

# ENGLISH LITERATURE A-LEVEL



## INDEPENDENT STUDY BOOKLET

# Starter for 12 Tasks- A Level English Literature

**1. Read through the following independent study booklet. In it you will find a wealth of information surrounding the texts you will be studying as well as useful links relating to them. This booklet is something that you can keep referring back to throughout the course.**

**2. Watch a version of Othello. Below are two good adaptations.**

- Othello dir. Kenneth Branagh, starring Laurence Fishburne and Irene Jacob (1994)
- Othello (Shakespeare's Globe Theatre) dir. Wilson Milam, starring Eamonn Walker, Tim McKinnerny and Zoe Tapper (2008)

**3. Find out more about the author of Atonement by visiting his website.**

([www.ianmcewan.com](http://www.ianmcewan.com)). It is useful to get to know the author, his opinions and interests—there are a series of interviews with the writer here and articles he has written, responding to world events.

**4. Read the following articles on how to read and understand poetry.**

The skills that you will need to read love poetry unseen will be largely fostered during the teaching of the AQA anthology. Nonetheless, the Academy of American Poets has a good website that introduces you to the often daunting process and language of reading poetry—have a look around:

<https://poets.org/text/poetry-101-resources-beginners>

Read the following article first though. Matthew Zapruder gives his own interesting (and heartening) introduction to reading poetry by arguing that instead of trying to be all deep and meaningful, you should pay attention to literal meaning, even in the strangest poems. It's a challenging and encouraging read:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/10/books/review/understanding-poetry-is-more-straightforward-than-you-think.html>

## **Introduction to English**

Studying English Literature at Southfields Academy requires extensive independent reading.

This Booklet will give you advice on the texts you need to read in order to pass the course— and the additional reading that is essential if you are to excel in English.

### **Reading is a habit**

Reading is a habit. It is as simple as that. Set aside time every day to read. That may be thirty minutes or an hour before bedtime, on the bus home, in a study room, a café or in the park, but make you must foster a reading habit. It's best if you set aside the same time every day, and ideal if you truly enjoy the books you're reading; but you have to read every day. Set yourself a goal: I want to read twenty novels this year, or perhaps ten plays. Create a reading log, or just make a tally on a piece of A4 up in your room. You'll be pleased and encouraged when you achieve your goal.

### **Independent reading is essential**

Students who do not read independently always fail at A-level. This is the prime fact worth knowing as you begin your course. There is no substitute for deep knowledge of the texts you are studying, and your knowledge will be gained by reading and re-reading the study texts until you know them backwards. No-one should have to nag you to do this. This, such as it is, is your job: there is no excuse for anything less. Beyond this, you get into the real work of A-level study, which is wider reading.

### **Wider reading is essential**

At A-level you cannot be spoon fed reading and ideas like at GCSE. Your own wider reading will define your success in the course.

You've just been spewed out of the great GCSE grade-making machine, where your own capacity for individual exploration of the subject has been trammelled (or 'focused') along the lines of the curriculum. Your course was defined for you. Your ability to master particular types of examiners' questions was a large part of your success or failure. Reading and regurgitating study books, notes and quotes could be enough to succeed.

Now, however, you are expected to read widely and enquire into all aspects of texts. You must explore the situation of novels, poets and plays in wider history, their place in the history of literature, and the thoughts of others on the texts that you are encountering for the first time. You are expected to read these texts as an enquiring, curious adult. If you are incapable of doing this, you are doomed to write in a simple manner and generalise about their content and meaning. This means failure at A-level.

If, however, you build on the reading the course demands, follow your own nose and take the initiative in reading widely, reading and achieving in English literature will become correspondingly easier. The added bonus is that this kind of broad and thoughtful reading will, in time, offer you a lifetime's pleasure too. And all you need to do is get into that reading habit. Good luck!

