

**Chapter 27 Viewpoint Activity**



Many young men who went to war with high ideals of patriotism soon became opponents of war (textbook pages 701–702). In these poems, two young British soldier-poets respond to their war experience. Brooke, a handsome athlete who was already a well-known poet, died early in the war. Owen, a decorated hero, was killed in action a week before the war ended. The title of his poem comes from a Latin phrase meaning “It is sweet and right to die for one’s country.” ♦ *As you read, think about each writer’s reactions. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

CHAPTER 27

**Soldier-Poets View World War I**

**Rupert Brooke, “The Soldier”**

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 a 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 suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the Eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England  
    given,  
Her sights and sounds, dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an  
    English heaven.

Source: *Modern British Poetry*, ed. Louis Untermeyer (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964).

**Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”**

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.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines [shells] that  
    dropped behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound’ring like a man in fire of 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.



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**Questions to Discuss**

1. What does Brooke remember about his life in England?
2. In Owen’s poem, what weapon of war do the soldiers encounter in the second verse? What do they do? What happens to one of them?
3. **Making Comparisons** Compare the two pictures of war—and of dying in war—that these poets give. If Brooke had lived long enough to serve in trench war, do you think he might have written differently?

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