

### **Assignment 14**

**In the following poem, Laurence Binyon looks back on those soldiers who died for their country during battle. Analyse the poem. What is the poem saying about war? Concentrate upon the following areas for your answer:**

- **Content and theme(s)**
- **Structure and style, and how this is shaped by content**
- **Context**
- **Purpose and success**

**The title of the poem written by Laurence Binyon already suggests what the purpose, context and theme for this poem will be with the title “For the Fallen”. Therefore before the reader even begins to read the poem they have an idea that is going to be about those who have passed away during the war. The first stanza personifies England as ‘a mother for her children’ who is mourning for the ‘dead across the sea’. This could be meaning the soldiers that were in the battle of the Somme. The tone in this first stanza is calm and respectful as the poem states its purpose and begins to describe that the men have ‘Fallen in the cause of the free’; Suggesting that this is why the men are fighting. By writing in this style the reader can understand that the men in this poem have become hero figures by sacrificing themselves for their country.**

**The second stanza opens with ‘Solemn’ as its first lexis carrying on the theme of loss and ‘desolation’ in the poem. We must remember that many women lost husbands, fathers and children in this war, so were left with no-one. So I think that the word desolation is a perfect word to describe how they would be feeling. It also tells the reader that the month is ‘death august’ which could be a form of pathetic fallacy, because august would be a cold, unpleasant time of year where leaves are falling from trees and nature is going into hibernation which could symbolise the death of the men. It could be assumed that this poem is set at a funeral because of the mention of the ‘drums’ and ‘death august’ and that could be the reason that it seems that many people are the voice of the poem; because they could be paying tribute to the lost soldiers.. The voice of the poet in this second stanza has changed; it is now the voice of many, as the stanza closes with ‘a glory that shines upon our tears’. England that was personified in the first stanza could now be interpreted as everyone in England and they all are mourning. Perhaps even all the women of England because so many men were sent to the war and the women were left behind. Perhaps this is also why the horrors of the war are not described; because it is from a women’s point of view and they would not know how horrific it was on the front line. In my opinion, after reading these first two stanzas I get the impression that this poem is going to reflect on all levels the grief that England has for its lost men.**

**There is a huge sense of pride throughout this poem and it becomes very apparent in the third stanza, as the soldiers were described as ‘staunch to the end’ meaning**

that they were loyal to their cause even when they were against the odds. When telling the reader that 'They fell with their faces to the foe' I get an immense sense of pride from those few words, these words telling that the soldiers were not cowards, they held their heads up high even when dying. Even though in reality this probably was not the case and they were probably terrified knowing that death was soon to be upon them. The voice of this poem does not talk about the true horrors of the war, this could be deliberate because it is paying tribute to the soldiers or it could be from lack of knowledge.

In the final stanzas of this poem the voice of the poem begins to tell the reader how the fallen soldiers will not experience anything anymore. They will not 'grow old' and they shall 'sit no more at familiar tables at home' but 'We will remember them' again that sense of pride is profound. Laurence Binyon could also be writing this poem to show gratitude for the men, as stated in the first stanza it is clear that this poem thinks the war has a purpose and it is just. Its reason being the 'cause of the free', they were fighting for freedom. All the soldiers are glorified because they fought for freedom and the reader is told that they will always be remembered. They are described as the 'stars' of the night and that they will remain, even when the people of their time pass away and become 'dust'. There is use of repetition here to emphasises the fact that they will remain,

'To the end, to the end, they remain'

In stanza 5 the word 'They' is repeated at the beginning of each line creating the rhyme of the lines and also emphasizing the subject change as it begins to tell the reader what the soldiers have lost. I think that the purpose of this poem is to show respect for the men that lost their lives in the war to help preserve our freedom and I think that Laurence Binyon achieves this aim completely. Throughout the poem there is a sense of immense pride and respect for the men. The reader is told 'We will remember them'. With this poem being written in 1914 its cause is true because now in 2009 we are still remembering them. There is a lot of imagery in this poem when it comes to describing the men. They are described as 'stars/in the time of our darkness' and that when 'the going down of the sun and in the morning/ we will remember them'

Perhaps it could be interpreted that there is also sympathy in this poem for the soldiers because 'they shall not grow old' although in the line to follow this the poem also states that 'Age shall not weary them', sympathy could be present because the voice of the poem is correct; they shall not grow old, they have had their lives taken away from them and for many men they could have been as young as 16 when they died. So they wouldn't have had a chance to live at all. The voice of this poem believes that they are 'moving in marches upon the heavenly plain' which is ironic that they still believe the soldiers to be marching even when they are in heaven.

To conclude my analysis on the poem 'For the Fallen' I believe that the purpose of the poem and what the poem is telling those who read it is that men who go to war

will forever be respected and forever remembered. This could make the war seem appealing for young men because they might want the glory and honour of being in the war. This poem is not gruesome in any way; it does not describe the cruel things that the soldiers went through. By reading the poem and looking for deeper meanings, others could suggest that it is writing about how men should behave in the war, stereotyping them. The poet does not know what circumstances these men were in when they died; But it is telling the reader that the men should have no fear when stating 'They fell with their faces to the foe' the poet expects the men to be courageous and 'staunch'. They might not have been that way and if they weren't I wonder would they still have been given the same respect that they have been given in this poem; after my wider reading I have learnt cowards in the army did not go down well. However my opinion is that the poem pays tribute to the lost men, showing them gratitude. I also believe that this poem is showing remorse. It tells the reader that the men are fighting for freedom but in doing so they have lost their lives and will not 'grow old'. The tone of the poem is sad but not angry or disrespectful with their loss. The voice of the poem has come to terms with the knowledge that these men have died and accepts it because that is what happens in a war. The main message that I have picked up from this poem that I believe Laurence wants those who read it to understand is that the men who have died will be remembered long after those who did not fight. The men will be like 'bright' stars in the sky that are forever there and for all to remember.