Owen's use of similes in 'Dulce et decorum est' highlight the insidious nature of war and the impact on the soldiers by comparing them to 'hags'.

- **Vocabulary**

- It is important when expressing your ideas about Wilfred Owen's poetry that you use appropriate vocabulary to help express your ideas more clearly and succinctly. For the following words write out the definition and then use the word to discuss an element of Owen's poetry. You should try and create a couple of sentences in order to get comfortable with the words.

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Futility        | 10. Condemn       |
| 2. Naivety         | 11. Juxtaposition |
| 3. Personification | 12. Mortality     |
| 4. Dehumanisation  | 13. Disenchanted  |
| 5. Tenderness      | 14. Visceral      |
| 6. Contempt        | 15. Abhorrent     |
| 7. Fatuous         | 16. Didactic      |
| 8. Sardonic        | 17. Ubiquitous    |
| 9. Subversive      | 18. Insidious     |

- **Verbs work**

- It is important that you use a variety of verbs when discussing Owen's poetry in order to develop a more analytical approach. Create a list of verbs that you could use when discussing Owen's poetry and use these in a sentence. Some suggestions have been done already but you should look for more examples.

- Challenges – Owen challenges the readers to question their views on war...
- Questions
- Attacks
- Positions
- Now come up with your own ideas

- **Practice prompts:**

- Now that you have worked on your vocabulary and verbs you can start to put these together in order to complete a response to a prompt. You do not need to write on all of the prompts but you should attempt to do at least a few of them.
- You do not always need to write a full essay, you could write a short paragraph response or write up a plan of your main ideas, you could make a list of the poems that you would use to support your ideas.

- Remember you should now be writing under timed conditions. Give yourself **five minutes planning time** and then **one hour of writing time**. This will help you to prepare for the exam.
1. 'Owen's poems show resentment towards the generals and others who encourage war.'
  2. "Drooping tongues from jaws that slob their relish,  
Baring teeth that leer like skulls' teeth wicked"  
'Wilfred Owen's poetry evokes the obscene horrors of war'
  3. 'Owen's poems reveal tenderness and compassion towards those whose lives have been destroyed by the war.' Discuss.
  4. 'Many of Owen's poems speak of a conspiracy of silence.' Discuss.
  5. 'It is hard to say who or what is the greatest enemy in the poetry of Wilfred Owen, for his bitterness is directed at more than one target.' Discuss.
  6. 'The power of Owen's poetry lies in the synthesis between realism and romantic depictions.' Discuss.
  7. 'It is not only the subject matter of the collection, but the voice in which it is written that makes Owen's poetry so unsettling.' Discuss.
  8. "These men are worth/Your tears." ('Apologia Pro Poemate Meo')  
'Owen does not let us view the experiences of the soldiers from a comfortable distance.'  
Discuss.
  9. 'In Owen's war poems, the imagery leads us to focus more on the living than the dead.'  
Discuss.
  10. 'Owen's poems reveal tenderness and compassion towards those whose lives have been destroyed by the war.' Discuss.

### **Responding to a prompt:**

Remember that you should now be in the practice of highlighting the key terms in the prompt and should be able to paraphrase the prompt in your own words.

These highlighted words should be used in constructing your introduction and should also be used, or synonyms, in the body of your essay to ensure that you stay connected to the prompt and don't fall into re-telling the story.

Planning – Once you have highlighted the key terms, it is useful to spend some time planning. Rather than just think about what ideas connect to the key terms, take a broader approach.

Remember in your introduction that you need to clearly demonstrate your point of view on the prompt and then present the main ideas that will form the basis of your body paragraphs for the rest of the essay. Remember that you need to think broadly in regards to some prompts as there may be some implied ideas that you will need to explore.

**Example.**

‘In Owen’s war poems, the imagery leads us to focus more on the living than the dead.’ Discuss.

In this prompt it asks you to discuss, so that you may in fact look at other ideas. In this case, some of Owen’s poetry may focus on the dead, so you could use this as an idea. Remember the prompt uses the word more, which would suggest that a lot of his poetry does focus on the living but not all of it, so therefore you would need to focus on this for some of your work to show a more rounded understanding of the prompt.

Think about all of the characters, not just the main ones and consider how these characters connect to the prompt this will give you a much broader exploration of the text, rather than just focussing on the main characters.

This would be the same with the Wilfred Owen poetry that you need to consider all of the poems you have studied and think about how these could be used to present ideas on the prompt.

When discussing the poetry, try and connect poems in your paragraph to help develop your ideas don’t just rely on one poem to support your point of view. You can do this by using conjunctive adverbs such as furthermore, in contrast, similarly, however etc. to help connect your ideas.