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Diplomová práce

**Poetry of WW1 and its use in the classroom**

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### **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně a pouze za použití uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Souhlasím s uložením práce na Univerzitě Palackého v Olomouci a jejím zpřístupnění ke studijním účelům.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the possible use of English-written World War I poetry in Czech classroom. The theoretical part of the project explains the war poetry of Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon, and their differing stances on the war. The first part subsequently presents supporting and limiting factors of the educational use of war poetry and suggests possible ways of using it to develop students' historical thinking. The practical part describes an inquiry-based lesson block centred around the inquiry question "*How did the war poets write about World War I?*" and findings of a questionnaire which followed this lesson block.

**Key words:** English war poetry, WW1, World War I, War poets, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Historical thinking, Inquiry-based lesson block, E-R-R, CLIL

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## Introduction

This diploma thesis aims to explore the educational usage of English-written World War I poetry and suggest ways of implementing some of them in the conditions of Czech classrooms. Given the author's field of study, personal interest, and the main research question "*How can Czech students work with English-written World War I poetry?*", the project focuses on the use of war poetry written by Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon. The poetry is used as a means of conjoining the topic of World War I in English and history lessons.

The work of Brooke, Owen, and Sassoon is used to represent the gradual development of how the war had been presented by its participants and based on that, received by the rest of the society back home in England. Although the author is aware that their work is not limited to war poetry, the nature of this diploma thesis requires the focus on the topic of war.

The theoretical part of this thesis constitutes of four chapters. The first chapter explains the phenomenon of war poetry and its possible definitions. Each of the three selected poets is introduced through a short biography, followed by the analysis of their war poetry.

The second and third chapters attempt to answer the research question "*Which factors support or oppose the educational use of English-written World War I poetry?*". The former considers the use of war poetry based on popularity of World War I topic and the direction of Czech educational policy, the latter explores the possible limitations of the school use, mentioning the extent of the topic, its age appropriateness, and the required level of English.

The fourth chapter discusses the possible interconnection of English and history lessons with the concept of historical thinking and use of war poetry. The six components of historical thinking are explained and accompanied by suggestions on how war poetry could be used in their development.

The fifth chapter serves as the practical part of the thesis. Selected war poems of the three abovementioned authors are used as the main material of English-taught inquiry-based lesson block, realised at ZŠ a G Konice in class Septima (7.G). The lesson block followed the ERR learning cycle in combination of CLIL and focused on developing the concept of historical thinking. Students' feedback on the lesson block will be obtained by a questionnaire. The received feedback will be used to suggest possible improvements of the lesson block, considering its advantages and disadvantages.

# 1. Poetry of War

Without much of an exaggeration, the history of humankind could be easily described as the history of conflicts, only with a slight difference in the reasoning behind each of them. As Jon Stallworthy points out, “*there can be no area of human experience that has generated a wider range of powerful feelings than a war*” (Stallworthy, 2014, p. xxi). It is only natural that people kept some records of these “*powerful feelings*” – as a possible justification of their action on one hand, a condemnation on the other, or just a simple reminder of events they endured. And while a great portion of these records is written in the form of prose, such as official government documents or survivors’ memoirs, the poetry (in this case, the war poetry in particular), its depiction of the war experience and overall importance should not be diminished or marginalised.

As suggested above, war is a common occurrence throughout history. Because of that, “war poetry” is often able to shelter poems which are not only different when it comes to the place and time of origin, but also in the form of composition and language. This exact approach is embraced by Jon Stallworthy, whose anthology of war poetry, *The New Oxford Book of War Poetry*, is not limited to only a handful of authors from a narrow time interval. The book includes a great variety of writings, with selected passages from The Bible and Homer’s *Illiad* at the beginning, through medieval and early modern poets, up until the contemporary war poets and their impression of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century armed conflicts.

A slightly stricter definition of the term is provided by *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English*. There, it is explained that “*although poetic treatments of armed conflicts have been written at almost every stage in the history of English literature, the term is taken to denote work produced in response to the First and Second World Wars*” (Stringer, 1996, p. 700). This line of thought is further elaborated on by Fran Brearton who states that the unique “war poetry” is not simply a response. Instead, she suggests that the “soldier-poets” wrote in an effort to somehow “*educate its audience to the actualities of war*”, based on their own experience (Brearton, 2001, p. 10).

This chapter continues with the introduction of three selected “soldier-poets”, all of whom have rightfully earned their place in the Poet’s Corner in Westminster Abbey: Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon. While these poets wrote about the very same conflict, their portrayals differ from one another. This selection of authors and their work should illustrate the gradual change of perspectives in the portrayal of World War I in “war poetry”.

## 1.1. Rupert Brooke

*“Born at Rugby, August 3, 1887*

*Fellow of King’s, 1913*

*Sub-Lieutenant R.N.V.R, September 1914*

*Antwerp Expedition, October 1914*

*Sailed with British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, February 28, 1915*

*Died in the Aegean, April 23, 1915”*

(Brooke, 1918, p. 5)

The short synopsis, situated in his posthumously released collection of poetry *1914 & other Poems* (1915), accents Rupert Chawer Brooke’s life milestones. Besides his birth in Rugby, Warwickshire, to Ruth Mary and William Parker Brooke, and the graduation from King’s College in Cambridge, the rest of them are connected to his straightforward, and at the same time short, military career. The voluntary enlistment to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve led to nearly immediate departure to continental Europe as a part of the Antwerp Expedition. While Brooke had not been a part of the actual battle, the limited experience still played a role in his approach to war. As Paul Delany points out, Brooke’s exposure to the aftermath of the German siege and destruction of Antwerp could be seen as the “*formative experience*” which guided his direction as a war poet (Delany, 2015, p. 264).

That said, neither the synopsis, nor the account of his first encounter with the effect of the war in the war-ravaged Belgium which formed his views, uncovers much of his personal image. From what is known, Rupert Brooke was a person of ambivalence and certain instability. First, there was his internal split in being a part of two polar opposite friendship groups during his time in Cambridge, which were to be kept unaware of one another. Whilst one circle of friends “*was exclusively male and devoted to gossip and philosophical speculations*”, the other would live in a much more carefree life “*of country living, theatricals and an easy mingling of men and women*” (Delany, 2015, p. 70).

Second, Rupert was unable to establish a long-lasting relationship. Despite being friends with many, as implied in the biography, his personal life was at times far from perfect. That could have been caused by the bisexual orientation of the poet, not too uncommon among the poets at that point in time. As the figurative rock bottom of his life is often labelled his visit of Berlin in 1912, where he experienced yet another failed relationship and nervous breakdown. With that in mind, Brooke’s life situation at that point of life may be summarised as follows:



*“He had wooed three women and won none; he had failed his fellowship; he had nowhere to go and nothing to do”* (Delany, 2015, p. 186).

Roughly at the same time, Brooke was praised not only in the circle of his close friends but also adored by the public for his intelligence and good looks, both of which could have further fuelled the popularity of his poetry (Stallworthy, 1990, pp. 185-186).

Unlike many other soldiers, Rupert Brooke did not die in a field of barbed wire or in a trench of World War I. Brooke met his end on the way to Gallipoli, as a part of the British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. In the reaction to his demise, the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, made sure to commemorate his war poetry and expressed a belief that *“...the very few incomparable war sonnets which he has left behind will be shared by many thousands of young men...”* since those exact sonnets were *“a whole history and revelation of Rupert Brooke himself”* (Means, 1998). Despite being dead, his legacy lived on in his poetry, which is going to be discussed in the following text.

### **1.1.1. Patriotic Sonnets of Rupert Brooke**

Although he was not directly engaged in the combat, it is safe to say that Brooke’s poetry had been shaped by the intense first-hand experience from the Antwerp Expedition. This “call to action” sparked his creativity and supplied Brooke with a topic which needed to be addressed. Because of that, an immediate reaction came in the form of five sonnets: “I. Peace”, “II. Safety”, “III. The Dead”, “IV. The Dead”, and “V. The Soldier”, all put together into a fittingly named sequence *1914*.

The contemporary reception of these sonnets was positive, to say the least, and the news of Brooke’s death further amplified their effect. St John Greer Ervine, a major literary figure of the time, in his article where he contemplates about Brooke after learning about his death, has these words of admiration on account of the sonnets: *“There is no hate in these sonnets, no damning of the enemy to everlasting hell, no arrogant demand that God shall do this or that... but a fine acceptance of destined things, and simple thankfulness that the hour had not found him unready”* (Ervine, 1915, p. 439). It is in these sonnets where the initial patriotic approach of the Great Britain’s society to the First World War can be found.

Contradictory to the broad recognition of Brooke’s war poems, his position of a war poet was often questioned. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, war poetry expects the author to be familiar with a particular conflict – and this exact argument could have been the issue for some in this case. Since Brooke’s experience was only a limited one, it is to be expected that as

the war persisted, other war poets felt obliged to distance themselves in their own work from the reality portrayed in the war sonnets of Rupert Brooke. As Ralph Pite suggests, “*the war’s progress... is seen repeating itself in a poetic development from empty-headed enthusiasm towards the grittier, battle-weary wisdom of the true war poets*” (Pite, 2007, p. 35).

It is a question whether Brooke would or would not reconsider his attitude towards the war up to the point that his poetry would undergo a significant change as well. Unlike other soldier poets, he did not get a chance to do so. During the course of the war, many of World War I poets, including Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, who will be examined in the following subchapters, eventually ended up distancing themselves from, and at times even going entirely against the patriotic perception. As Stallworthy points out while recapitulating Brooke’s complete work, to take him solely as a war poet would be a mistake, since he was “*not a War Poet*” but rather “*a poet of peace, a celebrant of friendship, love, and laughter*” (Stallworthy, 1990, p. 193).

## 1.2. Wilfred Owen

Born on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1893 in Oswestry, Shropshire, Wilfred Edward Salter Owen became the first child of Tom Owen and Harriet Susan Shaw. The early years of Wilfred's life were spent at Plas Wilmot, a cherished family house which belonged to his grandfather Edward Shaw up until his death early in 1897. After that, the Owen family had to move according to father's occupation of a stationmaster between Shrewsbury and Birkenhead (Cuthbertson, 2014, p. 15).

It is in these places where Wilfred gets his education and where he first gets conscious about it. After attending the Birkenhead Institute, followed by time spent in the Shrewsbury Technical School, Owen is unable, both because of his social status and the financial situation of his family, to enrol at Oxford. As Guy Cuthbertson (In Our Time, 2022) comments, this ended up being quite a sensitive topic in the family. The name of the prestigious university would become a "*banned word*" in front of Wilfred, most likely out of compassion with the young poet who must have felt excluded from the place fitting his literary ambitions (In Our Time, 2022, 2:55-3:47).

After another disappointment in the form of failed attempt to attend London University, Owen moved to Dunsden, nearby Reading. There he worked and eventually enrolled at Reading University College in 1912, only to abandon the studies a year later due to the lack of interest and funds (Cuthbertson, 2014, pp. 48-51). In need of change of setting and pace after suffered illness, he left for Bordeaux, France, where he took on a position of a tutor, up until his return to England and enlistment in the army in 1915 (Lewis, 1963, p. 151).

Hesitant to join the army at first, he ultimately joins the Artists' Rifles, part of the Army Reserves (Bloom, 2002, p. 11). Jane Potter (In Our Time, 2022) explains that Owen's enlistment was also accompanied by somewhat idealistic approach to the service itself. She continues by indicating that while Owen may have been "*an unlikely soldier*" at first, he must have somehow earned himself the respect among his peers and superiors since he became an officer, a second lieutenant, in 1916 and apparently took great pride in the position (In Our Time, 2022, 6:35-9:43).

As a part of the Manchester Regiment, Owen operated on the Western Front in the beginning of 1917. In the letters to his mother, Owen writes about the daily reality of the trench war. The description of no man's land between the dugouts of the opposite sides, ever-present danger of death, signalled by the constant roar of shells and bullets, gas attacks, inescapable cold, shock, and injuries (Lewis, 1963, pp. 154-164). Later that year, Owen was deemed unfit for duty due

to reoccurring illness and possible shell shock, which manifested in the form of nightmares, headaches, and overall unrest. Sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital as a part of his convalescence, Wilfred met with Siegfried Sassoon, already a war poet of great renown, who became not only Owen's literary guide and mentor, but also a friend (Cuthbertson, 2014, pp. 203-204).

Despite being discharged from the hospital and given the opportunity to stay in England, Owen chose to head back to France in September 1918, commenting on his decision as follows: "*I am glad. That is I am much gladder to be going out again than afraid. I shall be better able to cry my outcry, playing my part*" (Lewis, 1963, p. 174). Wilfred Owen, as many others only "*playing [his] part*" in the conflict, was unlucky enough to meet his death on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1918. His death could hardly be more poetic since the end of the war was just a mere week away.

### **1.2.1. Realistic Verses of Wilfred Owen**

In the preface of the posthumously released *Poems*, words of Wilfred Owen introduce the collection of poems as a whole. From his point of view, it "*is not about heroes... deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War*" (Owen, 1920, p. vii). However, this approach is only a result of his development as a war poet, given his personal experience. If his depiction of the Great War through the years were to be compared, it would be clear that his poetry underwent noticeable change.

A nearly Brooke-like patriotism and as Stallworthy finds, "*as great an ignorance of the issues*" (1974, p. 104) can be seen in one of Owen's first poems about the war "The Ballad of Purchase Money". But to compare the two poems would be unfair – while Brooke writes his patriotic sonnets after at the very least some experience with the war during the Antwerp expedition in 1914, Owen enlists a year after that and does not arrive to the war front sooner than in 1917. The first months of that year, especially January and March, are believed to be crucial moments, from which he drew inspiration for his writing (In Our Time, 2022, 21:40-22:24).

Fran Brearton continues with the opinion that in the poems, Owen is trying to find a suitable way of "*expressing the inexpressible*" – that is, the horrors of the war (In Our Time, 2022, 22:30-20:37). It is evident that in this process, Siegfried Sassoon had an undeniable role – Paul Norgate goes as far as to call it "*the turning-point for Owen*", which allowed him to explore the possibility of taking on a more critical view on the war (Norgate, 1989, p. 519). That being said, Sassoon himself states that his "*only claimable influence was that [Sassoon] stimulated*

*[Owen] towards writing with compassionate and challenging realism*” but also adds that “*the impulse*” of recording the reality in his poetry “*was already strong in [Owen] before he had met me*” (Sassoon, 1920, p. 60).

Besides the emphasis on realism, Owen also shows great understanding of poets’ role in the society, especially the ability to influence public opinion. Following his noted personal belief, “*[a]ll a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful*” (Owen, 1920, p. vii). For this reason, Owen had been fairly sceptical about the overly patriotic poetry, written by people with close to no experience with the war. As Anderson Araujo (2014) points out, one of these people was Jessie Pope. Owen, objecting to the poetry of people like her, includes in his early drafts of “*Dulce et Decorum Est*” a “*mock-dedication*” (Araujo, 2014, p. 335). The first, direct dedication “*To Jessie Pope etc*” was ultimately exchanged by a slightly more generic, but still somewhat straightforward “*To a certain Poetess*” (Lewis, 1963, p. 55).

