

And do what things the rules consider wise,
 And take whatever pity they may dole.
 Tonight he noticed how the women's eyes
 Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.
 How cold and late it is! Why don't they come
 And put him into bed? Why don't they come?

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UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Owen's wounded soldier, who has lost his legs and his arms, sits in a wheelchair in hospital listening to the shouts of boys playing at sunset. He is reminded of the excitement of former early evenings in town before he joined up; 'before he threw away his knees'.

Copy and complete the table, which contains some key phrases that show the soldier's present situation and his memories. Write a comment on each.

KEY POINT

This is a text that blends the past and present to powerful effect. Analyse how Owen achieves this.

▼ PHRASE	▼ COMMENT
'waiting for dark'	The soldier does not have anything positive to look forward to – only the arrival of the end of the day.
'sewn short at elbow'	The sleeves of his suit have had to be cut short because of the loss of his arms.
'Town used to swing so gay'	The evening had been a time for happiness and parties in town.
'glow-lamps budded in the light blue trees'	
'his back will never brace'	
'Poured it down shell-holes'	
'lapsed in the hot race'	
'He thought of jewelled hilts / For daggers in plaid socks'	
'soon, he was drafted out with drums and cheers'	
'not as crowds cheer Goal'	
'do what things the rules consider wise'	

EXPLORING LANGUAGE

Owen chose his words carefully to help you understand the mind of the soldier. Copy and complete the following table, making explanatory comments on the examples from the poem.