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| **RUPERT CHAWNER BROOKE, 1887-1915.** Georgian poet. Born at Rugby. Educated at Rugby School and King's College, Cambridge. He was an atheist and active Socialist. He was a friend of Edward Marsh and worked with him to prepare and promote the first Georgian Anthology of poetry. After travelling in Germany, and, following his nervous breakdown he went on a long tour to recuperate, taking in the USA, Canada, Honolulu, Samoa, Fiji, New Zealand, and Tahiti. After hesitation about what course of action to take at the start of the First World War he joined the navy. He was a witness at the siege of Antwerp before writing his famous set of five sonnets called 1914. Though he had seen the devastation and suffering created by the war he kept it all at an emotional distance from himself, denying the realities of war. He had a deeply confused personality - given to both ecstatic enthusiasm and suicidal doubt. Following a mosquito bite he died of acute blood poisoning on board ship on his way to Gallipoli, and was buried on the Greek Island of Skyros. Minds at War and Out in the Dark contain all five of Brooke's 1914 war sonnets, plus his sombre and realistic last poem, Soon to Die. Minds at War contains a further thirteen and a half pages of discussion of Brooke's ideas, and extracts from his letters which reveal something of the way his mind worked, and the origins of some of the ideas in his sonnets. There are five pages of information about Brooke, and extracts from his letters in Out in the Dark.**ELEANOR FARJEON, 1881-1965.** Born in London. Well known as an author of children's stories. She was a close personal friend of Helen and Edward Thomas in the last few years of his life. She loved Edward, but knew that expressing her feelings to him would mean the immediate end of their friendship. They often visited each other and went on long country walks together. She typed his poems for him and submitted them, on his behalf, under the pseudonym of Edward Eastaway, to various publications. Helen was aware of Eleanor's feelings towards Edward and was perfectly content with the situation, believing that it might help to make Edward a little happier.There are two of her poems in Minds at War and one in Out in the Dark. The poem that is common to both books is "Now that you, too" which is a moving poem about saying goodbye to Edward Thomas for the last time.**JULIAN GRENFELL, 1888-1915.** Educated at Eton, and Balliol College, Oxford. He joined the army in 1910. He seemed to take a psychopathic joy in killing people. His poem Into Battle is said to be the most anthologised poem of the First World War. He died of wounds on 30th April, 1915, a few days after sending his poem to The Times.Into Battle appears in both Minds at War and Out in the Dark. **IVOR GURNEY, 1890-1937.** Born in Gloucester. Educated at King's School Gloucester and the Royal College of Music. He wrote poetry and music from before the war. He volunteered to fight and was initially turned down because of his poor eyesight. He was gassed and wounded and returned to Britain. Mental illness developed. He was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic in 1922. He was committed to mental hospital where he continued to write poetry and compose - sometimes believing that he was still taking part in the war. He died of tuberculosis.Three of his poems appear in Minds at War and two in Out in the Dark.**RUDYARD KIPLING, 1865-1936.** Born in Bombay. As a small child he was sent to England (Southsea) to be educated. He was desperately miserable for some years. He was principally educated at the United Services College, Westward Ho! Before the war he favoured re-armament. He was vigorous in his opposition to Germany. After his only son was killed in the Battle of the Loos,in September 1915, Kipling's confident and simple verse faltered briefly. He is best known for his classic children's books - especially the Jungle Books (1894, 1895). He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907. During the First World War he was Director of Propaganda to the British Colonies.In Minds at War there are six of his war poems, plus an extract from A Song of the English. In Out in the Dark there are four full poems and two extracts.**HENRY NEWBOLT, SIR,** 1862-1924.Born in Bilston, Staffordshire. Educated at Clifton College, Bristol and Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Barrister, then professional poet. Keenly interested in naval matters he wrote the official British naval history of the war. Best selling imperialist poet. Establishment literary figure.There are seven examples of his fighting verse in Minds at War and five in Out in the Dark.**WILFRED EDWARD SALTER OWEN, 1893 - 1918.