
Unit-2 □ Rupert Brooke: The Soldier Wilfred Owen: Strange Meeting

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2.2.0 Introduction

In Module 1, you have read at length on the impact of the World War(s) on British culture in general and literature in particular. This Unit seeks to introduce you to the genre of War poetry, by taking up two poets who showed quite diametrically

opposed views to the First World War, to which they were integrally related. In due course, this Unit will

- introduce you to Rupert Brooke, a poet writing during the first world war, and one of the earliest twentieth-century writers to earn a name for himself as a war poet (a description that could apply to any one writing in verse about war, but which is, even now, associated greatly with those writing during World War I and II)
- to consider how he used the sonnet, a verse form with a rich literary history, to write about war
- to examine in detail what is perhaps his most famous war poem, the sonnet **The Soldier**
- introduce you to Wilfred Owen, one of the most famous, and perhaps the finest, of poets writing during the First World War
- to survey in brief his war poetry, which in terms of theme, treatment and style constitutes a corpus of some of the most important creative responses to the destructive horrors of war
- to examine in detail **Strange Meeting**, considered to be one of his most representative and complex poems.

2.2.1 Rupert Brooke and War Poetry

Rupert Chawner Brooke (1887-1915) was an Englishman who has been described as a “Georgian” poet, writing as he did in an era ruled by George V, and being one of the literary figures to feature in the five-volume verse anthology *Georgian Poetry* (1912-1922). He also had associations with the Bloomsbury group of intellectuals that included Virginia Woolf. Brooke was in his time something of a literary celebrity, his good looks adding to his poetic achievements, though the quality and value of the latter has subsequently been the subject of much scrutiny and debate. It is possible that his pre-war poetry, with its dreamy romanticism, would not by itself have ensured Brooke’s place in later anthologies.

But then came the First World War, and like many of his age and class, Brooke volunteered to enlist. He joined the Royal Navy in 1914, but did not get to see much action: in April 1915, two days before the Gallipoli campaign, he died at the age of 28, of sepsis from an infected mosquito bite. His posthumous elevation to the level

of national hero was largely on account of the series of five war sonnets written and published as *1914*, which reflect the innocence and idealism with which many Englishmen joined the First World War. These attributes, combined with the patriotic willingness to sacrifice self for country, characterised Rupert Brooke as a war poet, and constituted one of the two polarities between which World War I poetry ranged. At the other polarity would be those writers who, often as a direct result of having actually been in battle, saw the horrors of war and the inadequacy of conventional views glorifying war. These writers are perhaps best represented by Wilfred Owen, who will be studied later in this unit.

2.2.2 Rupert Brooke and the Sonnet

Brooke's *1914* (which contains *The Soldier*, the poem you are about to study in detail) is a series of five sonnets. Accordingly, this section will at first take a brief look at the sonnet form. With its 14 lines, sectional divisions and limited rhymes, the **sonnet** as a verse form is quite easy to identify. It has also been a poetic vehicle with which many English poets have experimented, from the sixteenth century onwards. Elsewhere in your study material (in EEG Paper 2, for example) you have also studied the characteristic features of the sonnet, and will remember that the most common variants are the Italian (or Petrarchan) form, with its octave-sestet division and five rhymes, and the English (or Shakespearean) kind, with three quatrains and a concluding couplet, and seven rhymes.

What makes a study of Rupert Brooke's war sonnets interesting is that he occasionally experiments with the verse structure. A poem might, for example, simultaneously display characteristics of both the Italian and the English sonnet forms. At the same time, his choice of war as a subject is also a kind of extension of the scope of the sonnet, though we have seen different ways in which other English poets from Shakespeare onwards have done the same.

In this connection, you might look up another sonnet by Rupert Brooke, though this does not concern war. It is titled *Sonnet Reversed*. Does the title suggest anything to you about what the poem could be like? You can find the poem online here:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43715>

2.2.3. Text of The Soldier

And now let us take a close look at the poem *The Soldier*. The text has been taken from *The Poetry of the First World War: 'Never Such Innocence'* edited by Martin Stephen, London, Everyman, 1993, page 54. The words/phrases in bold are explained in the section that follows the text provided.

The Soldier

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 the 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.*

2.2.4 Glossary and Annotations

corner of a foreign field: The soldier-speaker imagines that he might die in a foreign country, and refers to his grave in the land where he might lie buried. Incidentally, Brooke died in April 1915, and was buried in Skyros, a Greek island, and hence literally a “foreign field”.

