



## THE AGE OF INNOCENCE

### EDITH WHARTON

STAGE 6  
C2  
YOUNG ADULT READERS

### ACTIVITIES

Answer questions on the first stanza of Wilfred Owen's *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 gas-shells dropping softly behind.

- Find three verbs which describe ways of walking.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What happens to the feet of the men who had lost their boots?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How does Wilfred Owen describe the men's backs and legs?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What has happened to the men's sight and hearing?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What are the conditions like under their feet?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What is happening around them?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What sounds does Owen invoke in this stanza?  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 trudge, marched, limped (on); 2 their feet were bleeding (blood-shod) and all went lame (walking with difficulty due to an injury of the foot/feet); 3 The men are bent double and their legs are bent (knock-kneed); 4 They have become blind and deaf (this might be referring to permanent physical damage or temporary due to exhaustion); 5 They are walking through sludge (thick mud); 6 Flares (haunting flares) are being sent up into the night sky and gas-shells are 'dropping softly behind' them; 7 coughing like hags, the men's curses as they trudge through the sludge, (possibly) haunting flares, and 'the hoots of gas-shells dropping softly behind'



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### TEST YOURSELF

Answer the following questions.

- 1 What name is given to the area in a war where the two opposing sides are closest together?
- 2 What name is given to the work done inside the UK to support the 'war effort'?
- 3 Which countries were known as 'the Allies'?
- 4 Who were they fighting and what name were these countries given?
- 5 What name was given to the battle line that ran through northern France and part of Belgium?
- 6 What name was given to the battle area where Russian forces fought Germany and Austria in Prussia and Poland, then later in Russia, when the Central Powers pushed the Russians back?
- 7 What terrible weapon was used for the first time during World War I?
- 8 What name was given to the German submarines which sank thousands of ships?
- 9 What name was given to the German 48-tonne Howitzers? These could fire a 930 kg shell over a distance of 15 km.
- 10 What did German soldiers call the French gun that was accurate over 6 km?

1 The front line; 2 The Home Front; 3 Britain, France, Italy (1915), Russia and the United States (1917); 4 Austria-Hungary, Germany and Turkey, collectively these countries were known as the Central Powers; 5 The Western Front; 6 The Eastern Front; 7 poison gas; 8 U-Boats; 9 Big Bertha; 10 the Devil Gun



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### Cambridge Proficiency-style Activity

Using what you have learned from the poems and author biographies in this collection, write an essay (200-250 words) on either:

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FOCUS ON...

# Haig's Trench-Busters

In 1916 the British developed a new weapon designed to break the deadlock on the Western Front. Its codename was the “water-tank”. The innovators who fought inside them were from various parts of the British Army. Before going into action, they would have learned the perils of operating inside one of these deadly machines. Nevertheless, inside early vehicles like the Mark IV, there were all manner of additional hazards, like exposed scalding pipes and moving machinery. Once committed to conflict, the first tank men also found out that the armour plate ‘spalled’, sending small shards of metal around the tank’s inside, as it stopped bullets and fragments on the outside. Face masks made from chainmail were quickly improvised to shield them.

