

Teaching notes

Pre-reading activities

1. The role of a soldier

Get students to think about the complexity of the life of a soldier. Why do they join up? What events will they experience? What impact will this have on them?

2. Language patterns

Get students to consider word patterns to make predictions about the poem and its central themes. There are two differentiated worksheets here: one which encourages students to identify their own categories and one which provides categories to support weaker students. This could be done in pairs.

Reading the poem in context

'Remains', alongside other poems, was written from the testimonies of ex-soldiers for Armitage's collection entitled 'The Not Dead.' Each poem is based upon an experience that one of the veterans has found hard to forget. The whole programme is on YouTube, but the section where the veteran explains and reads the (majority of the) poem is from 46.05 to 50.34 (NB there is swearing almost immediately, at 50.39).

The link is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvA3K-tC6t8>

Group work on stanzas

After introducing the poem, get students to work in groups exploring a stanza each with the following series of questions. They could mind map these responses. Alternatively, you could ask students to take a question each and look at this throughout the whole poem. If so, the questions increase in difficulty.

1. What is happening? From what perspective are events viewed from?
2. What examples of simple language can you find? Why do you think Armitage chose these instead of more complex word choices?
3. Can you identify any poetic devices? What do these add to the poem? How do they make you respond as a reader?
4. Look at the structure: where do lines begin and end? Which words are emphasised by the use of enjambment and caesura? Why might this structure fit the subject matter?
5. Do you get any impressions of the speaker's feelings or emotions? How would you describe the tone being used?

Making links

Finish studying the poem by getting students to consider how 'Remains' compares to other poems from the 'Power and Conflict' set. 'War Photographer' for example, also explores issues concerning the impact of war once home, and 'Exposure' explores the difficulties that soldiers face. Use the 'Remains' dominoes comparison' worksheet to help support this activity. Students will add relevant points about other 'Power and Conflict' poems next to the points about 'Remains'. You will then ask students to cut out and link the completed dominoes, to peer assess a partner's set of dominoes.

The role of a soldier

Deciding to fight for your country is no easy decision. Think about the role of the soldier and annotate the image below.

- In one colour, write down **reasons why someone might choose to join** the armed services.
- In a second colour, write down **events you think a soldier might experience** during war.
- In a third colour, write down how you think these events would **affect soldiers**, even once they return home.



Language patterns

Look at the selection of words at the bottom of the page. They are all from the same poem and have been alphabetised.

Allocate the words to the categories you think they fit best in. You can put the word in more than one category if you think it applies.

| | | |
|------------|----------------|-------------|
| movement | time | violence |
| | | |
| human body | doubt | imagination |
| | | |
| people | setting/spaces | destruction |
| | | |

after again agony all another apart armed back bank behind blink blood-shadow bloody body broad bursts carted daylight dead desert distant doors dozen dream drink drugs dug else end enemy every except eyes fire flush fly goes got ground guts hands head hit home I image inside itself kind knuckle land leave left legs letting life lines looter looters lorry mates mind myself near not now occasion one open other out over pain patrol possibly probably raiding right rips road round rounds same sand sand-smothered see sent side six-feet-under sleep some somebody stays story street sun-stunned swear tackle there three through times torn tosses walk we week

Predictions

What atmosphere do you think is being created in the poem from looking at the language patterns?

What do you think the poem will be about?

Language patterns

Look at the selection of words at the bottom of the page. They are all from the same poem and have been alphabetised.

Decide how you would categorise these words, linking them together in the boxes below and coming up with your own titles for these categories. You could think of word types, the 5 senses or subject matter for example (e.g. sound words).

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'Remains' dominoes comparison

Practise making comparisons with this dominoes activity. The dominoes have some analytical ideas linked to the poem 'Remains' on the right hand sides.

Think of an idea from another poem to link to it - remember you can think of both similarities and contrasts! Write this in the left part of the adjoining domino. When you have finished, cut out your set, and swap with a partner to check your ideas make sense!



An extra challenge: see how many of the different poems in the 'Power and Conflict' section you can include!



There is a sense of doubt in the poem - the speaker is unsure of his actions.

The word choice is simple and colloquial, contrasting the complex situation.

The long vowel sounds of 'stays' and 'street' implies how long he has suffered with the memory.

Violent lexis such as 'torn' and 'rips' emphasises destruction and death.

Alliterative 'd' words emphasise the heaviness he feels.

The poem starts almost mid-conversation, placing readers in a position of confidence.

The enjambment suggests the on-going struggle in coming to terms with his actions.