Whatever the influences really were, Owen certainly managed to capture the reality of war in his poetry. “*Anthem for Doomed Youth*” shows futility of fighting for those who, far from home, “*die as cattle*”; “*The Last Laugh*” presents that with their dying breaths, soldiers do not proclaim heroic speeches, but instead call for their loved ones; “*The Next War*” portrays death as an old friend and, quite ominously, foresees an even greater conflict than the Great War; “*Disabled*” represents the often irreversible effect of the war on the lives of people who participated in it; and last but not least, probably the best known work of Owen’s “*Dulce et Decorum Est*”, which is also known as simply the “*gas poem*”, articulates the overall absurdity of war on the background of a deadly gas attack.

The execution of these strong images not only gained Owen the right to be one of the sixteen Great War poets commemorated on the Poets of the First World War memorial in the Poets’ Corner, but also resulted in his words being used as the famous inscription of the stone slab: “*My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity*” (Owen, 1920, p. vii).

### 1.3. Siegfried Sassoon

Siegfried Loraine Sassoon was born on 8 September 1886 in Matfield, Kent, to Alfred Erza Sassoon, a member of the influential Sassoon family, also known as “*the Rothschilds of the East*” due to their mercantile success in Asia, and Theresa Thornycroft, a member of the established English family of Thornycrofts, among other well-known artists and engineers (Matalon, 2002, p. 26). As Jean Moorcroft Wilson, one of the foremost experts on the poetry and poets of the First World War, suggests, the initial cause of Sassoon’s contradictory nature can be found in this marriage. The relationship between Alfred and Theresa did not last very long and led to their divorce, possibly because the two families were too dissimilar. Consequently, Siegfried and his two brothers, Michael and Hamo, were raised only by their mother. The loss of the father figure turns out to be a reoccurring issue, influencing a great deal of his life in which he tries to find a substitution of the father element, with a varying degree of success (In Our Time, 2007, 3:14-3:38).

The social status of his family allowed Sassoon’s education to be given the proper attention and financial backing. After he received his education at “*the elite boarding school Marlborough*”, which he did not find very fulfilling, Sassoon decides to enrol at Cambridge in 1905 (Matalon, 2002, p. 27). With an ambition to become a writer rather than anything else, he gives up on the studies two years later, to live a life of a poetry-writing English gentleman instead.

That said, Max Egremont explains that the time between 1907 and 1914 must have been difficult for Sassoon for two main reasons. According to him, first of these was Sassoon’s insecurity regarding the quality of his poetry, since “[*h*]e did not feel that it [*the poetry*] was as good as it should have been” (In Our Time, 2007, 8:56-9:03). The second reason was connected to his personal life, especially the confusion about his sexuality and uncertainty about his place in the world, both as the individual and the poet (In Our Time, 2007, 9:03-9:43).

Just like Brooke and Owen, Sassoon joined the war during its early stage. Although he shared the initial public enthusiasm about the war and being in the army from 1914, it was not until May 1915 when Siegfried was deployed, as a member of Royal Welsh Fusiliers, to the Western Front (Bloom, 2003, p. 43). It is there where he meets another war poet, Robert Graves, who, as Fran Brearton points out, influences Sassoon in a similar manner in which Sassoon later influenced Owen (In Our Time, 2007, 12:23-12:31).

Sassoon's time spent on the battlefield caused a significant clash of his inner values. Siegfried was described as "*famous for both his loyalty to the men who served in his command and reckless courage*", combination of which led to him becoming a captain, being awarded the Military Cross and becoming the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (Eide, 2007, p. 92). Jean Moorcroft Wilson agrees with this and continues with further uncovering of Sassoon's complicated personality. "[O]n one hand, there was the hearty extrovert, 'Mad Jack', physically daring, even bloodthirsty at times; on the other a timid, hypersensitive introvert with strong spiritual needs" (Moorcroft Wilson, 2005, p. 2). This duality, possibly caused by his personal losses, Sassoon must have felt the need to make his voice heard.

The idea of publicly expressing his disapproval sublimated in a form of a protest letter. "A Soldier's Declaration", read in the House of Commons on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1917 and printed in *The London Times* on the following day, did not criticise "*the military conduct of the War*" itself but rather "*the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed*", all that "*on behalf of those who are suffering*" (Sassoon, c2023). This act of defiance, which could have easily earned him a court martial, was with the help of Robert Graves attributed to a possible shell shock and resulted in Sassoon being pulled out of the active duty and sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital, where he became acquainted with Wilfred Owen (Bloom, 2003, p. 44). In the autobiography *Siegfried's Journey, 1916-1920*, Sassoon describes the intense friendship and the mutual influence between the two of them (Sassoon, 1920, pp. 58-74).

It is on the pages of his autobiography where Sassoon retrospectively reveals that "*in spite of [his] hatred of war*" he felt "*a carving to be back on the Western Front*" so that he could, through his writing, "*do something on a bigger scale*" (Sassoon, 1920, pp. 69-70). Most likely led to believe that he is, in a way, betraying his fellow soldiers by being relatively safe out of the combat, he eventually returned to the war – first to Palestine, then to France (p. 71), but did not get to stay there. After an accident, during which he was shot by one of his fellow officers, Sassoon was sent back to the United Kingdom (Bloom, 2003, p. 44). There he learned about the death of Wilfred Owen and the end of the war. As a sign of reverence for his fallen friend, Sassoon promoted and in 1920 edited Owen's poetry for publishing.

Up until his death at the age of 80 in 1967, Sassoon continued to be an active writer of both prose and poetry. That said, Sassoon was not able to completely free himself from the war, as visible in his war poems, the trilogy of his semi-autobiographical *Memoirs of George Sherston*

and the abovementioned *Siegfried's Journey, 1916-1920*. Because of these, "Sassoon's fame will always rest on his idyllic recreation of his fox-hunting youth and his nightmare evocation of the war" (Knox, 1983, p. 150).

### **1.3.1. Satiric Protests of Siegfried Sassoon**

Regarded as one of the most influential war poets, Siegfried Sassoon and his poetry indisputably underwent a major development through the course of World War I. Just like Brooke, Owen, and many others, Sassoon also feels the urge to express his beliefs and write poetry according to the patriotic note of the first years of the War. This approach to poetry can be found in the poem "Absolution", which voices the idea that there are positive aspects to the war "War is our scourge; yet war has made us wise" followed by a noble thought "And, fighting for our freedom, we are free" (Sassoon, 1917, p. 13). Jean Moorcroft Wilson, in her lecture on the author, uses this particular poem to compare his early work to the latter and mentions that Sassoon himself retrospectively described "Absolution" as a "typical self-glorifying feelings of a young man about to go to the front for the first time" (Moorcroft Wilson, 2013, 4:40-6:19).

With her argument supported by Robert Graves' autobiography *Goodbye to all that* (1929), Fran Brearton (2007, p. 210) indicates that the fellow poet was well aware that Sassoon would not be able to continue writing in such manner once he was faced with the reality of the war and made sure to let him know of that. Matalon (2002, p. 30) discusses that the turning point which set the course for Sassoon's poems was not the death of his brother at Gallipoli, but rather the "catastrophe that ended up costing the lives of over one million Allied and Entente troops battling over a few hundred meters of trenches", the Somme offensive of 1916. Based on his horrendous experience, Sassoon started to address the war in a completely different way.

While it would be wrong to completely omit the presence of realism, which later became the domain of Wilfred Owen's poetry, Sassoon's best-known wartime poems are easily recognisable due to something, which is considered to be his very own characteristic trait. George Parfitt (2003, p. 63) explains: "Siegfried Sassoon is remembered as the satirical poet of the war, and of the war's better-known poets he is the one who is most consistently satirical of aspects of war experience". Similarly, when asked about what makes Sassoon's war poems so prominent, Brearton claims that it is the use of satire and expresses her opinion that they could be viewed as his best work (In Our Time, 2007, 24:47-24:57).



In the satiric poems, such as “Died of Wounds”, “Does it Matter?”, “In the Pink”, “The Hero”, “The One-legged Man”, “The Tombstone Maker”, or “They”, Sassoon does not use complex language. In the lecture on Siegfried Sassoon, Moorcroft Wilson explains, on the example of “In the Pink,” that this is done deliberately. Accompanied by his “*hard-hitting, deeply ironic last line*” (Moorcroft Wilson, 2013, 9:42-9:49), the simplicity of language and verse form is used intentionally, “*as not to distract from the content*” (14:30-14:35).

The focus on the content is crucial, shared by both Sassoon’s and Owen’s poetry. So crucial, in fact, that the poems are often read “*as pieces of reportage*” and serve as the “*witness to the horrors of modern technological warfare*” (Campbell, 1999, p. 211). In this aspect, Sassoon’s poetry can be perceived as a believable documentation of World War I, “*encapsulating*” it one verse at a time (In Our Time, 2007, 29:15-29:23).

To call Sassoon’s war poetry “pretty” would completely miss the central point of his poems. Joseph Cohen (2003, p. 52) describes that the poetry “*unleashed the exasperation, the horror, the fear, the disillusionment, and the bitter cynicism*”. With the use of these concepts, Sassoon was trying to shock and let the society back in the United Kingdom see the pointlessness of the war, which, to him, must have been so painfully evident.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the three authors were selected to demonstrate the change of depiction of World War I in war poetry. Rupert Brooke and his idealistic patriotism are nothing like the realistic, dread-invoking poems of Wilfred Owen, or the satire of Sassoon, which is amplified by Siegfried’s contempt for the authorities, accused of needlessly prolonging the undergoing conflict.

## 2. Arguments for the Educational use of World War I Poetry

This chapter investigates the arguments in favour of the educational use of English written World War I poetry. This is done first by exploring to what extent the contemporary interest in the topic of World War I validates the inclusion of the war poems in the Czech educational practice. Since the interest itself may not be completely decisive for the inclusion of the poetry to the process of teaching and learning, the second argument is made with the help of the long-term Czech educational *Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic 2030+* and curricular documents *Framework Educational Programme for General Education (2021)* and *Framework Educational Programme for Secondary General Education (2021)* for the possible opportunities for the incorporation of World War I poetry in the Czech system of education.

### 2.1. Popularity of World War I Topic

One of the arguments in favour of the usage of war poetry in the educational process could be the contemporary global interest in the topic of World War I itself. Its cultural significance, even after more than a century, is not by any chance negligible. As will be presented below, many aspects of the contemporary popular culture have been directly impacted by it. The topic itself hence lost very little of its relevance.

Possibly the most important medium behind the international transmission/spread of the topic's popularity and hence the popularity of World War I from the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century until the present day has been the television. *The Great War on the Small Screen* written by Emma Hanna explores this distinct phenomenon.

In the monography, Hanna examines the degree of influence of the war on British society and its representation in different forms, such as documentaries, often backed by personal testimonies of war veterans, such as *The Great War* (1964) or *The Last Tommy* series (2005), the latter of which also featured a number of the last living British WW1 veterans, dramas *The Monocled Mutineer* (1986) and *The Unknown Soldier* (1998), or comedies, represented by the series *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989).

Hanna states in the conclusion of the monography “*Television has proved that the more eloquent expressions of war experience are not found in the military and political histories, but in the contemporary accounts from first-hand experience and the pieces of poetry, art and music that sprang from the war*” (Hanna, 2009, p. 171). The truthfulness of this statement has been confirmed by the recent film production, such as Peter Jackson's documentary *They Shall Not*

*Grow Old* (2018), the highly acclaimed war film *1917* (2019), or the newest film adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's 1929 novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (2022).

Besides the traditional "Remembrance Day", annually celebrated in the Commonwealth on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November since 1919, and all the other global equivalents of this celebration, the number of the events planned for the centenary of the conflict rose immensely in the preparation of the long-awaited period between 2014 and 2018. One of the major programmes in that time had been the four yearlong *BBC World War I centenary season*, consisting of almost 2500 hours of video and audio content designed for any type of audience, most of which is still available on the internet (Hall & Van Klaveren, 2013).

Noteworthy is also the *14-18 NOW*, the United Kingdom's art programme, which commissioned artists to produce work inspired by the Great war, one of which was the art event '*we're here because we're here*' by Jeremy Deller. Under the hashtag "#wearehere", each of the 1400 volunteers across the United Kingdom assumed a persona of a particular World War I soldier, whose life had been lost on the 1 July 1916 during the first day of the Somme offensive, and in their name interacted with the public ('*we're here because we're here*', 2016). While possibly not in such extent, similar commemorations were, in some form, happening globally during the four-year long period.

Nonetheless, the remembrance was not limited only to the film-making industry and government issued ceremonies, but also emerged in the online environment. For example, the YouTube channel *The Great War*, registered in 2014 and as of 2023 with more than 1,6 million subscribers, continuously popularises the events connected to the first global conflict. This online interest in the topic could perhaps be related to the present phenomenon of gaming industry. Although World War I used to be greatly overshadowed by World War II in the matter of video gaming for quite some time, Jakub Šindelář (2023, p. 18) points out in his article that the centenary of the Great War inspired video game developers to shift their focus. Titles such as *Valiant Hearts: The Great War* (2014), *Verdun* (2015), or *Battlefield 1* (2016) provoked the impulse for further exploration of the topic with the direct consequence of an increasing number of video games being inspired by or set in World War I.

As presented, the topic of World War I has a steady place in the popular culture and the undeniably significant role in the history of the United Kingdom. The relevance of the topic is further highlighted by the present-time reality of the ongoing war in Europe. During a time when the global society is a witness to such conflict, which is considered to be the largest one

to take place in Europe since World War II, it should be of uttermost importance to introduce students to the complexity and consequences of any war. Both the spatial and temporal proximity of the war in Ukraine, amplified by the media coverage, but also the immediate interaction with the refugees who were forced to flee their country, should serve as a motivation to explore the possible attitudes towards the war.

While means of warfare are bound to change over time, the experience resulting from the war itself should be, up to some point, transferable. In this aspect, the well-known proverb which states that “*war never changes*” remains plausible even at present time. The historical value, connected with the timeless horrors and tragedies of the war, makes the war poetry of World War I seem as one of the viable means for the introduction of the subject of war to students.

## **2.2. Education Policy of the Czech Republic**

Besides the solid place of World War I in the history of the United Kingdom and its influence on the global popular culture, the other relevant argument for the educational use of English-written World War I poetry is the educational strategy of the Czech Republic. This strategy is articulated in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports’ (MŠMT) document *Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic 2030+* (2020) and realised with the help of curricular documents, the *Framework Educational Programmes*.

As proposed in the *Strategy 2030+*, the educational system of the Czech Republic is expected to change, with the main objective of “*focusing education more on acquiring the competences needed for an active civic, professional and personal life*” (Strategy 2030+, 2020, p. 16). It is arguable that this is only a natural progression of the educational system, observable in the curricular documents of other countries such as Wales, New Zealand, or Finland, which shifts the educational focus away from memorisation in favour of acquisition of key competences, which are often also labelled as the “21<sup>st</sup> century skills” (Dvořák et al., 2018, p. 130).

A requisite for the overall functionality of this “competence-based” curriculum is the modernisation of the education. The *Strategy 2030+* states that based on this “*urgent need to innovate content and method at all levels*”, it is the obligation of MŠMT to “*support the introduction of new and innovative methods*” (Strategy 2030+, 2020, p. 17). If suitably adopted, World War I poetry and its use in the education could be one of these innovations.

