For the Fallen

Robert Laurence Binyon,

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children, England mourns for her dead across the sea.
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit, Fallen in the cause of the free.
Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.
They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.
They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.
They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.
But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night;
As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Biography: Robert Laurence Binyon, born 10 August 1869 at Lancaster and died 10 March 1943 at Reading Berkshire, was an English poet, dramatist and art scholar. He was too old to sign up for the war so he became a medical orderly in 1916 for the Red Cross. Binyons inspiration for his most famous poem, “For the Fallen”, was from within a few weeks of the outbreak of war in 1914, where just in those few weeks, so many casualties had happened. He wrote the poem on the cliff-top overlooking a beautiful view of the north Cornish coastline. A plaque remains there in remembrance.

In his most famous poem, “For the Fallen”, Binyon is expressing ideas such as calling England ‘mother’ and basically comparing England and its soldiers to a mother and her children so England must look after its people and soldiers, just like a mother does for her children. Bunion expressed this idea because obviously England’s soldiers were not taken care of; the mother did not look after her children because many soldiers died and many more were fatally injured. Another idea which Binyon expressed is when he wrote “They fell with their faces to the foe.” This means that Englands young soldiers all died to the ‘foe’ (enemy army) because they were too young and young in mind to fight. These ideas were very valid because no, England did not look after its soldiers (many died or were gravely injured) and many soldiers who enlisted were at least 12 years of age or higher; they joined because they were either forced to, they wanted to be with their dads and brothers, or because they thought they were strong and big enough to take on such a huge and life threatening job. The significance of these ideas to us today is that we must cherish the courage that every soldier had in order to fight for their country, even when they knew that their life was at a huge risk.
Anthem for Doomed Youth

BY WILFRED OWEN

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 goodbyes.
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.

Language Features + Meanings
• “for these who die as cattle?” - Simile - describes the young soldiers as ‘cattle’, probably to show that like cattle, the young soldiers were just thrown out onto the fields to all be massacred at once as if treating the soldiers as if they were animals (hardly a chance of survival).
• “Only the monstrous anger of the guns” - personification - describes the gun to be monstrous and angry, helps the audience get a feeling on what the poem means and to set a violent mood to the poem.
• Rhyming - All the green words rhyme with one of the other green words. Rhyming seems to get a meaning across to the reader.
• “mourning save the choirs” - metaphor - comparing a ‘choir’ to the reality of war.

This poem has a tone/mood that faces the reality of what war really was, therefore it is a sad, depressing poem set to create a sad/depressing feeling towards the reader.

Biography: Wilfred Edward Salter Owen, born 18 March 1893 in Shropshire, England, was an English war poet and soldier. Owen was killed in action on 4 November 1918 during the crossing of the Sambre-Oise Canal, exactly one week before the signing of the Armistice and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant the day after his death. Owen's poems were influenced by the fact that he was a soldier facing the reality of what war was and one of his good friends, Siegfried Sassoon (another famous war poet) also influenced his works.

In this poem, Wilfred Owen is expressing the idea that all of the young soldiers who sign up for the war will just be treated like cattle; they will be let out onto the fields to have a little wonder and then they will all be lined up and killed at once, just like cattle. The young soldiers will have no to little chance to survive, however, their family back home will mourn for them dearly. Another idea which Owen used is when he wrote, “What candles may be held to speed them all?”, meaning that the candle would symbolise life in a religious factor and the families of the soldiers back home would hold these candles to represent the dead soldiers life and would pray that their death was fast and painless (“speed them all”).

These ideas were very valid because all of the soldiers (young and old) were shown to be treated as cattle; they were all lined up to their death. Also because when a loved soldier did die, their families did mourn for them back at home and religion was a very popular thing back then so many of the soldiers were prayed for. The significance of these ideas to us today is that we must keep praying for all the soldiers who are dead or alive, retired or still on patrol, in the past or the present. Even if some of us don’t belong to a religious group, a positive thought in our minds would be enough to thank them for what they have done to save us all.