## **PAPER 1 CORE TEXTS**

### **Section A**

- 'Othello' by William Shakespeare

### **Section B**

- Unseen Love Poetry

### **Section C**

- *Anthology of Love Poetry through the Ages: Pre-1900*
- 'Atonement' by Ian McEwan

## **PAPER 2 CORE TEXTS**

### **Option 2B: WWI and its Aftermath**

### **Section A**

- 'Journey's End' by RC Sherriff

### **Section B**

- 'A Long Long Way' by Sebastian Barry
- *The Oxford Book of War Poetry* edited by John Stallworthy, poems 99-169 (p.160-224)

## **Independent Critical Study (Non-Exam Assessment: 20%)**

In this coursework component, you will write a comparative critical study of **two** texts. You will be required to commit to autonomous personal reading and texts across time provides a challenging and wide-ranging opportunity for independent study. Possible themes for the comparison are indicated below, but this is not a set list and you are free to develop their own interests from their own wider and independent reading.

The following conditions apply to the texts chosen:

- one text must have been written pre-1900
- two different authors must be studied
- A-level core set texts cannot be used for non-exam assessment
- the essay is comparative and connective so equal attention must be paid to both texts
- texts chosen for study *may* include texts in translation

Possible themes to connect texts include:

- |                             |  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| ❖ the struggle for identity | ❖ the Gothic                           | ❖ representations of sexuality                    |
| ❖ crime and punishment      | ❖ satire and dystopia                  | ❖ representations of women                        |
| ❖ minds under stress        | ❖ war and conflict                     | ❖ representations of men                          |
| ❖ nostalgia and the past    | ❖ representations of race<br>ethnicity | ❖ representations of social class<br>and culture. |

## Year 1: Love Through the Ages

The first year of your study in English literature will be dedicated to 'love through the ages'. This part of the A-level course is what is termed as *diachronic*— which means that it is concerned with the way that expressions of love, and attitudes to love have changed over time. We begin with poetry utilising or rejecting the Courtly Love Convention in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in this way encounter the beginnings of what would come to be called 'romantic love' in Western culture.

### Reading 'Othello'

It is **highly** recommended that when you read *Othello* (1604) you buy the EAJ Honigmann-edited **Arden Shakespeare** edition. The notes in this edition are second to none and will help you analyse language in your essays, with line-by-line explanations of meaning. It is crucial that you are able to engage with each line of Shakespeare in such a way that you can construct your own reading of the play, and can understand the different possibilities in each line to an actor or director in constructing character. That means knowing what each word on the page means, puzzling over why those words are chosen, and making your own sense of the writing. The Arden Shakespeare edition has line-by-line footnotes on every page for difficult language, and an interesting (if at times eccentric) introduction by Honigmann. It's not the only advanced edition, but for our purposes it's the best.

*Othello* is of course a play, and so perhaps the best way to encounter it first (depending on reviews!) is to watch a live production. There have been two live productions of *Othello* in London in 2019 alone, and more will follow. As odd as it might be for you, be brave and go to the theatre to see a production if you can. You will be part of an audience, with actors playing on a stage in front of you. This is how Shakespeare intended his plays to be seen. The more productions you can see, the more aware you will be that many readings can be constructed from one Shakespearian text. You can also reference these performances critically in examination— each production is a new, critical voice in the history of performing *Othello*. Indeed, one tactic to get to know the play well is to read the play and then repeatedly watch different adaptations. This way you'll get to know different directors' ideas and emphases in adapting the play, and the different interpretations that actors make when given these characters as their roles.

If you can't do this, there are two adaptations of *Othello* available to watch that are readily available, both good:

- ❖ **Othello** dir. Kenneth Branagh, starring Laurence Fishburne and Irene Jacob (1994)
- ❖ **Othello (Shakespeare's Globe Theatre)** dir. Wilson Milam, starring Eamonn Walker, Tim McKinnerny and Zoe Tapper (2008)

The former is a powerful and absorbing big movie production with great performances in the lead roles. The latter is a film of the production as it was performed at the Globe theatre, in the round, in period costume. It is invaluable as a guide for students as to how the play would have looked in its Elizabethan staging— which can seem to us at first strange and perhaps challenging.

