


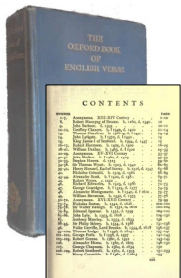


1914 -18
A Great War of Words

Introduction to the various roles that the written, spoken and sung word played during the Great War. Language as a means of both public and private expression is taken into account and examples of writing from a diverse range of forums are discussed. Although a particular focus is placed on the poetry that emerged from the war, official propaganda, newspaper reports, trench journalism, private letters, personal accounts, published books, recruiting posters and popular songs are all considered.



The Oxford Book of English Verse



The Man He Killed Thomas Hardy

"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.


"I shot him dead because —
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like — just as I —
Was out of work — had sold his traps —
No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown."

My indebtedness to an eighteenth-century poet became enormous. At every spare moment I read in [Edward] Young's *Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality*, and I felt the benefit of this grave and intellectual voice, speaking out of a profound eighteenth-century calm, often in metaphor which came home to one even in a pill-box. The mere amusement of discovering lines applicable to our crisis kept me from despair.


Edmund Blunden



Literature at the Front

The men sought to take stock of themselves; they were eager to find a precise rendering of the confused but stirring picture they had formed of themselves and their new destiny; they counted on the writer to help them achieve a clearer awareness of what they saw around them and what they felt within themselves.

Andre Bridoux on *Le Feu* in the trenches



SAMPLE SLIDES




The Kiss

To these I turn, in these I trust;
Brother Lead and Sister Steel.
To his blind power I make appeal;
I guard her beauty clean from rust.

He spins and burns and loves the air,
And splits a skull to win my praise;
But up the nobly marching days
She glitters naked, cold and fair.

Sweet Sister, grant your soldier this;
That in good fury he may feel
The body where he sets his heel
Quail from your downward darting kiss.

Siegfried Sassoon 1916

Colonel Campbell

But the star turn in the classroom was a massive sandy-haired Highland Major (Col. Campbell) whose subject was *"The Spirit of the Bayonet."* He spoke with homicidal eloquence... Man, it seemed, had been created to jab the life out of the Germans. To hear the Major talk, one might have thought that he did it himself every day after breakfast.

Siegfried Sassoon

The day before yesterday a bloodthirsty fellow, Colonel Campbell, the Army bayonet-fighting expert, gave a lurid lecture to a large, thrilled audience on the most economical use of the bayonet, and to arouse the pugnacity of the men. He pointed out that to plunge the blade right through an opponent is a waste of trouble, and that three inches in the heart are quite sufficient. The cold-blooded science of the business seems to me rather horrid, even if necessary.