

Poetry Report September 2025.

WAR!

Q. What is it good for?

A. Absolutely Nothing!

This month the poetry group considered the theme of 'Protest'. Protest rages against many targets...especially against the insanity and destruction of people, land and human values arising from armed conflict...

So it was perhaps not surprising that several poems focused on the subject of war.

Other themes:

Maya Angelou wrote on behalf of the enslaved and downtrodden everywhere: the caged bird sings not through joy but in spite of its harsh captivity:

"the caged bird sings of freedom".

Denise Levertov writes of the struggle to champion the human spirit against Tyranny and Oppression.

"I have no vocation to join the nameless great,
only to say to others, Watch! Hear them!
Through them alone
We keep our title, *human*"

William Blake rages against the destruction of nature and the enslavement of man in the modern industrial world. He focuses on the squalid back streets of Georgian London where poverty, vice and squalor seem doomed to persist forever

Dylan Thomas rages on a more personal level...

at the prospect of a father's death:

"do not go gentle into that good night
old age should burn and rave at close of day
rage, rage against the dying of the light"

And so to war...in song and in poem:

Bob Dylan shows contempt for The Masters of War:

"You that never done nothin'
But build to destroy
you play with my world
like it's your little toy"

Billy Joel describes the pointless brutality of war:

"remember Charlie
remember Baker
they left their childhood
on every acre
and who was wrong

and who was right
it didn't matter
in the thick of the fight"

Siegfried Sassoon mourns the theft of youth and laughter
"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"

Ray Lee describes the surreal, grotesque choreography of the configuration of seating
plans in the comfortable surroundings of peace talks far removed from the death and
destruction of battle

and Graham Nash pleads for change
"we can change the world
rearrange the world
it's dying
to get better"

Robert Alabaster. 12sep25.