** Born Oswestry, Shropshire. Educated at Birkenhead Institute and Shrewsbury Technical College. From the age of nineteen Owen wanted to be a poet and immersed himself in poetry, being especially impressed by Keats and Shelley. He wrote almost no poetry of importance until he saw action in France in 1917.He was deeply attached to his mother to whom most of his 664 letters are addressed. (She saved every one.) He was a committed Christian and became lay assistant to the vicar of Dunsden near Reading 1911-1913 - teaching Bible classes and leading prayer meetings - as well as visiting parishioners and helping in other ways. From 1913 to 1915 he worked as a language tutor in France. He felt pressured by the propaganda to become a soldier and volunteered on 21st October 1915. He spent the last day of 1916 in a tent in France joining the Second Manchesters. He was full of boyish high spirits at being a soldier. Within a week he had been transported to the front line in a cattle wagon and was "sleeping" 70 or 80 yards from a heavy gun which fired every minute or so. He was soon wading miles along trenches two feet deep in water. Within a few days he was experiencing gas attacks and was horrified by the stench of the rotting dead; his sentry was blinded, his company then slept out in deep snow and intense frost till the end of January. That month was a profound shock for him: he now understood the meaning of war. "The people of England needn't hope. They must agitate," he wrote home. (See his poems The Sentry and Exposure.) He escaped bullets until the last week of the war, but he saw a good deal of front-line action: he was blown up, concussed and suffered shell-shock. At Craiglockhart, the psychiatric hospital in Edinburgh, he met Siegfried Sassoon who inspired him to develop his war poetry.He was sent back to the trenches in September, 1918 and in October won the Military Cross by seizing a German machine-gun and using it to kill a number of Germans. On 4th November he was shot and killed near the village of Ors. The news of his death reached his parents home as the Armistice bells were ringing on 11 November. Owen is widely accepted as the greatest writer of war poetry in the English language.There are 27 of his war poems in Minds at War and 19 in Out in the Dark. Both anthologies contain additional information, comment, and extracts from his letters.**OWEN SEAMAN, SIR, 1861-1936** Educated at Shrewsbury and Clare College, Cambridge. Professor of Literature at Newcastle (1890). Editor of Punch (1906-1932). He was encouraged to write for the war effort by the Government's Secret Bureau for Propaganda. His verse is a clear, competent call to support official Government policy.Four of his poems are included in Minds at War. **SIEGFRIED LORRAINE SASSOON, 1886-1967**Born in Kent. Educated at Marlborough, and Clare College, Cambridge. He was a keen sportsman, loving cricket and foxhunting. He was the first war poet to volunteer - 3 August 1914. Disillusion set in slowly. His first critical poem, In the Pink, was written in February 1916. He was the only English disillusioned First World War poet who made an effort to be politically effective. As a captain in the Royal Welch Fusiliers he met and became a friend of Robert Graves. He became wildly angry at the death of one of his friends and fought recklessly, winning the Military Cross. He was wounded in the shoulder and later was shot in the head accidentally by one of his own men. The wound was a graze, but serious enough to put him out of the action for good from July 1918. It was when convalescing from his shoulder wound in the summer of 1917 that he made his famous protest about the war. As a result of this he was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh. There he met and encouraged Wilfred Owen with his poetry. He began to feel guilty about not fighting alongside his old comrades and returned to active service in November 1917. After the war he became literary editor of the Herald, returned to his country pursuits and wrote a number of autobiographical books. He married and had one son. He became a Roman Catholic in 1957. Second only to Owen as a war poet, he recorded the war and his developing responses with uncompromising honesty. Thirty three of his war poems are to be found in Minds at War, twenty-seven in Out in the Dark. There are seven pages of additional information and extracts from his diaries in Out in the Dark.In Minds at War there are twelve additional pages about Sassoon, including Arnold Bennet's response to Sassoon's defiance of military authority.Both anthologies include Sassoon's famous statement, In Defiance of Military Authority.[Back to Index to Lives of Poets](http://www.warpoetry.co.uk/biogs99.htm#THE WAR) | **VERA MARY BRITTAIN, 1893-1970.