

Explain that quote!

Teaching notes

Photocopy and cut up sets of the cards on the first two pages. Students should match each quotation from the poem with the appropriate explanation of its effect. The last six quotations have no explanation, so students should come up with their own explanations for these. They could do so through group discussion or by writing them onto blank cards. The whole class could feed back their comments for comparison.

The task is designed to form the starting point for modelling explanations in an extended piece of writing about 'Dulce et Decorum Est' or another poem.

Explain that quote!



<p>'Bent double, like old beggars under sacks'</p>	<p>This phrase suggests that the men are so exhausted that they are barely even conscious of what they are doing.</p>
<p>'men marched asleep'</p>	<p>This line tells us that the men are physically injured and that their feet are bleeding. The punctuation adds to the effect that they are walking slowly because there are pauses.</p>
<p>'limped on, blood-shod'</p>	<p>All of these verbs show how the men are struggling, both to fit their gas masks in time and then to fight death. It gives a feeling of panic and desperation. The stanza is also written in the present tense to help the reader imagine that they are there too.</p>
<p>'As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.'</p>	<p>This line suggests that the soldiers look like old men. The simile describes how tatty their uniforms are. This is very different to when they first went to war looking physically fit, smart and proud to be fighting for their country.</p>
<p>'fumbling ... floundering ... plunges ... guttering ... choking ...'</p>	<p>This line describes how the narrator sees one of his comrades die through the glass of his gas mask. It helps the reader to imagine the smoke in the trenches and the way that the victim of the gas attack is struggling to breathe.</p>

Explain that quote!



<p>'If in some smothering dreams you too could pace behind the wagon ...'</p>	<p>This line comes at the end of the poem and makes the poet's message really clear. He is saying that he does not agree with the idea that it is 'sweet and honourable' to die for your country.</p>
<p>'You would not tell ... the old lie'</p>	<p>This line is directed at the reader, asking them to imagine they had witnessed the realities of the battlefield and making them feel guilty.</p>
<p>'Knock-kneed, coughing like hags'</p>	<p>'watch the white eyes writhing in his face, His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin'</p>
<p>'on the haunting flares we turned our backs'</p>	<p>'If you could hear ... the blood come gargling from his froth-corrupted lungs'</p>
<p>'In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, he plunges at me'</p>	<p>'children ardent for some desperate glory'</p>

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Answer sheet

'Bent double, like old
beggars under sacks'

This line suggests that the soldiers look like old men. The simile describes how tatty their uniforms are. This is very different to when they first went to war looking physically fit, smart and proud to be fighting for their country.

'men marched asleep'

This phrase suggests that the men are so exhausted that they are barely even conscious of what they are doing.

'limped on, blood-shod'

This line tells us that the men are physically injured and that their feet are bleeding. The punctuation adds to the effect that they are walking slowly because there are pauses.

'As under a green sea, I
saw him drowning'

This line describes how the narrator sees one of his comrades die through the glass of his gas mask. It helps the reader to imagine the smoke in the trenches and the way that the victim of the gas attack is struggling to breathe.

'fumbling ... floundering ...
plunges ... guttering ...
choking ...'

All of these verbs show how the men are struggling, both to fit their gas masks in time and then to fight death. It gives a feeling of panic and desperation. The stanza is also written in the present tense to help the reader imagine that they are there too.

'If in some smothering
dreams you too could pace
behind the wagon ...'

This line is directed at the reader, asking them to imagine they had witnessed the realities of the battlefield and making them feel guilty.

'You would not tell ... the
old lie'

This line comes at the end of the poem and makes the poet's message really clear. He is saying that he does not agree with the idea that it is "sweet and honourable" to die for your country.