War Poems Word Sort

Poem (1) These are the first 115 words from a poem about war.		Poem (2) These words (115 in all) make up another poem about war.	
air an and and and and and and at blast Boche breath buffeting burst but but by candles choked clay climb corpses curse den door down down dug-out eyes flump! for found found frantic from fumes gave guttering hammered he hell herded high hour hour if in in kept knew last left lived men murk never not of of of of old old on on one our quite rain remained rising shell shell slime slush smell snuffing sour stank steps that the the the the their their there there thick through thud! thud! to too top up us waist waterfalls we we'd what whizz-bangs whizz-bangs who'd with with years		a a a a a air all an and and and as at aware away back be blest body bore breathing by by by concealed corner day die dreams dust dust earth England England England England's English English eternal ever evil field flowers for foreign friends gave gentleness given gives happy heart hearts heaven her her her her home I if in in in is laughter learnt less love made me mind no of of of of once only peace pulse rich richer rivers roam shall shaped shed should sights some somewhere sounds suns that that the the the there there's think think this this thoughts to to under washed ways whom	
Decide your headings for the columns below and then put words from the two poems into them. Put words from poem (1) above the dotted line; words from poem (2) below the line.			



War Poem Word Sort: Note to teachers

This activity compares Brooke's 'Soldier' with Owen's 'The Sentry'. To make the comparison fair, the same number of words are examined from each poem. They are also collapsed into alphabetical order for students to carry out a word sort into categories which they decide.

In this example, the headings for the columns have been left blank so that preconceptions can be avoided. Let students work out for themselves what headings might be useful / appropriate. If some do need help, then suggest some of the following:

- negative words
- positive words
- concrete nouns
- abstract nouns
- words suggesting sounds
- words associated with conflict

The sorting can be done using a pen and paper worksheet or a word processor. From the word collections students make, ask what theories they come up with about similarities or differences between the two poems. When you feel the moment is right, display the poem and the poem extract side by side. How close were they in their hypotheses?

We'd found an old Boche dug-out, and he knew, And gave us hell, for shell on frantic shell Hammered on top, but never quite burst through. Rain, guttering down in waterfalls of slime Kept slush waist high, that rising hour by hour, Choked up the steps too thick with clay to climb. What murk of air remained stank old, and sour With fumes of whiz-bangs, and the smell of men Who'd lived there years, and left their curse in the den, If not their corpses. . . .

There we herded from the blast Of whizz-bangs, but one found our door at last. Buffeting eyes and breath, snuffing the candles. And thud! flump! thud! down.....

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Ask them to come up with titles for the poems. Below we have mixed up the words from the two poems. Ask students to sort them into positive and negative and see what the experiment reveals.

air aware away back blast blest Boche body bore breath breathing buffeting burst candles choked clay climb concealed corner corpses curse day den die door dreams dug-out dust earth England English eternal ever evil eyes field flowers flump! foreign found frantic friends fumes gave gentleness given gives guttering hammered happy heart hearts heaven herded high home hour kept knew last laughter learnt left less lived love made me men mind murk never no not old once one only peace pulse quite rain remained rich richer rising rivers roam shall shaped shed shell should sights slime slush smell snuffing some somewhere sounds sour stank steps suns thoughts through thud! thud! too top under waist washed waterfalls ways whizz-bangs years