

# Starter for Ten

## Key word spotlight

In your own words write a definition of the keyword	use the term correctly in a sentence	Create a question where the keyword is the answer
List all of the character foils in Blood Brothers.	<b>KEYWORD: character foil</b>	Create a question using the key word
What other words are connected to the keyword?		Draw or find a picture to illustrate the keyword

# Exposure:

**What is the poem about?**

**Wilfred Owen's poem focuses on the misery felt by World War One soldiers waiting overnight in the trenches. Although nothing is happening and there is no fighting, there is still danger because they are exposed to the extreme cold and their wait through the night is terrifying.**



# Exposure:

## Let's read the poem!

Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds that knive us . . .

Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent . . .  
Low drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient . . .  
Worried by silence, **sentries** whisper, curious, nervous,  
But nothing happens.

Watching, we hear the mad gusts tugging on the wire,  
Like twitching agonies of men among its brambles.  
Northward, incessantly, the flickering **gunnery** rumbles,  
Far off, like a dull rumour of some other war.  
What are we doing here?

The **poignant** misery of dawn begins to grow . . .  
We only know war lasts, rain soaks, and clouds sag stormy.  
Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army  
Attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey,  
But nothing happens.

Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence.  
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,  
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew,  
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's **nonchalance**,  
But nothing happens.

Pale flakes with fingering stealth come feeling for our faces—  
We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-  
dazed,  
Deep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed,  
Littered with blossoms trickling where the blackbird fusses.  
—Is it that we are dying?

Slowly our ghosts drag home: glimpsing the sunk fires, glozed  
With crusted dark-red jewels; crickets jingle there;  
For hours the innocent mice rejoice: the house is theirs;  
Shutters and doors, all closed: on us the doors are closed,—  
We turn back to our dying.

Since we believe not otherwise can kind fires burn;  
Now ever suns smile true on child, or field, or fruit.  
For God's invincible spring our love is made afraid;  
Therefore, not **loath**, we lie out here; therefore were born,  
For love of God seems dying.

Tonight, this frost will fasten on this mud and us,  
Shrivelling many hands, and puckering foreheads crisp.  
The burying-party, picks and shovels in shaking grasp,  
Pause over half-known faces. All their eyes are ice,  
But nothing happens.



# Exposure:

## Meaning/main messages of the poem:

- Owen wishes to communicate to the public at home the horrifying reality of war and challenge the messages in the propaganda that encouraged them to join as soldiers.
- Owen wanted to draw attention to the physical and psychological suffering faced by the soldiers, highlighting how it was often the inactivity of war that was more painful than the activity. Overall, he presents war as futile and monotonous.
- Man vs nature. The poem personifies the forces of nature as an actively hostile force that attacks the soldiers, and presents nature as a more pressing threat than any human enemy.



# Exposure:

Complete the cloze activity in your booklet:



# Exposure:

Environment	'Nothing happens.'
Frost	Comrades
Stabbing	Futile
Personified	Beginnings
Dangerous	Pain
Exhausted	Repeat
Dying	Shut out

The speaker begins the poem with a description of the soldiers' mental state and physical \_\_\_\_\_. Sitting in frigid trenches during World War I, the soldiers are mentally and physically \_\_\_\_\_. The wind is \_\_\_\_\_ as being without mercy, metaphorically \_\_\_\_\_ the soldiers with its chill. This is the first indication that nature might be just as \_\_\_\_\_ to the soldiers as any enemy army.

Despite all this tension and vigilance required of the soldiers, \_\_\_\_\_ The speaker closes the stanza with the first instance of a refrain that he will \_\_\_\_\_ throughout the poem. In other words, war is \_\_\_\_\_ and meaningless; all this suffering changes nothing. In literature, dawn is usually a metaphor for new life and new \_\_\_\_\_, but Owen flips this on its head, instead portraying the despair of the men as they have to face another day of \_\_\_\_\_ and sorrow.