## Reading Critically about 'Othello'

General critical texts on Shakespeare and his plays that are recommended are:

- ❖ **Shakespeare: A Beginner's Guide** - Roni Jay
- ❖ **Shakespearean Tragedy** – A.C. Bradley
- ❖ **Shakespeare's Language** – Frank Kermode
- ❖ **Shakespeare: Texts and Contexts** – Kiernan Ryan

You need to start reading critical texts as soon as possible and habituate yourself to the (at first) difficult language and terminology that they use. This may mean reading with Google constantly open on your phone or computer and repeatedly typing 'define'. Every word you learn and in turn correctly use in your essays will see your grade rise: you will be adopting what is called an 'academic vocabulary' in your writing. Using an academic vocabulary at A-level is one key to exam success.

Beyond this, of course, you are finding out what true experts in your subject think about the portrayal of race in Othello, say, or its depiction of women. They save you from struggling towards an idea about the text that has already been thought, long ago— and so set you up on the higher rungs of the critical ladder, ready to have more sophisticated discussions of the play's language and themes.

## Reading Tragedy

One way of understanding Othello better as a text is to read or watch productions of Shakespeare's other tragedies. In doing so, the structure and motifs of the Shakespearean tragedy will become more apparent, and you will familiarise yourself further with the language of the time. The four tragedies selected below are some of the greatest dramas in any language. If you're serious about literature, you'll read or watch them all at some point anyway:

- ❖ **Romeo and Juliet** (c. 1597)
- ❖ **Macbeth** (1606)
- ❖ **King Lear** (1606)
- ❖ **Hamlet** (1609)

To understand tragedy's rules and conventions (which Shakespeare confidently broke and reshaped), read AC Bradley's book. Research Aristotle's theory of tragedy and Shakespeare's innovations in tragedy, starting here:

'Greek Theory of Tragedy: Aristotle's Poetics'

<http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/film-and-lit/tragedy-hnd.pdf>

British Library Introduction to Shakespearean Tragedy

<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/an-introduction-to-shakespearean-tragedy>

## Reading 'Atonement'

Reading novels at A-level should not be something done within lessons as the year progresses. Buy a book quickly, begin reading your novel on the first day that you get it, and finish it within a month at least, and you'll save yourself a lot of anguish and stress as the year goes on. As stated at the head of this guide, nothing can replace good knowledge of the text, and that means reading the novel more than once. This way, come exam-time, you'll be able to confidently survey the text, drawing on your knowledge of plot and character development. The exploration of themes and ideas in the novel that you are given access to in lessons will be more easily comprehensible when you know the characters and the story well.

Buying an A-level study Notes Guide is a sensible investment to help you read the book by yourself. York Notes are a trustworthy comprehension and revision source. Their study books are recommended, with Amazon selling some ridiculously cheap used texts, particularly for the 2006 edition:

- ❖ **Atonement: York Notes Advanced** by Anne Rooney, 2006 (ISBN no: 9781405835619)
- ❖ **Atonement: York Notes for A-level** by Anne Rooney and Lyn Lockwood, 2016 (ISBN no: 1292138165)

Ian McEwan also has his own website ([www.ianmcewan.com](http://www.ianmcewan.com)). It is useful to get to know the author, his opinions and interests— there are a series of interviews with the writer here and articles he has written, responding to world events.

Two texts that will allow you to begin your critical studies on McEwan can be found online for free:

*The Effects of Conflict in the Novels of Ian McEwan* – Morten Høi Jensen

This essay explores the notion of conflict in *Atonement*, as well as in two other McEwan novels – *Saturday* and *Enduring Love*. We'll read some extracts from it in class, but you might want to try and read the entire piece. Wait until we've finished the novel though, as this may spoil it for you...

<http://www.ianmcewan.com/bib/articles/Jensen.pdf>

*Shades of Austen in Ian McEwan's Atonement* – Juliette Wells

McEwan uses a quotation from Jane Austen's novel *Northanger Abbey* to open *Atonement*. This essay explores the influence of Jane Austen on McEwan's novel. If you've read any of Austen's works, this might be one for you to try! Wait until we've finished the novel though, as this may spoil it for you.

