

REMAINS



- **Context:** this poem is based on the account of a young British Soldier, called Guardsman Troman, who served in Iraq. This poem is also from a collection which examines the effects of war on ex-soldiers. It dances around the theme and damaging effects of PTSD, which is often developed due to the traumatic and violent situations soldiers are faced with daily.

- **“...and tosses his guts back into his body/Then he’s carted off in the back of a lorry”** - these seem like very casual - and almost cold-hearted - actions and could reflect how human life is wasted and soldiers become disposable in warzones. The word “guts” is also very visceral, and therefore could show how soldiers, much like the British soldier who served in Iraq and inspired this poem, are desensitised to the atrocities they witness. This makes the reality of conflict seem gory and incredibly sad.
- **“Probably armed, possibly not”** - it is this ambiguous thought that constantly plays on the narrator’s mind, as he feels a sense of guilt. He says that this situation is **“dug in behind enemy lines”**, suggesting the potential PTSD experienced by the soldier. This may cause the reader to question why soldiers are sent into war zones, which was also Wilfred Owen’s (the author of “Exposure”) intention as he firmly believed that the horrific conditions and situations faced by soldiers were inhumane and unnecessary).
- **“His bloody life in my bloody hands”** - this may suggest that the responsibility of the looter’s death has been put back on the narrator’s shoulders, despite how “all three” of them opened fire. **“His bloody life”** has a double meaning, as it could show how the narrator is angry at the suffering he has both caused and witnessed, and is swearing. However this very prosaic language is left open to interpretation, as he could just be referencing the horrific way in which the man died. The phrase **“in my bloody hands”** could hint at an allusion to Macbeth, as Lady Macbeth repeatedly tries to wash her hands of King Duncan’s blood after his murder. This, once again, may suggest the guilt felt by the narrator, and how he will never forgive himself, or be mentally free of, the “crime”.

KEY THEMES, FORM AND STRUCTURE

- One of the feelings or attitudes in this poem is **nonchalance**, as the soldier initially appears to have no issues with opening fire on the looter. This makes him seem as if he is just doing his job, however the greater and silent mental impact that this action has on him appears to contradict this.