

Dulce et Decorum Est -- by Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
 Till on the haunted 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 gas-shells dropping softly 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 flound'ring 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
 Bitten 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. *

Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori means, "It is sweet and becoming to die for one's country."

Wilfred Owen died at the front during the last days of World War One.