The currently employed curricula documents for primary and secondary schools, that is the *Framework Educational Programme for General Education* (2021) and *Framework Educational Programme for Secondary General Education* (2021), do provide evident

opportunities for the use of English-written World War I poetry in the classroom. With consideration to their respective literary and historical value, it becomes clear that the most prominent fields in the curricula suitable for such employment of the poems are the humanities, especially the languages and history.

The medium of World War I poetry could be beneficial in the aspect of developing not only some of the key competences, but also reading literacy. Relating to the literacy, the 2018 survey found out that while the reading performance of Czech students managed to be set above the OECD average (OECD, 2021, p. 37), when scoring the enjoyment of reading, students scored well below the average (p. 81). World War I poetry could, mostly due to its attractive topic, help to improve the reading habits and lead to the improvement in the reading comprehension.

### 3. Possible Limitations

Despite the presented arguments in favour of the inclusion of the English-written First World War poetry in Czech classrooms, there are also some factors which discourage or, at the very least, limit the use. While some of the factors are universally perceptible in any classroom, others are unique for the classrooms in which English is taught and used as the second language. This chapter brings to attention three of these factors, although there possibly could be more.

First, the issue of the ideal extent of war poems' educational use in Czech classrooms is augmented based on the United Kingdom's insight into the practice. Second, the overall age appropriateness of the topic and the related question of the required level of English, both of which are necessary for students' work with the source material, are confronted with the conditions provided by the Czech educational system. Because the three factors are of major significance in employing the war poetry, each of them will be provided with means through which they could be or currently are dealt with.

#### 3.1. Extent of the Use

One of the universal limiting factors may be the argument, whether teaching about the history of World War I exclusively by using its war poetry is desirable or even possible. In her article about teaching World War I in the United Kingdom's secondary schools, Pennell (2016) articulates the criticised idea of *"upholding a narrow view of the war that focuses on mud, blood and the tragedy of the Western Front"* and the connected belief that *"war is ever taught as poetry"* (Pennell, 2016, p. 41).

While this criticism is understandable, the solution to the very issue is available. By no chance is war poetry meant to be the sole resource used for teaching about World War I. Instead, it should be employed in such manner which would allow it to interact with other available resources complementarily.

While the war poetry of World War I, when compared to other historical primary sources such as official documents, contemporary press, or diary entries, might contain fewer historical facts, to discard it from the teaching process altogether would mean to deprive students of soldiers' invaluable personal accounts which only amplify the added benefit of the poems' distinctive form and background. In this regard, it could be argued that despite the relative absence of facts, the war poetry can assist in developing the affective domain of learning, which might be difficult to achieve through other teaching materials.

### **3.2. Age Appropriateness & Level of English**

The age and overall appropriateness of the topic to learners is another of the limiting factors. It would not be reasonable to present the primary or possibly even the lower secondary school pupils with an extensive and thorough description of World War I, which is often conveyed by the war poetry. The psychical and emotional development of pupils and students plays an important role in grasping abstract terms, the acquisition of critical thinking, and to a certain extent, the arrangement of the education itself seems to be structured around these facts. Because of that, pupils should not be confronted with the topic sooner than it is desirable, if only to avoid possible confusion and misunderstanding of the subject matter.

In the context of Czech educational system, the issue is handled by the abovementioned structure of the curriculum. In the first five years of the formal education there most often are not the history lessons in the proper meaning of the word. Because of that, pupils are often first confronted with the topic in the lower secondary part of their studies (RVP ZV, 2021, p. 53). Since history classes tend to be taught chronologically, topic of World War I is given attention in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Depending on the form, in the case of upper secondary education students either return to the topic of World War I in the penultimate year of their studies at grammar schools, once more undergoing the chronological approach to the history (RVP G, 2021, p. 44), or only cursorily in the first one or two years of the vocational education.

Closely connected to the age appropriateness is the learners' level of English. According to the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) scale, at the end of the upper secondary education, Czech students should be able to attain, at the very least, the B1 level of language proficiency. With that in mind, the use of English-written primary sources, which include the war poetry, needs to correspond with students' language skills, especially in English and history lessons.

The effective use of the First World War poetry in the educational environment is conditioned by the students' ability to understand these poems, both in the case of the comprehension of the conveyed ideas, but also the understanding and active use of the language itself. Because of that, upper secondary school students seem to be better fitting participants for the use of the First World War poetry. By the time, not only should their language level be developed enough which would allow their active work with the poems, they also should be familiar with some background information about the conflict and have their own preconcepts about the characteristics of the war.

## 4. Educational use of English-Written World War I Poetry

The educational use of English-written World War I poetry does not have to be limited only to individual subjects. On the contrary, the war poetry does have, thanks to its nature, a great potential for the application in interdisciplinary teaching. Both Mittal (2016) and Ribeiro (2018) advocate for the use of poetry in teaching – the former by commenting on the use of poetry in developing understanding and communication skills in English, the latter by suggesting the use of poetry as a historical source, coincidentally also about the topic of World War I. Additionally, the aim set by the aforementioned *Strategy 2030+* closely resembles the aim of interdisciplinary teaching, which is “*to synthesize the characteristics and methods of multiple disciplines while developing lifelong learning skills*” (Jones, 2010, p. 80).

On the basis of this and all the previously presented arguments, this chapter is going to research the ways in which it would be possible to employ the English-written World War I poetry in English and history lessons. The main purpose of this particular interconnection would be developing both the students’ historical literacy and their language proficiency.

On the background of six concepts of historical thinking, the war poems are going to be used to represent their possible educational use. The use of World War I poems for supporting the acquisition of historical thinking could be well justified by the argumentation, provided by the monograph “The Big Six: Historical Thinking Concepts”. Both authors propose the idea that “[t]he six historical thinking concepts make no sense at all without the material, the topics, the substance, or what is often referred to as the ‘content’ of history” (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 4). In the case of this thesis, the war poetry of Brooke, Owen, and Sassoon will serve as the essential “content” used to expand the historical thinking concepts.



#### **4.1. World War I Poetry in English and History Lessons**

The inspiration behind the whole concept of historical thinking clearly comes from the approach taken by historians and journalists in their work. Introduction of learners to these techniques may result in a more sophisticated approach to information in general. Not only would this be valuable for their overall school performance, but also in their everyday lives.

That said, Seixas and Morton are aware that it is not possible to “teach” these concepts. Rather, teachers should be mentors who “introduce” the concepts and afterwards supply the learners with plenty of opportunities in which the learners can strive for the improvement of said concepts. As emphasised, “*we [should not] expect students to replicate the work of these mature academics and journalists who have spent years in training and a lifetime honing their craft. But, as in any apprenticeship, the masters provide the models*” (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 8). By providing learners with not only “*the models*”, but also with the necessary scaffolding, they themselves should be able to obtain healthy work habits and set solid foundations for their lifelong learning.

As advocated by Peter Seixas and Tom Morton (2013), there seem to be six concepts which altogether constitute the historical thinking: establishment of historical significance, use of primary source evidence, identification of continuity and change, analysis of cause and consequence, taking of historical perspectives, and understanding of the ethical dimension of historical interpretations. While these concepts of historical thinking are closely connected and complement one another, they are going to be discussed individually, for the sake of overall coherence.

#### **4.1.1. Historical Significance**

*“When students are taught to think critically about what is historically significant, they learn not only the results of the work of historians ... but more importantly how to make reasoned decisions about historical significance”* (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 14).

The first of the six historical thinking concepts is the establishment of historical significance. Robert Philips (2002) accents the overall importance of historical significance by placing it *“at the very heart of the subject”* (p. 14). By deciding what is and is not significant, students should be able to “filter” information and ultimately decide the importance of a topic.

The historical significance of Brooke’s, Owen’s, and Sassoon’s poetry is given by its connection to the topic of World War I. Use of the war poems can act as a counterweight to the generalisation of the events of 1914-1918, which can be often viewed as a homogenous process and exceedingly large to grasp. By presenting that there were individuals participating in the conflict, each of whom had their own notion about it, students can discover that exactly these subjective notions add up to the overall complexity of the topic.

Because of that, it is important to let students take part in the process of deciding on the historical significance of not only the topics they learn about, but also how significant are the sources which bring them closer to these topics.

Nature of both the primary, made either intentionally or unintentionally, and secondary sources can be evaluated by students for their corresponding value. Although the unintentionally made primary sources offer unchanged statements about the past, their interpretation is usually rather problematic. Simultaneously, the intentionally made primary sources while often more accessible for the interpretation, have the disadvantage of the possible self-stylisation or alternation of the recorded events from their authors. Hence, students could be presented with diverse sources and lead to decide on the respective advantages and disadvantages.

While the war poetry of World War I may not have the highest factual value compared to other primary sources, its historical significance lies in the subjective account it provides. These subjectively written accounts should be viewed as the basic building blocks used for building the “larger” and “more significant” historical topics, since they are made of these blocks and without them, they would be nothing more than detached “facts”.

#### 4.1.2. Primary Source Evidence

*“If we can help [the students] grasp that history is interpretation of evidence, then they will see the purpose of developing their own ability to interpret. By teaching students how to think like historians, we enable them to engage with history by seeking appropriate sources, analyzing those sources, and considering their context”* (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 42).

Closely connected to historical significance is the concept of primary source evidence use. Being the basis to any historical research, primary sources need to be carefully selected, analysed, and, as argued by Seixas and Morton (2013, pp. 46-47), turned into evidence by asking/setting the appropriate/fitting questions. For instance, if one were to answer the question “What was the Great war fought with?” by exploring the means of warfare through the war poetry of the time, they would obtain some insight into the problematics, but they would hardly be in a better position than if they chose the official documents about World War I weaponry instead.

As pointed out by Morgan and Rasinski (2012), the primary sources *“can help connect students to a person, event, or time period”* (p. 585) and portray historical events in more detail (p. 587). In this instance, the war poetry written by Brooke, Owen, and Sassoon has the characteristic trait of being the first-hand account of their World War I perception. By taking into consideration the context, that is by sourcing and contextualising their work through asking questions about the authors and the situations they were in, it should be possible for the students to *“[infer] from the source the author’s or creator’s purposes, values, and world view”* (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 47).

The analysis of the war poetry can take on different forms. One of the ways of uncovering the first layers of meaning could be the literary analysis of a particular poem, done by exploring the literary devices used and looking for the inherent “message”. Based on their own notion of the poems and knowledge of the background information, students can assume a position in which they suggest and interpret the reasoning behind the poems and their content.

Since a comparison of the primary and secondary sources and their subsequent corroboration seems to be an inseparable part of historians’ work (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 53; Morgan and Rasinski, 2012, p. 585), the adoption of the skills and habits by students should be provided with a fitting practice material. By comparing the war poetry of Brooke, Owen, and Sassoon, students can pinpoint the similarities and differences not only between their respective war poetry and what it expresses, but also between the individual authors and their lives.

### 4.1.3. Continuity and Change

*“By teaching students how to think like a historian, we enable them to see change as a process that speeds up, slows down, and sometimes takes a turn. We encourage them to peek underneath examples of change to see the continuities that contribute just as much to the course of human history”* (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 76).

As argued in the introduction to the chapter regarding the war poets, a war is a rather common occurrence through the history. As the famous quote “If you want peace, prepare for war” suggests, these two states can somehow coexist. Otherwise, it would hardly be possible to observe unforeseen events such as the Christmas truce in December 1914, the very first year of World War I. Because of that, the topic of war is an ideal phenomenon for the representation of the concept of continuity and change.

With regard to the interconnection of the continuity and change, World War I poetry can also serve as the indication of what changed and what remained the same during the war. As noticeable from the analysis of Brooke’s, Owen’s, and Sassoon’s poetry, the perception of the war is not consistent. The patriotic celebration of the duty and just cause and possible heroic death gradually shifted to the realistic and naturalistic portrayal of the war or was mocked through satire. By comparing the work of the authors and their real-life experiences, as it was suggested in the use of primary source evidence, students can see the change of how the war was addressed.

Furthermore, World War I poetry can be used as a starting point for addressing the continuity and change of war poetry itself, since each new conflict is connected to the emergence of another generation of war poets. Their poetry, while possibly unique in some features, most likely remains rooted in some universal war experience. As fittingly articulated by Rachel Foster (2013) in the name and content of her article, *“[t]he more things change, the more they stay the same”*. The war experience does not seem to be an exception to this rule.

Practically, this pattern of war poetry could be visualised by letting students construct a timeline of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century major conflicts. After finding a war poet for each of the conflicts, students would be tasked with exploring the poems and pointing out their characteristic traits. In the process of analysing the poems or during the subsequent reflection, students should be able to express their opinions on what changed and what remained the same in the war poetry throughout modern history.

#### 4.1.4. Cause and Consequence

*“By introducing students to historical thinking, we teach them to think beyond the immediate, to consider the interplay of casual factors ranging from the focused influence of the choices made by historical actors to the broad influence of prevailing social, political, cultural, and economic conditions ... [and] the ways in which conditions, opposition, and unforeseen reaction can thwart the actors’ intentions, resulting in unintended consequences”* (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 104).

History is closely intertwined with causes and consequences which provide the context and interconnect events and their participants to one another. These circumstances can shape not only the formation of a particular historical event, but also its process and subsequent result.

The content of World War I poetry, despite possibly being its integral part, is not its only defining aspect. Brooke’s, Owen’s, and Sassoon’s poetry was not written in a social vacuum. That means it is probable that there were many different factors which shaped the authors’ work, becoming an inseparable part of the poems. Analogous situation could be observed the other way around. As well as the poetry may have been influenced by the society, the poetry itself also might have served as an influence.

Seixas and Morton (2013) agree that the recognition and assessment of causes and consequences of any historical event is not straightforward. Historical events have, according to the authors, its source in *“the interplay of two types of factors”* which consists of two parts: *“historical actors”* and *“social, political, economic, and cultural conditions”*, each of which has varying levels of influence on the historical outcome (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 111).

Ideas proposed by New Zealand’s Ministry for Culture and Heritage suggest that *“[o]ne way of understanding causes and consequences is through categorising them”* based on their chronology, nature, and significance, or by allowing students *“to play around with words”* when describing the causes and consequences (Cause and Consequence, 2021).

By categorising, playing around with words, and asking questions regarding war poets’ motivation for writing their poetry or the effect of the war poetry on the society of the UK, students could attempt to uncover the various causes and consequences of World War I poetry. This might help students understand the role of written word, not only in historical perspectives, but also in their everyday lives.

#### 4.1.5. Historical Perspectives

*“By teaching students how to take an historical perspective, we enable them to use evidence to make evidence-based inferences about the thoughts and feelings of the characters of history. Students learn to take historical context into account when making inferences, and to seek out multiple perspectives when trying to understand the events of history”* (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 138).

As visible in the contemporary world, human interaction, be it on personal or national level, is rather diverse occurrence which deeply relies on the ability to distinguish and take into consideration perspectives of many different people. Similarly, for the sake of the objectivity of their work, researchers should take into account the historical perspectives of participants and witnesses, even slightly involved in a historical event.

One of the possible ways in which it is possible to take the multiple historical perspectives is evident in the work of Jay Murray Winter, a well-recognised World War I historian. In his research on the topic, Winter (1989) does not limit the history of World War I only to the relations between the involved nations but instead he employs a multiperspective approach to investigate the conflict through distinct perspectives of the individual participants. Due to that, his monograph *“The Experience of World War I”* views the conflict not only as the war of politicians (pp. 26-69) or generals (pp. 70-113), but also soldiers’ (pp. 114-163) and civilians’ (pp. 164-201).

