EXAM STASH

POWER & CONFLICT POETRY

AQA GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

EXPOSURE

WILFRED OWEN



WAR | NATURE | WAITING

WHAT HAPPENS?

Waiting soldiers are worn down by cold, fear and a lack of progress.

THE BIG IDEA

War destroys through exhaustion and waiting as well as battle; nature defeats the promise of military purpose.

POEM BREAKDOWN

1 *Opening watch*
Exhausted and anxious. Silent waiting already causes bodily and mental pain.

2 *Snow and imagined home*
Numb and estranged. Dreams of warmth offer no secure escape; the men imagine themselves shut out.

3 *Faith and burial*
Desolate. Religious doubt and frozen faces replace the expectation of a meaningful advance.

4 KEY QUOTATIONS

'merciless iced east winds that knive'	**Method:** Personification	**Key word:** 'knive'	**Effect:** Weather is imagined as a pitiless attacker.
'But nothing happens.'	**Method:** Refrain	**Key word:** 'nothing'	**Effect:** Repeated inaction becomes an account of gradual destruction.
'Dawn massing in the east her melancholy army'	**Method:** Metaphor	**Key word:** 'melancholy'	**Effect:** Dawn brings another hostile force rather than rescue.
'All their eyes are ice,'	**Method:** Metaphor	**Key word:** 'ice'	**Effect:** The final bodily image freezes perception and life together.

FORM & STRUCTURE

- **Eight five-line stanzas** create a steady, drawn-out sense of waiting and routine.
- **Recurring shortened endings and pararhyme** leave lines unresolved, reflecting inaction and the constant drain of the cold.

CONTEXT

- Owen wrote from his experience of the First World War.
- The collective voice centres soldiers' suffering.

COMPARE IT WITH...

- ***Storm on the Island:*** threatening nature.
- ***Bayonet Charge:*** different wartime experiences.



RECALL QUESTION

Why is inaction so destructive here?