

Poem Analysis Graphic Organizer

Name _____

	War Begins	Horrors of the Front	Generation Gap
Poems and Authors			
How does the author view the war? (What is the tone?) How can you tell?			
What types of imagery are used to help the reader connect to the subject?			
What symbols are used?			
What can this poem teach us about WWI?			

	Soldiers vs. Society	War's Casualties	Remembrance
Poems and Authors			
How does the author view the war? (What is the tone?) How can you tell?			
What types of imagery are used to help the reader connect to the subject?			
What symbols are used?			
What can this poem teach us about WWI?			

Appendix C: World War I Poems

War Begins

<p>“The Call”</p> <p><i>Jessie Pope</i></p> <p>Who's for the trench-- Are you, my laddie? Who'll follow French-- Will you, my laddie? Who's fretting to begin, Who's going out to win? And who wants to save his skin-- Do you, my laddie?</p> <p>Who's for the khaki suit-- Are you, my laddie? Who longs to charge and shoot-- Do you, my laddie? Who's keen on getting fit, Who means to show his grit, And who'd rather wait a bit-- Would you, my laddie?</p> <p>Who'll earn the Empire's thanks-- Will you, my laddie? Who'll swell the victor's ranks-- Will you, my laddie? When that procession comes, Banners and rolling drums-- Who'll stand and bite his thumbs-- Will you, my laddie?</p>	<p>“V. The Soldier”</p> <p><i>Rupert Brooke</i></p> <p>If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a foreign field That is for ever 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.</p>
--	--

War Begins

June 28, 1914 – Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb nationalist, assassinates Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne.

July 28, 1915 – Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia; World War I begins.[1]



A flawed depiction of the war to come, with a heroic cavalry charge[2]



Use of heroic imagery in propaganda

“Pistol shots in a Sarajevo street struck the match to war on June 28, 1914. A Bosnian Serb nationalist killed the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne...Reservists put on old uniforms of red and blue, picked up their rifles, and boarded trains that would take them to the front. Both sides believed their cause was just, that they were defending their homelands and way of life. Most imagined the war would be a glorious adventure, filled with colorful flags, flashing sabers, and heroic deeds. They thought the conflict would be decisive and short and that they would all be home for Christmas.”[3]

“After the failure of the German offensive in 1914, the armies in northern France found themselves in a stalemate – unable to outflank or break through their opponents’ lines. Both sides dug deep trenches to protect their positions...Over the next four years, the lines would hardly move.”[4]



British soldiers starting to dig a trench in France

[1] Museum label, *Chronology, 1914* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

[2] All images from the collection of the National WWI Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

[3] Museum label, *To Arms!* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

[4] Museum label, *Into the Trenches* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

The Horrors of War

“Dulce Et Decorum Est”

(Originally titled, “To Jessie Pope”)

Wilfred Owen

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 disappointed 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 floundering like a man in fire or 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.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

The Horrors of War

April 22, 1915 – “In Second Battle of Ypres, Germans use poison gas. The Germans open the assault with a chlorine-gas attack, the first successful use of poison gas on the Western Front. More than 10,000 Allied troops are affected. Half of them die. By May 25, the Allies withdraw.”[5]



French Soldiers wearing gas masks[6]



Gas victims being moved into a field hospital

“The use of poison gas was a desperate attempt to break the stalemate on the Western Front. The Germans were the first to successfully use it, but the British and French quickly followed suit. Poison gas endangered both defenders and attackers...And when in use, it sometimes wafted back onto the attackers or engulfed them as they moved into enemy lines. It mostly functioned as a terror weapon. Gas masks quickly proved effective in protecting most troops, and the number of combat deaths from poison gas was relatively small. Gas masks, however, with their grotesque appearance, seemed to the ultimate symbol of man turned into a mechanized, dehumanized phantom by modern warfare.”[7]



Early mask, a hypo-hood



Nurse flushing the eyes of a gas victim



German gas mask

[5] Museum label, *Chronology, April 1915* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

[6] Museum label, *Chronology, September 1915* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

[7] Museum label, *Poison Gas* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

The Generation Gap

“The Parable of the Old Man and the Young”

Wilfred Owen

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb, for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
And builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretched forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an Angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him, thy son.
Behold! Caught in a thicket by its horns,
A Ram. Offer the Ram of Pride instead.

But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

“Base Details”

Siegfried Sassoon

If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,
I'd live with scarlet Majors at the Base,
And speed glum heroes up the line to death.
You'd see me with my puffy petulant face,
Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,
Reading the Roll of Honour. 'Poor young chap,'
I'd say – 'I used to know his father well;
Yes, we've lost heavily in this last scrap.'
And when the war is done and youth stone dead,
I'd toddle safely home and die – in bed.

The Generation Gap



The leadership came to be seen as disconnected from the war's true costs

The Kaiser had promised a quick victory

The war exposed and contributed to a growing gap between the older generation (especially the royal governments) who led the war and the young men and women who died as a result of these rulers' decisions: "In the early 20th century, the royal families of Europe set the tone for much of society. Each monarch symbolized a proud national heritage. Millions of people eagerly read news of royal engagements, marriages, and births...It was no coincidence that the first great powers to enter the war – Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia – were controlled more by a few generals and officials around the monarch than by democratic institutions." [8]

"The constant bombardment of modern artillery and rapid firing of machine guns created a nightmarish wasteland, littered with tree stumps and snarls of barbed wire. In battle, soldiers had to charge across no-man's-land into a hail of bullets and shrapnel. They were easy targets and casualties were enormously high. By the end of the war, total deaths exceeded all the deaths from all the wars for the previous hundred years." [9]

In some countries, this growing disconnect led to worker strikes, rebellion, and revolution: [10]

- **March 9, 1917** – Bread riots break out in Petrograd. Crowds shout, "Down with the Czar!" Russian troops refuse to fire on the demonstrators.
- **April 29, 1917** – Mutinies roil the French Army. Long periods in the front line and military setbacks...cause thousands of French soldiers to mutiny.
- **January 24, 1918** – 250,000 on strike in Berlin. Massive demonstrations quickly spread across Germany; some estimate that about 4 million people participate.

