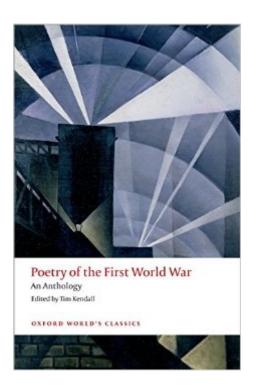
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# Poetry Of The First World War: An Anthology (Oxford World's Classics)





# **Synopsis**

The First World War produced an extraordinary flowering of poetic talent. Its poets mark the conflict in ways that are both intensely personal and as enduring as any monument. Their lines have come to express the feelings of a nation about the horrors and consequences of war. This new anthology provides a definitive record of the achievements of the Great War poets and offers a fresh assessment of the work on the centenary of the Great War's outbreak. Focusing on the poets themselves, the book is organized by writer, not theme or chronology. It offers generous selections from the celebrated soldier-poets, including Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, and Rupert Brooke, whilst also incorporating less well-known writing by civilian and women poets. It also includes two previously unpublished poems by Ivor Gurney. A general introduction charts the history of the war poets' reception and challenges prevailing myths about the war poets' progress from idealism to bitterness. The work of each poet is prefaced with a biographical account that sets the poems in their historical context. Although the War has now passed out of living memory, its haunting of our language and culture has not been exorcised. Its poetry survives because it continues to speak to and about us.

## **Book Information**

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### Customer Reviews

When I was teaching, one of my favorite assignments each year was when we got to  $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}$ 

the poetry of â ÂœWorld War 1â Â•. I have long believed that some of the richest and most over looked poetry of the last century came out of â ÂœThe Great Warâ Â•. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that I loved â ÂœPoetry of the First World Warâ Â• compiled and edited by Tim Kendall. The poems in this anthology are intensely personal. Often you feel as if you are with them in the mud, barbed wire, fogs of chemicals, and rotting corpses. The anthology is a definitive work and contains all the great poets of the time, including Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen,, Rupert Brooke and Ivor Gurney. This is a great gift and should be on the shelves of anyone who considers themselves a poetry lover or history buff.

You call them Doughboys, Tommies, Fritz, Boche, Huns, Heinies, and poilus. Among them was Ivor Gurney who enlisted successfully, despite his poor eyesight, as a private with the Gloucesters to swap his nervous exhaustion for healthy fatigue on the battlefield. And we still remember Jack Kipling, the only son of Rudyard Kipling, who died on Loos battlefield in 1915. It was his father who pulled strings to have his son Jack commissioned. Jack was acutely short-sighted and unfit for military service, but Rudyard's patriotic fervor won over. On page 29 of this anthology, one reads Rudyard's "My Boy Jack:" When d'you think that he'll come back? Certainly, this is not a piece on effusions of a mortuary mason. After all, dulce et decorum est pro patria mori (it is sweet and fitting(!) to die for one's country). A fuller annotation on each writer of poetry could have made the anthology much more readable. This is a good companion to Lorrie Goldsohn's "American War Poetry: An Anthology" (2006).

The 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War 1 is officially July 28, the day Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia and attacked, in retribution for the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand and Archduchess Sophie in Sarajevo by a Serbian teenager. By the time the war ended, more than 70 million military personnel had been involved; more than nine million combatants were dead; and the German, Austrian, Ottoman, and Russian ruling families were swept from power. It seems odd to associate poetry with war, but it is a fact that no war is more connected to poetry that World War I. And for that we mostly have the English to thank. From 1914 to 1918, poetry went to war. But it went to war in all its possible permutations  $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}$  jingoistic nationalism; nostalgia for a world being fought for even as it passed away; the cynical response of the men in the trenches to their incompetent generals; the mourning of civilians; pacifism and opposition to the war; and the reflection of what it all meant, or didn $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}^{TM}$ t mean, years after the war was over. The poets we usually associate with World War I are those who died in the conflict  $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}$  Rupert Brooke