Inspired by Winter’s approach, the exploration of World War I experience through the comparison of Brooke’s, Owen’s, and Sassoon’s lives and poetry could allow students to better formulate their understanding of the conflict through the authors’ vision. As established in the first chapter of this thesis, each of the war poets has their own way of portraying the conflict. By comparing them, students themselves should be able to distinguish the possible layers of addressing the war. Additionally, a form of role-play could also allow students to evaluate the poetry, through the vision of World War I contemporaries.

Useful way of presenting different historical perspectives could also be provided by introducing Czech-written World War I poetry into the focus. As argued by Skvor (1965), the conflict *“emphasised the political duty of Czech poets”* and encouraged general shift from the *“introspective poetry”* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Skvor, 1965, p. 196). By confronting Czech World War I poetry with the English-written one, students could find it easier to recognise the differences and similarities between them, and lead to better coherence of the topic.

#### 4.1.6. Ethical Dimension

*“By introducing students to historical thinking, we help them to learn to judge the past fairly. Not only do students begin to distinguish what should be remembered, memorialized, or celebrated, they also learn how to judge what is an appropriate response in the present. Learning to think critically about the mistakes and the horrors – as well as the heroism – of the past contributes to the development of students’ historical consciousness; they begin to see the links among the past, present, and future (Seixas and Morton, 2013, p. 170-171).*

As mentioned before, the work of a historian requires a high degree of objectivity, which ensures relevancy of a historical account. Yet, there are some instances which are difficult to address without considering the level of subjectivity. The ethical dimension, being the final competence of historical thinking, emphasises the importance of personal insight and judgement of historical events.

What might have been considered act of heroism to some, could be viewed as tragedy to others. This bifurcation of possible perception of meaning behind historical event is clearly visible when comparing war poets’ work, but also in their individual poetry. Sassoon’s poem “Reconciliation” is a fitting example of that. The patriotic feeling, the *“heart’s rekindling pride”* of British society, is confronted by the fact it was soldiers of both sides, the Central Powers and the Allies, who *“fought like brutes”* and were guilty of committing *“hideous things”* (Sassoon, 1919, p. 87).

Attempts to develop the affective domain through World War I poetry could take different shapes. Once again, comparison of the different views could be a viable option, allowing students to *“focus [on] the emotional/affective quality of people’s views”* and explore what led the authors to their expressions (Empathy: Historical empathy, 2021). Then again, simplification of the poems to expressed emotions and their subsequent dramatisation could also be implemented, especially with students who are not familiar with analysing poetry.

The medium of World War I poetry offers a great opportunity for exploration of the ethical dimension. Otherwise, Niall Ferguson, renowned historian whose work focuses on the 20<sup>th</sup> century history, would have hardly decided to title his monograph *“The Pity of War”*, referencing Owen’s quote regarding his approach to poetry, and refrained from citing the poems written by the war poet and his contemporaries.

## 5. Inquiry-Based Lesson Block

The practical part of this diploma project consists of description of an inquiry-based lesson block, evaluation of said lesson block based on questionnaire research findings, and suggestions on how to improve the use of World War I poetry. That said, since the lesson block is constructed according to the structure suggested by Reading & Writing for Critical Thinking project and taught with the help of the method of Content and Language Integrated Learning, these two concepts are going to be briefly explained, prior to the description of the lesson block itself.

The Reading & Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) project explains critical thinking as “*a complex thought process*” which includes “*taking ideas and examining their implications, exposing them to polite scepticism, balancing them against opposing points of view, constructing supporting belief systems to substantiate them, and taking a stand based on those structures*” (Steele et al., 1998, p. 1). Based on this information, it is noticeable that the concept of critical thinking is closely connected to the concept of historical thinking presented above. Both critical and historical thinking reject simple reception of information and instead build on theory of constructivism, which advocates for students’ construction of their knowledge through their active work in lessons.

Because of this closeness, it is possible to develop both concepts at the same time. As suggested by University at Buffalo, one of the possible means of teaching according to the theory of constructivism is inquiry-based learning (Constructivism, 2023). This approach is the core element in MŠMT backed project Dějepis+. As stated by the project goals of *Strategy 2030+*, which has already been touched upon, “*modern history teaching should lead to the development of competences – critical thinking, work with primary and secondary sources, reading literacy*” (Dějepis+, 2023).

The RWCT “Framework for Thinking and Learning” or “E-R-R Framework”, which is going to serve as the structure for this project’s inquiry-based lesson block, consists of three consecutive parts: Evocation, Realisation of Meaning, and Reflection (Steele et al. 1998, p. 32). It is necessary to mention that none of these three parts is omittable since altogether, they shape students’ understanding and guide them through the learning process. Their individual roles in the learning process are going to be closely explained in the following subchapters, but before that, this part of the text is going to introduce the second concept influencing the form of the planned lesson block.



This second concept is the Content and Language Integrated Learning, better known under the acronym CLIL. This teaching method promotes learning of a target language through its active use in learning other school subjects. As explained by Mehisto et al. (2008) usage of CLIL “involves using a language that is not a student’s native language as a medium of instruction and learning for primary, secondary and/or vocational-level subjects such as maths, science, art or business” (Mehisto et al., 2008, p. 11). Versatility of this method might be one of the reasons behind its widespread adoption in English language teaching in majority of European countries (Wolff, 2012, p. 106; Goris et al., 2019, p. 676).

The core principles of CLIL are imbedded in so-called “*CLIL triad*”, which consists of 1) the learning of the target language through content, 2) the learning of the content through the medium of target language, and 3) the overall acquisition of learning skills (Mehisto et al., 2008, p. 12). Wolff (2012) comments on the balance of these three elements, stating that CLIL is often understood “as an approach which prioritizes the content subject”, which may result in it becoming more “content- and not language-oriented” (2012, p. 108). While this project’s lesson block is going to try to maintain equal focus on English and history, it is assumed that the orientation on the content is going to be more prominent.

### **5.1. “How did the war poets write about World War I?”**

Based on the two theoretical concepts, that is the three phase “E-R-R Framework” and CLIL teaching method, this project’s practical part is going to be an English-taught inquiry-based lesson block. As noted by Seixas and Morton (2013), “*engaging students through thought-provoking questions*” is important part of developing historical thinking, since these questions “*involve grappling with evidence, weighting choices, and making interpretations*” (p. 9). On account of that, this lesson block is going to have its own inquiry question, intended to guide students through the complex topic of World War I.

The war poetry written by Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon is therefore going to be used as a means of learning about the topic. With the inquiry question “*How did the war poets write about World War I?*”, students are going to explore the previously explained concepts of historical thinking.

The inquiry-based lesson block itself was tested at ZŠ a G Konice on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023. Class selected for this project was Septima (7.G). Students of Septima, being in the penultimate year of their upper secondary education, should already be around the English language proficiency level of B1, making them well-equipped to efficiently use English language through the lesson block. Moreover, these students should already be familiar with the topic of World War I from their lower secondary education and possibly cover the early 20<sup>th</sup> century history in this school year. As a consequence, the lesson block should be able to rely on students’ previous knowledge and preconcepts without having to introduce the very basis of the topic.

The length of the inquiry-based lesson block is planned to be five lessons in one school day. Evocation is going to be situated in the second, the realisation of the meaning in the third, fourth, and fifth, and the final reflection in the sixth lesson. The alternative approach of dividing the lessons into two or more days has been rejected for the reason of keeping students’ attention. Because of the interconnection and continuity of the individual parts of the lesson block, if they were to be preceded or succeeded by different school subjects, its overall integrity could be disrupted.

### **5.1.1. Evocation**

Since students might not be familiar with the used ERR structure and CLIL teaching method, these concepts should be explained. After a brief introduction of the overall structure (ERR) and length, the teacher should point out the importance of using English through the lesson. Given students' age and expected language proficiency, the lesson block is going to use variation of so-called "hard" CLIL, pointing students to the usage of English to the extent of their abilities. With the inquiry-based lesson block's language of use established, students are faced with its first part, the evocation.

Proposed by Steele et al. (1998), the evocation part has several educational purposes. Besides giving students opportunity to establish what they already know about a topic by "*linking new information with previous schemata*", motivation of the learner is also of the importance (Steele et al., 1998, p. 17). For that reason, the first lesson is going to be dedicated to uncovering of the topic of the lesson block.

In the first activity, the whole class is presented with several different artefacts, which are connected to the topic of World War I. The artefacts vary in their character, ranging from copies of authentic photographs and posters to contemporary means of commemorating the historical event, such as a poppy flower pin. This variety of presented items is the first, but not the last, occasion of showing students the multiperspectivity of historical perspectives.

The artefacts are placed around the classroom and students are asked to go examine them. They are free to discuss their ideas about the artefacts, either in pairs or smaller groups. After all items had been inspected, students return to their seats and, in the class discussion, identify the nature of each of them. Based on the identification, students should be able to discover that the lesson block is connected to World War I.

The second activity expands on the established topic, aiming to explore students' preconcepts about World War I. Individually, students first think about what they already learnt and know about the topic. Teacher encourages students to share their ideas with one another and asks students follow-up questions which provide necessary context. It is expected that students' knowledge will be centred around facts about the war, such as the dates, sides of the conflict, or general causes and consequences. After a brief discussion about those, the class proceeds to the following activity.

The third activity, closely connected to the previous one, pushes students to think about what primary and secondary sources can be used to learn about World War I. Confronted with the question “*From which sources can we learn about World War I?*” students are in pairs asked to brainstorm and afterwards list ideas on the blackboard in the form of a mind map. Once a varied enough range of the sources is established, students should think about the nature of these sources, followed by a discussion on what kind of relevant historical information can be obtained from them. The points from the discussion are then added to the mind map.

During the process of brainstorming and related development of the mind map, students are likely to come across the literature written during or inspired by World War I. If, for some reason, this specific body of literature is not mentioned, it is required for the teacher to guide students into considering it, possibly with the help of guiding questions. That could be done either by referencing to the knowledge of literature from Czech classes or their personal reading. The establishment and comprehension of the fact that there had been individuals who wrote about the war during the war is an essential prerequisite for finishing the evocation part of the lesson block.

In the fourth and final evocation activity, students are assigned to think about the phenomenon of war poetry. For the purpose of providing students with a helpful starting point to the topic, an excerpt from BBC TV sitcom “Blackadder Goes Forth” is played. In the video which is situated to the settings of an English Western front trench during World War I, one of the main characters, a soldier named Baldrick, performs his “war poetry”. The performance of these two war poems is intended to help students construct an initial definition of war poetry and compare it with their classmates. After the comparison of these definitions and agreeing on several shared characteristics, students attempt to come up with and discuss themes which might have been used mostly in World War I poetry, but also in war poetry in general.

That is followed by the establishment of the inquiry question “*How did the war poets write about World War I?*” which defines the form of the lesson block. The class is also explained that in the following lessons, they are going to work with selected war poetry written by three war poets: Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon. As not to impair the process to inquiry, students are not yet told poets’ biographical information and attitude towards the conflict since both are planned to be revealed in the final part of the lesson block, the reflection.

The introductory evocation lesson in a way functioned as an icebreaker, intended to set a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. After realising that the activities focus on production and discussion of ideas above anything else, students became more and more actively involved. In the lesson's activities, students displayed great skill at working with primary sources and their analysis (Primary Source Evidence, and Historical Significance).

The first lesson also exposed one issue, which ended up recurring through the entirety of the lesson block – timing of individual activities. Since the actual time requirements of these activities are bound to differ with each student group and their respective abilities, neither this one nor the following parts of the lesson block are going to provide the planned timing. Instead, each lesson of the lesson block is completed with a list of its activities with time necessary for their realisation with students of Septima at ZŠ a G Konice.

In the case of the evocation, the timing was the following: introduction to the inquiry-based lesson block (~5 minutes), artefact activity (~10 minutes), exploring students' preconcepts (~6 minutes), "*From which sources can we learn about World War I?*" brainstorming and mind map (~12 minutes), Blackadder war poems video + following discussion (2 + 10 minutes).

### 5.1.2. Realisation of Meaning

The realisation of meaning is the central part of the lesson block, intended to provide students with an opportunity to formulate their knowledge based on “*com[ing] into contact with new information or ideas*” (Steele et al., 1998, p. 18). As further accented by Steele et al., this part needs “*to sustain engagement, to maintain the interest and momentum established during the evocation phase*” and “*support learners’ efforts to monitor their own comprehension*” (p. 19). Since failing to do either of these could lead to impairment of the entirety of the E-R-R learning cycle, these factors need to be accounted for. To ensure the former, the realisation of meaning part employs diverse methods of students’ work with war poetry. The latter necessity is addressed by distribution of prepared handouts, which allow students to monitor their understanding through recording their thoughts about the war poets and their poetry.

The three lessons, which altogether constitute the realisation of meaning part of the lesson block, chronologically deal with the three selected war poets. First of these is Rupert Brooke. As explained in the first chapter of this thesis, his war poetry portrays the conflict in a patriotic way, while using rather complicated language. This, supported by the fact that there are only five of Brooke’s poems which could be considered war poems, noticeably limits the possible selection. Because of that, this lesson plans on using four of his war poems. These are “I. Peace”, “II. Safety”, “III. The Dead”, and “V. The Soldier”.

The dramatisation activity relies on students’ ability to work in groups. According to the number of learners, the class is divided by the teacher into three groups. Each group is assigned one of the three poems (“Peace”, “Safety”, or “The Dead”) and is asked to analyse the content of their poem. To prevent students’ passivity caused by the lack of vocabulary needed to understand the poem, they are recommended to use online dictionary (such as the Cambridge Dictionary, available from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>). This opportunity is especially required when dealing with Brooke’s poetry, since expressions used in Owen’s and Sassoon’s poems are far more common and easier to understand. That said, individual use of the online dictionary is going to be permitted even when working with the poetry of these authors.

After roughly ten minutes, during which students were to familiarise themselves with their poem, the follow-up activity is explained. Based on their understanding of the poem, each group is asked to brainstorm ideas how to introduce their poem to other groups by a silent dramatisation, accompanied by online recording of said poem. Students are allowed to choose their own approach to the dramatisation – they can perform it either as a whole group or individually, follow the story of the poem or just focus on expressed emotions. Following the

brainstorming session, groups then perform their dramatisations. During the performance of one group, the others focus on the ideas and emotions included in both the poem and the dramatisation. Once all groups had their turn presenting their work, the performances are reflected upon in a short reflection.

In the last part of the lesson, the poem “The Soldier” is recited to students. Those are asked to think about the possible events, both historical and contemporary, which could include the recitation of Brooke’s poetry. The lesson is concluded with the question “*How did Rupert Brooke write about the war?*”. Students are encouraged to discuss their ideas and eventually note them in their handouts. Similar opportunities for partial reflection are going to be provided at the end of each lesson regarding the particular war poet and his work, as these notions will be of high importance for the reflection.

