

Read the following poem carefully. Then, compose a well-developed essay in which you analyze the techniques employed in the poem to reveal its meaning and the speaker's complex attitude towards war.

### **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\* (1893-1918)

\**Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, translated "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country," is a line from a poem by Roman military officer and poet Horace (65-8 BCE).

\*Wilfred Owen, a poet and young military officer, was struck by trench mortar and trapped in a German dugout during his service in World War I. He was diagnosed with shell shock but returned to the front in France out of patriotic duty. He was killed in action one week before the signing of the Armistice to end the fighting of World War I.