

**Andrew Page**

11 Nov 2017 00:13

Will have to finish this grid later. In the meantime here is A Remembrance Poem For Those Who Maybe Not So Gladly Made The Great Sacrifice

When that letter arrived calling you to the war,  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
When you left your wife weeping for you at the door.  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
And throughout basic training and armed combat drill  
Did you do everything you were told with a will?  
Did you relish the prospect that you were to kill?  
Were you glad? Were you glad?

When at last you were ready to go overseas,  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
With the thought of the mud and the gas and disease,  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
When your last minute home leave had come to an end  
With your last will and testament all neatly penned,  
When your little girl asked you what flowers to send  
Were you glad? Were you glad?

When the news came that you were to move to the front  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
When you knew that of shelling your line took the brunt  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
When moving up you passed those you were relieving  
Who stared at you, greenhorns, with eyes disbelieving  
From faces all strained from the hell they were leaving  
Were you glad? Were you glad?

When your part of the line did come under attack,  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
With the gunfire so fierce that you couldn't shoot back,  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
Did you think of 'Old England with folk now a-bed'  
When the bullets were whistling over your head  
And you found that the soldier beside you was dead  
Were you glad? Were you glad?

When the order came through to go over the top,  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
When you knew that once started you didn't dare stop  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
When that shell burst that took off your leg at the thigh  
And your friends didn't help; they were dead that was why  
And you suddenly realised that you were to die  
Were you glad? Were you glad?

As you lay there your life slowly ebbing away,  
Were you glad? Were you glad?

As you thought of your wife and your child far away,  
Were you glad? Were you glad?  
Were you glad be dying out there in Verdun?  
Did you feel that in dying your battles were won?  
Were you glad that for England your duty you'd done?  
Were you glad? Were you glad?



**andipoll** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 00:25

Are you Billy Bragg, incognito? That's the sort of anti-establishment, disrespectful tosh that he writes.



**TournesolQuiDanse** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 00:43

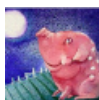
Deep. The marching rhythm is almost lighthearted for such a serious subject. Easy enough to dismiss the weight of the words but of course, so few of them knew what they were getting into, didn't they?



**Beobachterin** andipoll

11 Nov 2017 00:46

Pretty authentic to the experiences of people at the time, I would say.



**Ostrakon** Beobachterin

11 Nov 2017 00:56

As a young child I was struck by the war memorials in every town and village throughout Scotland...I couldn't fathom why there were so many  
Later when I learned to read the names I started to realize that many shared the same names and represented whole families of young men, including their fathers and even grandfathers wiped out in a brutal and senseless slaughter

Lest we forget, but the tragedy is that we do and repeat the folly and bloodshed again and again!



**WilliamLongland** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 01:05

Take no notice of Andipoll, **Andrew**. That poem is exactly right for Remembrance Day, and an antidote to thoughtless gung-hoery. And it is one of the few poems worthy of the name that I have seen in this blog. Is it your own work? I couldn't find it by Googling it.



**AutumnalD** Ostrakon

11 Nov 2017 01:08

Well said Ostra.....when will they ever learn, as the song goes.....



**ID1753151** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 01:08

Dulce et decorum est

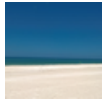


**Cinnamoncrumbs** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 01:33

I'm afraid I find it harsh and cynical and disrespectful. It's saying, "You asked for it," and they didn't, for what they held true was right at the time and obliged them to act on their beliefs.

Perhaps you confuse gladness with willingness.



**andipoll** WilliamLongland

11 Nov 2017 01:42

I couldn't disagree more with you, and i object to you dismissing my view.

I gladly attended 26 Remembrance Sunday services in uniform, one for each year I served my country, because Remembrance Sunday is all about showing our gratitude and deep respect for those that paid the ultimate price in wars.

The stupidity of the politics behind both world wars is irrelevant in remembering what those who were sent to war did and gave. Each one of those servicemen did their duty, most likely knowing that they had a slim chance of returning but they still went and did their bit.

Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday are not about asking those heroes disrespectful taunting questions like 'Were you glad?', particularly as the very men and women it is aimed at cannot possibly answer.



**WolfHome** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 02:30

Reluctant heroes, young men terrified by war, the wounded, the maimed, the dead. The courageous, the foolhardy, the fearful, the traumatised, those that lived but did not survive.

Your anger is misdirected **Andrew**.

They were not glad. They were not asked, but many felt they had no choice.

Those responsible for wars are usually the last to die, and rarely provide an honest answer to a simple question.

The question, why...



**SilentBugler** andipoll

11 Nov 2017 02:37

Today I broke my silence and played the last Post for the 45th time for Armistice Day, the same number for ANZAC day and in those years, for the funerals of many returned servicemen.

They are becoming fewer each year but I'm sure that they all would probably agree with both of you!

For those who don't know, I call myself "The Silent Bugler" in the fervent hope that I could be silent and not need to pay tribute to the people of all colours races and creeds who do their best to keep us safe.

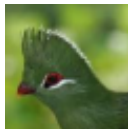
I also count the civil police forces among these.



**chrissyk** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 08:29

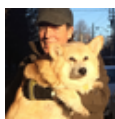
Having only recently discovered through research that my great-grandfather died in 1915 "of his injuries" leaving my great-grandmother with five small children to raise on her own in poverty, I think I can answer for him that no, he wasn't glad. What a horrific thing to suggest.



**treasurehouse** andipoll

11 Nov 2017 08:34

**andipoll** - I think you're missing the point. It's not disrespectful at all. To me it reads as very poignant and sad but with an undertone of cynicism at the way so many were recruited. May they forever rest in peace.