England: a space occupied by an Englishman's mortal remains, and in that sense English space. (This is an example of the figure of speech known as **synecdoche**.)

In that rich earth a richer dust concealed: When the buried soldier's body has decomposed, and turned to soil, it mixes with the dust of the foreign country. Being a loyal Englishman, the speaker believes the dust that his body has turned into, has

enriched the dust of the foreign country. (The phrase “**richer dust**” may be considered an example of **euphemism** as well as **hyperbole**, both figures of speech.)

bore: past tense of “bear”, in the sense of “give birth to”

body: the focus in this section is on the physical person, just as the next section deals with his spirit

blest: a variant of “blessed”, here meaning “given special favour”

shed away: cast off or discarded

a pulse... Gives somewhere back: when the dead soldier’s body has disintegrated, his innermost essence returns to the Divine Being and exists as a “pulse” or beat that retains its Englishness, having brought along all the pleasant experiences of an English life

dreams happy as her day: England is seen as an ideal place; where days are pleasant, as are its people’s thoughts and dreams. (The phrase contains an example of a **simile**.)

2.2.5 Critical Understanding of The Soldier

The poem seems to be an utterance of a soldier who imagines meeting his death in battle, away from home. He does not, however, express sadness or fear at the possibility that he might die. He rather considers it worthwhile, since he will be sacrificing his life for the sake of his country. What gives this poem its distinctive quality is the speaker’s insistence that his national identity will be preserved even after he is dead. This is the idea that is developed in the first section of the poem. Thus, the grave in which the soldier’s corpse lies buried, eventually to turn into dust, will be a space that represents England, containing as it does English remains, even if it is in a foreign land. As if to emphasize this Englishness, the speaker conjures up an image of the soldier before his death: a physical presence growing up in English conditions which seem both elemental and idyllic. Air, water and the fiery sunlight all nurture and develop the Englishman; with the elements so mixed in him that, rather as Shakespeare’s Mark Anthony (in the play *Julius Caesar*) said about Brutus, Nature might point to the soldier as a perfect specimen of an ideal man. Or to put it perhaps more accurately, a perfect specimen of an ideal Englishman.

The second part of the poem carries the idea a step further. Whereas earlier the

focus had been on the Englishman's corporeal or physical identity, the later section deals with his inner essence, or what is at the "heart" or spiritual core of a person. This innermost essence, according to the speaker's belief, will be united after death, with what he calls "the eternal mind", and others might refer to as God, or a supreme and immortal Divine Being. The idea here seems to be that, after death, an individual's spirit merges with that of the Divine Being. However, even in such a situation, the speaker's Englishness will be asserted. Death is seen as a process whereby all negative qualities are "shed away" or overcome, and what remains is only the good and imperishable. To the speaker, this implies all the factors that have nurtured his English existence, so that what his spirit "gives... back" or surrenders to the Divine Being are memories of experiences under "an English heaven".

2.2.6. Title and Theme

Most anthologies reprint this poem simply as **The Soldier**. However, according to The First World War Poetry Digital Archive, this poem initially was titled **The Recruit**, and was published in a January 1915 edition of the periodical *New Numbers*. It was the fifth in a series of war sonnets published under the general title *1914*, which of course is the year in which World War I broke out. Accordingly, the poem may be also referred to as *1914: The Soldier*. This version of the title indicates that it was composed during the first year of the WW1, and might in fact be a useful pointer that the soldier-speaker of the sonnet is more likely to be a fresh recruit than a war-weary veteran. It might also account for the youthful idealism of the lines. Such idealism (and its supporters) would, as the war dragged on, come in for increasing criticism.

The theme, as stated by the soldier-speaker, seems to be that for a loyal Englishman (or warrior), even death is an opportunity to assert his patriotism, since wherever he dies, the area occupied by his dead body will effectively be English space. The repeated mention of Englishness, the references to burial and death in a foreign land, all serve to locate the speaker in a specific time and space, but overall the sentiment may be seen as a recasting of what was once considered an acceptable sentiment concerning death in battle: it is worthwhile to die for one's country. (Or, in the words of the Roman poet Horace, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*" You might want to find out what exactly these words mean in English, and which English poet has used the first four words of the quote as a title for one of his poems.)