The first realisation of meaning lesson successfully maintained the atmosphere set in the evocation. Students, surprised by the dramatisation at first, quickly understood the assignment and started working on their performance. Each group approached their dramatisation in a different way – while one group chose to prepare their own props and the final dramatisation was more of a living picture (“The Dead”), others aptly used their surroundings (chairs and desks to represent trenches, blackboard and chalk to express certain ideas) and, with the use of pantomime, performed their poems (“Peace” and “Safety”). Especially the preparation part demanded more time than it was assigned, resulting in shortening of time intended for recitation of “The Soldier” and discussing Rupert Brooke’s writing style. Fortunately, some students chose to discuss Rupert Brooke in their free time during the break, thus resolved the issue.

The timing of the Brooke lesson was the following: analysis of assigned poems (~10 minutes), brainstorming and planning stage of dramatisation (20 minutes), performances and brief reflection (~13 minutes), recitation of “The Soldier” and addressing of the question “*How did Rupert Brooke write about the war?*” (2 minutes).

The second realisation of meaning lesson deals with poetry written by Wilfred Owen. Compared to Brooke, Owen’s war poetry repertoire is significantly more numerous, reaching the number of around one hundred poems, which were, as pointed out by Niall Ferguson, published mostly after his death (2009, p. xxvi). Accenting their realistic portrayal of the war, this lesson’s activities use poems “The Next War”, “The Last Laugh”, “Dulce et Decorum Est”, and “Anthem for Doomed Youth”.

As a means of restoring students' attention for the following activities, the second realisation of meaning lesson starts with another video excerpt, this time from the 2018 BBC documentary series "Cunk on Britain". The selected five-minute-long segment (4:04–9:04) from the episode "Twentieth Century Shocks" delivers the very simplified World War I context. Besides some of the causes leading to the conflict, the nature of the trench warfare is also explained, followed by a reference to Wilfred Owen's poetry.

In the first activity, students are presented with copies of "The Next War" and "The Last Laugh", both of which are missing their titles. Working in pairs, each student individually reads one of the poems and afterwards describes it to their partner. Considering the content of the poem, students suggest a suitable title. After agreeing on a title for one of them, students repeat this process with the second poem. The titles of examined poems are then shared in the class, either through class discussion or online poll website, such as [mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com). When discussing, students should also be able to provide explanation and supporting arguments for the titles they have devised, referencing concrete parts of poems which inspired them.

The subsequent activity works with the idea of assuming different personalities of World War I contemporaries and exploring their possible perception of war poetry. Divided into four groups at random, each group is assigned their personality. The four personalities are: Mother, whose son had been sent to the Western Front; Young recruit, who has just enlisted to the British Army; War veteran, who had experienced some previous armed conflict; and Wife of a high-ranked British officer.

In these personalities and roles, students are confronted with the poem "Dulce et Decorum Est". They are asked to consider the poem through the eyes of the assigned personalities while focusing on their feeling. Students are first given time to discuss the one group personality. After that, the large groups are disbanded in favour of smaller groups. In these smaller groups consisting of four people, each of the previously mentioned personalities needs to be represented. The next ten minutes are reserved for sharing the four points of view regarding the poem. Students are asked to think about the personalities, considering the similarities and differences in their attitudes and possible reasoning behind those.

At the end of the lesson, the poem "Anthem for Doomed Youth" is recited and the question "*How did Wilfred Owen write about the war?*" is raised. Students are once again encouraged to discuss and note their ideas.



In the second realisation of meaning lesson, which featured Wilfred Owen's poems, students continued to engage in the lesson. That said, the inclusion of the video at the beginning of the lesson visibly stimulated their interest in the topic, functioning as a motivation tool, most likely thanks to its' deadpan humour. Through the lesson, one part of the "assumption of personality" activity needed to be adjusted – instead of dividing students into groups of four, they remained in the original groups. The ideas they have thought up were then written by each of the group on a blackboard. The comparison of similarities and differences was then done during teacher-led discussion.

The timing of the Owen lesson was the following: mockumentary video (~ 6 minutes), titling of poems (~ 13 minutes), assumption of personalities, subsequent discussion and comparison of views (10 + ~10 minutes), recitation of "Anthem for Doomed Youth" and addressing of the question "*How did Wilfred Owen write about the war?*" (~6 minutes).

The last of the selected war poets is Siegfried Sassoon, whose poetry, just like the poetry of Wilfred Owen, has not been scarce in numbers. Because of his anti-war attitude, Sassoon's war poems tend to be either realistic, satiric, or a mixture of both. Since Owen's poetry should provide sufficient insight into the realistic portrayal of the war, selected Sassoon's poems "Does it Matter?", "Suicide in Trenches", "Reconciliation", and "The Hero" instead put the focus on the use of satire in the condemnation of World War I.

In the first activity, each student is given a copy of either the poem "Does it Matter?", "Suicide in Trenches", or "Reconciliation". Students are told to look for any ideas which seem to contradict each other and thus result in making a visible contrast. Forming groups in which all three poems are present, students explain their poems and point out the contrast they have found. Additionally, they are asked to select one line or verse which they consider to be the key part of the whole poem – vast majority of Siegfried Sassoon's satiric war poetry depends on the last lines which deliver the main point of the poem. Once students uncover this pattern, they are asked about the author's intentions for writing the poems in this way.

The second activity of the lesson starts with a short brainstorming session regarding characteristic traits of a hero. All thought up ideas are written down on the blackboard and after enough ideas had been brainstormed, students are presented with first two stanzas of Sassoon's poem "The Hero". The portrayal of the hero in the poem is then compared to the brainstormed characteristics of a hero. It is expected that students' ideas are going to correspond with the portrayal initially expressed in "The Hero".

Subsequently, the teacher presents the final stanza of the poem, and the students are urged to compare the hero characteristics with the hero portrayed in the poem once more. After deciding on the relevance of the individual traits, students should additionally debate about the different perspectives present in the poem.

In the same way as the two previous lessons, the final realisation of meaning lesson ends with the question “*How did Siegfried Sassoon write about the war?*” and the opportunity to discuss and note their ideas.

The third of the realisation of meaning lessons was the first of them which had been impaired by problems connected to lesson block’s length, language of poetry, and loosely set instructions of activities. The lesson was marked by noticeable decrease in students’ attention, possibly caused by the overall difficulty of the activities, but also the longer lunch break between this and previous lesson. Students mostly struggled with the second activity in which they searched for contrasts present in three selected poems – this activity was eventually finished by discussing these poems with the whole class, otherwise students would most likely have remained stuck. That said, the subsequent activity which worked with the poem “The Hero”, once again provoked students into active work.

The timing of the Sassoon lesson was the following: finding and discussing contrasts (~15 minutes), brainstorming of characteristic traits of a hero, making of a mind map, and confrontation of the first two stanzas of the poem with the mind map (~12 minutes), confrontation of the third stanza with the mind map, discussion of perspectives (~10 minutes), addressing of the question “*How did Siegfried Sassoon write about the war?*” (8 minutes).

### 5.1.3. Reflection

The final part of the E-R-R learning cycle, necessary for its overall success, is the reflection. *“It is in this phase that learners truly make new knowledge their own”* and where *“lasting learning takes place”* (Steele et al., 1998, p. 20). The collective of authors continues with a claim that this phase should allow students to *“begin expressing in their own words the ideas and information encountered”* and be involved in *“generating a robust exchange of ideas between students thereby expanding their expressive vocabulary as well as exposing them to varying schemata to consider as they build their own”* (Steele et al., 1998, p. 21). For the sake of successfully summarising the content of the inquiry-based lesson block and thus achieving its established goal, the reflection activities include both these knowledge adoption principles.

To illustrate similarities and differences of the three war poets who were studied through the realisation of meaning part of the lesson block, the activities are intended to compare Brooke’s, Owen’s, and Sassoon’s war poetry between one another. This is planned to be accomplished by using three circle Venn diagram, which should allow students to visualise their notions about the authors’ poetry in an organised manner, and by answering the initial inquiry question.

At the beginning of the lesson, each student receives an A4 handout with a three circle Venn diagram, followed by an explanation of its function. The three circles represent the war poetry written by Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon, with some of its parts overlapping one another. Because of that, students should be able not only to describe the authors’ individual style and poetic approach, but also any features which are shared between two or even all three selected war poets. Students are given set amount of time in which pairs of students can discuss their ideas, consult their notes from the previous lessons, and then fill in their understanding of the war poetry into the diagram.

Following the work in pairs on the diagram, whole class is given a window of opportunity for formulating, sharing, and collectively working with their perception. The same three circle Venn diagram is redrawn by teacher on the blackboard and students are given sticky notes on which they can write any relevant information connected to the selected war poetry. The notes can then be stuck on the corresponding place in the diagram. The reasoning behind the use of sticky notes is that the limited space should compel students into thinking about how they should formulate their answers to make them clear and concise. Furthermore, once on the board, the notes with the ideas written on them are easily accessible to anyone in the classroom. Especially the last-mentioned fact is going to be helpful for the final activity of the lesson block.

In the final activity, students are for the second time confronted with the initial inquiry question “*How did the war poets write about World War I?*”. Their individual task is to write a short paragraph in which students answer the inquiry question in any way they deem fit. During the process of writing, students are free to come up to the Venn diagram on the blackboard and confront their personal view with the view of the classroom collective. During this process of self-reflection, students might be able to explore ideas which they either struggled to express or have not considered at all.

With students who have finished writing, the question can be brought up once more and addressed by the whole class in a short, teacher-led discussion. Alternatively, the written answers could be put up on a notice board in the classroom. In any case, letting students share and discuss answers to the inquiry question might be useful. In their answers, limited only by the formulation of the inquiry question, each student could have accentuated something else.

The timing of the reflection lesson was the following: pair work with individual Venn diagrams (~5 minutes), class work with shared Venn diagram and sticky notes (~10 minutes), answering the inquiry question “*How did the war poets write about World War I?*” (~15 minutes), class discussion (5 minutes), a questionnaire (~10 minutes).

The reflection lesson served its purpose of allowing students to construct and share their understanding. In the two main activities of the lesson, which were the group work with Venn diagram and individual answering of the inquiry question, students were able to recognise some differences and similarities between the presented approaches of Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon. In their written answers, students appropriately pointed out that each of the war poets had their own impression of the war (Historical Perspectives) and individual reasons for writing war poetry (Cause and Consequence, Ethical Dimension). During the short class discussion, students were reminded that the phenomenon of war poetry is not exclusive only to World War I, but that nearly all major modern conflicts do have their own war poets (Continuity and Change). With the remaining two competences addressed in the evocation (Historical Significance, Primary Source Evidence), the inquiry-based lesson block to some extent covered all of the six historical thinking competences.

## 5.2. Questionnaire findings

All fourteen students who participated in the inquiry-based lesson block agreed to complete the questionnaire. Although the number of respondents may seem rather low, the data gathered from their answers still might reveal interesting points regarding CLIL interconnection of English and history lessons. Furthermore, the provided feedback serves as a solid basis for future improvements of the inquiry-based lesson block and the educational usage of English-written World War I poetry.

The first part of the questionnaire, consisting of questions 1, 2, and 3, intends to explore students' overall attitude towards the interconnection of English and history lessons. Questions 1 and 3 are formulated as rating scale questions, question 2 as binary yes-no question. The second part of the questionnaire is directly connected to the inquiry-based lesson block the students have just participated in. Besides one rating scale question 4, which asks students to evaluate the lesson block on a scale 1-10, questions 5, 6, 7, are open-ended, allowing students to explain their opinions in more detailed way. The last item of the questionnaire provides a place in which students can comment on any part and aspect of the lesson block. All of the answers are going to be quoted with only minor stylistic changes, for the sake of authenticity.

### ***“Do you find interconnecting English and history lessons useful?”***

The first question the students were asked was *“Do you find interconnecting English and history lessons useful?”*. Answers *“No”* and *“Usually no”* were not selected by any student. *“Sometimes”* also was not too popular, with only two students selecting the statement. It is hence clear that the overwhelming majority of students do find the interconnection of English and history lesson useful, with four students inclining towards the answer *“Usually yes”*, and the largest group of eight students selecting *“Yes”* as the answer they identify with the most.

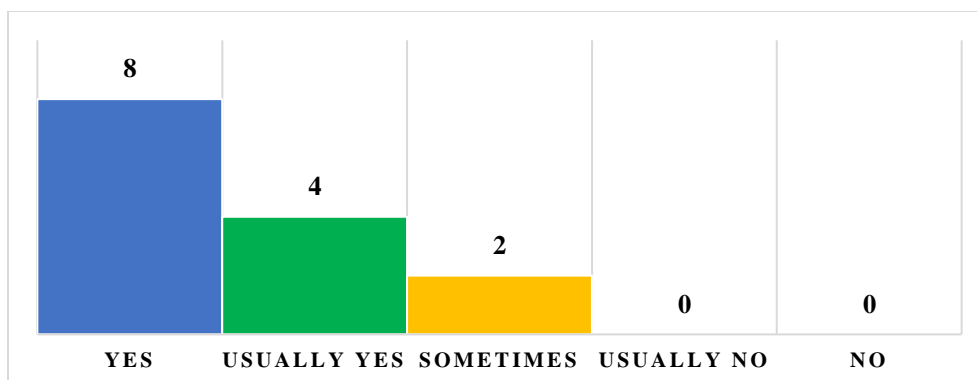


Fig. 1, *“Do you find interconnecting English and history lessons useful?”*

***“Would you welcome the interconnection of English and history lessons?”***

Students’ answers to the dichotomous yes-no question show that thirteen out of the fourteen students would welcome such interconnection. While the reasoning behind the one “No” is unknown and could be caused either by student’s preference of different teaching methods or some different factor, based on the answers to the first question, even this student still does admit that interconnection of English and history lessons is to some degree useful.

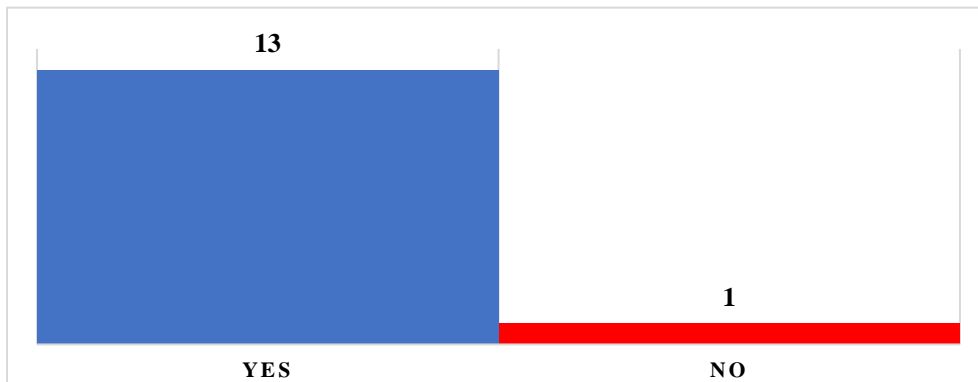


Fig. 2, “Would you welcome the interconnection of English and history lessons?”

***“How often would you welcome such interconnection?”***

The third question completes the exploration of students’ general attitudes by providing them with an opportunity to voice their ideas with respect to the ideal frequency of the English and history lesson interconnection. Answers to the question assert that none of the fourteen students completely discredit the interconnection since the answer “Never” has not received a single vote, and only one student selected the option “Less often [than a month]” which represented only a sporadic interconnection of English and history. Answers “Once a month” and “Once a week” each similarly received four votes. The option which called the interconnection to take place “Several times a month” became the most selected one with the votes of five students.