<http://www.jasna.org/persuasions/printed/number30/wells.pdf>

## Reading Pre-1900 Love Through the Ages Poetry and Reading Unseen Love Poetry

You will receive an AQA anthology to study and annotate the selected poems for the course. AQA are slow about sending this out, however, so it is a good idea to familiarise yourself with these 14 poems quickly. They are:

- ❖ 'Whoso list to Hunt'- Sir Thomas Wyatt
- ❖ 'Sonnet 116'- William Shakespeare\*
- ❖ 'The Flea' - John Donne
- ❖ 'To His Coy Mistress'- Andrew Marvell\*
- ❖ 'The Scrutiny'- Richard Lovelace\*
- ❖ 'Absent from Thee'- John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester
- ❖ 'The Garden of Love'- William Blake
- ❖ 'Ae Fond Kiss'- Robert Burns\*
- ❖ 'She Walks in Beauty'- Lord Byron\*
- ❖ 'Remember'- Christina Rossetti\*
- ❖ 'The Ruined Maid'- Thomas Hardy\*
- ❖ 'At an Inn'- Thomas Hardy
- ❖ 'La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad'- John Keats
- ❖ 'Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae'- Ernest Dowson

You will be annotating these poems in detail and it is never too early to begin reading them. You may well find some or all of these poems difficult to understand at first. Your response to difficulty has to be resilience— not to be discouraged or downhearted. Some of these poems are more easily comprehensible on first reading than others. If you feel poetry is a weakness for you, start with a reading of these (asterisked \* above).

Reading poetry can be like being faced with a puzzle or riddle. The first thing to do is to read the poem and try to create a personal reading of the poem that makes some sense to you— that has a logic or feeling of sorts. This logic or feeling that you discover in the poem might (on reflection) be flat-out wrong, but the patient practice of *trying* to understand a poem is itself a skill, a way of creating meaning.

Once you've done this, go online and research what others have written about the poem. As far as analysing and critiquing these poems are concerned, you and I are very late to the party. So google around the poems- explore. Some, like 'To his Coy Mistress', will have sites with line to line annotation of the poem. Others may tell the story that lies behind the poem, as in Wyatt's 'Whoso List to Hunt' or Burns' 'Ae Fond Kiss'. Others may be better understood by a little historical research on the Metaphysical Poets (Donne and Marvell), the Cavalier Poets (Lovelace and Rochester) or the Romantics (Keats, Blake, Burns and Byron), for example.

After this critical and historical reading, you reconsider your initial reading. You may have surprised yourself with the insight you displayed when you read poem. You may reject your first reading as rubbish. You may choose to reject some of the criticism you've read as misguided or irrelevant. But by re-reading the poem in the light of another person's criticism. you have begun to debate the meaning of a poem, with others and with yourself. This kind of reading is exploratory and thoughtful, and is a sign you are maturing as a reader and a critic.

**Caldew School** have built an excellent resource at their website which Southfields Academy unashamedly steals from. Find this at:

<https://caldewlit.weebly.com/paper-1-poetry-pre-1900.html>



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<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/10/books/review/understanding-poetry-is-more-straightforward-than-you-think.html>

## Year 2: WWI and its Aftermath

The second year of your study will be dedicated to the literature of World War One. This means literature inspired by as well as documenting the Great War of 1914-1918.

It is important you quickly get to grips with the conflict and the experiences of those who were involved in it. You should get to know what European society was like in the years before during and after the war: its politics, culture and science. You should try to understand what life was like for the average man or woman in Britain, and why the First World War was at first eagerly welcomed by many in Europe. You should understand the web of influences and patterns of domination that made this fundamentally European conflict a world war. And you should above all get to know the common experiences of everyday people during the First World War, whether on the front line or the Home Front.

There are literally hundreds of books that have been published about the conflict, of varying excellence. Go to the library and flick through the books on the shelves. Try to find a historian with the power to interest and engage you, and read about the war.

