

The poems are in response to Wilfred Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'.

Life or Death?

Another life gone.

Smash.

The bashing of bones on the hard cold ground.

Whistle.

The shells pounding against the dirt.

Tap.

The pitter-patter of the rain.

The beating of hearts- getting fewer by the second.

The buzzing of their guns.

No one safe,

No boy or girls.

The machine gun barking at the chance of death.

Ready to feast on their prey.

Sometimes the soldiers wonder...

...What do I really want?

Life... or death?

Crunch.

The teeth of soldiers grinding.

Growl.

Their stomachs rumbling.

Splash.

Blood dripping.

Whine.

People screaming.

The bombs like lions pouncing on their prey.

War

A great war has begun, it's raining bombs.

Soldiers are dying, in the terrible trenches.

The guns are firing bullets that cry BANG

As they land on the battle field,

Like birds shot at by hunters, one, by one.

The soldiers start sobbing, mourning for the loss of their

Fellow friends, dying in the blood-stained mud,

But they ignore it later, as they see it every day,

No one to sing hymns of death for them, all they hear is

The angry yells of bombs and machine guns.

No-one cares about the soldiers lying on the ground
Wailing for help as they die.
The soldiers are dreaming of going back to their families
But they don't know if that time will ever come.
They hope the terrible war would end soon, but,
Will it?
The war will end, one day, some day, they say to each other,
One day... some day...

The dreams of the soldiers have come true,
The war is ending, the leaders are deciding, that peace
Should be declared.
The red poppies start to grow
In the blood-stained ground.
Happiness is slowly arriving,
But will it leave the land again?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?
As calls of Fire! Shoot! Fill the battle ground.
As the bugles call and the bells chime.
Why do all the soldiers die one by one?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?
The wailing of the bomb hits the floor with a bang!
As the sweet smell of gunpowder drifts off in the sky...
Why do all soldiers die one by one?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?
Every bullet that flies a murderer
That waits to pounce on their prey.
Why do all soldiers die one by one?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?
The trenches below sucking in the dead
The stutter sound of the fun screams through the sky.
Why do all soldiers die one by one?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?
Like cattle knowing the end is near
And the whimper of the dog louder than the shot
Why do all soldiers die one by one?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?
As shaking hands pull the trigger
Whizzing from trench to trench

Why do all soldiers die one by one?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?

As the final call for the end

Is never the final shot.

Why do all soldiers die one by one?

Why do all soldiers die one by one?

The battle ground now crosses

Those soldiers lying beneath

Why do all soldiers die one by one?

The Tragedy

“Boom” there goes another one.

The cries of soldiers echo in the field.

The rapid rifles firing silences the screams of courage.

The bullets like woodpeckers,

Pecking at everyone’s bodies

The sickening smell of death burns their hearts in pain and sorrow.

The bodies scattered on the field,

As the others fall with them

Dying one by one like cattle about to be slaughtered.

The poppies screaming in horror at the sight.

Letter home from people researched as Edward Dargan – we researched the Soldiers on the memorial and thought about what had happened to them and what they would want to say to their families. The task was to show what they had found out about the person and their families to develop empathy and to apply their understanding of WW1 to what they think their lives may have been.

Battalion 3
Mesopotamia
10/11/1918

Dearest Mother and Father,

How are you getting on? I have heard that the butcher has found a new roundsman! Have you heard the bad news? My cousin Henry has passed away 1 day ago. I was devastated when I heard the news. He died of Pneumonia after he stayed in the trench for too long. I can’t imagine what his parents are having to put up with. He was in Le Havre when he died.

It is very hot here in Mesopotamia with high temperatures of 56degrees Celsius! About 3 hours ago I was shot in the arm and had to retreat to the trench. But do not worry about me! The damage is only minor and they will send me home soon. I cannot wait. My doctor says I must get some bed rest. It’s not just shells and bullets that can cause you to go to the infirmary though. In some of the other countries such as France or Belgium they have

trenches which are cold and damp that can give you a horrible disease called trench foot. It causes your skin to fall off. Luckily we don't have that here, but we do have trenches.

I miss you both incredibly. They say that I am going home tomorrow. Although I have been shot, as soon as I finish this letter I will be heading back into battle.

The heat and death aren't the only things that we hate. The food is horrible as well. Whenever there's something nice like beef stew or soup, by the time it arrives at our trench it's gotten cold. I can't blame the cooks though. They don't mean to do this. I know that they try their best for us. It probably tastes lovely and warm but they have to carry it over here. Even though it's hot here it is important that we have warm food because most of the time we only have enough time to eat at night when it is quite cool. It's not just the temperature of the food that is appalling though. Sometimes we don't have enough rations so we have to eat lice or rats. I know it sounds disgusting and it is but it is our only option if we want to survive. The other day I saw some Germans slaughtering their own horses to cook and then eat. At least we are not cruel enough to do that.

I am sorry but I must go. Another one of our soldiers just got shot and I must help him get back to safety. I love you both so much.

Love from,

Edward.

P.S. Say hello to the butcher for me please.

And Albartus Degans

Trench no.3
Arras
France
12/04/1917

To my dearest wife Helen,

Thank you so much for the letters you've given me; I am sorry I don't write to you much these days. I don't get much time because I get really tired after fighting for so long, especially as a private. Us privates need to fight at the front line and it's not easy. Anyway, are all the children doing fine? I hope it's not too hard managing them alone and Pieternetta isn't that naughty at home.

It's only been 2 days since I've been in Arras and I already hate it. Even at night time, you can hear wailing shells exploding. It is so different to home – every one's hair is like a bird's nest, little Albartus's hair looks better than mine. You'd be surprised to hear I've actually started to learn French. When I get home, I'll teach you and the children some words in that amazing language. The blood-thirsty Germans have no mercy on the poor French soldiers. They are 100x worse than little Albartus fighting with the little girls. The war is the most terrible time of my entire life.

Ever since I joined the army, I was a private and life as a private is tough. I'm trying my best to achieve a higher rank, however, there is not luck. The trenches we have to work in are

very unpleasant. There are small, annoying flies flying over our heads, onto our food and big, fat rats running around on the mud eating some of our food. The trenches make me miss home very much. It is so messy in the trenches, but so clean at home. Some of my fellow soldiers' feet get so wet, their feet start to rot (what we call here in the trenches: 'Trench Foot'). In order to get rid of rats, we play a game called 'Splat the Rat', in which we try to kill the disgusting things. However, we don't get time in the day so we have to do it at night time which is very hard. It's incredibly tough living in the cold, damp trenches, in which rats scurry about and I am looking forward to coming back to warm cosy house.

I had a particularly horrible time travelling to Arras, it was freezing in the boat and it was raining cats and dogs. Myself and my friend, Edward, (and a few others) were the only ones in our troop that didn't get ill on the voyage. I felt very lucky then, but we had to get to work very quickly as soon as we reached Arras. It's really hard to fight in the rain, especially when I didn't get any rest and food to eat after the long journey. However, none of us dared to ask the leader of our trench; he is always very angry.

I've had the most gruesome time in the past 3 years. I am sure this terrible war will end and I will come home soon.

Lots of love from your ever-loving husband,

Albartus.