**Compare and Contrast how War is Presented in ‘Dulce et Decorum est’ and ‘The Soldier’**

‘Dulce et Decorum est’, written by Wilfred Owen describes the suffering of exhausted World War One soldiers, as they endure a ‘gas’ attack. The narrator witnesses a man’s painful death, which haunts him. This graphic imagery of the true nature of war, deters people from war and belief of ‘the old lie, dulce et decorum est pro patri mori’ - it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country.

The rhyme scheme present in ‘Dulce et Decorum est’ is an alternate rhyme that resembles the sounds of the soldiers marching towards their ‘distant rest’. This is because the soldiers ‘trudge’ through the ‘sludge’, with their ‘sacks’ on their ‘backs’, these alternating rhymes are similar to the marching patterns of the soldiers, creating a sense of relentlessness, as the rhyme scheme is upheld throughout the poem. In addition the enjambment gives the poem a narrative quality, as each line flows into the next. This allows Owen to tell his compelling story through the course of the poem.

The third stanza is only two lines that describe the painful, torturous, and slow death of the soldier; Owen does this by using the three consecutive verbs ‘guttering, choking, drowning’. Owen states that in ‘all [his] dreams’ he relives this experience. This tells the reader the trauma endured by Owen on that day continuously haunts him, whilst awake and asleep. The fact this stanza is in present tense, works in conjunction with his ‘helpless’ ‘dreams’ to emphasise to the reader how much Owen is still haunted by this experience.

In the fourth stanza, the narrator directly addresses the reader, suggesting that if the reader was to be witness to and be forced to relive this experience through ‘smothering dreams’, then they would not so eagerly teach their children the romanticised version of war. This is done through the very gruesome and graphic description of the soldier’s death: as Owen paces ‘behind the wagon’ the near dead soldier was ‘flung’ into, he watches ‘the white eyes writhing in his face’, leaving ‘his hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin’. This description drastically contrasts the idealised version of war told by the propaganda of the time, that described a soldier’s death as an honourable act of devotion to his country.

In the last few lines of the poem, Owen directly addresses the reader as ‘my friend’. By Owen using the singular ‘friend’ and not plural “friends”, it singles out every individual reader to rethink their personal view on war, rather than addressing all readers as a collective. This encourages readers to think for themselves, and to not follow the crowd and blindly believe the propaganda of the time. Owen continues by warning the reader to ‘not tell’ their ‘children … the old lie’. This makes the reader reassess their view on war and encourages them to not pass on the ignorant belief that war is beneficial and good and that they should willingly want to die for their country.

‘The Soldier’, written by Rupert Brooke is a patriotic poem, focussing on his idealistic view of war. For example, the narrator states that death in a foregin country will leave that space ‘forever England’, showing his belief that death in war will be a comfort, as he will be giving back to England. England is presented throughout the poem as a mother to ‘the soldier’, who bore and raised him, so he holds much love for England, in a nostalgic and sentimental way, leading Brooke to be willing to risk his life for his country. This is emphasised by ‘England’ being referred to with the female pronoun ‘her’.

The rhyme scheme, rhythm, and stanzas of ‘The Soldier’ work together to create the classic structure of a sonnet. A sonnet is conventionally used to show devotion or love towards something, and so is often used for love poems. In this war poem it is clear that the love and devotion, shown throughout the sonnet, is directed towards England, overall emphasising the patriotic theme of ‘The Soldier’. This directly contrasts the structure of ‘Dulce et Decorum est’, with its alternating rhyme and enjambment, which reflects the neverending march of the soldiers as a relentless struggle.

Both poems talk about the death of soldiers in war, however the poems each describe death drastically differently: in ‘Dulce et Decorum est’, the soldier’s death is gruesome, graphic, and painful, whereas in ‘The Soldier’, the death of a soldier is described as a heroic act. The death of the soldier in ‘Dulce et Decorum est’, is described from Owen’s point of view, another soldier. Owen describes the soldier ‘as under a green sea’ where he ‘saw him drowning’. The combination of both a simile and a metaphor helps the reader imagine this scene of the soldier’s slow and painful demise. In contrast to this, ‘The Soldier’ does not contain a scene of a soldier’s death, but rather talks about the possibility of death at war. Brooke begins the poem by stating ‘if I should die’. The use of the conditional tense in conjunction with the modal verb ‘should’ reflects only the chance of death - it is not certain that the soldiers will die. The poem continues to reference the likeliness of death at war throughout the poem, by romanticising the idea. ‘The soldier’ describes that if his death were to occur, it would leave a ‘corner of a foreign field … forever England’. The patriotic tone of the poem is continued in this line, as his place of burial will not be in ‘England’, but rather near the battlefield, in a ‘field’ in France, Belgium, or another ‘foreign’ country. Brooke believes that as he was born and raised in England, that wherever he is laid to rest, will consequently be left ‘forever England’. Therefore the poems differ, as Owen depicts a brutal death at war, whereas Brooke presents the romanticised and idealised image of a fallen soldier.

Both poets draw different conclusions to their poems: with Owen concluding that the reader should not believe ‘the old lie’ of the propaganda, whereas Brooke concludes his poem with peaceful imagery of ‘laughter’ and ‘friends’. Owen’s ending is a warning to readers that the propaganda fed to them is not the reality of war. Propaganda of the time depicted making the ultimate sacrifice as an honourable act, however Owen’s poem leaves the reader to ponder how truthful the propaganda is - it is neither sweet nor fitting to helplessly witness a young man choke to death as his lungs dissolve, nor to revisit this traumatic event in your dreams. Owen’s conclusion is that ‘the old lie’ perpetuated by propaganda is shameful and disgusting, as he warns the reader from passing it on to future generations. The ending of Brooke’s poem is a positive one, despite it being about death. The patriotic image of ‘an English heaven’ presents England as a paradise. The persona finds comfort in the thought of his home at the time of his death. Brooke uses the non ‘heaven’ to describe ‘England’, this shows his patriotic view of his country as a perfect place. Additionally, the fact that he is thinking of his country that ‘bore [and] shaped’ him at his time of death, reinforces the patriotism of the poem, as the last phrase of the poem powerfully displays the poet's deep affection for his country.

In conclusion, both poems touch on the themes of war, death at war, and patriotism. ‘Dulce et Decorum est’ describes the violence of war and the immediate suffering of the soldiers, as well as the long-term harm this causes - PTSD. Owen’s poem is very realistic and is not scared to reveal the gruesome truths of war. The realistic descriptions are a result of Owen’s first-hand experience as a soldier in the trenches of World War One. In complete contrast to this, ‘The Soldier’ presents a patriotic, idealised, and romanticised depiction of war. Brooke writes about how ‘the soldier’ does not fear death, instead finding comfort in the idea of dying for ‘England’. Brooke differs from Owen, as at the time of writing the poems, Owen had experienced the horrors of war, whereas Brooke was yet to face the battlefield, thus he believed the propaganda and ‘the old lie: dulce et decorum est pro patri mori’.