INTRODUCTION

Though a lot of aspects of life in this time period seemed very serious and/or
boring, both the servant and noble classes alike had their preferred forms of entertainment. In particular, since most members of the noble class had no real job or profession, they would have to get creative when thinking of ways to spend their leisure time.

UPPER CLASS PASTIMES

- King Edward VII (reigned 1901-1910) popularised horse racing and sporting events, although these were mainly for the wealthy. (Spalding)
- Hunting was another popular pastime among the upper class, especially those who lived in estates such as Highclere Castle, with a surrounding area full of game.
- In the early 20th century, listening to a gramophone at home was becoming a popular pastime. (Spalding)
- Fairground shows were very popular in the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, with menageries, circuses, ghost shows, waxworks, peep shows, illusion booths and exhibitions of freaks – all dominating the showground landscape until the introduction of steam powered roundabouts. However, these fairs could still be found in the early 20th century and still gathered a crowd. (Spalding)

LOWER CLASS PASTIMES

- The servants in the Astor household had their own football and cricket teams, with regular fixtures, their own boat on the River Thames, and the staff could use the tennis course and the golf course whenever the family weren’t in residence. (Harrison 141)
• Servant’s balls occurred around once a year and gave servants a chance to
dance and relax among the presence of the family. (Harrison 141)
• Dancing was a very popular pastime downstairs.

GAMES
• Teddy bears had been a new craze in the early 1900s. With the onset of the War,
  British toymakers rushed to make patriotic British bears instead. (BBC)
• During the War, a lot of factories stopped making toys and started making
  uniforms, bullets and such to help with the war effort. (BBC)
• The British designed a game called “trench football”: the goal of the game was to
  guide a ball to the mouth of the Kaiser. (BBC)

  ![Trench Football Game](image)

• Kill Kiel: a naval war game with submarine mines, was first for sale in
  Christmas 1914. (BBC)

SONGS

English Songs
• [God Save the King](#) The anthem of the British Empire.
• [Private Tommy Atkins](#) A patriotic song about a proud soldier, based on the
  Rudyard Kipling poem *Tommy*.
• [Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty](#) A song about soldiers who long for good old
  England.
• [I Didn’t Raise My Boy to be a Soldier](#) An anti-war song about mothers mourning
  the loss of their sons.
• [Hanging on the Old Barbed Wire](#) A sarcastic song where soldiers sing of officers
  living in comfort, whilst soldiers are dead and dying.
- **Oh! It's A Lovely War!** Another sarcastic song about how wonderful it is to be a soldier.
- **Keep the Home Fires Burning** A song urging the homefront to stay strong for the fighting men.

**Irish Folk Songs**
- **I Know Where I'm Goin'** A haunting and beautiful song about a woman in love.
- **The Gypsy Rover** A song about a supposed gypsy who’s whistling bewitches a Lord’s daughter.

**POETRY**

Poetry had long been a standard practice in English literature at this point, and people often spent time committing poems to memory, reciting them to lovers or in shows as entertainment. The Great War also brought a great amount of wartime poets, men who had been to the front and published works about the horrors they saw there. Both love and war poetry can be read for further understanding of the time period, and actors can commit some lines to memory so that they can be brought to the stage. Should the actor be interested in reading more wartime poetry, the book *World War One Poets* is available from the summer.

**Love Poems**

*She Walks in Beauty, by Lord Byron*

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

To A Stranger, by Walt Whitman

Passing stranger! you do not know
How longingly I look upon you,
You must be he I was seeking,
Or she I was seeking
(It comes to me as a dream)

I have somewhere surely
Lived a life of joy with you,
All is recall’d as we flit by each other,
Fluid, affectionate, chaste, matured,

You grew up with me,
Were a boy with me or a girl with me,
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become
not yours only nor left my body mine only,

You give me the pleasure of your eyes,
face, flesh as we pass,
You take of my beard, breast, hands,
in return,

I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you
when I sit alone or wake at night, alone
I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again
I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

Heart, We Will Forget Him, by Emily Dickinson

Heart, we will forget him,
You and I, tonight!
You must forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

When you have done pray tell me,
Then I, my thoughts, will dim.
Haste! 'lest while you’re lagging
I may remember him!

Who Ever Loved, by Christopher Marlowe

It lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is overruled by fate.
When two are stripped, long ere the course begin,
We wish that one should love, the other win;

And one especially do we affect
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:
The reason no man knows; let it suffice
What we behold is censured by our eyes.
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?

Patriotic Poems

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.

*The Soldier, by Rupert Brooke*

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there’s some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England’s, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

*Anti-War Poems*

*Dulce Et Decorum Est, by Wilfred Owen*

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 gas-shells dropping softly 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 flound’ring 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.

Repression of War Experience, by Siegfried Sassoon

Now light the candles; one; two; there’s a moth;
What silly beggars they are to blunder in
And scorch their wings with glory, liquid flame—
No, no, not that,—it’s bad to think of war,
When thoughts you’ve gagged all day come back to scare you;
And it’s been proved that soldiers don’t go mad
Unless they lose control of ugly thoughts
That drive them out to jabber among the trees.

Now light your pipe; look, what a steady hand.
Draw a deep breath; stop thinking; count fifteen,
And you’re as right as rain ...

Why won’t it rain? ...
I wish there’d be a thunder-storm to-night,
With bucketsful of water to sluice the dark,
And make the roses hang their dripping heads.
Books; what a jolly company they are,
Standing so quiet and patient on their shelves,
Dressed in dim brown, and black, and white, and green,
And every kind of colour. Which will you read?
Come on; O do read something; they're so wise.
I tell you all the wisdom of the world
Is waiting for you on those shelves; and yet
You sit and gnaw your nails, and let your pipe out,
And listen to the silence: on the ceiling
There's one big, dizzy moth that bumps and flutters;
And in the breathless air outside the house
The garden waits for something that delays.
There must be crowds of ghosts among the trees,—
Not people killed in battle,—they're in France,—
But horrible shapes in shrouds—old men who died
Slow, natural deaths,—old men with ugly souls,
Who wore their bodies out with nasty sins.

*          *          *

You're quiet and peaceful, summering safe at home;
You'd never think there was a bloody war on! ...
O yes, you would ... why, you can hear the guns.
Hark! Thud, thud, thud,—quite soft ... they never cease—
Those whispering guns—O Christ, I want to go out
And screech at them to stop—I'm going crazy;
I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns.

Suicide in the Trenches, by Siegfried Sassoon

I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.

Sassoon’s Public Statement of Defiance

“I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it. I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation.

I have seen and endured the suffering of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust. I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed.

On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practised on them; also I believe that I may help to destroy the callous complacence with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realise.”

This is a copy of the open letter, published in The Times newspaper, 31 July 1917. The letter published by a war hero (Sassoon won the Military Medal) caused a minor furore and questions were asked in the Houses of Parliament.

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REFERENCES