

Like Arthur Empey from your other reading, many WWI soldiers developed a strongly anti-war stance. The poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" was written by a British soldier named Wilfred Owen, who was a school-teacher in his civilian life, and had been excited to join the army when World War I broke out. Owen spent several years in the trenches, suffering one serious injury, and he wrote this poem while he was recovering. Owen's poem took on a bit of tragic irony when he himself was killed on November 4, 1918, just one week before the war ended.

Note: "Dulce et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori" is Latin for "It is a sweet thing to die for your country."

"Dulce et Decorum Est," by Pvt. Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.--
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,

Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.