

By the end of studying the poem [The Charge of the Light Brigade](#) I need to know:

Meaning: The poem describes a battle between the British cavalry and Russian forces during the Crimean War. A misunderstanding meant that the Light Brigade were ordered to advance into a valley surrounded by enemy soldiers. The cavalry were only armed with swords, whereas the Russian soldiers had guns. The Light Brigade were virtually defenceless against their enemies, and many of them were killed.

Ideas: The poem is partisan, in that it presents a bias view of war- it is attempting to convince the British public to abandon their anger and criticism of the British government and instead commemorate and honour the soldiers for their bravery, heroism and comradeship.

<p>Vocabulary</p>	<p>League [noun]- 3 miles Blunder'd [noun]- mistake Sabres [noun]- Swords Plunged [verb]- fast Fought [verb]- fight Honour [verb in the context of the poem]- respect Sabring [verb]- to cut or wound with a sword Battery [noun]- a group of cannons Cossack [noun]- a warrior from southern Russia and Ukraine Sunder'd [verb]- broken into pieces Comradery [noun]- mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together. Solidarity [noun]- unity Partisan [adjective]- bias</p>
<p>Context</p>	<p>Alfred, Lord Tennyson was one of the most important poets of the Victorian period. He was the Poet Laureate (the country's official poet) from 1850 until his death in 1892. His poems range from those focused on the legend of King Arthur to those dealing with the loss of a loved one. The Crimean War took place between 1853 and 1856, with Imperial Russia on one side and an alliance including Britain and France on the other. The poem takes as its subject the Battle of Balaclava, one of the many battles of the war. During the battle a unit of British cavalry (the Light Brigade) mistakenly charged straight towards a Russian line of cannons. The soldiers demonstrated incredible bravery in attacking the guns, but little was achieved. As such, the British public were angered by the miscommunication that led to the soldiers' deaths.</p> <p>The Light Brigade was only 600 soldiers. 118 were killed, 127 were wounded and 60 were taken as prisoners.</p> <p>It's worthwhile here noting other battles that took place during this conflict-</p> <p>Bombardment of Odessa (April 1854) Battle of the Alma (September 1854) Battle of Balaklava (October 1854) Battle of Inkerman (November 1854) Battle of Chernaya (August 1855)</p> <p>*The names Balaklava, Crimea, Raglan, Odessa and Inkerman feature as road names in the Falls Road area of Belfast in 'Belfast Confetti'.</p>
<p>Themes</p>	<p>Death- Tennyson deliberately focuses on the battle and bravery and talks little about the deaths of the soldiers. He firstly alludes to this when he says 'then they rode back but not, not the 600'. The repetition here causes a break in the dactylic dimeter rhythm which draws attention to the fact that some of the soldiers died; he also describes how 'horse and hero fell' as they rode back. Firstly, this makes their death seem noble because they are being killed after they already broke through the Russian line- a feat in itself. However, it also demonises the Russians as they are shooting the British in their backs as they are riding back to the British line at this point. This suggests that the Russians could only kill the light brigade when they were retreating, but also reinforces the heroism of the soldiers. The fact that he focuses so little on their deaths serves his purpose of writing- he wants the British public to stop focusing on their deaths.</p> <p>Solidarity- Tennyson highlights the comradeship and solidarity of the Light Brigade through the refrain 'rode the 600'- by being known as 'the 600' Tennyson is highlighting how this is how they are known; something also reinforced through the collective pronoun 'theirs', they are known as a collective.</p>

Links to other poems:

The Destruction of Sennacherib- Very similar in style, though DOS is didactic in its message.

The Man He Killed- Hardy is anti-war due to his Humanist beliefs; whilst Tennyson glorifies war through hyperbolic and romanticised view of battle- Hardy's deliberate omissions of battle, in contrast, doesn't glamorise war and instead focus on the deaths. Death to Tennyson, however, is something to largely brush over.

Exposure- consider the differences in the poets' own experiences: Owen fought in the war and Tennyson didn't. This causes considerable differences in tone, description and emotions

	<p>Heroism- The depiction of the ferocious and violent battle reinforces the bravery and heroism of the soldiers.</p>
<p>Deeper understanding</p>	<p>The poem itself is a carefully constructed piece of propaganda- designed to convince the British public to abandon their resentment and anger towards the government. It achieves this by focusing on the bravery of the soldiers and trivialising the miscommunication from Lord Raglan- referring to it as a 'blunder' somewhat negates the seriousness of that error, coupled with the idea that the soldiers consciously chose to attack despite being aware of the error 'not tho the soldier knew'. Equally, Tennyson ignores key details- he suggests the battle was one-sided- 'Cossack and Russian reel'd from the sabre stroke', references the deaths of some of the soldiers: 'not, not the six hundred' but fails to mention that some of the British got captured. It's implied in the poem that some die, whilst all of the others rode back. The excessive description of battle, coupled with active verbs, construct a sense of power and might of the British army, which is why her demands them to be 'honour[ed]' in the final stanza, which acts as a volta. By the time the poem ends, the reader has forgotten the 'blunder' at the start of the second stanza- which is precisely what Tennyson intends. The shift in rhythm helps to signal this volta- the first five stanzas are written in dactylic dimeter in order to reflect the sound of the horses' hooves, whilst the last stanza abandons this rhythm and meter to establish a more solemn and reflective note. Interestingly, the rhythm quickens at the start of stanza 3 ('cannon to the left of them... right of them... in front of them') to suggest that the soldiers quickened their speed, rather than slowed down, once they were surrounded- which further encapsulates their heroism). The use of heroic couplets throughout also reinforces this sense of bravery and how they deserve the respect of the British people- rather than demonstrating anger at the government. Arguably, his hyperbolic depiction of battle, the comradery of the soldiers and the honour that is requested by Tennyson presents a romanticised view of war; it's worth contrasting this with 'The Man He Killed' and 'Exposure' which focuses far more on the human cost of war.</p>
<p>Quotes</p>	<p>'Half a league, half a league, half a league onward.' 'Into the valley of Death rode the six hundred.' 'There's not to reason why, theirs but to do and die.' 'Cannon to the right of them, cannon to the left of them, cannon in front of them.' 'Stormed at with shot and shell.' 'When can their glory fade?' 'Honour the charge they made! Honour the Light Brigade!'</p>
<p>Terminology</p>	<p>Language: Adverbs Verbs Personification Person pronoun Metaphor Alliteration Hyperbole</p> <p>Structure: Chronological order Caesura Repetition Enjambment Semantic field Heroic couplets Rhetorical question Stanzas Anaphora Volta End stop</p>

Form:

3rd Person Narrative

Active voice

Passive voice

Ballad

Past tense

Present tense

Dactylic Dimeter

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