

KEY STAGE	AGE
KS1	5-7
KS2	7-11 ✓
KS3	11-14 ✓
KS4	14-16
KS5	16-18

AT A GLANCE

- RHYTHM
- IAMBIC PENTAMETER
- WAR POETRY
- STRUCTURE
- SYLLABLES

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POETRYCLASS: FRESH IDEAS FOR POETRY LEARNING FROM THE POETRY SOCIETY

RHYTHM AND PACE IN POETRY

BY ROSHAN DOUG

The aim of this activity is to familiarise students with the concepts of structure and movement of a poem.

Give out copies of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* on the accompanying sheet. Ask the class to mark time and the movement of the poem, noticing how the grouping of words can make a certain beat – what poets call rhythm.

Rhythmic structures

You can then discuss metre and the way syllables in each line are stressed in a regular or irregular pattern. Explain how stresses in the lines emphasise particular words and how rhythm can help to create a mood (cheery, angry, melancholy, etc). Talk about the effects of a sudden rhythm change. Discuss the use of certain monosyllabic and polysyllabic words in relation to consonance and assonance and how they affect the tempo of a poem.

Understanding pace

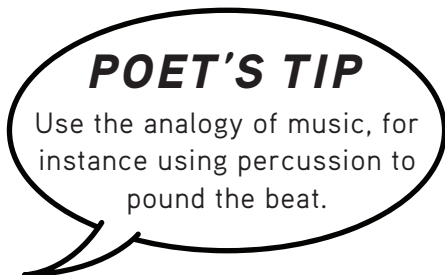
Talk about pace (speed) and the effect it has on poetry, on the length of lines, the mood, alliteration and long or short vowel sounds. Ask students to suggest how they might change the pace of a piece.

Now give students a copy of the accompanying sheet on which *Dulce et Decorum est* is printed without punctuation and line breaks. Underneath it, ask students to write it how they think it should be punctuated to change pace and so to make it more meaningful.

Expanding the exercise

As an alternative or additional activity, you could cut it up into pieces either into its original stanzas or by cutting the poem randomly. Ask the students to restructure the poem the way they think it should look. Ask them to explain why with reference to rhythm.

Now invite students to write one of their own poems, paying particular attention to structure and pace.



THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns' he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldiers knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to the right of them,
Cannon to the left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

DULCE ET DECORUM EST

Bent double like old beggars under sacks knock-kneed coughing like hags
we cursed through sludge till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
and towards our distant rest began to trudge men marched asleep

many had lost their boots but limped on blood-shod all went lame all
blind drunk with fatigue deaf even to the hoots of disappointed shells that
dropped behind GAS Gas quick boys an ecstasy of fumbling fitting the
clumsy helmets just in time but someone still was yelling out and stumbling

and floundering like a man in fire or lime dim through the misty panes and
thick green light as under a green sea I saw him drowning In all my dreams
before my helpless sight he plunges at me guttering choking drowning if
in some smothering dreams you too could pace behind the wagon that we
flung him in and watch the white eyes writhing in his face his hanging face
like a devil's sick of sin if you could hear at every jolt

the blood come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs obscene as cancer
bitter as the cud of vile incurable sores on innocent tongues my friend you
would not tell with such high zest to children ardent for some desperate
glory The old Lie Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori

WILFRED OWEN

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DULCE ET DECORUM EST

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, –
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

WILFRED OWEN

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