

Wilfred Owen
Anthem for doomed youth
More challenging questions!

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The vehicle for this poem is the sustained or extended metaphor of a funeral where the poet looks at the trappings of a typical funeral in a church and compares it with what would happen to a soldier killed in battle:

church bells = the noise of gun-fire

prayers = rapid rifle fire

choirs = the wailing of shells, plus the bugle calls

candles held by altar boys = the light of the sky reflected in the unclosed dead eyes of the soldiers

pall covering the body = pale colour in the faces of the bereaved women back home

flowers = kind thoughts of those back home

Notice too the numerous references to the madness and futility of war:

"die as cattle";

"monstrous anger";

"stuttering rifles rapid rattle";

"mockeries";

"shrill demented choirs".

1. The title of this poem -- ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH -- is ironic.
 - Discuss how the poet uses this irony to sum up his philosophy on warfare. (3)
2. "What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?"
 - How effective is this opening question as a statement of the poet's philosophy towards warfare? (3)
3. Show how the ARGUMENT of the Octave differs from that of the Sestet -- or is this a trick question? (4)
4. What type of sonnet is this? Justify your answer. (4)
5. What would be the BEST word to describe the tone of the poem? Justify your answer. (4)
6. Is the final line a fitting conclusion to the sonnet? Justify your answer. (4)
7. What is the poet's attitude towards war? Discuss with reference to the words and images used in this sonnet. (6)

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