Wilfred Owen, *The War Poems*

# Lesson 9: ‘Exposure’

Last time: ‘Futility’

* The futility and meaninglessness of war
* Powerlessness in the face of death
* Frustration that the dead soldier cannot be revived
* A critique of how God does not (cannot?) stop the war, despite his ability(?) to create man out of clay – and a realisation that maybe the Christian creation myth is false.
* A critique of war.

# Tone and mood

**Tone:** The speaker’s attitude to what is presented.

**Mood:** The feeling that is invoked in the audience, and the atmosphere that is created.

# Individually or in pairs

Describe the tone and mood (atmosphere) in ‘Futility’ and how it is created. Support your answer with quotes from the poem, e.g. by making a semantic map.

Choose one or more of these words:

* **Tone:** Frustrated, angry, disillusioned, accusatory, disappointed
* **Mood:** Calm, aggressive, helpless, confident, depressed, fragile

# Definitions

* **Pararhyme** is a type of half-rhyme that occurs when the same pattern of consonants is used, but where the vowel changes, e.g., brambles/rumbles and crisp/grasp. <https://poemanalysis.com/literary-device/pararhyme/>
* **Sibilance:** a specific kind of consonance: hissing sounds in several words in the same verse line, e.g., **S**am **s**old **s**even venomou**s s**erpent**s**
* **Assonance:** same vowel sound in several words: ‘L**i**ght the f**i**re’, ‘He s**e**nt that v**e**ry m**e**ssage’

# Listen to ‘Exposure’

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ux3s8qQBFt4>

# Read ‘Exposure’ aloud in pairs or groups.

Take turns reading the poem aloud stanza by stanza (the oldest person reads the first stanza, and then take a stanza each till you have read it all). Identify the rhyme pattern and the metre.

# Analysis of ‘Exposure’

EACH GROUP MAKES NOTES ON AN A3 SIZE PAPER that you annotate and hang on the wall.

**Question:**

*How and to what effect does the poem ‘Exposure’ express how the soldiers are exposed to the weather and the waiting?*

# Share your analysis (15 min)

The oldest person (the expert☺) stays with the poster while the others go out separately to listen what others have found (10 min). Then come back to explain to the expert what the others said (5 min).

**Additional questions if you feel you need them (optional)**

1. Take turns reading the poem aloud stanza by stanza (the oldest person reads the first stanza, and then take a stanza each till you have read it all). Identify the rhyme pattern and the metre.
2. Characterise the setting that the soldiers are in and how they experience it. Include, for example,
   1. the repetition of the sentence “But nothing happens”
   2. the use and effect of sensory imagery
   3. the use and effect of personification
   4. the use and effect of assonance
   5. the use and effect of rhetorical questions
   6. the use and effect of sibilance
   7. the use and effect of alliteration
   8. the use and effect of tricolon
   9. the use and effect of metaphors, e.g., “on us the doors are closed”
   10. the mood/atmosphere (consult the wheel)
   11. the waning power of religion
   12. the significance of the title.
3. What is the purpose and message of the poem? In relation to this, make a final interpretation of the poem, including the significance of the title.