

- As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.²⁴
 15 In all my dreams, before my helpless²⁵ sight,
 He plunges at me,²⁶ guttering,²⁷ choking,²⁸ drowning.
- If in some smothering²⁹ dreams you too could pace³⁰
 Behind the wagon that we flung³¹ him in,
 And watch the white eyes writhing³² in his face,
 20 His hanging³³ face, like a devil's sick of sin;
 If you could hear, at every jolt,³⁴ the blood
 Come gargling³⁵ from the froth-corrupted lungs,³⁶
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud³⁷
 Of vile³⁸, incurable sores³⁹ on innocent tongues, –
 25 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest⁴⁰
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,
 The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
 Pro patria mori.⁴¹



Isaac Rosenberg, *Break Day
 in the Trenches*
 Digital Library D87

24. **drowning:** annegare.
 25. **helpless:** impotente.
 26. **plunges at me:** cade disperatamente verso di me.
 27. **guttering:** sciogliendosi.
 28. **choking:** tossendo.
 29. **smothering:** soffocante.
 30. **pace:** camminare.

31. **flung:** lanciammo.
 32. **writhing:** contorcersi.
 33. **hanging:** cascante.
 34. **jolt:** scossone.
 35. **gargling:** gorgogliando.
 36. **froth-corrupted lungs:** dai suoi polmoni riempiti di schiuma.
 37. **cud:** fiele.

38. **vile:** disgustose.
 39. **sores:** piaghe.
 40. **zest:** zelo.
 41. **Dulce... mori:** "è dolce e glorioso morire per la propria patria", una citazione del poeta latino Orazio, che a sua volta l'aveva presa dal poeta greco Tirteo.

FOCUS ON THE TEXT

Language

1 The poem is full of rhetorical devices such as **similes**, **oxymorons** and **onomatopoeia**. Highlight them in the text.

Structure and content

2 The text can be divided into three short sequences, give each a title.

3 In the first sequence, the poet describes an ordinary, everyday scene in the trenches.

- Who are the protagonists, what are they doing, and how do they feel?
- What kind of description is it?

4 The second sequence of the poem starts with a shout, inviting men to

- Yet, something happens: what is it? Find evidence in the text.
- The poet focuses on what remains of this terrible experience: he is left with a terrible

5 The final sequence of the poem introduces a moral.

- It has the syntactical structure of an, whose main clause is:
- It is structured around two human senses, those present throughout the whole poem:
- What is the "old lie" Owen is speaking about?

BUILD UP YOUR COMPETENCES

Work out the key ideas

6 Reading Answer the questions.

- What do you know about Wilfred Owen's life?
- What does he extensively use in his poems?

7 Writing Wilfred Owen's poem is one of the most intense poems ever written about war. Unfortunately, the violence and suffering described in this poem are still true today, especially in the countries where a war is being fought. Read the newspapers, listen to

the news, then try to write a text (a poem, a paragraph or a song) on the effects of war.

PROJECT

8 Speaking Recent years have witnessed a series of events commemorating the centenary of World War I. Surf the net to find out what activities and events have taken place to mark that period of our history. If you were asked to organize such an event, what kind of event would you organize? Discuss the topic with your classmates.