



## Gas, Gas, Gas!!!



### Source A: John Raws, letter to his sister (27th June 1916)

*We use the German gas, and let it loose in trenches, where of course, we wear our helmets. They are abominably hot and uncomfortable, and make us look like imitation wolves in a pantomime show. They consist of heavy cloth masks, with a rubber tube for the mouth, and glass goggles for the eyes. The neck end is quite open and shapeless, but you tuck it inside the collar of your tunic. One has to be pretty quick with them as the Germans may be only 100 yards away and the gas travels about 25 yards a second with a favourable wind. It moves in a dense cloud close to the ground, and being much heavier than air, fills up all trenches and holes it comes to. You see how fatal it must be to be caught in a dugout below a trench. A man without a helmet might as well stand upon the parapet (the low breastwork in front of the trench) and risk being shot.*

**Question:**            **How does Source A describe the gas mask?**  
**How useful is source A in studying gas warfare?**

### Source B: In 1930 H. S. Clapham published a book of his experiences during the First World War called *Mud and Khaki: The Memories of an Incomplete Soldier*.

*The shells came over just above the parapet, in a flood, much more quickly than we could count them. After a quarter of an hour of this sort of thing, there was a sudden crash in the trench and ten feet of the parapet, just beyond me, was blown away and everyone around blinded by the dust. With my first glance I saw what looked like half a dozen bodies, mingled with sandbags, and then I smelt gas and realised that these were gas shells. I had my respirator on in a hurry and most of our own men were as quick. The others were slower and suffered for it. One man was sick all over the sandbag and another was coughing his heart up. We pulled four men out of the debris unharmed. One man was unconscious, and died of gas later. I started at once to build up the parapet again, for we had been laid open to the world in front, but the gas lingered about the hole for hours, and I had to give up as it made me feel very sick.*

**Question:**            **How does source B support what source A is saying about gas warfare?**  
**How reliable is source B in its description of gas warfare?**

## Lieutenant Wilfred Owen M.C (killed in action 4/11/18)

Owen wrote this poem after first hand experiences of gas on the Western Front.

### Dulce Et Decorum Est

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.--  
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.

*(It is good and sweet to die for your country)*