



1

IT WAS A TOWN of red brick¹, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes² had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye³, and vast buildings full of windows where there was a rattling⁴ and a trembling⁵ all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness⁶.

Charles Dickens describes an industrial city, in the novel Hard Times (1854).

3

"I HAVE A BELT ROUND MY WAIST⁹, and a chain passing between my legs, and I go on my hands and feet. The tunnel is very steep¹⁰ and we have to hold by a rope. I have pulled trucks¹¹ till I have the skin off me."

"I work thirteen hours a day. I have to open and close a door for the coal. Sometimes I sing. But when it's dark, I can't sing – I'm too frightened."

A woman and an 8 year old child describe their work (Royal Commission on Coalmines, 1840).



2

IT IS A WONDERFUL PLACE – vast, strange, new and impossible to describe. Its grandeur does not consist in *one* thing, but in the unique assemblage of *all* things. Whatever human industry has created you find there, from the great compartments filled with railway engines and boilers, with mill⁷ machinery in full work, with splendid carriages of all kinds, to the most gorgeous work of the goldsmith and silversmith, it is such a bazaar or fair as Eastern genii might have created. It seems as if only magic could have gathered⁸ this mass of wealth from all ends of the earth.

The novelist Charlotte Bronte describes a visit to the Great Exhibition in 1851.

4

THE MOST INTENSE CURIOSITY and excitement prevailed, and, though the weather was uncertain, enormous masses of densely packed people lined the road, shouting and waving hats and handkerchiefs as we flew by them. What with the sight and sound of these cheering multitudes and the tremendous velocity with which we were carried past them, my spirits rose to the true champagne height, and I never enjoyed anything so much.

The actress Frances Kemble describes the opening of the Liverpool-Manchester railway (1830).

WILFRED OWEN (1893-1918)

* TEXT ONE

DULCE ET DECORUM EST (1917)

Although written in 1917, this poem was published in 1920. It is based on Owen's experience of trench warfare.

Look at the lay-out of the text. What do you notice about the way the poem is divided up?

- Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed¹, coughing like hags², *we* cursed through sludge³, *we* refers to...
Till on the haunting flares⁴ we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge⁵.
- 5 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped⁶ on, *blood-shod*. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots⁷
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind. *Why blood-shod?*
- 10 Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling⁸,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just *in time*, *in time* for...
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering⁹ like a man in fire or lime¹⁰. –
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light¹¹,
As under a green sea, *I* saw him drowning. *I* refers to...
- 15 In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering¹², choking, drowning. *He* refers to...
- If in some smothering¹³ dreams, *you* too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung *him* in,
And watch the white eyes writhing¹⁴ in his face,
20 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt¹⁵, the blood
Come gargling from the froth¹⁶ – corrupted lungs,
Bitter as the cud¹⁷
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, –
25 *My friend*, you would not tell with such high zest¹⁸ *My friend* refers to...
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori¹⁹.

The Soldier

BY RUPERT BROOKE

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,

A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

He took the lamp from the table and crept upstairs. As he unbarred the door, a smile of joy flitted across his strangely young-looking face and lingered for a moment about his lips. Yes, he would be good, and the hideous thing that he had hidden away would no longer be a terror to him. He felt as if the load had been lifted from him already. He went in quietly, locking the door behind him, as was his custom, and dragged the purple hanging from the portrait. A cry of pain and indignation broke from him. He could see no change, save that in the eyes there was a look of cunning and in the mouth the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite. The thing was still loathsome—more loathsome, if possible, than before—and the scarlet dew that spotted the hand seemed brighter, and more like blood newly spilled. Then he trembled. Had it been merely vanity that had made him do his one good deed? Or the desire for a new sensation, as Lord Henry had hinted, with his mocking laugh? Or that passion to act a part that sometimes makes us do things finer than we are ourselves? Or, perhaps, all these? And why was the red stain larger than it had been? It seemed to have crept like a horrible disease over the wrinkled fingers. There was blood on the painted feet, as though the thing had dripped—blood even on the hand that had not held the knife. Confess? Did it mean that he was to confess? To give himself up and be put to death? He laughed. He felt that the idea was monstrous. Besides, even if he did confess, who would believe him? There was no trace of the murdered man anywhere. Everything belonging to him had been destroyed. He himself had burned what had been below-stairs. The world would simply say that he was mad. They would shut him up if he persisted in his story. . . . Yet it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement. There was a God who called upon men to tell their sins to earth as well as to heaven. Nothing that he could do would cleanse him till he had told his own sin. His sin? He shrugged his shoulders. The death of Basil Hallward seemed very little to him. He was thinking of Hetty Merton. For it was an unjust mirror, this mirror of his soul that he was looking at. Vanity? Curiosity? Hypocrisy? Had there been nothing more in his renunciation than that? There had been something more. At least he thought so. But who could tell? . . . No. There had been nothing more. Through vanity he had spared her. In hypocrisy he had worn the mask of goodness. For curiosity's sake he had tried the denial of self. He recognized that now. But this murder—was it to dog him all his life? Was he always to be burdened by his past? Was he really to confess? Never. There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The picture itself—that was evidence. He would destroy it. Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing old. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away, he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy. It had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience. He would destroy it. He looked round and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened. As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it.

