

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE



- **Context:** This poem describes when the Light Brigade were accidentally sent into a valley surrounded by enemy soldiers, during the Crimean War. This led to many of them being killed, as they were left virtually defenceless.
- **“Into the jaws of Death/Into the mouth of Hell”** - this phrase personifies death and Hell and makes them seem like angry beasts or wild animals. The repetition of “into” heightens the sense of danger and builds tension in the poem, whilst also portraying the terrible fate of the British cavalry. The word “jaws” makes it sound as if the soldiers are like bait, sent to tempt the heavily-armed Russian soldiers. This portrays the soldiers as almost disposable and insignificant in their role.
- **“Half a league, half a league/Half a league onward”** - the repetition of this phrase sounds almost sinister, but this rhythm could also mirror the sound of the horses’ hooves galloping against the ground. This use of military language also highlights the blunt and prosaic nature with which soldiers were given their orders (which they obeyed, despite knowing that **Some one had blunder’d**). The repetitive nature of this phrase may also mirror the repetitiveness of life as a soldier, which - despite the constant threat to life - was often monotonous and long. Soldiers also carried out many of the same orders day in, day out.
- **“All the world wonder’d”** - this phrase has a double meaning, as Tennyson could be referring to the way in which people were in awe of the soldiers’ heroism and bravery. However, this could also represent the criticism of the military leaders (a theme which this poem chooses to ignore) and Britain’s involvement in the Crimean war, which many people were against.

THEMES, FORM AND STRUCTURE

- The overall lack of a **rhyme scheme** may hint at the chaos of war.
- This poem is written in **chronological order** and is told in **third person**, which makes it seem like a story to be marvelled at.
- The speaker is both in **admiration** at the sacrifice made by the men and in **horror**, due to the violence of the battle.

EXAM QUESTION

Q) Explore how this poem, and one other poem in the Power and Conflict anthology, portray the reality of war.