

Responding to 'Exposure', students might want to write about the physical hardships the soldiers have to endure as a result of the weather, the soldiers' exhaustion and fatigue, and Wilfred Owen's own experiences of trench warfare.

- Physical hardships

Students might analyse the sibilant sounds in 'merciless iced east winds', which recreate the noise of the wind for the reader. They could go deeper and mention how the adjective 'merciless' personifies the wind, making it seem cruel. They could then look at the verb choice 'knife' used to describe how the wind is attacking the soldiers. This emphasises the extreme weather conditions, but also acts as a reminder of the violence of war.

- Exhaustion

Owen describes how the soldiers' 'brains ache', showing how the men are not just experiencing physical hardships but are also mentally fatigued. The verb 'ache' emphasises the ongoing, chronic discomfort that the men are experiencing, an idea which is also suggested by the use of ellipses at the end of the first three lines. The inverted syntax in the second line of the poem gives emphasis to '[w]earied', highlighting just how tired the soldiers are.

- Owen's own experiences

Students will probably want to comment on the fact that Owen has written the poem in the first person using the possessive determiner '[o]ur' and the plural pronoun 'us'. This creates a sense of unity amongst the soldiers who are enduring these 'merciless' conditions together, as one. It also encourages the reader to empathise with the situation being described, as it is written as a personal account. Students might also comment on Owen's first-hand experiences of trench warfare (thus making a link to context).