The snow and cold send the soldiers into a numbed daydream about home. The bemused soldiers question whether they are \_\_\_\_\_. In stanza 6, their disembodied ghosts visit the early-morning fires of home and observe crickets on the hearth and mice playing while the household sleeps; however, the ghosts feel \_\_\_\_\_ of this domestic scene and must turn back to their own slow deaths.

The last stanza observes that God's \_\_\_\_\_ will freeze the mud in which the soldiers find themselves, and it will freeze their hands, foreheads, and, finally, their eyes in their final act of dying. The next morning, burial parties will half recognize their \_\_\_\_\_, who died of exposure while nothing in particular was happening in the war. They were defeated by wind, snow, mud, and the seeming indifference of God rather than by wounds caused by bullets and bayonets.

# Exposure:



Environment	'Nothing happens.'
Frost	Comrades
Stabbing	Futile
Personified	Beginnings
Dangerous	Pain
Exhausted	Repeat
Dying	Shut out

The speaker begins the poem with a description of the soldiers' mental state and physical environment. Sitting in frigid trenches during World War I, the soldiers are mentally and physically exhausted. The wind is personified as being without mercy, metaphorically stabbing the soldiers with its chill. This is the first indication that nature might be just as dangerous to the soldiers as any enemy army.

Despite all this tension and vigilance required of the soldiers, "nothing happens." The speaker closes the stanza with the first instance of a refrain that he will repeat throughout the poem. In other words, war is futile and meaningless; all this suffering changes nothing. In literature, dawn is usually a metaphor for new life and new beginnings, but Owen flips this on its head, instead portraying the despair of the men as they have to face another day of pain and sorrow.

The snow and cold send the soldiers into a numbed daydream about home. The bemused soldiers question whether they are dying. In stanza 6, their disembodied ghosts visit the early-morning fires of home and observe crickets on the hearth and mice playing while the household sleeps; however, the ghosts feel shut out of this domestic scene and must turn back to their own slow deaths.

The last stanza observes that God's frost will freeze the mud in which the soldiers find themselves, and it will freeze their hands, foreheads, and, finally, their eyes in their final act of dying. The next morning, burial parties will half recognize their comrades, who died of exposure while nothing in particular was happening in the war. They were defeated by wind, snow, mud, and the seeming indifference of God rather than by wounds caused by bullets and bayonets.



# Exposure:

## Golden quotations:

Sibilance - conveys the biting cold, the intensity of the wind that hurts them as if stabbed.

**Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds  
that knife us . . .**

Metaphor - Owen establishes the poems focus on the psychological impact of war, but also the literal ache the freezing conditions have on the soldiers.

Personification - Nature is personified as an evil, inescapable and vicious enemy, creating fear within the listener and the soldiers themselves.

### STRUCTURE

Ellipsis - Implies how long these brutal, yet mind-numbing events continue on. Owen uses ellipsis to slow the pace of the poem, forcing the reader to experience the same frustrations the soldiers were exposed to.





# Exposure:

**Personification – Nature is again being personified to convey ideas that it is more dangerous than any physical army could be to the soldiers.**

**Golden quotations:**

**Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army**

**Dawn = new beginning, happiness etc. However, here it just brings another day of misery.**

**Juxtaposition – Owen juxtaposes the stereotypical female kind and nurturing nature figure with the aggressive connotations of an army. This emphasizes ideas that the soldiers are not only in conflict with physical bodies, but also with nature.**



# Exposure:

Anaphora – Repetition of this line emphasizes the futility of war. The situation is never-changing despite the suffering the soldiers are exposed to.

## Structure:

**But nothing happens.**

Cyclical Structure – The last line of the poem mirrors the last line of the first stanza, emphasizing that nothing has happened or changed in the time the narrator has been speaking.



# Exposure: plenary/exit ticket.

**Imagine this is your exam question:**

**'Compare how conflict is presented in 'Exposure' and one other poem.**

- 1) Decide which poem you would compare with.**
- 2) Write down one point of comparison between the poems.**

