

Dulce et Decorum Est – How to Structure your Essay!

This essay plan has been written specifically for the poem Dulce et Decorum Est but the basic ideas can be applied to any essay on any text over the next two years.

The Question: **What impression is created of war by Owen in his poem Dulce et Decorum Est?**

You should begin by thinking about the question and highlighting the key words so that you know exactly what you should be focussing on in this essay. In this case it should be pretty clear what the key words are.

Essays almost always break down into 3 key stages:

Introduction

- Keep it short – no more than 100 words
- You should mention Owen's name (just his surname) and the poem's name
- You should mention the key words from the question: in this case 'horrifying and sickening'
- You should introduce 3 or 4 ways in which Owen creates that effect – these will be your **MAIN POINTS** later on
- A **MAIN POINT** can be: a theme – e.g. "Owen creates a sense of being physically crippled"
a literary device – e.g. "Owen uses harsh consonants and sibilance"
- You should try to end with a quotation from the poem – try to make these your very last words



Main Body

- This must be written in paragraphs – with a different paragraph for each **MAIN POINT** that you want to make
- The **MAIN POINT** should be introduced in a clear **TOPIC SENTENCE** at the beginning of each paragraph
- Your **MAIN POINT** paragraphs should occur in the order that they are mentioned in your introduction
- You must refer frequently back to the key words in the question – although don't repeat them too much
- You must use quotations to support every point you say
- You should try to **SMOOTHLY EMBED** quotations into your sentences
- You should consider a variety of literary features and show how they work together to create an effect
- Use words like exacerbated, emphasised, reinforced, strengthened, etc ... to show how different literary features are working together to create the same effect
- Use connectives like Furthermore, Additionally, In addition, However, etc ... at the start of sentences to join ideas and paragraphs together



Conclusion

- Try not to end by just summing up everything that you've said before – this is a bit boring
- Instead save your best point for last and end with something like the sentence: "However, the most effective way in which Owen undermines the heroic image of war is by ..."
- As with your introduction try to end with a quotation

How do you smoothly embed quotations?

Here is an example of a paragraph that does not smoothly embed quotations:

"Owen creates the impression that the war is like a nightmare as he fills the first stanza of the poem with images that are magical, unreal or like something from a frightening dream such as: 'haunting flares' and 'hags'. These words suggest ..."

Here is an example of a paragraph that does smoothly embed quotations, notice how much better it sounds :

"Owen's fear of the 'haunting flares' creates the impression that war is a nightmarish and horrific experience. The simile that compares the soldiers with coughing 'hags' emphasises this and the corrupt, unhealthy connotations of these words make it clear just how different the reality of war is from the image of bravery and heroism that the men were tricked into believing when they signed up to fight."