[8] Museum label, *Rulers* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

[9] Museum label, *No-man's-Land* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

[10] Museum label, *Chronology, 1917-18* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

The Soldier and Society

“Glory of Women”

Siegfried Sassoon

You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,
Or wounded in a mentionable place.
You worship decorations; you believe
That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace.
You make us shells. You listen with delight,
By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.
You crown our distant ardours while we fight,
And mourn our laurelled memories when we're
killed.
You can't believe that British troops 'retire'
When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,
Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with blood.
O German mother dreaming by the fire,
While you are knitting socks to send your son
His face is trodden deeper in the mud.

“Suicide in the Trenches”

Siegfried Sassoon

I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.

The Soldier and Society

More information about the effects of the war on soldiers returning home can be found in the sections on “War’s Casualties” and “Remembrance”. The following images come from Memory Hall at the National WWI Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, Missouri.



Despite the best efforts of women to support soldiers, many who returned were unable to reintegrate into civilian society



Blue stars hung in the windows of soldiers' families



When a soldier died, his star was replaced with a gold one

War's Casualties

“The Veteran”

May 1916

Margaret Postgate Cole

We came upon him sitting in the sun
Blinded by war, and left. And past the fence
There came young soldiers from the Hand and Flower,
Asking advice of his experience.

And he said this, and that, and told them tales,
And all the nightmares of each empty head
Blew into air; then, hearing us beside,
"Poor chaps, how'd they know what it's like?" he said.

And we stood there, and watched him as he sat,
Turning his sockets where they went away,
Until it came to one of us to ask "And you're how old?"
"Nineteen, the third of May."

“Does it Matter?”

Siegfried Sassoon

Does it matter?--losing your legs?...
For people will always be kind,
And you need not show that you mind
When the others come in after hunting
To gobble their muffins and eggs.

Does it matter?--losing your sight?...
There's such splendid work for the blind;
And people will always be kind,
As you sit on the terrace remembering
And turning your face to the light.

Do they matter?--those dreams from the pit?...
You can drink and forget and be glad,
And people won't say that you're mad;
For they'll know you've fought for your country
And no one will worry a bit.

War's Casualties

“Ambulance after ambulance came from the lines...kindly hands pulled out the stretchers, and bore them to the wash-room...The wounded lay naked in their stretchers while the attendant daubed them with a hot soapy sponge – the blood ran from their wounds through the stretchers to the floor, and seeped into the cracks of the stones.”[11]

- Henry Sheahan, American Field Service volunteer
February 22, 1916



Officers' convalescent ward

(above and below) German amputees

“World War I was the first major conflict in which modern medicine could save lives. By 1914, doctors knew how to treat infected wounds and many diseases, the main killers in previous wars. Morphine and other anesthetics were available for surgery patients. Medical success, however, was still limited. The appalling filth of the trenches and the heavily manured soil of northern France caused septic infections and gangrene that were often lethal. Artillery shells, when they failed to kill, frequently left soldiers permanently maimed or disfigured. Many soldiers suffered from shell shock, a term coined during the war to describe extreme mental trauma from the combat experiences.”[12]

“Despite the efforts of modern medicine, industrial technology made World War I the deadliest war yet in history. Officially recorded deaths exceed 8 million. But later estimates indicate that probably over 9 million people died from the effects of the battlefield. Millions more lost limbs, suffered lung injuries, or had other physical and mental disabilities. In some European countries, about half the men who went into combat were killed or wounded. Civilian deaths, including the Armenian genocide, are estimated to be 1 to 5 million.”[13]



[11] Museum label, *Chronology, February 1916* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial, n.d.).

[12] Museum label, *Casualties* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial, n.d.).

[13] Museum label, *Human Costs* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial, n.d.).

Remembrance

"In Flanders Fields"

John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.
We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

"Grass"

Carl Sandburg

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—

I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the
conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

Remembrance

November 11, 1918 – Germany signs armistice; fighting ends on the Western Front, at 11:00 a.m. Paris time.[14]



Poppies have become an international symbol of remembrance

Sketch of women mourning lost soldiers

“The four-year war left deep wounds. In Europe, where the loss of human life was unprecedented, temporary graves were still scattered around the battlefields. A sad duty of the living was to record the dead and relocate their graves to vast cemeteries with endless rows of stone markers. After the war, many countries built a “Tomb of the Unknown Soldier” to honor the multitudes of unidentified dead. Throughout the war-torn nations, there was a pervasive sense of loss. Returning veterans tried to restart their lives, but some never found a place in civilian society. Millions of families had to learn to live without loved ones. With so many millions of young men and women dead from the effects of the war, it seemed as if an entire generation had been lost.”[15]

“In previous wars, victory columns and statues most often commemorated military heroes and generals. But after World War I, there was an outpouring of sentiment for the common soldiers and sailors who fought and died. Their names are engraved on monuments in hundreds of European and American towns. The poppy, which defied the carnage of war to bloom so profusely on the Western Front, became a symbol of the millions who sacrificed their lives in battle.[16]



The National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, Missouri, is an example of one of the thousands of memorials across the world.

[14] Museum label, *Chronology, November 1918* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

[15] Museum label, *Mourning* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

[16] Museum label, *Remembering the Many* (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).