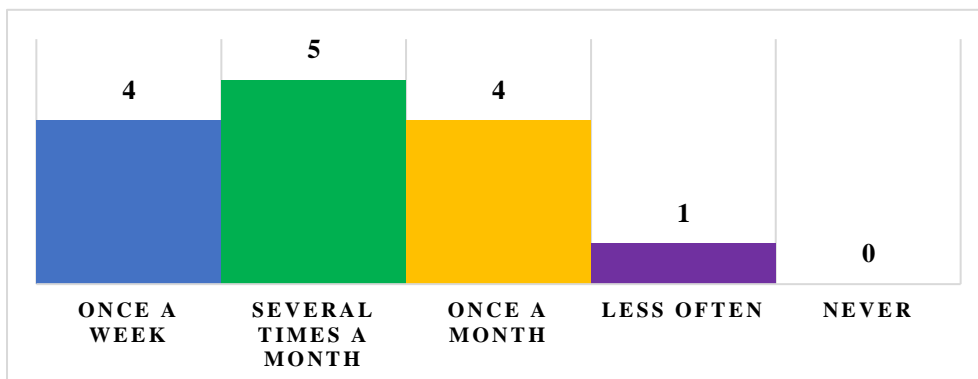


Fig. 3, “How often would you welcome such interconnection?”

As mentioned, the second part of the questionnaire shifts the attention from general questions about the interconnection of English and history towards the inquiry-based lesson block. Preceding the four open-ended questions, students are asked to provide the evaluation of the lesson block on the scale from one to ten, with one being the lowest and ten the highest score.

***“On a scale 1-10, how would you evaluate the lesson block you have just experienced?”***

As seen in figure no. 4, which lists the answers to the fourth question, scores 1 to 6 were not chosen by any student. On the contrary, with the total score of the lesson block averaged at ~8,7 it can be assumed that students have found the lesson useful, enjoyable, or ideally both. However, the score also indicates that students have found at least some parts of the lesson block problematic, which implies that possible changes might be welcomed.

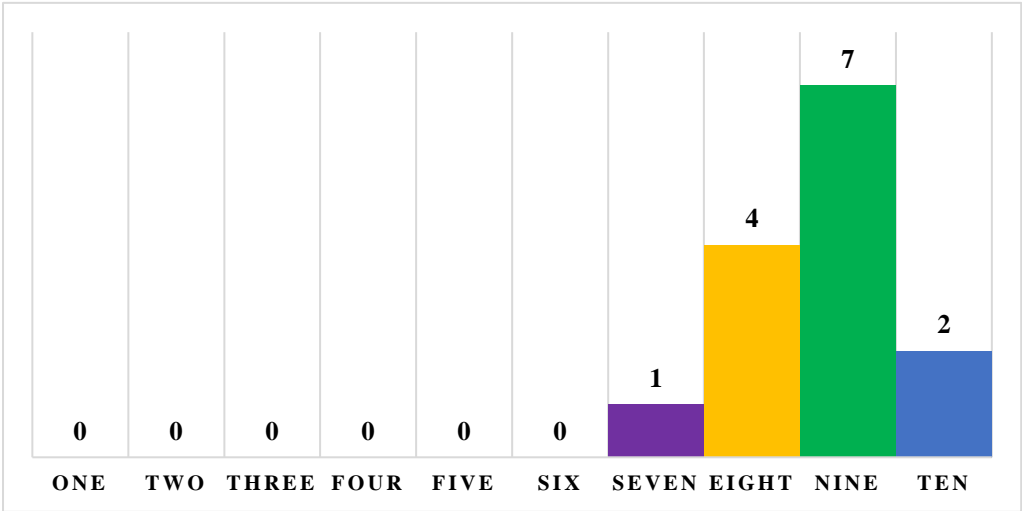


Fig. 4, Students' evaluation of the lesson block on a scale 1-10

***“Based on this experience, do you find the war poetry suitable for learning about the topic of World War I? In which ways?”***

Based on the assessment of the answers, all fourteen students do agree on the suitability of the war poetry when learning about World War I. That said, their rationalisation of it seems to have diverse character, displaying at least two main perspectives.

It is noticeable that some students chose to compare the inquiry-based learning of the lesson block with the way in which they learnt about the topic prior to that. One of the students appreciates the introduced alternative to frontal, teacher-centred teaching by considering it *“more fun to learn about things in different way, than just from books and facts from presentation”*. Others acknowledge the value of the use of war poetry with statements such as *“Yes, for some people it can be more understandable that way”*, *“Yes, I do. To improve skills”*, or *“Yes, I find. I think it is more attractive and we will see the other side of WWI.”* Due to the lack of elaboration, it is not clear in which way war poetry could make the topic *“more understandable”*, whether English, history, or general learning skills were meant to be improved, or what could make the educational use of war poetry seem *“more attractive”*.

Larger group of students decided to describe the content of the war poetry when explaining its educational suitability, rather than comparing it to teaching methods and materials they were already familiar with. *“Thanks to the poems, we could see what did the soldiers experience on the battlefield, how did they feel, or what happened to them after the war”* remarks one of the students in their answer. The personal experience of the individual war poets had been brought up and pointed out as beneficial quite often in other answers as well: *“For sure, the authors experienced the war themselves – primary sources. It makes it more personal and I believe it makes us remember more”*, *“Yes, because the authors wrote in their poems about their feelings and that is something what is usually not in documentary, books or films”*, *“Yes, because it shows emotions and the authors wrote about what was happening during the war”*. Apart from the cited answers and ones which conveyed similar idea, one additional answer managed to articulate the main point behind the use of personal records in historical research: *“Yes, I do, because it’s important to know not only the facts, but the feelings of people as well”*.



***“Which parts of the lesson block do you appreciate? Why?”***

The inquiry-based lesson block was designed to contain a broad number of activities. Differentiated in their character, they were intended to be used in discovering which of them would be suitable for the direct educational use. To determine students’ preferences regarding the employed activities, students were asked to point out the parts of the lesson block which were appreciated by them.

Mentioned by the exact half of all participants, the most appreciated aspect of the lesson block was students’ collaboration during group work activities. One of the answers appreciated this form of learning by arguing that students *“rarely get to do that in other lessons and it is always an interesting experience”*. Another student expressed their support of working in groups by arguing that *“school teaches us to work alone, but not how to work with other people”*. Learning while cooperating with other students seems to be of high interest, further supported by the fact that group work activities, such as *“brainstorming”* and activities in which students *“had to figure things out ourselves”*, were pointed out in some answers.

Besides the group work, students also mentioned concrete activities. Among these, the dramatisation of Rupert Brooke’s poetry was found to be the most intriguing one. *“It was really good to make up, what will we do and perform”*. The answers indicate students not only appreciated the process, but on several occasions also remark that *“it was fun”*. In one answer, its author does not hide their own surprise by confirming that *“[a]cting, most unusually”* was their favourite part of the lesson block. Besides the dramatisation, students also appreciated the reflection activity which employed the three circle Venn diagram or the fact that there were *“[d]ifferent activities for every part of this lesson”*.

Last but not least, students were also very appreciative of the fact that they were most often in charge of the learning. While the lesson block relied on interaction and discussion, students were not forced into answering by being called out – fortunately, students participated regardless of that. *“Everyone was free to speak and not everyone had to speak”* as stated in one of the answers. This view was complemented by another answer: *“I appreciate that our ‘teacher’ doesn’t want to that everyone will be speaking. If someone isn’t comfortable with speaking English, he is ok with that.”*

***“Which parts of the lesson block would you change? How?”***

Although the students assigned the lesson block relatively high score and pointed out parts which they have found worth appreciating, there certainly were aspects of the lesson which they appreciated less or even found problematic. With the intention of uncovering these aspects, students were given an opportunity to identify them in this part of the questionnaire.

Given the central place of war poetry in the realisation of meaning phase, the lesson block highly relies on understanding of poems. This became apparent as the most pressing issue for some of the students who, in their answers, often emphasised that there were either too many poems or that the war poems were difficult to read and comprehend. Out of the three authors, students, rather unexpectedly, seemed to struggle the most with Siegfried Sassoon’s poems, which were prior to the lesson block considered to be the most straightforward out of the work of the three selected war poets. As a possible consequence of that, the activities which used Sassoon’s poetry might have been more demanding, resulting in the higher difficulty compared to ones employing Brooke’s or Owen’s poems. However, one of the possible reasons behind the difficulties might be connected to students’ reading habits. The remark of one of the students *“I don’t like reading, so part where we were reading poems”* could be hardly considered constructive feedback, given the fact that when dealing with any kind of poetry, reading needs to be present in one form or another.

The other obvious issue which had been pointed out in some answers was the length of the entire lesson block. As previously explained, the five subsequent lessons variant was selected instead of the one which would divide parts of the lesson block through the span of several days, mostly because its overall progression and unity might have been endangered. Nonetheless, some of students’ commentaries pointed out the issues with the chosen variant, stating that the lesson block *“was a little too long”* and partly because of that, students *“were a bit tired”*. Possible altering of the lesson block’s length is suggested in one of the answers, with the student stating that they *“would make it shorter or divide the block into two parts”*.

In contrast to that, one student, though aware of the length of the lesson block, suggested prolonging some parts to explore students’ understanding of the poetry: *“Maybe it was a little too long but I didn’t mind too much and maybe it’d be good to discuss some things a little longer and talking about our individual options, some questions”*. It was furthermore indicated that since *“the topic was repeated, so maybe it would be good to change the subject after a while”*, and one student recommended including *“some more interactive stuff”* in the lessons.

***“Feel free to express any comments regarding the lesson block or the educator here:”***

The last item of the questionnaire is intended to provide students with freedom in which any part of the lesson can be commented upon. Not bound by a formulation of a question, students therefore can either elaborate on the points raised in the preceding part of the questionnaire or present their opinion on any other aspect of the lesson block.

Majority of students decided to express their overall opinion of the lesson block. Despite the ambivalence towards poetry, mentioned in some of the answers, students still acknowledged that working with poetry had some positive sides: *“I found it pretty entertaining even though I don’t really love poetry.”*, *“Unfortunately, poetry isn’t my favourite subject, but it was still something fresh and inspiring. It’s hard to find a topic, which is great and interesting for all”*.

Students also appeared to accent their personal enjoyment of the lessons, writing comments such as: *“It was a great and interesting project and I hope to have another similar project again. :)”*, *“It was really good and interesting... I really enjoyed this lesson :)”*, *“I love it. I think it is great variation lessons. Great job, Míšo :)”*. As visible in the last quotation, some students decided to comment on the educator who guided them through the lesson block. Besides stating that *“[t]he educator was really enthusiastic and passionate about the topic”*, students complimented his pronunciation and expressed belief that *“the educator did such a great job”*.

In addition, the approval of the lesson block’s usefulness was also mentioned. Besides students’ opinion on employed methods, which they considered to be *“[g]ood teaching methods”*, and belief that *“this is good way to learn English”*, one other student was able to comment on the interdisciplinary element of the inquiry-based lesson block, which interconnected not only the two expected subjects, but to a lesser extent also Czech: *“For me it was really helpful when it comes to English, History but Czech too.”*

### **5.3. Suggested Improvements**

Based on lesson reflections and students' questionnaire entries, the inquiry-based lesson block has both positive and negative aspects. Out of the positive aspects, students mostly appreciated any kind of group work, followed by the dramatisation, overall diversity of used activities, and relaxed atmosphere in which they had opportunities to share their ideas. When asked about the suitability of war poetry for learning about the topic of World War I, the questioned students themselves agreed that the use of poetry has plenty of advantages, hence justifying it.

Regardless of that, the reading of the war poetry was still considered to be the leading negative aspect of the lesson block. This was, according to students' questionnaire answers, caused by combination of two reasons – the high number and the difficult language and structure of the poems. The relevance of these arguments is partly supported by the lesson block itself, which had certain problems with timing of individual activities.

Besides the reading, the length of the lesson block was mentioned as a drawback of the lesson block. Furthermore, some students also argued that there could have been more opportunities for the discussion of their personal notions, the topic could have undergone some change, and that they would have appreciated inclusion of more interactive elements.

With the goal of addressing these issues while retaining the abovementioned positive aspects, the inquiry-based lesson block needs to be altered. The following text is going to present two feasible suggestions applicable to Czech upper secondary schools.

The first of these suggestions would shorten the length of the lesson block. So far, the taught lesson block consisted of five individual lessons, divided according to the E-R-R framework in ratio 1:3:1, and employed twelve different war poems. This variety of war poems allowed the lesson block to provide students with enough material which presented the writing style of the three war poets. Lowering the number of lessons would most likely make the lesson block more accessible for both teachers and students. With that in mind, the number of used poems would need to be reduced significantly for its proper function, proportionally limiting the variety of sources and activities. Conversely, having fewer poems could lead to their closer analysis. Students could, for example, search poems for emotionally charged words, which could help them to detect author's opinion on the conflict. Generally, while the compacting of the inquiry-based lesson block could result in a compromise between the width and depth of the students' constructed knowledge, it could also serve as a convenient way of addressing the topic.

The second option operates on the other side of the length spectrum. As already mentioned, the 11<sup>th</sup> of November is globally recognised either as the Remembrance or Veterans Day. This fact offers an opportunity to prepare a project day which would both introduce and commemorate the topic at school. Compared to the first suggestion, the project day has undeniable advantages originating from the participation of the whole school in the project. Also, the limitation of the inquiry-based lesson block to the older upper secondary students would not be an issue since different project day activities are often targeted at a certain age group. The lesson block could serve as an opportunity for cooperation between different classes (6.G, 7.G, 8.G) since it is probable that students would complement their language skills.

Divided into three (or more) groups with members from each of the three classes, students could be confronted with an inquiry question, possibly similar to the one employed in the previously introduced lesson block. After a shared evocation lesson, each multi-class group would be assigned a particular war poet whose work would be the content of one or more realisation of meaning lessons. The activities of the realisation of meaning phase would need to thoroughly employ the preferred methods, such as discussion or dramatisation, setting aside the high number of reading-reliant activities. In the reflection, students of all groups could share their discoveries and together compile a visualisation of the studied approaches and formulate an answer to the inquiry question. Both the visualisation and the answer could be then presented with other classes, possibly expanding the collective knowledge.

Nonetheless, not even this suggestion is without flaws. Project days are notoriously demanding in relation to the organisation and time management, requiring a skilled organiser to accomplish it. Moreover, the topic is not suited to every age group, which impairs the participation of the whole school. Either way, the two suggested means of improving the lesson block are only some of the possible ways to address the topic of World War I and use its poetry. The effectiveness of the use of war poetry would depend not only on the selected method of teaching, but also on the teaching and learning styles of teacher and their pupils respectively.

## 6. Conclusion

With the aim of exploring the poetry of World War I and its use in the classroom, this thesis first needed to consider war poetry and war poets themselves. It was established that while the term “war poetry” can be used to label poetic response to any armed conflict, be it historical or contemporary, its most prominent use is connected to World War I. The following analysis of three selected war poets (Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon) confirmed that the work of these three authors provide varied perspectives of World War I, undoubtedly influenced by the respective personal combat experience, and hence might function as a means of learning about the topic.