There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke and crept out of their rooms. Two gentlemen, who were passing in the square below, stopped and looked up at the great house. They walked on till they met a policeman and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but there was no answer. Except for a light in one of the top windows, the house was all dark. After a time, he went away and stood in an adjoining portico and watched.

“Whose house is that, Constable?” asked the elder of the two gentlemen.

“Mr. Dorian Gray’s, sir,” answered the policeman.

They looked at each other, as they walked away, and sneered. One of them was Sir Henry Ashton’s uncle.

Inside, in the servants’ part of the house, the half-clad domestics were talking in low whispers to each other. Old Mrs. Leaf was crying and wringing her hands. Francis was as pale as death.

After about a quarter of an hour, he got the coachman and one of the footmen and crept upstairs. They knocked, but there was no reply. They called out. Everything was still. Finally, after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof and dropped down on to the balcony. The windows yielded easily—their bolts were old.

When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was.

Nineteen Eighty-Four (1948)

The following extract is the beginning of the novel, a description of London as seen by one of its inhabitants, Winston Smith. Although living conditions have declined, the Thought Police, equipped with a technological advanced system of surveillance, follow people's every movement.

Before you read

- 1 Read the first sentence. What indicates that the setting is not the present?

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled ¹ into his breast in a effort to escape the vile ² wind, slipped ³ quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, ⁴ though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust ⁵ from entering along with him. The hallway ⁶ smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. ⁷ At one end of it a coloured poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked ⁸ to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a metre wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly ⁹ handsome features. Winston made for the stairs. ¹⁰ It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours. It was part of the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week. The flat was seven flights up, and Winston, who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the lift-shaft, ¹¹ the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived ¹² that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption ¹³ beneath it ran. Inside the flat a fruity ¹⁴ voice was reading out a list of figures which had something to do with the production of pig-iron. ¹⁵ The voice came from an oblong metal plaque like a dulled ¹⁶ mirror which formed part of the surface of the right-hand wall. Winston turned a switch and the voice sank somewhat, though the words were still ²⁰ distinguishable. The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, ¹⁷ but there was no way of shutting it off completely. He moved over to the window: a smallish, frail figure, the meagreness ¹⁸ of his body merely emphasized by the blue overalls ¹⁹ which were the uniform of the Party. His hair was very fair, his face naturally sanguine, his skin roughened by coarse ²⁰ soap and blunt razor blades ²¹ and ²⁵ the cold of the winter that had just ended. Outside, even through the shut window-pane, the world looked cold. Down in the street little eddies ²² of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into spirals, and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no colour in anything, except the posters that were plastered everywhere. The blackmoustachio'd face gazed ³⁰ down from every commanding corner. There was one on the house-front immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into Winston's own. Down at street level another poster, torn at one corner, flapped fitfully ²³ in the wind, alternately covering and uncovering the single word INGSOC. ²⁴ In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down ²⁵ between the roofs, ³⁵ hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, ²⁶ and darted away ²⁷ again with a curving flight. It was the police patrol, snooping ²⁸ into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.