The End and the Beginning

BY [WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/wisaawa-szymborska)

TRANSLATED BY [JOANNA TRZECIAK](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/joanna-trzeciak)

After every war

someone has to clean up.

Things won’t

straighten themselves up, after all.

Someone has to push the rubble

to the side of the road,

so the corpse-filled wagons

can pass.

Someone has to get mired

in scum and ashes,

sofa springs,

splintered glass,

and bloody rags.

Someone has to drag in a girder

to prop up a wall.

Someone has to glaze a window,

rehang a door.

Photogenic it’s not,

and takes years.

All the cameras have left

for another war.

We’ll need the bridges back,

and new railway stations.

Sleeves will go ragged

from rolling them up.

Someone, broom in hand,

still recalls the way it was.

Someone else listens

and nods with unsevered head.

But already there are those nearby

starting to mill about

who will find it dull.

From out of the bushes

sometimes someone still unearths

rusted-out arguments

and carries them to the garbage pile.

Those who knew

what was going on here

must make way for

those who know little.

And less than little.

And finally as little as nothing.

In the grass that has overgrown

causes and effects,

someone must be stretched out

blade of grass in his mouth

gazing at the clouds.

The Man He Killed

BY [THOMAS HARDY](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/thomas-hardy)

"Had he and I but met

            By some old ancient inn,

We should have sat us down to wet

            Right many a nipperkin!

            "But ranged as infantry,

            And staring face to face,

I shot at him as he at me,

            And killed him in his place.

            "I shot him dead because —

            Because he was my foe,

Just so: my foe of course he was;

            That's clear enough; although

            "He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,

            Off-hand like — just as I —

Was out of work — had sold his traps —

            No other reason why.

            "Yes; quaint and curious war is!

            You shoot a fellow down

You'd treat if met where any bar is,

            Or help to half-a-crown."

**Questions:**

1)Who is the speaker in each poem? What is each speaker’s tone and idea about war? HOW are tone and ideas about war conveyed?

2)Read each poem as a set of directions for visualizing images of war. What images stand out? What effect do these images have on the reader? Links to purpose?

Facing It

BY [YUSEF KOMUNYAKAA](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/yusef-komunyakaa) B. 1947

My black face fades,

hiding inside the black granite.

I said I wouldn't

dammit: No tears.

I'm stone. I'm flesh.

My clouded reflection eyes me

like a bird of prey, the profile of night

slanted against morning. I turn

this way—the stone lets me go.

I turn that way—I'm inside

the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

again, depending on the light

to make a difference.

I go down the 58,022 names,

half-expecting to find

my own in letters like smoke.

I touch the name Andrew Johnson;

I see the booby trap's white flash.

Names shimmer on a woman's blouse

but when she walks away

the names stay on the wall.

Brushstrokes flash, a red bird's

wings cutting across my stare.

The sky. A plane in the sky.

A white vet's image floats

closer to me, then his pale eyes

look through mine. I'm a window.

He's lost his right arm

inside the stone. In the black mirror

a woman’s trying to erase names:

No, she's brushing a boy's hair.