**Cinnamoncrumbs** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 09:16

Oh, and a minor point but you may as well try to aim for accuracy: Verdun was entirely a French theatre of operations. The Somme offensive launched by the British was intended in part to relieve pressure there.

Incidentally, an excellent novel is *Education Before Verdun* by the German writer Arnold Zweig. You know he was there by the detail it contains. Title's a bit misleading: what it means as I recall is "How I came of age during the siege of Verdun."

Going a bit further off topic (can't sleep, that's why) I find as I get older I feel just about as much sorrow for the German dead in WWI as the Allied. Not quite the same for WWII though, since it was a different kind of enemy.

Then again, as a Canadian writer once observed: there weren't two world wars in the last century, just one with a 20-year truce.



**Andrew Page** TournesolQuiDanse

11 Nov 2017 12:32

Thank you **Tqd**, that was the point I was trying to make.



**Andrew Page** Beobachterin

11 Nov 2017 12:34

Thank you **Beobachterin**, I am glad that you saw my point.



**Andrew Page** Cinnamoncrumbs

11 Nov 2017 12:42

**Cinnamoncrunbs**, how often is it said from pulpits and elsewhere that they gladly laid down their lives? Most of the poor bastards had no choice.



**Andrew Page** WolfHome

11 Nov 2017 12:46

I think you miss my point **Wolfhome**; once conscripted they had no choice and I respect their deaths but I rail against the glorification that they gladly laid down their lives.



**Andrew Page** chrissyk

11 Nov 2017 12:49

My whole point **chrissyk**, is that they were not glad, can you not see the irony in the poem?



**BrusselSprouter** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 13:03

I have no doubt that some gladly gave their lives. We should never underestimate the power of nationalism, for good and for evil.



**Stiou1** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 13:12

Really moving.  
It really saddened me to see that the irony and ambiguity was so missed by some.  
The point about Verdun(cinnamon) was well made but how could some read the whole poem as disrespectful tosh?



**kath55** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 13:13

Thanks for the poem **Andrew**. I wonder if you have seen [Larkin's poem MCMXIV](#). I think about it and return to it at this time of year. He seems to catch a moment in time so beautifully and the poignancy of those men signing up without really knowing what was in store.

Think I have posted this link before but it's a poem worth re-reading I think.



• **Stiou1** kath55

11 Nov 2017 13:19

Absolutely worth reading and re-reading.

I have been struggling since July to read a history of the Somme and one of Verdun from both sides. I cannot bear to read more than a chapter at a time. At least I can read Larkin at one go.



• **chrissyk** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 14:17

I don't see it as ironic. Of course I understand what you are trying to portray but others have managed it much more sympathetically. Sorry.

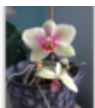


• **WolfHome** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 16:03

**Andrew**, I could simply say that I *if I did* miss the point, it was because the point of the poem was not clear. As I read your poem I felt the phrase "Were you glad?", became an accusation. The insistent rhythm, and repetition becomes aggressive and hectoring, and I don't think you intended that to happen.

To state that so many "gladly lay down there lives for their country" robs the dead of their dignity. It is simply balm to the conscience of those who took us to war.



• **chrissyk** WolfHome

11 Nov 2017 16:12

You said what I could not put into words. Thank you.





**Marinegrunt** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 16:13

The ability of the writer or poet to plunge a stiletto into a popularly held belief is frequently accomplished through the device known as *irony*. When masterfully employed, I find it absolutely elegant, artistic--and fatal.

The poem offered by Andrew Page is suffused with irony, as is war and, indeed, the human condition in general.

One need only look at photographs and film strips of Tommies marching off to whip the Boche smiling, laughing, singing, and then at the rotting, mutilated corpses "somewhere in France" to understand the true meaning of *irony*.

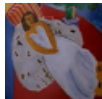
My admittedly jaundiced view is that politicians do not understand this any more than they know how to manage a budget.



**FriedFish** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 16:44

I don't particularly wish to pitch in, **Andrew**, but suffice it to say that I laud your poem and this weekend I shall be wearing a *white* poppy.



**mrsmatisse** Andrew Page

11 Nov 2017 20:07

Thank you for sharing the poem. The rhythm conveys the irony and the anger we all feel at the waste of a generation. I think people have got hung up on 'glad' aspect. Perhaps forgetting the fervour that went with enlisting at the beginning of WW1. And 'the glad' is a defence against the anxiety they would all have been feeling but not expressing. I'm sorry you have faced so much criticism here.



**dvorahjerusalem** mrsmatisse

11 Nov 2017 20:44

Almost unbearably moving about that war and most others. If you wrote it, Andrew, then thank you so much! If you didn't, who did? Goggle hasn't helped, so far.



**Andrew Page** [mrsmatisse](#)

11 Nov 2017 21:12

Thank you mrs. I expected some flack but was surprised how some completely misunderstood what I was trying to say and grateful to those others who, like yourself, saw what meant.



**Andrew Page** [dvorahjerusalem](#)

11 Nov 2017 21:14

Thanks for your comment **dvorahjerusalem**, I confess that I wrote it.



**RichardCrawford10** [andipoll](#)

12 Nov 2017 22:48

So, if you are asked to do something which is wrong and results in a mass loss of life, you should 'do your duty' and not rebel? By putting on that uniform you are resigning your morality. Welcome to Nuremberg.



**saulger** [Andrew Page](#)

13 Nov 2017 09:07

A terrible poem and dreadful sentiments.  
Nobody was glad to go to a war that devastated a great part of humanity.  
Only cowards fail to appreciate the heroism and sacrifice by glowing youth who had everything to live for and chose to defend their country, family, and friends.