2.2.7. Structure and Style

This poem is structured as a sonnet and, as has been mentioned, was part of a sequence of sonnets concerning war, published in 1914. Elsewhere in your reading material (EEG Paper 2 Module 2, for example) there are discussions of the sonnet that you might look up as you study the structure of this poem. The theme of the poem is that the soldier-speaker's English identity and character will be preserved even after death. Notice how the two-part division of the Italian sonnet form is used by Brooke to focus separately on the external body (in the octave) and the internal being (in the sestet). Interestingly, however, the rhyme scheme of the octave is not typical of the Italian variant, but is more suggestive of its English/Shakespearean counterpart.

Refer to what has been said about the sonnet form, here and elsewhere in your reading material, to determine the answers to the questions in the following checklist, with regard to the poem being discussed:

- 1. How many rhymes does the octave contain?
- 2. What is the rhyme scheme of the octave?
- 3. Is this usual for a sonnet using an octave-sestet division?
- 4. How many rhymes are there in this sonnet?

A tendency to experiment with divergent impulses may be noted in the language of the poem as well. For a poem that belongs to the early modern era, a word such as “blest” recreates an archaic, idyllic, almost Biblical effect, which might appear out of place in a poem about war. And Brooke's choice of *given-heaven* rhymes might seem less than perfect in terms of matching vowel sound, and closer to the par-rhymes of Owen, as you will see when you study the latter's versification in the next section/unit. However, the degree to which Brooke experiments is inconsiderable when compared to the techniques used by Owen.

Key to checklist

- 1. Four
- 2. ababcdcd
- 3. No; the usual rhyme scheme for the octave would be abbaabba
- 4. Seven

2.2.8. Summing Up

Here are a few points concerning what this section has covered. Included is **one observation that is NOT true**. Strike out the incorrect one, and you will be left with a concise summing up. (Match your choice with that in the key provided.)

- Rupert Brooke’s war poetry, in general as well as in this poem, reflects an innocence and idealism
- **The Soldier** is from a collection of three sonnets published under the general title *1914*
- Despite its title, the poem makes no actual mention of war
- **The Soldier** is about a protagonist for whom even death is an opportunity to assert his patriotism
- The poem is a sonnet with an octave-sestet division

2.2.9. Comprehension Exercises

● Long Answer Type Questions-20 Marks

- a) What picture of a patriotic soldier emerges from your reading of Rupert Brooke’s sonnet? Is this depiction, in your opinion, likely to match a portrayal of a modern-day soldier?
- b) Consider how Rupert Brooke uses the sonnet form to develop his sentiments in “The Soldier”, and examine whether he strictly follows existing traditions, or adapts them to suit his own purposes.
- c) It has been suggested that Brooke’s skillful use of language makes dying for one’s country sound like a great privilege. With reference to the text, do you think this claim is justified?

● Medium Length Answer Type Questions-12 Marks

- a) “[T]hink only this of me...” Discuss, with close textual reference, what the soldier, in the octave of the sonnet, would like others to think.
- b) What does the protagonist in “The Soldier” have to say about “this heart”?
- c) The speaker in Brooke’s sonnet is an Englishman. Examine how the poem asserts the soldier’s Englishness.

● **Short Questions: 6 marks**

- a) Examine the rhyme scheme used by Brooke in “The Soldier”. What is the metrical pattern used here?
- b) Explain what the poet means by: “...there’s some corner of a foreign field/
That is forever England.”
- c) Identify three figures of speech in the poem and explain any two of them.

***Odd one out in the Summing Up section**

“**The Soldier** is from a collection of three sonnets published under the general title *1914*”. Actually the poem is one of a sequence of five sonnets, not three.

2.2.10. Wilfred Owen and War Poetry

Like Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Edward Salter Owen (1893-1918) is a much anthologized English war poet who fought for his country and died young. But the differences between the two are perhaps more significant than their points of similarity.

Unlike Brooke, who was a published poet even before enlisting, Owen had only a few poems published in his lifetime. He wrote little verse of importance till he joined the war in 1915. Whereas Brooke did not actually see much action, Owen was a soldier for more than three years, was decorated for bravery, and eventually died in action a week before World War I ended. He is now almost exclusively remembered for the poems that were largely shaped by his experience of the horrors of war. These affected him as both a person and a poet, turning him from a shy, sensitive introvert into a battle-scarred warrior who could respond as the situation demanded, yet was deeply disturbed by what war did to people in mind and body. His poetic technique also changed, turning his verse from something faintly romantic and sensuous to a vehicle that stylistically and powerfully echoed the discord of a world at war all around him.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of Owen’s war poetry is his preoccupation with what he calls “the pity of war”. This phrase occurs in the poem you are about to study in detail, but is also found in the lines of a preface that he had drafted for a volume of poems he planned to publish:

“My subject is war, and the pity of war.”