The subsequent part of the thesis presented arguments in favour or against the use of English-written World War I poetry, for most parts answering the research question “*Which factors support or oppose the educational use of English-written World War I poetry?*”. On one side the cultural popularity of World War I topic and the advancement of Czech educational policy approve of the use of English-written war poetry, on the other side there are some limitations such as the extent and age appropriateness of World War I, and the prerequisite level of English needed for effective work with the poetry. Besides the arguments presented in the theoretical part, the practical part expands the discussion. The upper secondary school students, all of whom participated in the lesson block, do consider employing English-written World War I poetry beneficial, but their answers argue that it heavily depends on selection of used activities and poems.

Because of that, the research question “*How can Czech students work with English-written World War I poetry?*” was addressed in both the theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part presents the possible engagement of World War I poetry in development of students’ historical thinking. These six concepts were subsequently worked with in the inquiry-based lesson block, which used the ERR framework (evocation, realization of meaning, reflection) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) teaching method. The lesson block and its integrated use of English-written World War I poetry were both appreciated by the students, who were able to construct their knowledge of the conflict based on the personal accounts of the war poets. This is especially important given the fact that this topic usually depersonalises itself by highlighting its scale and impact on states, rather than focusing on individual participants.

In conclusion, the use of English-written World War I poetry provides a great opportunity not only to address students' affective domain, but also allows students to assume the role of World War I historian. When working with these specific primary sources, students are confronted with authentic views of the warfare and its consequences on the lives of both few and many.

While the theoretical part of this diploma thesis focused only on a small selection of war poetry and its potential use in the classroom, and the practical part's inquiry-based lesson block was subjected to only one trial run, the results indicate that use of war poetry might be a welcome addition to upper secondary English and history lessons and means of their meaningful interconnection. This project focused solely on the topic of World War I, but it is clear that plenty of other conflicts presented in war poetry remain and could be used in the context of education. With no place for these in this thesis, the author hopes that some of his future colleagues take on this exciting challenge.

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## Attachments

### Attachment 1: *Evocation phase materials*



“You said you would go when you were needed. You are needed NOW!”

LC-USZC4-12698

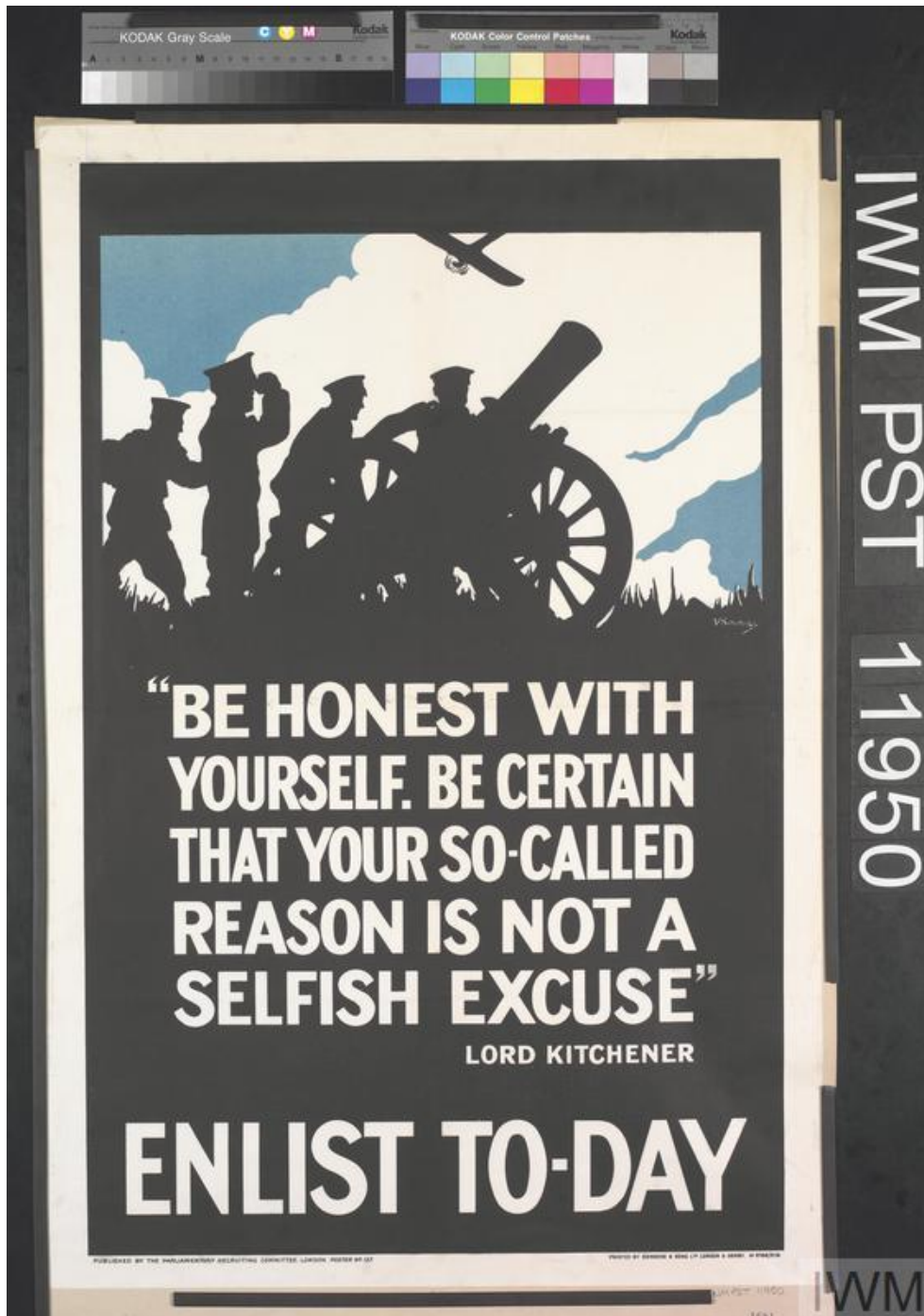
Available from: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3g12698>



“If you knew a day's pay would save a life, would you give one day a month?  
All of the Red Cross War Fund goes for war relief.”

LC-USZC4-8382

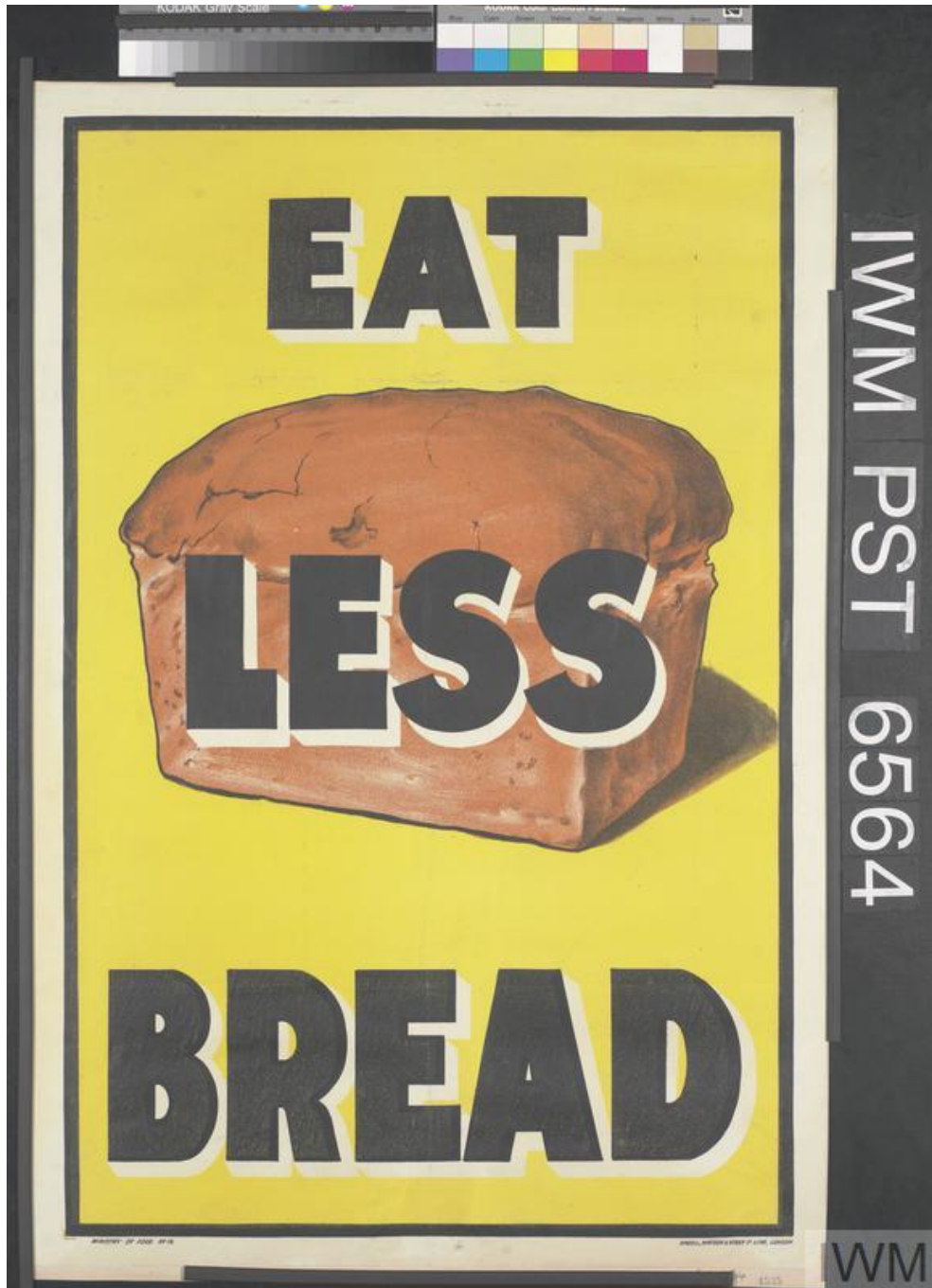
Available from: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3g08382>



“Be Honest with Yourself”

© IWM Art.IWM PST 11950

Available from: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/25060>



“Eat Less Bread”

© IWM Art.IWM PST 6564

Available from: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/28693>



“Your King and Country Need You – Enlist Now”

© IWM Art.IWM PST 11363

Available from: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30230>

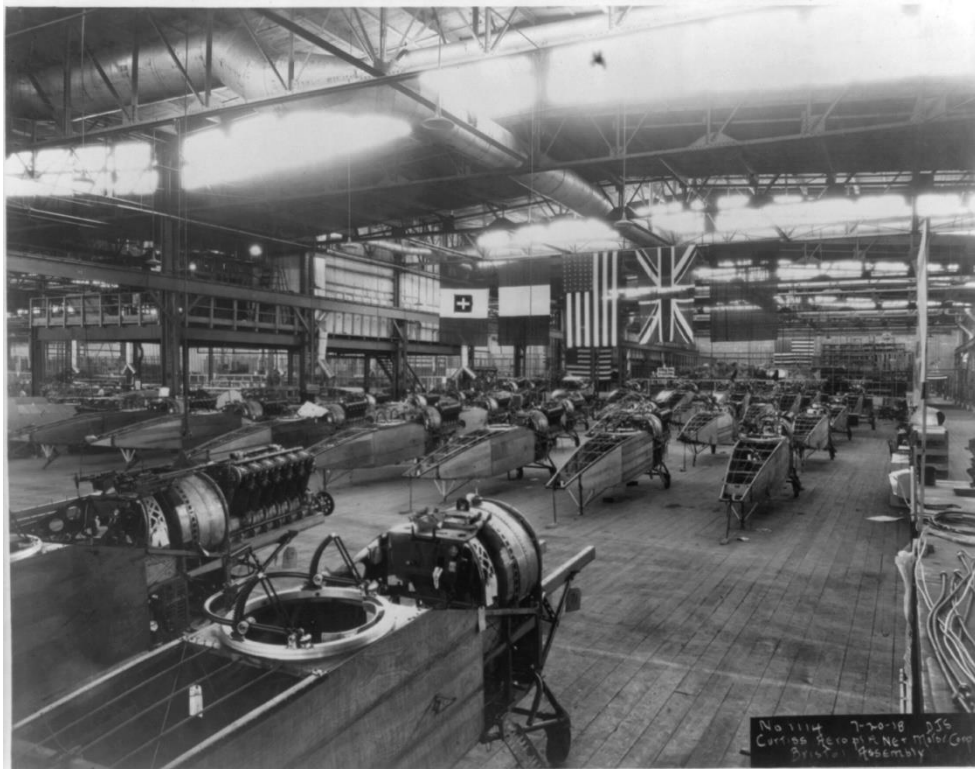




“Women of Britain Say ‘Go!’”

© IWM Art.IWM PST 11707

Available from: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/14628>



“Curtiss Aeroplane & Motor Corp., Bristol [fighter] assembly”

LC-USZ62-15806

Available from: <https://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a18047/>



“Abandoned British trench which was captured by the Germans; in background, German soldiers on horseback view the scene.”

LC-USZ62-136102

Available from: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c36102/>



“British War Medal (1914-1920)”

© IWM OMD 794

Available from: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/30006892>



“Remembrance poppy”

Author’s personal collection

**Attachment 2: Realisation of Meaning materials**

Rupert BROOKE	Wilfred OWEN	Siegfried SASSOON

## **“I. Peace”**

*Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,  
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,  
With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,  
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,  
Glad from a world grown old and weary,  
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,  
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,  
And all the little emptiness of love!*

*Oh! we, who have known shame, we have found release there  
Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,  
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;  
Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there  
But only agony, and that has ending;  
And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.*

(Brooke, 1918, p. 11)

## **“II. Safety”**

*Dear! Of all happy in the hour, most blest  
He who has found our hid security,  
Assured in the dark tides of the world that rest,  
And heard our word, 'Who is so safe as we?'  
We have found safety with all things undying,  
The winds, and mornings, tears of men and mirth,  
The deep night, and birds singing, and clouds flying,  
And sleep, and freedom, and the autumnal earth.*

*We have built a house that is not for Time's throwing.  
We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for ever.  
War knows no power. Safe shall be my going,  
Secretly armed against all death's endeavour;  
Safe through all safety's lost; safe where men fall;  
And if these poor limbs die, safest of all.*

(Brooke, 1918, p. 12)

### **“III. The Dead”**

*Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!  
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,  
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.  
These laid the world away; poured out the red  
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be  
Of work and joy, and that unhop'd serene,  
That men call age; and those who would have been,  
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.*

*Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,  
Holiness, lacked so long, as Love, and Pain.  
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,  
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;  
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;  
And we have come into our heritage.*

(Brooke, 1918, p. 13)

### **“V. The Soldier”**

*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 rivers, blest by suns of home.*

*And think, this hearth, 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.*

(Brooke, 1918, p. 15)

### **“The Next War”**

*Out there, we've walked quite friendly up to Death;  
Sat down and eaten with him, cool and bland,—  
Pardoned his spilling mess-tins in our hand.  
We've sniffed the green thick odour of his breath,—  
Our eyes wept, but our courage didn't writhe.  
He spat at us with bullets and he's coughed  
Shrapnel. We chorused when he sang aloft;  
We whistled while he shaved us with his scythe.*

*Oh, Death was never enemy of ours!  
We laughed at him, we leagued with him, old chum.  
No soldier's paid to kick against his powers.  
We laughed, knowing that better men would come,  
And greater wars; when each proud fighter brags  
He wars on Death—for lives; not men—for flags.*

(Owen, 1920, p. 86)

