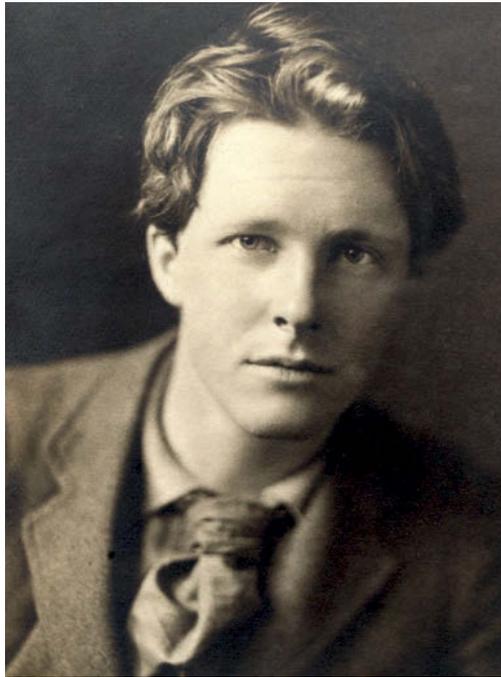


Rupert Brooke

(1887-1915)

▶ Rupert Brooke.



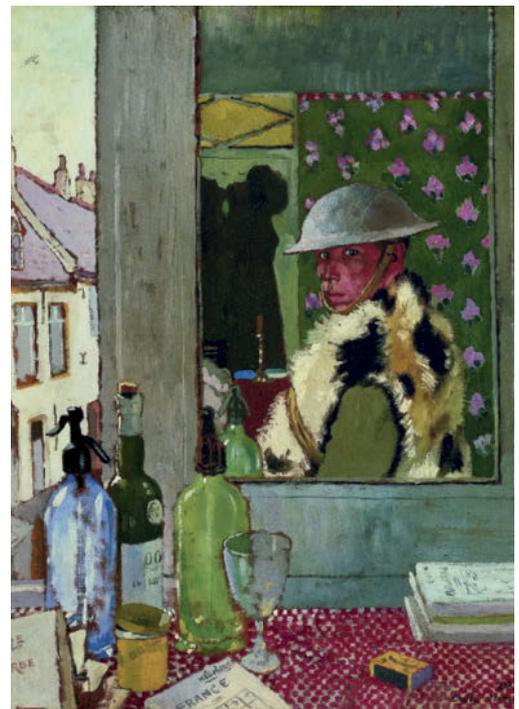
Rupert Brooke was born in Rugby, England and studied at King's College, Cambridge, where he first began to write poetry. The poetry of his early period is romantic and idyllic in its descriptions of the English countryside. After graduating he travelled extensively, visiting, among other places, the South Pacific, including New Zealand. When the First World War broke out he joined the Royal Naval Division but was only briefly involved in the war as he contracted blood poisoning and died at the age of 28. Due to his premature death he is remembered for only two books of poetry, *Poems* (1911) and *1914 and Other Poems* (1915) which is a series of extremely patriotic poems. *Collected Poems* was published posthumously a year after his death and is notable for its

romantic treatment of war. Despite his youth Brooke's writing showed a very high level of technical skill and an elegance of expression which would have certainly guaranteed him a brilliant career as a poet.

Main works

- *Poems* (1911)
- *1914 and Other Poems* (1915)
- *Collected Poems* (1916)

Belonging to the group of writers known as the 'war poets' Rupert Brooke, however, distinguishes himself from the other poets in this group as he did not represent the brutal and realistic aspects of war, which was the prerogative of the other war poets, but **focused on expressing his personal, overwhelming sense of patriotism and idealism**. This was probably because he did not participate in any fighting himself, dying at the beginning of his service from blood poisoning. His poetry, in fact, strikes a sharp contrast with the other war poets in this anthology, Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, but it is nevertheless still deeply moving and technically brilliant.



! See Literary Context, The war poets → p. 28.

▶ Sir William Orpen, *Ready to Start - Self Portrait*, 1917. Oil on canvas; Imperial War Museum, London.

'The Soldier' (1915)

Seen as one of the most patriotic poems in the English language in this sonnet the poet seems to meditate on his own death, almost as if he foresaw its imminence. Yet he seems to find solace from his 'Englishness' and the fact that even death cannot take this away from him.



BEFORE READING

- 1 The First World War was one of the first wars to be reported by journalists and photographers on a wide scale and these people brought the horrors of war closer to home, to the families left behind. The new weapons used and the horrors of gas also meant that those soldiers who did manage to survive returned home not just with physical injuries but often suffering from trauma and psychological consequences. These post-traumatic consequences, however, often received little sympathy from doctors and were rarely talked about in public. Why, do you think? Discuss in groups and then relate to the rest of the class.
- 2 Now read and listen to the poem 'The Soldier' and state how you feel this poem differs from the new attitudes towards war which were growing at the time.

'The Soldier'



CD 3 - TR 07
MP3 19

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed¹;

- 5 A dust whom England bore², shaped³, made aware⁴,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam⁵,
A body of England's breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest⁶ by suns of home.

- And think, this heart, all evil shed⁷ away,
10 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.

1. **dust concealed:** polvere nascosto.
2. **bore:** generò.
3. **shaped:** formato
4. **made aware:** rese consapevole.
5. **ways to roam:** strade da esplorare.
6. **blest (blessed):** beato.
7. **shed:** liberato.

▼ Soldiers of the Yorkshire Regiment on the march. Battle of the Broodseinde Reidge, World War I.





OVER TO YOU

- 1 Tick the correct alternative.**
- The poet imagines he will die
 in England
 in a foreign country
 - The poet is
 proud to be English
 embarrassed to be English
 - Before becoming a soldier we can deduce that the poet was
 a troubled person
 a contented person
 - The poet gives the impression that life in England was
 idyllic
 difficult
- 2 Say why the 'corner of a foreign field' will be 'forever England.' What will make it so? (ll. 2-3)**
- 3 Can you explain line 4? Why will there be a 'richer dust'?**
- 4 In which lines does Brooke personify England?**
- 5 What effect does this have?**
- 6 The poem contains the words England or English six times. What does this underline? Choose.**
- the poet's patriotism for his country
 the poet's anger at his country
- 7 In lines 6 and 12 who or what does the word 'her' refer to?**
- 8 According to the poet where is there peace?**
- 9 How would you describe the tone of this poem? (More than one is possible.)**
- sad
 moving
 angry
 nostalgic
 depressing
 romantic
- 10 Does the poet seem afraid of dying? Why? Why not? Discuss in class.**

REVIEW

- 1 Complete the following sentences.**
- Rupert Brooke was not a war poet.
 - His poetry is full of and images of England.
 - This may be because he died at the of the war.
 - He also did not participate in any
 - In the poem 'The Soldier' Brooke seems to his own death.
 - But he speaks about it without