If you're struggling to find an interest in the conflict, my advice is first to watch Peter Jackson's colourised documentary about the war, **They Shall Not Grow Old**, available to buy or rent on Amazon. It's a remarkable film documentary that brings the conflict to uncanny life. Then visit the **Imperial War Museum**— it's just 6 miles and a short bus journey from Southfields, after all— and look around the dedicated galleries to the First World War.

### Reading critically about World War I

There are three crucial critical texts that you should read to support your reading of World War One and its Aftermath. These texts are in the school library and are easily bought online.

- ❖ **The Great War and Modern Memory** by Paul Fussell
- ❖ **Heroes Twilight** by Bernard Bergonzi
- ❖ **Anthem for Doomed Youth: Twelve Soldier Poets of the First World War** by John Stallworthy

The knowledge you will find in these three texts alone can sufficiently prepare you for the A-level exam. **The Great War and Modern Memory** is the best of these, and functions as both a history and a cultural account of the Great War. **Begin with this to provide you with an overview of the First World War.** It will supply you with a historical and cultural knowledge that can underpin all your reading that will follow.

Also recommended but often missed is the introduction to John Stallworthy's Oxford Book of War Poetry. It is a comprehensive survey of the history of War Literature.

### Reading Widely: Fiction

Three novels about the First World War are recommended:

- ❖ **Return of the Soldier** by Rebecca West
- ❖ **Birdsong** by Sebastian Faulks
- ❖ **A Farewell to Arms** by Ernest Hemingway

Return of the Soldier is an accessible and interesting novel about the disturbances the war creates amongst the women who love a shell-shocked soldier; Birdsong a late twentieth century classic of First World War fiction; A Farewell to Arms a more challenging modernist novel about an army medic's experiences in Italy.

### Reading Widely: Non-Fiction

Four memoirs (one, by Sassoon, fictionalised) about the first World War are recommended:

- ❖ **Testament of Youth** by Vera Brittain
- ❖ **Goodbye to All That** by Robert Graves
- ❖ **Memoirs of an Infantry Officer** by Siegfried Sassoon
- ❖ **Undertones of War** by Edmund Blunden

All of these texts give powerful accounts of the conflict. Brittain's is a vital female perspective, written by a nurse who experienced considerable personal loss during the war. The infantry officers' accounts of the war differ in tone, but a favourite is Graves' book, which is darkly cynical and at times humorous.

**Forgotten Voices** and **Last Post** by Max Arthur are excellent collections of accounts of the war, by some of the people who lived through it. They provide an easy 'way in' to personal experiences of the First World War.

### Reading 'Journey's End'

Wider reading for Journey's End is easily accessible online. Here are three key resources:

- ❖ Surrey Heritage have a website, **Exploring Surrey's Past**, that acts a portal to many excellent resources on the play:

<https://www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/themes/subjects/military/surreys-first-world-war/sherriff/>

- ❖ Roland Wales has an excellent website, **RC Sherriff... and more**, devoted to the life of Sherriff himself that will give you all the autobiographical information that you will ever need to understand how Journey's End came to be written:

<https://www.rolandwales.com/RC-Sherriff/2017/07/>

- ❖ One of the best academic articles to focus on Journey's End is an academic essay by **Amanda Phipps** on the audience reception of the play at different times. It will deepen your understanding of the play and the way attitudes to the war have changed over time:

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/students/retrospectives/issues/amanda-phipps.pdf>

## **Using Move Him Into the Sun**

*Move Him Into the Sun* has been the Southfields study blog for ten years and has had around a million and a half visits from people around the world to date. It is an infinitely valuable study resource, with links to various historical and literary sites on World War One. It has detailed notes for many of our study texts, including **A Long Long Way**. It answers questions about the course and it gives advice on how to study at A-level. Use it regularly as a research aid. Get online now and explore what's there. Begin by clicking 'All Posts and Poems- Archive!' on the top banner, and follow what interests you.

## **Reading 'A Long Long Way'**

First stop for readers of *A Long Long Way* is the *Move Him Into the Sun* study blog. There are links there to follow on the book's historical context and critical perspectives on the novel, with chapter by chapter summaries and (growing all the time) analysis.

