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| **Literature Paper 2 Section B: Anthology Poetry****Learning compendium****‘Exposure’ Owen** |
| Key ideas\*The poem focuses upon the misery felt by WW1 soldiers who are waiting for periods of time in the trenches. (During the Somme, over 60,000 British soldiers died in one night.)\*In terms of fighting/being at battle, there is nothing happening.\*However the soldiers are still in extreme danger due to the terrible weather conditions.\*Furthermore the waiting also has a negative impact upon their mental strength and resilience: there is an overpowering feeling of despair and a loss of hope.\*By the end of the poem there is sense of hopelessness and despair where the men see their deaths as inevitable.\*Owen his poem to show the reality of war. There is a feeling of injustice running through the poem that the soldiers may die due to being ‘exposed’ to the brutal weather conditions. The poet’s tone is provoking and emotive language is used to upset the reader. |
| Form and structureAutobiographical.The poem is written in first person plural in order to present the collective suffering of the soldiers.Eight stanzas of a regular pattern of five lines. The last line of each stanza is purposefully shorter and finishes with the feelings/attitudes of the soldiers. They also emphasise the pointlessness of what is going on. Alternatively the shorter line could be seen to represent the lack of activity or hope of the men.There is a regular rhyme scheme of abbac. Owen has employed the use of half rhyme, in order to create an unsettling feel throughout the poem. It also could represent the monotonous nature of the men’s experience. |
| LanguagePresentation of the soldiersThe soldiers are distressed and agitated. They are unsettled by the lack of noise.‘Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous’----4 verbs used to show ‘on edge’ the soldiers are feeling: the uncertainty plays on their mental strength and resilience.They feel helpless and have lost hope and focus. Their minds wander- they are no longer mentally alert.‘Slowly our ghosts drag home…Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed.’Metaphors used to show how the men believe they will die in the trenches. They are being slowly tortured by their minds.They are powerless and victims. The weather is the ‘victor’ of the battle.‘We cringe in holes.’The use of the verb ‘cringe’ may have connotations of a weak and repressed animal. (Therefore may be viewed as zoomorphism.) The men are ‘shells’ of themselves. Presentation of the weatherOwen provides a detailed description of the weather and how it ‘attacks’ the men.‘Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us’----personification and verbs used to show the wind as a relentless dictator.‘Rain soaks and clouds sag stormy.’ Verb used to indicate the almost ‘deluge’ of the rain as constant.‘Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces’---Personification and verb used to show how the men are at risk of hypothermia and frost bite.‘Tonight, this frost will fasten on this mud and us,Shrivelling many hands…’Frost is again seen as attacking the soldiers and making the job of burying dead soldiers almost impossible.Presentation of natureNature is also seen at war/ attacking the soldiers.‘Dawn massing in the east her melancholy armyAttacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey’The poet has subverted the idea of dawn which is usually symbolic of hope to being symbolic of despair. The colour ‘grey’ could also be linked to the German army as their uniforms were grey.Presentation of timeTime seems endless and repetitive in the poem.‘We only know war lasts’ and ‘But nothing happens’ show that the men has been left for an indefinite amount of time.Due to the fact that the soldiers have such a large amount of time being active, they become disorientated and reality becomes distorted.‘So we drowse, sun-dozed’ ---Use of verb suggests a lack of awareness. This is also reinforced by ‘All their eyes are ice.’ This metaphor describes both the dead soldiers and the living soldiers, showing that they have lost their emotional sense. They are also ‘disassociated’ with the environment that they are in. |
| Feelings and attitudesSuffering and isolationHopelessness |
| ThemesWar and reality of conflictPolitical |
| Compare with…‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ (representation of a group of soldiers/ representation of war/battles)‘Bayonet Charge’ (representation of a soldier)‘Remains’ (representation of a soldier- modern view)‘Kamikaze’ (exploration of ‘duty’ in war) |
| Key quotations ‘Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us’‘Slowly our ghosts drag home…Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed.’‘All their eyes are ice.’  |
| Glossary **Merciless** – unforgiving; cruel; brutal; harsh **Salient –** a piece of land/section of fortification that juts out to form an angle, or an outward bulge in a line of military attack or defence **Sentries** – a soldier stationed to keep guard **Brambles** – a tough, prickly, wild shrub **Gunnery** – firing of heavy guns **Sag** – sink or slump under weight or pressure **Melancholy** – sad and thoughtful; no obvious cause **Ranks** – position in the armed forces **Successive** – following one another**Lingering –** lasting for a long time **Stealth**– cautious **Glozed** – a combination of glowing and glazed **Rejoice** – celebrate **Invincible** – too powerful to be defeated or overcome **Loath** – unwilling **Puckering** – contracting into wrinkles and folds **Burying-party** – group of people in charge of burying the dead **Grasp** – seize and hold firmly |