

Handout 2

"How to Die"

By Siegfried Sassoon

- 1 Dark clouds are smoldering into red
While down the craters morning burns.
The dying soldier shifts his head
To watch the glory that returns;
- 5 He lifts his fingers toward the skies
Where holy brightness breaks in flame;
Radiance reflected in his eyes,
And on his lips a whispered name.
- You'd think, to hear some people talk
- 10 That lads go West with sobs and curses,
And sullen faces white as chalk,
Hankering for wreaths and tombs and hearses.
But they've been taught the way to do it
Like Christian soldiers; not with haste
- 15 And shuddering groans; but passing through it
With due regard for decent taste.

Smoldering– To show signs of repressed anger or hatred.

Craters– A bowl-shaped depression in a surface made by an explosion.

Radiance– warm, cheerful brightness.

Sullen– gloomy, showing bad humor.

Hankering– To have a strong, often restless desire.

Shuddering– To shiver convulsively, as from fear.

Decent– morally upright, respectable.

"Anthem for a Doomed Youth"

By Wilfred Owen

- 1 What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
--Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
- 5 No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,--
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?

- 10 Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of silent minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Patter- To move with quick, light, soft steps.

Orisons- a prayer.

Mockeries- an act of ridicule.

Demented- mentally ill, insane.

Bugles- a brass wind instrument.

Shires- a county in Great Britain.

Pallor- extreme or unnatural paleness.

Pall- a coffin.

Handout 4

“Rain”

By Edward Thomas

- 1 Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die
And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
- 5 For washing me cleaner than I have been
Since I was born into this solitude.
Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:
But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying to-night or lying still awake
- 10 Solitary, listening to the rain,
Either in pain or thus in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,
- 15 Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death,
If love it be for what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

Bleak– gloomy and somber.

Solitude– a lonely place.

Myriads– a large number.

Dissolved– to cause to disappear or vanish.

Tempest– a violent windstorm.

“Does it Matter?”

Siegfried Sassoon

- 1 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
5 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
10 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
15 And no one will worry a bit.

Gobble— to eat quickly.

Splendid— very good.

Terrace— a porch.

“Pluck”

Eva Dobell

1 Crippled for life at seventeen,
His great eyes seem to question why:
With both legs smashed it might have been
Better in that grim trench to die
5 Than drag maimed years out helplessly.

A child – so wasted and so white,
He told a lie to get his way,
To march, a man with men, and fight
While other boys are still at play.
10 A gallant lie your heart will say.

So broke with pain, he shrinks in dread
To see the 'dresser' drawing near;
And winds the clothes about his head
That none may see his heart-sick fear.
15 His shaking, strangled sobs you hear.

But when the dreaded moment's there
He'll face us all, a soldier yet,
Watch his bared wounds with unmoved air,
(Though tell-tale lashes still are wet),
20 And smoke his woodbine cigarette.

Crippled– a person who is disabled.

Maimed– to injure.

Gallant– brave and high-spirited.

Shrinks– to draw back.

Woodbine– honeysuckle.