Wider Reading on the history of Ireland, the independence struggle, the Easter Rebellion and Ireland during the First World War can be found online and through the website.

In reading *A Long Long Way*, I found **A Nation and not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-23** by Diarmaid Ferriter useful, and I recommend it: but more closely focused resources can be found by googling cleverly and using the school website.

## **Reading the Core World War One Poetry Texts**

The *Oxford Book of War Poetry* by John Stallworthy is a well selected (if very much male-oriented) overview of the poems produced throughout the First World War, and of those poems that subsequently look back on the war. You should ensure that you read and have a working familiarity with all the AQA selected poems in this book (poems 99-169, p.160-224). There are many great and moving poems in this selection. You must seek them out. The more of these poems you know, the easier you'll find answering any comparative question on themes in the exam. Read them with the help of the Southfields study blog, **Move Him Into the Sun**.

You can extend your knowledge of First World Poetry, and especially female poets' responses to the war, by reading

- ❖ **Scars Upon My Heart** edited by Catherine Reilly
- ❖ **Up the Line to Death** by Brian Gardner

The first is an excellent resource to begin understanding womens' experiences in the First World War. The second is a more internationalist anthology than Stallworthy's. The former in particular provides excellent wider reading on the war.

## **Appendix:**

### **Select Reading List for the Oxford Book of War Poetry**

In addition to the above, you should focus closely on certain poems that have been selected as particularly useful in discussing themes found in your Core novel, Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way*. What follows is a Select Reading List from the Oxford Book of War Poetry. These are poems you should know backwards. Again, you must use **Move Him Into the Sun** as a study resource to help you understand each of these poems intimately.

#### **1) Peace- Brooke**

A poem that expresses some of the contemporary excitement at the outbreak of war, and the sense of a patriotic higher calling that some joining up felt. Useful in terms of its romantic register, and Brooke's own history as a poet who died before he fought in the war.

#### **2) When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead- Sorley**

This poem is the first to conceive of the First World War as a conflict in which millions will die. Sorley is, as Stallworthy himself writes, a "transitional figure" who mediates between the earlier and later soldier poets. Brooke's poems express the romantic sentiment of "If I should Die..."; Owen's soldiers die "like cattle". Between them is Sorley, with this poem that performs a visit to the underworld, where the myriad men reject solecisms: "Say not soft things".

#### **3) Easter 1916- WB Yeats**

It is self-explanatory as to why this poem should be understood. It allows students to discuss the centrality of the Easter rebellion to Barry's text and the conflictedness that even Irish republicans like Yeats felt about the rebels (who did not believe England's promise of Home Rule at the end of the war).

#### **4) Reprisals- WB Yeats**

Yeats' bitter poem about Major Gregory (counterpart to his earlier eulogy about his heroic sacrifice, 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death') is the only poem in the anthology that takes an explicitly Irish and nationalist retrospective perspective on the events of the war, in the light of the post-war, British government-sponsored attacks on nationalist communities in Ireland (so-called 'reprisals' for IRA attacks). It is a poem about the consequences of the civil war for Irishmen, and provides a useful meditation on the way in which for an Irishman to join the British Army, like Willie, unforeseen consequences follow.

### **Poetry Case Study- Sassoon**

It is useful to know one poet, their biography, poetry and political perspectives, in some detail. This will allow you to write hitting all the AOs when using their poetry in the exam. I think Sassoon, as the most politically engaged of the war poets, a poet dissatisfied with the conduct of the war, a soldier of immense bravery who was nonetheless made mentally ill by his experiences, who made the journey from romantic to sceptic about the war, provides an excellent case study for the poetry of the war. His poetry is technically rich but pointed in terms of message. He is well worth knowing well.

#### **5) They- Sassoon**

A poem useful in any discussion of the effects of the war, and the distance between the home front moralising about the war and soldiers' actual experiences in the war. Connects through the figure of the archbishop to religious and moral questions about the dubious ethics of supporting the war; he also provides a good contrast with practical devotion of Willie's regimental chaplain, Father Buckley. The story of physical damage and mental and moral degradation undergone by the men also neatly ties to Willie's experience of the war—especially to the key encounter Willie has with the young prostitute in Amiens.

