Dulce et Decorum Est

Wilfred Owen
Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgQhH67oPgY
Explanation of Title

“Dulce et Decorum est, Pro Patria Mori” means it is sweet and proper to die for the fatherland.
This is ironic that the poem is called this because in the poem the poet says that dulce et decorum, pro patria mori is all a lie.
Explanation of Poem

The poem is about soldiers going to attack. It describes the brutal **conditions at war**. It describes when their base is being gassed and the brutality of seeing the **soldiers friend’s dying** in front of their eyes and being helpless. It also tells us about the government lying to the citizens about the **conditions of being at war** and being thought of as **heros**.
Explaining Poem Line by Line

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.

The soldiers are bent over and trying to walk in mud. When they saw fires they turned back towards their base.
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.

The soldiers were like zombies they were so tired. Many soldiers were injured and missing clothing. Many soldiers had lost their hearing because of bombs dropped.
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.

This explains a scene where everyone is putting on their gas masks because they had been gassed but one man didn't put his mask on in time. He began choking in the gas.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight, He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

The dying man falls at the poet begging for help.
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;

The dying man was put into a wagon to die and the soldiers watched his eyes turn white and roll back into his head.
THE OLD LIE
"DULCE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI."
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,—

The poet describes the noise of the blood of the dying man coming out of his mouth. The poet uses a simile referring to the scene like cancer or cud.
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.

The poet tells us how young children and teenagers who want to be heros are being lied to about the condition of wars and are being told that it is a wonderful thing to die for your country.
Poetic Techniques

The first line is a **simile**.

“*bent double over like old beggars under sacks*”

This creates an image of the bent over soldiers look as disheveled as a beggar/poor person.

The **metaphor** “*Drunk with fatigue, deaf even to the hoots Of gas shells dropping softly behind*” suggests how **exhausted** and lethargic these men were so that they ignored the dangers of the shelling. **Just as a drunken man staggers unsteadily, so too the soldiers** could not march properly through exhaustion and like a deaf person they could no longer hear the shells.
Poetic Techniques:

ONOMATOPOEIA: Owen describes the effort of the men returning from the line. They do not march proudly but “trudge” through the mud with exhaustion and effort. The word choice conveys the noise and difficulty of plodding through the wet mud when being totally worn out.

The hyperbole or exaggeration of “All lame…all blind” indicates how vast numbers suffered trench foot and eye injuries.
Theme:

❖ The theme of this poem is war. It shows when the poem says “Gas! Gas! Quick boys!”.
❖ This can also been seen when the soldiers are being described at the start of the poem. “Bent double like old beggars under sacks”.

war
Tone:

❖ The tone of this poem is **sorrow**. This is clear when the poet says “he plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning”.

❖ The tone of this poem is also **revealing**. This shows when the poet says “Dulce et decorum est Pro patria mori”.