In Flanders Fields

Literary Analysis of a Poem by Molly

_In Flanders Fields_ was written during WWI and is the most notable poem from that time. The author, John McCrae, wrote this poem a few days after his friend and former student, Alexis Helmer was killed by a German shell. A few hours after Helmer’s funeral, McCrae went and sat down on the back of an ambulance where he began to write _In Flanders Fields_. Cyril Allinson was delivering mail at that time and noticed John; he watched him from a distance and later recalled, “His face was very tired but calm as he wrote. He looked around from time to time, his eyes straying to Helmer’s grave.” Within a few minutes the poem was finished. John then proceeded to rip it out of his notebook; it was rescued by a fellow officer, Francis Alexander Scrimger, and later published in Punch magazine.

The Poppies which were mentioned in the poem grew abundantly in Flanders and later they became a symbol of Remembrance Day. The first line of the poem “In Flanders fields the poppies blow”1 where it says poppies blow, it originally said “In Flanders fields the poppies grow”. When the poem was published it was believed to have been changed. The theme of _In Flanders Fields_ was to show that as citizens of this country, it is our responsibility to protect it and our freedom. We should always be ready to fight for what we love. The second stanza states, “We are the dead. Short days ago we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, loved and were loved, and now we lie in Flanders fields.”2 This stanza is showing the first person point of view of the dead soldiers that lie in Flanders fields. They state the ways they felt alive, but then say that they lay in Flanders fields. Another theme of _In Flanders Fields_ is responsibility. By saying in the poem that the torch is held high, is saying we should be ready to fight for this country at any given moment, because it is our responsibility.

_In Flanders Fields_ consists of a final stanza that states what goes on even after the soldiers died. “Take up our quarrel with the foe”3 this line of the poem is saying that since the soldiers are dead the fight still needs to be managed by the soldiers and that surrendering is not an option. Another line of the poem includes a popular symbol of America, “The torch is yours to hold it high” 3 this line says that the victory rightfully belongs to America, and by saying torch John McCrae reflects two meanings. The first meaning is the statue of liberty, it hints at the fact that the statue of liberty holds up the torch lighting a path way into America. The second meaning of the torch would be holding it up to victory.

_In Flanders Fields_ is one of the most memorable poems of WWI because of the meaning it gave. Its theme was dedicated to the soldiers, but the actual basis of the poem was dedicated to John McCrae’s friend and student, Alexis Helmer. Alexis Helmer was buried in Flanders Fields along with the 410 other soldiers there. The Flanders Fields that the poem is based off of is in Flanders Belgium. John McCrae, the author of the poem is Canadian and the poppies, “Which grow in Flanders fields”1 is now a symbol of remembrance and is on the ten dollar bill in Canada.
In Flanders Fields
By John McCrae

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,

That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly

Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

Loved and were loved, and now we lie in Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw

The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep though poppies grow in Flanders fields.