The word “pity” here conveys a sensitivity to the agony and anguish of those who fought in war, but goes beyond, seeing all the suffering and destruction as a tragic waste of humanity. Such an attitude was in sharp contrast to the idealistic glorification of war that characterized much of war poetry, at least during the initial stages of World War I. (An example of such a view might, for example, emerge from your reading of Brooke’s *The Soldier*. And an example of what might be seen as Owen’s rejoinder to simplistic praises of the glories of war would be his poem *Dulce et Decorum Est*.)

2.2.11 Text of Strange Meeting

Let us now take a close look at the poem **Strange Meeting**, which was composed probably in the last year of Owen’s life, and published after his death. The text of the poem is taken from *The Norton Anthology of Poetry, Third Edition* (1983) page 1035. The words/phrases in bold are explained in the section that follows the text provided.

Strange Meeting

*It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had grained.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,—
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.
With a thousand fears that vision’s face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
“Strange friend,” I said, “here is no cause to mourn.”
“None,” said that other, “save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,*

*Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
 But mocks the steady running of the hour,
 And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
 For by my glee might many men have laughed,
 And of my weeping something had been left,
 Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
 The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
 Now men will go content with what we spoiled.
 Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
 They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress.
 None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
 Courage was mine, and I had mystery;
 Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:
 To miss the march of this retreating world
 Into vain citadels that are not walled.
 Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,
 I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
 Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
 I would have poured my spirit without stint
 But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
 Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.
 "I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
 I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
 Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
 I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
 Let us sleep now. . . ."*

2.2.12. Glossary and Annotations

profound: an inspired choice of word, this suggests both “deep” and “significant”. The reader immediately registers that there is something particularly significant about this tunnel descent

granites: very hard rocks

titanic: great in terms of scale; the reference may be to the world war as well as to all great wars in history

groined: hollowed out

encumbered: burdened, by the uniforms and equipment the soldiers wear, but also maybe under the weight of traumatic experiences

fast: a word suggesting deeply occupied, or taken up by

bestirred: roused or awakened

probed: explored, examined

grained: marked

flues: airshafts

Strange friend: There appears to be an **oxymoron** here, friends are obviously “familiar” rather than “strange” people, but this phrase indicates a major paradox addressed by the poem. War divides people into enemy camps; people who might otherwise be not just friends, but brothers or twins in terms of nature/temperament

save the undone years: except the years taken away or reduced by death

braided hair: hair tied in plaits; a physical attribute that represents tame beauty, along with the eyes mentioned earlier

richier than here: more earnestly than is possible here

The pity of war: Owen’s famous phrase is, by his own admission, the subject of his poetry. The pity lies in the fact that war provides occasions for the display of man’s inhumanity to man: which hurts both those who die as a result, and those who kill and live with the responsibility and the guilt

distilled: left in its purest, undiluted form

trek: move away

vain citadels: proud cities, or in a broader sense, aggressive countries

too deep for taint: so well-entrenched that it cannot be falsified

stint: limit or limitation

cess: the word originally refers to a tax; here it might be used in the associated sense of “burden” or “curse”

Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were: in other words, these men have suffered, not physical pain from a wound, but mental trauma

I am the enemy you killed, my friend: the central **paradox** in the poem. How can an enemy be a friend? The answer obviously is that narrow political enmity comes in the way of broader, more universal, human ties

through me as you jabbed: an example of **inversion**, a figure of speech where the usual grammatical order or words is reversed. The normal order would be “as you jabbed (that is, thrust with your bayonet) through me”

parried: blocked or defended

loath: unwilling, possibly because the soldier is weary of fighting and killing

2.2.13 Critical Understanding of Strange Meeting

The poem begins with a narrator who is probably a soldier, since he tells us that he escaped “out of battle”. Note however that this is preceded by “It seemed...” so this not a real retreat but a dream vision, or one imagined. Throughout the poem, the atmosphere is dreamlike and inconsistent, now lacking detail and logic, now coming sharply into focus. Note also that the soldier-narrator’s movement involves a descent, suggesting both a psychological journey into the depths of the subconscious and also a journey into some underworld or hell.

