



As part of our work on developing effective study skills and independent revision strategies, we will look in detail at some strategies that have been used effectively by students in the past. One of these strategies - which students have found to be very useful – is making and using Flashcards.

Please turn to the appropriate page in your booklet for advice on how to make and use Flashcards. Read the page headed “Using Flashcards” carefully.

When you have done so, your teacher and your S6 Study Mentors will give you examples of where this Flashcards strategy might prove useful.

Over the page, you will find some notes on a poem. These will be similar to the kind of notes you will be given on the literature your class is studying in English. You will notice that, while these notes are very detailed and potentially useful for the pupils who would receive them, they are very long and quite “wordy”. These notes would help you develop your understanding of the poem and consolidate your learning, but how we might break down these notes into more manageable chunks so that they are easier to use for independent revision?

The students using these notes would want to be able to:

- Quote from the poem accurately;
- Explain in detail some of the analysis points given here.

### **Task 1**

In pairs, make flashcards which will make the content of the notes on the following pages more easy to learn and recall.

Things to consider:

- Remember to read carefully over the notes that you have in your booklet on how to make flashcards. Look at the page headed “Using Flashcards”.
- Think about the points in the notes that would be difficult to remember and most important to remember. Will you ensure that these points are on the flashcards somewhere?
- Think about the most sensible way to structure your flashcards. For instance, will you have quotations on the front with analysis on the back?
- It would be best to assign a section of the notes to each person in the pair to give them responsibility, and make sure you’re not having to do the same thing twice.

### **Task 2**

Now quiz each other using the flashcards you have created.

# “Base Details” by Siegfried Sassoon

## Key Quotations and Notes (lines 1-5)

Key – All literary techniques and language features have been **EMBOLDENED, UNDERLINED, AND CAPITALISED.**

“Base Details” by Siegfried Sassoon is a poem written during the First World War. It expresses the intense frustration felt by the **SPEAKER**, a typical British frontline soldier. The **SPEAKER’S** anger is not aimed at the enemy soldiers as we might expect, but is aimed instead at the fact that the Majors of the British Army were not punished for the number of British casualties that came as a result of the Majors’ incompetence and callousness. The **SPEAKER** aims to encourage the reader to share these feelings of infuriation. The **SPEAKER** criticises his own superior officers in two main ways:

- By mocking them through the use of bitter humour;
- By drawing attention to their flaws.

In doing so, he develops a detailed **CHARACTERISATION** of a stereotypical Major in the British Army.

### Base Details

If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,  
 I’d live with scarlet Majors at the Base,  
 And speed glum heroes up the line to death.  
 You’d see me with my puffy petulant face,  
 Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel, 5  
 Reading the Roll of Honour. ‘Poor young chap,’  
 I’d say—‘I used to know his father well;  
 Yes, we’ve lost heavily in this last scrap.’  
 And when the war is done and youth stone dead,  
 I’d toddle safely home and die—in bed. 10

Siegfried Sassoon

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Quotation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
<p>The poem begins with the <b><u>SPEAKER</u></b>, a typical frontline soldier like Sassoon himself, imagining himself as a stereotypical Major, <b><u>CHARACTERISING</u></b> such men. This leads him into a detailed description of the character and appearance of those in the High Command.</p>	<p>“If I were fierce and bald and short of breath,”</p>	<p>A <b><u>LIST</u></b> of descriptive words and phrases is evident. <b><u>WORD CHOICE</u></b> is used very effectively. The word “fierce” is used <b><u>AMBIGUOUSLY</u></b>, as it could mean that the Majors spoke viciously to their own men when demanding their orders were carried out. Alternatively, this word could be an example of <b><u>VERBAL IRONY</u></b> or a <b><u>SARCARSIC TONE</u></b>, with the speaker sarcastically mocking the Majors’ cowardice and hypocrisy; they did not “fiercely” fight on the front line, but expected their men to do so. The expressions “bald” and</p>