(1887-1915), Wilfred Owen (1893-1918), and possibly Isaac Rosenberg (1890-1918). These are the ones who usually show up in the high school and college English textbooks. But as Tim Kendall points out in â ÂœThe Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology,â Â• the number of poets involved was far greater than the handful represented in the texts. They came from the upper classes, middle class and working class. Novelist Thomas Hardy, for example, wrote poems about the war from the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914 to the armistice in November 1918. So did Rudyard Kipling, who lost his son John at age 18 in the Battle of Loos. And it wasn¢Â ™t only poets who went to war; men in the trenches read poetry. In fact, Kendall says, the most commonly read book by soldiers in the trenches was A.E. Housmanâ Â™s A Shropshire Lad, possibly because of the feelings the long poem evoked about the England being fought for. And after the war, it was largely the poets who framed Britain $\hat{A}\phi\hat{A}$   $\hat{A}^{TM}$ s understanding of what had happened and why. The anthology includes some wonderful poetry, and itâÂÂTMs difficult to limit a choice of favorites to one or two or a handful. Here is one by Rosenberg, who grew up in Whitechapel in Londonâ Â™s East End and was torn between being a painter or a poet until the war arrived:Break of Day in the TrenchesThe darkness crumbles away. It is the same old druid Time as ever,Only a live thing leaps my hand,A queer sardonic rat,As I pull the parapetâ Â™s poppvTo stick behind my ear. Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew Your cosmopolitan sympathies. Now you have touched this English handYou will do the same to a GermanSoon, no doubt, if it be your pleasureTo cross the sleeping green between.It seems you inwardly grin as you passStrong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes, Less chanced than you for life, Bonds to the whims of murder, Sprawled in the bowels of the earth, The torn fields of France. What do you see in our eyes At the shrieking iron and flameHurled through still heavens? What quaver â Â" what heart aghast? Poppies whose roots are in manâ Â<sup>TM</sup>s veinsDrop, and are ever dropping;But mine in my ear is safeâ Â"Just a little white with the dust. And there \$\hat{A} \chi \hat{A}^{TM}\$ Edward Thomas (1878-1917), considered something of a hack writer, Kendall says, until he developed a friendship with and received encouragement from Robert Frost. His first book of poetry was being prepared for publication when Thomas was killed at the Battle of Arras. This is his poem \$\tilde{A}\chi \tilde{A} \tilde{\tilde{A}} \tilde{\tilde{C}} The Private: \$\tilde{A}\chi \tilde{A} \tilde{A} \tilde{\tilde{T}} This ploughman dead in battle slept out of doorsMany a frozen night, and merrilyAnswered staid drinkers, good bedmen, and all bores:"At Mrs Greenland's Hawthorn Bush," said he,"I slept." None knew which bush. Above the town, Beyond `The Drover', a hundred spot the downln Wiltshire. And where now at last he sleepsMore sound in France -that, too, he secret keeps. Two other favorites are Robert Serviceâ Â™s â ÂœOnly a Bocheâ Â• and Owenâ Â™s â ÂœAnthem for Doomed Youth.â Â•Kendall, professor of English at Exeter University, is a poet, biographer and literary

Excellent, comprehensive and well-annotated collection. There's enough here to guide the reader into delving further into the poetry and/or biography of any of the included poets. I wanted to reread some of the more familiar poems, such as "Dulce et Decorum Est" and "I Have a Rendezvous with Death," as well as others new to me, in this hundredth year since the beginning of the Great War. While acknowledging that nothing can fully convey the experience of war to anyone who wasn't there, I feel that these poets do so as near-completely as can done with words. This for me is a satisfying anthology.

Exceed expectations. Best WW anthology I've seen and as poet, I have seen many. Well worth the investment for much pleasure.

Part of a "we will be better for having read this" choice by a small reading group. And we were. Vivid and moving descriptions, but little true poetry in the sense of the form of the language interacting with the thoughts conveyed.

Once I got to the poetry, every time I tapped next page I got the box to zoom an image. This formatting error did not allow for anything like a seamless, immersive reading experience.

Very moving poetry. Often beautiful but always gripping. My wife asked "why are you getting this?"

Because it touched my heart.

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