



Only Remembered

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This collection extends a tradition of anthologies introduced by distinguished editors, published in support of charities caring for the families of those wounded or killed in wartime. On my desk, for example, is **Made in the Trenches** (1916), written and illustrated by men on active service, edited by Sir Frederick Treves, Serjeant Surgeon to His Majesty the King, all profits devoted to the 'Star and Garter' Fund for Disabled Soldiers and Sailors. 50% of royalties from **Only Remembered** will be divided between The British Legion and The Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association. The royal family has regularly lent its name to such projects. Here, The Duchess of Cornwall heads the list of contributors who select or write material; HRH chooses Carol Ann Duffy's **The Christmas Truce** ('An owl swooped on a rat on the glove of a corpse.')

Around 40 of the 70 contributors have connections with the children's books world. Most of the Laureates are there, alongside David Almond, Raymond Briggs, Eoin Colfer, Michael Foreman, Anthony Horowitz et al. There are eminent writers for adults - Julian Barnes, Sir Andrew Motion, for example. BBC correspondents Frank Gardner and Caroline Wyatt are joined by Channel 4's Cathy Newman and Jon Snow. The Establishment provides Rowan Williams, Sir Roger Bannister, Paddy Ashdown. Then there are Establishment Celebs, if you like, among them Dame Evelyn Glennie, Joanna Lumley, Emma Thompson and Alan Titchmarsh. Richard Curtis introduces **Goodbye**, that final script from *Blackadder*. There are a couple of German voices: the bitter poem, **Prayer After the Slaughter** and two extracts from **All Quiet on the Western Front**.

The names may sell this handsome book, but it's the selections and their organisation which will matter to both adult and able teenage readers. Three sections are headed At War, At Home and After. Most of the items are written after the war, so that Teresa Hooley's **A War Film** (chosen by Virginia McKenna) and Eleanor Farjeon's sonnet in memory of Edward Thomas, **Easter Monday** (chosen by Anne Harvey), stand apart in the painful immediacy of the poets' wartime experiences. Perhaps as a consequence of the post-war perspective of most of the texts, the collection implicitly shares the most frequent judgement of our own time; that it was all futile - a horrific, hopeless waste. Yet as Owen's biographer, the late Dominic Hibberd, noted in interview: 'The futility myth has got hold of so many people's understanding of the war, but at the time they [the combatants] thought that this was a desperately important war that simply had to be fought'. Hibberd's belief is explicitly echoed here just once, I think, by the politician Frank Field, urging readers to 'look to the gains as well as the losses that the world experienced in a war that I believe was, on

balance, important to fight.?

The collection includes ? usefully for young readers ? much that is familiar: **In Flanders Fields**, **Dulce et Decorum Est**, music hall songs and so on. They could well be prompted by the extracts to search out such texts as **Birdsong** or **Regeneration**, though Proust might be stretching things a bit. The prose, poetry and fine colour reproductions of paintings and book illustrations are linked deftly, through writers and content, which makes consecutive reading very possible, as well as ?dipping in?. So, we find sequences of Owen and Sassoon, or a series of dramatic accounts of action on the Western Front. Thanks to Jamila Gavin, we learn that: ?In the First World War 1.27 million Indians volunteered to fight for Britain? more than the sum total from all the rest of Britain?s colonies and dominions?. We can read some of the letters those soldiers wrote home recording their ?traumatic and revelatory? lives in a harsh and alien environment, where their white commanders were initially unsure whether ?brown-skinned Indians [could] be asked to kill the white-skinned enemy?. Malorie Blackman supplies a brief life of Walter Tull, a Tottenham Hotspur footballer who became the first black commissioned officer in the British Army. Anthony Beevor selects extracts from the letters of his grandfather-in-law, Duff Cooper, ?an inveterate gambler? who, ?due to the favours of that fickle goddess whose smiles I have so often courted at the green table,? on one occasion captured 18 or 19 Germans single-handed. And, with this distinguished editor, how would there not be an occasional mention of the work and sacrifice of countless war horses?

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