**Born in Newcastle under Lyme, Staffordshire, and grew up in Macclesfield and Buxton. Her Testament of Youth is one of the outstanding biographies of the First World War. She felt compelled to play a part, and worked as a VAD nurse in England, France (where her first task was looking after wounded German prisoners) and Malta. She was moved to the verge of a nervous breakdown by her experiences in the war and the loss of a close friend, her fiancé and brother. She wrote her Testament of Youth to record the effect of the war on her generation. Her interest in politics sprang from a desire to understand the causes of the war which, in turn, she hoped might help to prevent a recurrence of such a human catastrophe. She continued her biography in Testament of Experience. As a pacifist, supporter of the League of Nations, and feminist she wrote prolifically and lectured in Britain, the USA and Canada.There are five of Vera Brittain's war poems in Minds at War and two in Out in the Dark. There are brief extracts from Vera Brittain's biography, Testament of Youth in both books.**GILBERT FRANKAU, 1884-1952.** Educated at Eton. Worked in the family tobacco business. Best-selling novelist (World Without End, 1943). Volunteered at the start of the war. He fought at Loos, Ypres and on the Somme. In spite of the bitter tone of some of his poetry he was an intense patriot and supporter of the war throughout. - At his own request, perhaps realising that he could not suppress the trauma much longer, he was transferred from the front line to staff work at the end of 1916 - propaganda in Italy. His brother, Jack, was killed in November 1917. He was invalided out of the war in February 1918 with shell-shock. He served in the RAF as a Squadron Leader in World War II. He married three times.There are three full poems by Frankau and one extract from a poem in Minds at War, and one of his poems in Out in the Dark.**ROBERT VON RANKE GRAVES, 1895-1985.** Born in London. Educated at Charterhouse. His mother was German. As a child he spent five summer holidays at his grandfather's home in Germany. Went straight from school into the Royal Welch Fusiliers at the age of nineteen. He became a friend of Sassoon, Nichols and Owen. In July 1916 shrapnel from an exploding shell pierced his lungs and he was invalided out of the front line with major injuries and shell-shock. His autobiography Goodbye to All That (1929) is the most racily readable personal account of the First World War. Highly regarded as a love poet. During his second marriage (to his loving and long-suffering wife Beryl) and as he grew older, he developed amorous, but doomed relationships with a series of attractive young women. He was generous to a fault and commercially naive. Oxford Professor of Poetry 1961-1966. His historical novels I Claudius and Claudius the God were best sellers. He lived most of his life in Majorca. During his life he suppressed most of his war poems, probably because he was not happy with the quality of them.There are ten of his poems in Minds at War. Several have not been in print for over half a century. **THOMAS HARDY, 1840-1928.**Born at Higher-Bockhampton near Dorchester. Educated at a private school in Dorchester. His pre-war poetry was admired by Sassoon. Wessex Poems (1898), Poems of Past and Present (1901), Times Laughing Stock (1909) and the dramatic epic of the Napoleonic Wars, The Dynasts (1904 - 1908). Best known as a classic novelist. His novels include Far from the Madding Crowd (1874), The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891). He staunchly supported the war until it was over. A member of the Fight for Right Movement and the Secret Bureau for Propaganda.Nine of Hardy's war poems are to be found in both Minds at War and Out in the Dark. **JOHN McCRAE, 1872-1918.**Born in Canada. Educated at McGill University. Although a doctor originally he fought on the Western Front in the artillery. In Flanders Field, one of the most famous poems of the war, was written during the Second Battle of Ypres. He was put in charge of the No 3 General Hospital at Boulogne before being appointed Medical consultant to all the British Armies in France. He died of pneumonia, on 28th January, 1918, before taking up the appointment.In Flanders Fields appears in both Minds at War and Out in the Dark.**ROBERT NICHOLS, 1893-1944.** Educated Winchester and Oxford. He was in the trenches for only a few weeks before being invalided out with shell-shock and syphilis in 1915, never to return. Worked for Ministries of Labour and Information. He was a friend of Brooke and Sassoon. Georgian poet. Nichols' intense poem, Noon, is in both anthologies.**JOHN OXENHAM, 1852-1941**Popular novelist and poet. During the First World War his poetry sold over a million volumes, showing him to be the most popular poet at that time. His hymn, For the Men at the Front, is reputed to have sold eight million copies.Oxenham's support for the war is expressed in terms of Christian idealism and total faith in God's Divine Love and Purpose. Every soldier was sure of his place in Heaven.For the Men at the Front is in both anthologies. There are three further poems and two extracts in Minds at War, and one more Oxenham poem and an extract in Out in the Dark**JESSIE POPE, 1868- 1941** Born in Leicester. Educated at Craven House, Leicester and North London Collegiate School. Popular journalist and versifier. Regular contributor to Punch, The Daily Mail, and The Daily Express. Owen originally addressed Dulce et Decorum Est to her. Two of her poems appear in Minds at War and one in Out in the Dark.