

EXPOSURE

- **Context:** Wilfred Owen wrote this poem from the trenches, where he was serving during World War One, not long before he was tragically killed. Much of his poetry explores his anger surrounding the inhumane conditions with which he and his fellow soldiers were kept in. This theme of war being a waste of life is also reflected in "Remains" and "Bayonet Charge".
- **"But nothing happens"** - this is repeated at the end of the poem (and at the end of stanzas one, three and four) to give the sense that nothing has changed the soldiers' terrible situation, not even death. This is half-line also contrasts a lot of the vivid and bleak imagery throughout the poem, making it seem simple and prosaic in comparison. This shows how the narrator is incredibly frustrated at the boredom of having to wait in the trenches during World War One.
- **"Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knife us"** - the collective pronoun "our" gives a sense that this is a common and shared experience for soldiers, and its repeated use can also be seen in "Remains". The deep emotional and physical pain felt by these men is only exacerbated by the personalised wind, which appears to be attacking them violently. This reminds us of the power of nature, whilst the harsh and sibilant "s" sounds heighten their visceral experience and further reinforce their exhaustion and fatigue. This makes the effects of conflict seem deep and unyielding.
- **"All their eyes are ice"** - this imagery suggests the physical effects of war and hints at the impacts of "cold exposure", an illness which killed many soldiers back in the Great War. This reflects the title of the poem, which serves a double-meaning as exposure could also mirror the act of taking a photograph. Additionally, this phrase could reinforce the lack of emotion or ability to feel things as the dead and living men are described as one. This may show how they have also been completely overpowered and taken over by nature. This could also once again highlight Owen's anger and desperation at having little control over what he could do in the trenches.



KEY THEMES, STRUCTURE AND FORM

- Each stanza has a monotonous and regular **ABBAC rhyme scheme** which reflects the **boredom** felt by the soldiers.