The narrator travels along a dark tunnel which has been carved out by the ravages of war, yet paradoxically offers protection from the destruction currently raging overhead. He comes across clusters of soldiers who are either unaware or inanimate. He examines them closely, and one of them jumps up, and with an expression of pity and distress seems to recognize the narrator. This, as we learn later, is because the narrator has killed him in battle the day before.

The speaker so far is surprised to note that the other soldier has a faced lined with pain, for he assumes that this place, far removed from the war raging elsewhere, should have no cause for sorrow. The other soldier responds, and with his words the narrator seems to disappear from the poem, never to return, for he neither speaks again nor makes his presence felt.

The dead soldier says his sorrow is on account of death taking away his chances to lead a full life, to love and feel, and more importantly, to inspire others with hope and ideals. His laughter might have taught other people to laugh, and similarly his tears could have moved others to sorrow. His own sorrow has been generated by his experience of “the pity of war”: the realization that killing in action connects a slayer

and his victim, who do not know one another, yet who might be so similar as to be friends. Though the dead soldier has realized this truth, he cannot communicate this to other men as he is no longer alive. So some soldiers continue to count the supposed gains of victory, while others prepare to retaliate. Either way, people die, and nations who trigger destruction continue to regress. Owen presents here a powerful image of chariot wheels clogged by the blood of the slain, as the dead soldier laments that he might have brought relief and shared the truth about war, had he been alive. The dead soldier now reveals that he has been killed in battle, only the day before, by the poet-narrator.

The poem ends on a disquieting note, without a sense of proper closure. What happens to the narrator? Why are the words of the other soldier left unfinished, as indicated by the ellipsis? And when the soldier says “Let us sleep now...” what kind of sleep is indicated: the sleep of death? Or a more literal sleep? Either way, there is no guarantee that this slumber is restful. Remember, this soldier seemed asleep when the narrator first came upon him, yet he suddenly sprang up to address the narrator and to warn him of the tragic waste of war. Perhaps this is the lasting impression the poet intended to leave us with. This would be in consonance with Owen’s declaration in another part of that draft of a preface: that all a poet can do is to warn people.

2.2.14 Title and Theme

The title of the poem echoes a line from a poem by Shelley, who (along with Keats) was a major literary influence, at least in the early part of Owen’s poetic career. Shelley’s *The Revolt of Islam* contains the line: “Gone forth whom no strange meeting did befall.” and Owen’s choice of title for the poem we are studying is an exact replication of the phrase “strange meeting”. The word “strange” here is a hint that the meeting or encounter described in the poem is not perhaps as realistic as it is metaphorical. In fact, some critics feel it might be an experience in a dream (or nightmare); others think that it is about a psychological journey, within a speaker’s mind.

Even in terms of theme, Owen may have been influenced by Shelley, who claimed *The Revolt of Islam* was an expression of what he called the “precariousness” of his life, and that it was animated by feelings similar to those communicated by a dying man. There is a sense of the same in Owen’s poem, which depicts a meeting

with an enemy soldier who in a larger sense, as a fellow human being, is a friend, yet has been killed out of compulsions that disregard the bonds of human brotherhood. The poem is thus clearly an exploration of “the pity of war”.

2.2.15 Structure and Style

In structure, the situation recreated in this poem might remind you of a poem by Siegfried Sassoon (who was a war-poet and a major influence on Owen), titled *The Rear-Guard*. There too a soldier travels along a tunnel, while a battle rages overhead, and mistakes a dead soldier for one asleep. But if Owen takes the germ of the idea from Sassoon, his extension of the situation and his treatment give the work a distinctive and unforgettable quality.

Owen impresses with his use of forceful language, and images that challenge rather than colour the reader’s imagination, but are undeniably striking. Witness lines such as these:

“I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.”

He resorts to alliteration, or the repetition of the same consonants in syllables close together, in constructions such as “*might many men*” or “*boil bloody*”; and onomatopoeia, where the sound of the word matches its sense, as in “*thumped*” and “*moan*”. All this charges the language with vigour and emphasis.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Owen’s poem is a technical virtuosity that was startling in its time and went on to influence profoundly the work of many who followed him. He discarded conventional patterns of rhythm and rhyme, with their associations of regularity and harmony, as inappropriate devices by which to express the chaos of a world torn apart by war; and in their place he popularized alternative devices. These include para-rhyme, where pairs of words have the same (or similar) consonants but different vowel sounds; either over single syllables, such as in *laughed/left*, or more, as in *mystery-mastery*. This creates a sense of discordance to ears used to full rhyme. Owen also used internal rhyme and assonance, which involve the repetition of vowel sounds within sentences but not at the ends of lines, as in “*knew you*”. All these create unfamiliar auditory patterns that counter the expectation of familiar cadences and rhythms.

