

Sassoon's Statement

War and Propaganda



The Poet



- Born into a wealthy Jewish family.
- World War I, Sassoon served with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers
- He received the Military Cross

The Letter

- "I am making this statement as an act of **wilful defiance of military authority**, because I believe the war is being **deliberately prolonged** by those who have the power to end it.
- **I am a soldier**, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as **a war of defence and liberation** has now become a war **of aggression and conquest**. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation.



The Letter

- I have seen and endured the suffering of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which **I believe to be evil and unjust**. I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerity's for which the fighting **men are being sacrificed**.
- On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against **the deception** which is being practised on them; also I believe that I may help to destroy **the callous complacency** with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realise.“
- This is a copy of the open letter, published in The Times newspaper, 31 July 1917



by
C. Lt. Siegfried Sassoon.
3rd Batt: Royal Welsh Fusiliers.
July, 1917.

I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that the war upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them and that had this been done the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation.

I have seen and endured the sufferings of the troops and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust. I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed.

On behalf of those who are suffering now, I make this protest against the deception which is being practised upon them; also I believe it may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share and which they have not enough imagination to realise.

Outcomes

- The letter was read in the House of Commons
- Sassoon expected to be court-martialled
- Poet Robert Graves argued that Sassoon was suffering from shell-shock and needed medical treatment
- In 1917, Sassoon was hospitalized.
- Public reaction to Sassoon's poetry was fierce.
- Even pacifist friends complained about the violence and graphic detail in his work.





Jessie Pope (1868-1941)



- Educated at the North London Collegiate School for Girls
- Began writing for “Punch”
- Humorous writer
- Published WW1 patriotic poetry
- Wilfred Owen dedicated ‘*Dulce et decorum est*’ to her
- Her name will be replaced by «*my friend*» in the following version.

«*The Call*» by Jessie Pope

- *Who's for the trench—
Are you, my laddie?
Who'll follow French—
Will you, my laddie?
Who's fretting to begin,
Who's going out to win?
And who wants to save his skin—
Do you, my laddie?*

*Who's for the khaki suit—
Are you, my laddie?
Who longs to charge and shoot—
Do you, my laddie?*

*Who'll earn the Empire's thanks—
Will you, my laddie?
Who'll swell the victor's ranks—
Will you, my laddie?*

*When that procession comes,
Banners and rolling drums—
Who'll stand and bite his thumbs—
Will you, my laddie?*