#### **6) The General- Sassoon**

The role of the General Staff in the direction (and mismanagement) of the war, and their distance from the experiences of the common soldier in the line, are made explicit in this poem. Major Stokes, of course, symbolises one aspect of this intransigence in Barry's novel, but there are any number of examples of the General Staff moving at the periphery of Willie's experience, as when he reports to HQ after the first gas attack, their presence at the boxing match, and a number of references to generals and the visit of the Head of the Army himself, King George. This example of jaunty but sardonic satire connects well with a number of sceptical political expressions about the war (especially Christy Moran's). Another poem that reads well in combination with this poem, wryly observing the flaws of the line of command, is Ivor Gurney's **The Silent One. Sergeant Major Money** by Graves similarly depicts discontent in the line. Given Sassoon's protest to parliament, it can also be read as a contemporary poem of protest, and links well with Yeats' Irish poems in the anthology.

#### **7) Glory of Women- Sassoon**

In an anthology with very limited representation of women's perspectives on the war, this vituperative attack on the role of women on the home front in extending and extenuating the conflict becomes important reading. It is important as an example of the conflict (or undeclared war even) existing between the sexes at the time, and its misogynistic tone evidences the bitterness some serving men felt towards women. More broadly, the imagined women in the poem become scapegoats for soldiers' anger felt towards non-combatants, perceived hypocrisy, and indeed all those on the home front.

#### **8) Everyone Sang- Sassoon**

Given the centrality of song as symbol in 'A Long Long Way'—Willie's own damaged singing voice, the manner of his death and the moments of delight in song throughout the novel—Sassoon's poem about singing heard in the trenches seems important in terms of content and form. Song is complex and contradictory in Barry's novel: recalling place and people, uniting individuals and communities, but also marking loss and division. Sassoon's poem is more straightforwardly about song as a sign for blissful hope and freedom in a fallen world of mundane violence.

#### **9) Break of Day in the Trenches- Rosenberg**

Rosenberg's most famous poem captures a soldier's moment of reflection as he stands on the fire-step at dawn: as he pulls a poppy from the parapet, he feels a rat run across the top of his hand. A meditation follows on irony that the rat is more free, and fitter to survive in this environment, than most of the men at the Front line. A gentle, humorous poem, it captures some of the grim everyday absurdity of life on the Western Front. Read with Owen's frightening **Exposure** for different views of life on the front line.

#### **10) Dead Man's Dump- Rosenberg**

Rosenberg's poem is the most gruesome and unflinching account of the horrors of war in the anthology: the journey of the wiring crew through no-man's land, and the scene of nauseating violence and despair found there is replicated many times in 'A Long Long Way'. The desperate questioning amidst the horror and the unflinching attention to detail in the description of no-man's land make it a logical comparison to Barry's poetic realism.

### **11) Dulce Et Decorum Est- Owen**

The multiple gas attacks in 'A Long Long Way' make this a logical choice for comparison, but the polemical aspect of the poem (dedicated to Jessie Pope, as it was) gives a starting point for discussion of Barry's own method and purpose in depicting the horrors of war.

### **12) MCMXIV- Larkin**

Larkin's poem looks back upon the 'Golden Age' of the Edwardian era in order to express the magnitude of the change to Britain and the British inaugurated by the First World War. The conflict is framed by a narrative that depicts a fall from innocence to knowledge. Larkin's poem is politically conservative, English, at times nostalgic, sentimental. Barry's novel is only the last, on occasion. There is therefore an interesting contrast to be made between the two texts that foregrounds the position of the poet and author- both looking back on a war that took place in a world they had not yet been born into. The formal question of historiography— how we write history, what we take to be central to that history— can be considered through thinking about these two texts. In studying the theme of loss, MCMXIV can be read in combination with any of the Edward Thomas poems in the anthology; in studying the theme of writers looking back on the conflict, it forms an interesting contrast to Pound's acerbic '**from Hugh Selwyn Mauberley**'.