2.2.16 Summing Up

Here are a few points concerning what this section has covered. Included is **one observation that is NOT true**. Strike out the incorrect one, and you will be left with a concise summing up. (Match your choice with that in the key provided.)

You have learnt that

- Wilfred Owen's earlier verse was more romantic and sensuous than his war poetry.
- The experience of the realities of war changed Owen as a person as well as a poet.
- The poem **Strange Meeting** was written soon after World War I began
- The poet's major concern is with "the pity of war".

2.2.17 Comprehension Exercises

● Long Answer Type Questions-20 Marks

- a) With reference to the poem being discussed, show how Owen communicates "the pity of war".
- b) Examine how Owen uses language and technique to great effect in his recreation of the horrors of war.
- c) How far would you agree with the view that Owen's response to war is anti-romantic?

● Medium Length Answer Type Questions-12 Marks

- a) Recreate after the speaker in the poem his nightmarish descent, right up to the time he speaks to his "strange friend".
- b) Which sections of this poem suggest that the two soldiers, though on opposing sides, might essentially be the same kind of person?
- c) What is para-rhyme? Examine a few occurrences of para-rhyme in this poem and suggest what Owen achieves by his use of these.

● Short Questions: 6 marks

- a) Briefly explain the pattern of rhyme and rhythm in the poem.
- b) Identify three figures of speech in the poem and explain any two of them.

c) How would you explain the phrase “the pity of war” in your own words?

***Odd one out in the Summing Up section**

“The poem *Strange Meeting* was written soon after World War I began.” The poem was in fact written towards the end of the war.

Activity for the Learner

Based on your reading of the two poems, you could take up the following activities with help from your counselor

Elsewhere in your study material there are discussions that focus on the sonnet as a verse form, examining how it blossomed in England during the Renaissance and evolved in later centuries. An interesting point to note about the sonnet is that, during the First World War (as well as at other times), this form was adapted and used to write about war. We have already seen that Rupert Brooke himself wrote a series of sonnets on the subject. It might be rewarding for you look for other examples of poets composing war sonnets in English. Wilfred Owen, the other war poet you will study in detail, is a name that springs readily to mind in this connection. Here is a link to a handful of sonnets (and sonneteers) of the First World War: <http://www.sonnets.org/wwi.htm>

Wilfred Owen died in 1918, at the age of 25. A number of poets in English literature have died young, their lives and careers cut short by mortality. If John Keats is perhaps the most famous of such terminated talents, Thomas Chatterton, is a lesser known example, though he died even younger.

It is sobering to note how many English poets lost their lives in a world war, while still in their twenties. You might prepare a list of your own, and go through a poem or two by each poet you identify. Would the following make it to your list? Keith Douglas, Julian Grenfell, Sidney Keyes, Ewart A. Mackintosh, Isaac Rosenberg, Charles H. Sorley. Decide why (or why not). Were they all casualties of the First World War?

In this connection you may wish to look up a poem by Archibald Macleish beginning “The young dead soldiers do not speak...” which was written by an American poet during the Second World War, but which may refer to all young lives lost while fighting in any war. Here is a link to the poem:

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-young-dead-soldiers-do-not-speak/>

2.2.18 Comprehensive Reading List

David Roberts (ed), *Out In the Dark: Poetry of the First World War*. UK. Saxon Books, 2013.

Jon Silkin, *Out Of Battle: The Poetry of the Great War*. 2nd Ed. UK. Palgrave Macmillan, 1998.

Jon Stallworthy (ed), *The New Oxford Book of War Poetry*. 2nd Ed. UK. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Martin Stephen (ed), *Poems of the First World War: 'Never Such Innocence'*. London. Everyman, 1993.

John Lehmann, *Rupert Brooke: His Life and His Legend*. London. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1980.

Timothy Rogers, *Rupert Brooke: A Reappraisal and Selection*. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971.

Candace Ward (ed). *World War One British Poets: Brooke, Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg and Others*. New York, Dover Publication, 1997

Dominic Hibberd, *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography* UK. Phoenix (Orion), 2003

Jon Stallworthy, *Wilfred Owen*. USA, OUP, 1993