**HERBERT READ, SIR, 1893-1968**Born in Kirbymoorside, Yorkshire, the son of a farmer. Educated at Leeds University. Before the war he was a Socialist, and internationalist, yet he volunteered in January 1915, joining the Yorkshire Regiment. Promoted to rank of captain. He was a natural leader and derived great satisfaction from his role. He was courageous, and daring. Awarded the Military Cross, and the DSO - an award just short of the Victoria Cross.His 21-year-old brother, Charles, was killed in France in October, 1918. He married the girl he had loved since before the war, in 1919. Leading art critic. Anarchist theorist. Distinguished academic career. - A complex and brilliant man.- Knighted 1953. His moving poem about a deserter, The Execution of Cornelius Vane, and four other war poems are to be found in Minds at War.**ISAAC ROSENBERG, 1890-1918** Born in Bristol, educated in London's East End and Slade School of Art. He was an artist and engraver as well as a poet, but finding no work he volunteered in October 1915. Killed 1 April 1918. His war poetry is increasingly admired and was praised by Sassoon.There are nine of his poems in Minds at War, and ten in Out in the Dark, plus a little further background material.**ALAN SEEGER, 1888-1916** Born in New York. Educated at Harvard. After graduating he lived in Greenwich Village for two years by sponging off his friends. He was aimless, anti-social and scruffy. His parents sent him to continue his studies in Paris. He saw the war as a liberation from the dullness of everyday life. On its outbreak he rushed to join the French Foreign Legion. He dreamed of leading heroic charges in the thick of battle.He was killed at Belloy-en-Santerre on the fourth day of the Battle of the Somme, 4 July, 1916. His deservedly famous and moving poem, Rendezvous, is included in both anthologies.**CHARLES HAMILTON SORLEY, 1895-1915** Born in Aberdeen. Educated at Marlborough, University College, Oxford, and for six months in Germany at Schwerin and Jena. He loved Germany and hated the idea of the war and fighting for England. Consciously yielding to psychological pressure he enlisted in 1914, joining the Suffolk Regiment. He was promoted to Captain in August 1915 and killed in the Battle of Loos, 13 October 1915, at the age of twenty. Robert Graves was very impressed by Sorley's poetry. Five of his poems in both anthologies.**MURIEL STUART, ? -1967** Born in London. Thomas Hardy described her poetry as "superlatively good." Her poem, Forgotten Dead, I salute You, is to be found in Minds at War.**KATHARINE TYNAN, 1861 - 1931**Born in Clondalkin, County Dublin. Educated Siena Convent, Drogheda. During the war she had a son serving in Palestine and another in France. Friend of W B Yeats. Both anthologies contain her poem, Joining the Colours.**ARTHUR GRAEME WEST, 1891-1917** Educated at Blundell's and Oxford. Enlisted with the Public School's Battalion in February 1915. He grew to hate the war, and lost his faith in God. He was convinced he should protest or desert but could not find the courage to do so. He was killed by a sniper's bullet, 3 April, 1917 at Bapaume. His war diary, The Diary of a Dead Officer, which contained his poetry, was published in 1919. West wrote two particularly powerful war poems: God, How I Hate You, and Night Patrol. The full texts of both appear in both anthologies. **EDWARD THOMAS, 1878-1917**He was born in London and educated at St Paul's School, and Lincoln College, Oxford. His first book was published when he was eighteen and in the next eighteen years he wrote over 30 books and thousands of articles and reviews. In spite of his output he was treated meanly by publishers and was often troubled by a shortage of money. He was a friend of Gordon Bottomley, Walter de la Mare, Lascelles Abercrombie, Harold Monro, Eleanor Farjeon, the Meynells and friend and spokesman for the American poet, Robert Frost. It was Frost who encouraged Thomas to write poetry. Starting in December 1914 and finishing in December 1916 Thomas wrote 144 poems - mainly about the English countryside, weather, the seasons - all of them written in England, in a straight, unadorned style - a number of them darkly influenced by the war. His poetry was rejected as fast as it was submitted to newspapers and periodicals, using his pseudonym, Edward Eastaway. He was a shy, self -effacing man who suffered from depression and came close to suicide. Having volunteered for the front, after eighteen months training, he went to France with the Royal Garrison Artillery at the end of January 1917. He was killed ten weeks later, on 9th April, leaving a wife and three children. The gentleness, subtle melancholy, plainness and direct honesty of Thomas's verse is both moving and impressive.There are ten of his poems in Minds at War and thirteen in Out in the Dark. |