### **“Anthem for Doomed Youth”**

*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 good-byes.  
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.*

(Owen, 1920, pp. 44-45)



**“Dulce et Decorum Est”**

*Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting 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 tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dopped 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 devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter 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.*

(Owen, 1920, pp. 55-56)

**“The Last Laugh”**

*‘O Jesus Christ! I’m hit,’ he said; and died.  
Whether he vainly cursed, or prayed indeed,  
The Bullets chirped – In vain! vain! vain!  
Machine-guns chuckled, – Tut-tut! Tut-tut!  
And the Big Gun guffawed.*

*Another sighted, - ‘O Mother, mother! Dad!’  
Then smiled, at nothing, childlike, being dead.*

*And the lofty Shrapnel-cloud*

*Leisurely gestured, - Fool!*

*And the failing splinters tittered.*

*‘My Love!’ one moaned. Love-languid seemed his mood,  
Till, slowly lowered, his whole face kissed the mud.*

*And the Bayonets’ long teeth grinned;*

*Rabbles of Shells hooted and groaned;*

*And the Gas hissed.*

(Owen, 1920, p. 59)

### **“Does it Matter?”**

*Does it matter?– loosing your legs? ...  
For people will always be kind,  
And you need not show that you mind  
When the others come in after football  
To gobble their muffins and eggs.*

*Does it matter?– loosing your sight? ...  
There’s such splendid work for the blind;  
And people will always be kind,  
As you sit on the terrace remembering  
And turning your face to the light.*

*Do they matter?– those dreams from the pit? ...  
You can drink away and forget and be glad,  
And people won’t say that you’re mad;  
For they’ll know that you’ve fought for your country,  
And no one will worry a bit.*

(Sassoon, 1919, p. 59)

### **“Suicide in Trenches”**

*I knew a simple soldier boy  
Who grinned at life in empty joy,  
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,  
And whistled early with the lark.*

*In winter trenches, cowed and glum  
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,  
He put a bullet through his brain.  
No one spoke of him again.*

\* \* \*

*You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye  
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,  
Sneak home and pray you’ll never know  
The hell where youth and laughter go.*

(Sassoon, 1919, p. 39)

### **“Reconciliation”**

*When you are standing at your hero's grave,  
Or near some homeless village where he died,  
Remember, through your heart's rekindling pride,  
The German soldiers who were loyal and brave.*

*Men fought like brutes; and hideous things were done:  
And you have nourished hatred, harsh and blind.  
But in that Golgotha perhaps you'll find  
The mothers of men who killed your son.*

(Sassoon, 1919, p. 87)

### **“The Hero”**

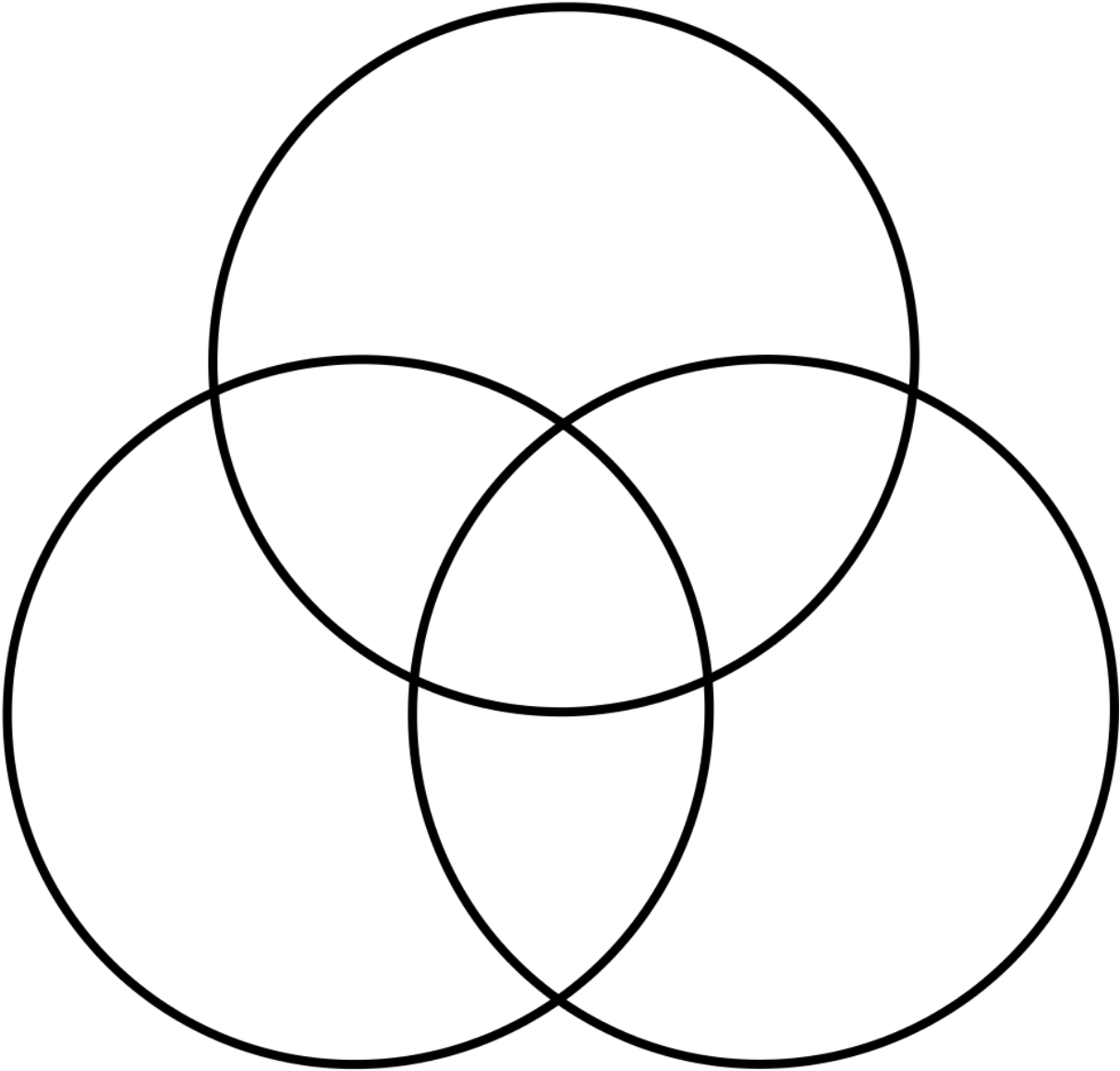
*“Jack fell as he'd have wished,” the Mother said,  
And folded up the letter that she'd read.  
“The Colonel writes so nicely.” Something broke  
In the tired voice that quavered to a choke.  
She half looked up. “We mothers are so proud  
“Of our dead soldiers.” Then her face was bowed.*

*Quietly the Brother Officer went out.  
He'd told the poor old dear some gallant lies  
That she would nourish all her days, no doubt.  
For while he coughed and mumbled, her weak eyes  
Had shone with gentle triumph, brimmed with joy,  
Because he'd been so brave, her glorious boy.*

*He thought how “Jack,” cold-footed, useless swine,  
Had panicked down the trench that night the mine  
Went up ad Wicked Corner; how he tried  
To get sent home; and how, at last, he died,  
Blown to small bits. And no one seemed to care  
Except lonely woman with white hair.*

(Sassoon, 1917, p. 48)

**Attachment 3:** *Reflection materials*



## **Attachment 4: *Blank questionnaire***

### **“How did the war poets write about World War I?”**

1) Do you find interconnecting English and history lessons useful?

- Yes
- Usually yes
- Sometimes
- Usually no
- No

2) Would you welcome the interconnection of English and history lessons?

- Yes
- No

3) How often would you welcome such interconnection?

- Once a week
- Several times a month
- Once a month
- Less often
- Never

4) On a scale 1-10, how would you evaluate the lesson block you have just experienced?

Useless										Useful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

5) Based on this experience, do you find the war poetry suitable for learning about the topic of World War I? In which ways?

6) Which parts of the lesson block do you appreciate? Why?

7) Which parts of the lesson block would you change? How?

8) Feel free to express any comments regarding the lesson block or the educator here:

## **Attachment 5: Students' answers to open-ended questions 5, 6, 7, and 8**

**Question 5: “Based on this experience, do you find the war poetry suitable for learning about the topic of World War I? In which ways?”**

*“For sure, the authors experienced the war themselves – primary sources. It makes it more personal and I believe it makes us remember more”*

*“Yes I do, I think we can see the topic of WWI in different way. Know how they felt in this hard times.”*

*“Yes I think it is suitable. It is more fun to learn about things in different way, than just from books and facts from presentation.”*

*“Yes, because it shows emotions and the authors wrote about what was happening during the war.”*

*“Yes, because the authors wrote in their poems about their feelings and that is something what is usually not in documentary, books or films.”*

*“Yes, for some people it can be more understandable that way.”*

*“Yes, I do, because it's important to know not only the facts, but the feelings of people as well.”*

*“Yes, I do. To improve skills.”*

*“Yes, I find. I think it is more attractive and we will see the other side of WWI.”*

*“Yes, it shows us the real situations how did look like in WWI”*

*“Yes, show how difficult it was”*

*“Yes. Thanks to the poems, we could see what did the soldiers experience on the battlefield, how did they feel, or what happened to them after the war.”*

*“Yes”*

Question 6: ***“Which parts of the lesson block do you appreciate? Why?”***

*“Acting, most unusually”*

*“e.g.: The part of performing the actions.”*

*“Everyone was free to speak and not everyone had to speak. Different activities for every part of this lesson”*

*“I appreciate that our ‘teacher’ doesn’t want to that everyone will be speaking. If someone isn’t comfortable with speaking English, he is ok with that. He is really funny tho.”*

*“I appreciated the circles that the authors have in common”*

*“I think the best was when we performed feelings to poem. It was really good to make up, what will we do and perform.”*

*“Parts in which we worked in groups”*

*“The group works”*

*“The part where we were in groups and we try to act emotions of the poem, because it was fun.”*

*“The part, when we performed the feelings from poems, then brainstorming and also the last part.”*

*“When we worked in groups, when we had to figure things out ourselves, brainstorming”*

*“Working in groups – school teaches us how to work alone, but not how to work with other people”*

*“Working in groups, because we can discuss our ideas”*

*“Working in groups, because we rarely get to do that in other lessons and it is always an interesting experience. Also performing the poems, because it was fun.”*



**Question 7: “Which parts of the lesson block would you change? How?”**

*“At the end of the lesson, the topic was repeated, so maybe it would be good to change the subject after a while”*

*“I didn’t like the part with Sassoon poems, because it was hard to read. I would like to read more readable poems.”*

*“I don’t like reading, so part where we were reading poems”*

*“I don’t really know, probably none.”*

*“I would add some more interactive stuff, not so much reading.”*

*“I would make it shorter or divide the block into two parts because it was quite long”*

*“I’d like less read”*

*“I’d like to read less”*

*“Looking in poems for oxymorons and what this poem is about. Too much poems”*

*“Maybe it was a little too long but I didn’t mind too much and maybe it’d be good to discuss some things a little longer and talking about our individual opinions, some questions”*

*“Maybe the last part where we were searching the meaning of poems, it was too long for us already and we were a bit tired.”*

*“Maybey nothing.”*

*“Too hard vocabulary”*

Question 8: ***“Feel free to express any comments regarding the lesson block or the educator here:”***

*“Definitely yes”*

*“For me it was really helpful when it comes to English, History but Czech too. Thank you and see you soon, I hope <3”*

*“Good teaching methods”*

*“I found it pretty entertaining even though I don’t really love poetry. The educator was really enthusiastic and passionate about the topic. I loved the idea of the whole lesson being in English”*

*“I love it. I think it is great variation lessons. Great job Mišo :)”*

*“I think this is good way how to learn English”*

*“It was a great and interesting project and I hope to have another similar project again. :)”*

*“It was really good and interesting, the educator did such a great job. I really enjoyed this lesson :)”*

*“It was useful and you have a perfect pronunciation! :) not all people can speak English well as you :)”*

*“Unfortunately, poetry isn’t my favourite subject, but it was still something fresh and inspiring. It’s hard to find a topic, which is great and interesting for all”*

*“YES”*

## Resumé

Diplomová práce se zabývá anglicky psanou válečnou poezií první světové války a jejím možným využitím ve výuce anglického jazyka a dějepisu. Poezie tří vybraných válečných básníků, kterými jsou Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen a Siegfried Sassoon, poskytuje různorodé vyobrazení první světové války, a tudíž umožňuje efektivní komparaci. Samotné využití této poezie ve výuce, ačkoliv podporováno kulturní oblíbeností tématu a inovováním formy a obsahu výuky českého edukačního systému, je také limitováno rozsáhlostí tématu první světové války, jeho vhodností pro žáky a studenty, a potřebnou úrovní anglického jazyka. Použití poezie první světové války jako prostředku vytváření historického myšlení bylo navrženo s ohledem na jednotlivé koncepty a následně otestováno v rámci badatelsky orientovaného výukového bloku postaveného na principech modelu E-U-R a metody CLIL. Ze zpětné vazby, která byla poskytnuta zúčastněnými studenty v rámci dotazníkového šetření, mimo jiné vyplývá, že anglicky psaná poezie první světové války je vhodným prostředkem zkoumání tohoto tématu, ale je důležité při jejím využití přihlížet na jazykovou náročnost jednotlivých básní, vhodnost využitých aktivit a celkovou časovou dotaci.

## Annotation

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Bc. Michal Langer
<b>Katedra:</b>	Ústav cizích jazyků
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Petr Anténe, M.A., Ph.D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2023
<b>Název práce:</b>	Poezie první světové války a její užití ve výuce
<b>Název práce v angličtině:</b>	Poetry of WW1 and its use in the classroom
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Práce se zabývá anglicky psanou poezií první světové války a jejím využitím ve výuce anglického jazyka a dějepisu. Teoretická část práce prozkoumává tvorbu tří válečných básníků (Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon) a určuje jejich rozdílné pohledy na tento konflikt. Následně práce zkoumá argumenty podporující a limitující edukační využití této poezie a předkládá návrhy možného využití v kontextu rozvoje historického myšlení. Praktická část práce popisuje badatelsky orientovaný výukový blok, který využívá model E-U-R a je vyučován v anglickém jazyce metodou CLIL. Výukový blok je zhodnocen studenty za pomoci dotazníku a jeho výsledky využity při návrhu možných zlepšení.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Anglická válečná poezie, WW1, První světová válka, Váleční básníci, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Historické myšlení, Badatelsky orientovaný výukový blok, E-U-R, CLIL
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	This thesis deals with English-written poetry of World War I and its use in English and history lessons. The theoretical part of the thesis explores work of three war poets (Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon) and establishes their differing perspectives on the conflict. Subsequently, work examines arguments which support or limit the educational use and presents the possible employment in context of historical thinking development. The practical part of the thesis describes an inquiry-based lesson block, which uses E-R-R model and is taught in English with the help of CLIL. The lesson block is evaluated by students through a questionnaire and obtained data is used for suggestion of possible improvements.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině</b>	English war poetry, WW1, World War I, War poets, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Historical thinking, Inquiry-based lesson block, E-R-R, CLIL
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	65 stran (116 981 znaků) + přílohy
<b>Přílohy:</b>	tabulky, fotografie, dotazník, prepisy volných odpovědí na dotazník