



Poppy Fields Forever

BY PETER BALKUS

Those poppy fields were lifeless,
but now they shine with light.
The war has made them bleeding,
the Peace has made them smile.
Each flower is a soldier,
who sacrificed his life,
who gave up his own future,
to make our future count.
Each flower tells a story of man and woman's fight,
you hear them in the glory of petals shining bright.
Shhh, quiet, can you hear this?
The flowers – making sound.
The unsung heroes singing the song of joy – and life.

Peter Balkus is an amateur poet, who wrote this poem in November 2015 in response to the centenary of the First World War Remembrance ceremonies, many of which used the image of the poppy as a powerful symbol, such as the Tower of London ceramic poppies which were displayed around the country.



Anthem for Doomed Youth

BY WILFRED OWEN

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Wilfred Owen was born in Oswestry in Shropshire in 1893, and began writing poetry as a teenager. He enlisted with the Manchester Regiment in 1915, before being sent to France in January 1917. Being diagnosed with shellshock, he was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh in June, where he was introduced to Siegfried Sassoon, an already well-respected poet, who encouraged Owen and helped him to refine his writing style.

Owen returned to the Western Front in August 1918, and was awarded the Military Cross for bravery. He was killed on 4th November 1918. Sassoon edited a volume of Owen's poetry which was published in 1920, and included the above Anthem for Doomed Youth.



Perhaps 1916

BY VERA BRITTAIN

Perhaps someday the sun will shine again,
And I shall see that still the skies are blue,
And feel once more I do not live in vain,
Although I feel bereft of You.

Perhaps the golden meadows at my feet
Will make the sunny hours of Spring seem gay
And I shall find the white May blossoms sweet,
Though You have passed away.

Perhaps the summer woods will shimmer bright,
And crimson roses once again be fair,
And autumn harvest fields a rich delight,
Although You are not there.

Perhaps someday I shall not shrink in pain
To see the passing of the dying year,
And listen to the Christmas songs again
Although You cannot hear.

But, though kind Time may many joys renew,
There is one greatest joy I shall not know
Again, because my heart for loss of You
Was broken, long ago.

Vera Brittain was born in December 1893 in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. In August 1914 Vera was due to begin studying English Literature at Oxford University, but within a year decided to leave and become a VAD nurse in a military hospital in Buxton, and later London. Her fiancé Roland was killed in action in France in December 1915. Her brother Edward was later also killed in action. This poem, written in 1916, describes her feelings of sorrow and loss.

*Vera went on to write her memoir *Testaments of Youth* which depict life as a nurse on the Home Front, while the men in her life whom she loved were away fighting.*



For the Fallen

BY LAURENCE BINYON

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Laurence Binyon was a well-respected poet of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During the First World War, Binyon volunteered with the Red Cross, serving as an orderly in a military hospital in France from 1915 to 1916. His experiences of the war and what he saw heavily influenced his poetry, and he wrote many with the war as a central subject.

For the Fallen is the most famous of Binyon's war poetry, particularly the fourth stanza ending "we will remember them", which is used often in Remembrance Services.