		<p>“short of breath” introduce the <b><u>CONTRAST</u></b> which runs throughout the poem. The High Command are characterised as old, unfit and obese, the opposite of the young, fit men they sent to their deaths.” “Short of breath” may also recall the earlier discussion of “Fierce”, again portraying how they breathlessly barked out orders.</p>
<p>Again, the poem’s main <b><u>CONTRAST</u></b> is reinforced; the Majors are “at the base” which would be miles from the danger of the frontline where their soldiers are dying. This develops the <b><u>CHARACTERISATION</u></b> of such Majors.</p>	<p>“I’d live with scarlet Majors at the base”</p>	<p><b><u>COLOUR SYMBOLISM</u></b> is used in order to further <b><u>CHARACTERISE</u></b> the High Command. “Scarlet” is the deep red colour of blood, suggesting that these superior officers are entirely responsible for the violent deaths of the men in their command. It may also suggest their embarrassment at their own incompetence, or again emphasise how unfit and unhealthy they are.</p>
<p>Reference is then made to the catastrophic errors made by the High Command of the British Army when embarking on ill-fated campaigns such as the Battle of the Somme, where casualties were many. <b><u>CHARACTERISATION</u></b> is developed, with the callousness (uncaring nature) of the Majors being emphasised.</p>	<p>“and speed glum heroes up the line to death.”</p>	<p>The <b><u>WORD CHOICE</u></b> of “speed” indicates that the High Command did not give adequate consideration to their battle plans, instead focussing on sending troops to war as quickly as possible without any thoughts for the safety of the men. The <b><u>OXYMORON</u></b> of “glum heroes” suggests that the wartime propaganda which insisted that soldiers were brave, proud men, pleased to be doing their duty (“heroes”) was false. In reality, the soldiers were “glum” – still brave, but miserable and depressed at the abysmal conditions in the trenches, and the high probability of death. The <b><u>WORD CHOICE</u></b> of “line to death” emphasises this probability, and supports the <b><u>CONTRAST</u></b> between frontline and headquarters.</p>
<p>The <b><u>SPEAKER</u></b> then gives further detail in his description of a typical British Army Major’s physical form and personality.</p>	<p>“You’d see me with my puffy, petulant face</p>	<p>The poet uses <b><u>ALLITERATION</u></b> of the <b><u>PLOSIVE</u></b> “p” sound to portray the blustering, angry and arrogant way they commanded their men. The <b><u>WORD CHOICE</u></b> of “puffy” again suggests the Majors are overweight and unhealthy, while “petulant” likens them to moody, selfish children, prone to temper tantrums.</p>
<p>The <b><u>SPEAKER</u></b> then gives further detail in his description of a typical British army major’s behaviour. They are portrayed as rather animalistic.</p>	<p>“guzzling and gulping in the best hotel.”</p>	<p><b><u>SOUND EFFECTS</u></b> are again used. The <b><u>ONOMATOPOEIA</u></b> of “guzzling” and “gulping” depicts the greedy and grotesque way in which they eat and drink, and this is reinforced by the <b><u>ALLITERATION</u></b> of the <b><u>GUTTURAL</u></b> “g” sound, which is harsh and ugly. The <b><u>CONTRAST</u></b> between the frontline and the headquarters (relative comfort and luxury) is again reinforced</p>

## An example

### Front of Flashcard

Line 1

“If I were fierce and bald and short of breath . . .”

### Back of Flashcard

1st line = LIST of phrases to describe stereotypical WW1 British Army major.

WORD CHOICE of “fierce” is AMBIGUOUS (more than one possible meaning)

- viciously, angrily ordering soldiers around? OR . . .
- sarcasm – the Majors are cowardly, not really “fierce” at all, as they don’t fight on the front line?

CONTRAST created by “bald” and “short of breath”

- Majors were typically old and unfit
- Soldiers they commanded were young and in the prime of life.