The Man He Killed
By 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."

I. Vocabulary (Do this section on the back of this page.)
A. Look up the underlined words in a dictionary. Be sure to choose a dictionary that has sufficiently complete definitions. Write down the definition of the word that best fits the meaning of the word as it is used in the poem. Also write down the part of speech of the word used in the passage. Note that 'list is a contraction for enlist, so look up enlist.

Example: wet (verb) - to take a drink -- usually in the phrase "to wet [one's] whistle"

B. Then, write a sentence with each word. The word in your sentence should have the same meaning as the word in the poem.

Example: After a long day's work, Father wet his whistle with a cold glass of beer before dinner.

II. Sound
1. What is the rhyme scheme of each stanza?
2. Remember that alliteration is the repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words that are close together. For example, in the phrase "quick and gool kiss" you have repetition of the k-sound. Which line contains alliteration?

3. Which line contains alliteration?

4. Rhyming words that occur within the same line is one type of internal rhyme. For example, in this line:

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,

you have internal rhyme because two words within the same line rhyme. Which line below contains internal rhyme?

a. "Had he and I but met
b. No other reason why
c. You shoot a fellow down
d. Just so: my foe of course he was;
e. none of the above.

5. An iamb is one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. In the word before, you have two syllables: "be" and "fore." You say the second syllable more loudly and with more force: be-FORE. So, the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed. An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable is called an iamb. Let's look at the first line of the poem:

"Had he | and I | but met
da DUM da DUM da DUM

Notice that you have 3 iambs. Therefore, this line is called
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an **iambic trimeter**. "Tri" means three. Now look at the following line:

"I shot him **dead** because —

This line is also in **iambic trimeter**. Which syllables are stressed?

- a. I, shot
- b. shot, dead, cause
- c. I, him, dead, be
- d. I, him, be
- e. none of the above

6. Let's review iambic trimeter once more. Iambic trimeter is a line with 3 iambs. In this line:

```
1              2              3
Because | he was | my foe,
da DUM   da DUM   da DUM
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the three iambs are: Because, he was, and my foe.

Which pairs of syllables in the following line are iambs?

"He **thought** | he'd 'list. | **perhaps.**

- a. He thought
- b. he'd list
- c. Perhaps
- d. all of the above
- e. none of the above

The next line is also in iambic trimeter:

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No other reason why.
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7. Which pairs of syllables are iamb?

- a. No other
- b. No o-
- c. other
- d. reason
- e. why

8. **BONUS QUESTION**: We said "tri" meant three. "Tetra" means four. Which line below is in iambic tetrameter?

- a. Was out of work — had sold his traps —
- b. By some old ancient inn,
- c. Off-hand like — just as I —
- d. You shoot a fellow down
- e. none of the above

III. Meaning

9. The speaker (the person who is saying "I" in the poem) says he would have bought the man he killed a drink in which two stanzas?

- a. stanzas 2 and 3
- b. stanzas 1 and 5
- c. stanzas 1 and 2
- d. stanza 4 and 5
- e. none of the above

10. True or false: The speaker is a high ranking officer in the army. Write below the line that supports your answer:

____________________________________________________________________

11. According to the speaker, why did he kill the man?

____________________________________________________________________

12. Which of the following **could be true** of the man the speaker killed?

- a. He was unemployed
- b. He had sold all of his belongings
- c. He was an infantry soldier
- d. He was an enemy soldier
- e. all of the above

13. In which stanza does the speaker speculate that the man he killed was a lot like him?

- a. stanza one
- b. stanza two
- c. stanza three
- d. stanza four
- e. stanza five

14. True or false: The speaker shot at the man although the man posed no threat to him. Write below the line that supports your answer:

____________________________________________________________________

15. Where did the speaker shoot the man?

- a. on the battlefield
- b. in a duel
- c. in the man's home
- d. in a deserted area
- e. none of the above

16. Which word in stanza 4 shows that the speaker enlisted in the army without thinking too much about it?

____________________________________________________________________
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17. What are two things the speaker would have done for the man he killed had they not met in battle on opposite sides? (hint: look in the last stanza)

________________________________________________
________________________________________________

18. Give two reasons why the speaker joined the army.

________________________________________________
________________________________________________

IV. Synthesis (putting it all together)

19. Do you think the man the speaker killed was really the speaker's foe? Why or why not?

20. Re-read stanza 3 where the speaker tries to explain why he killed the man:

"I shot him dead because —
   Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
   That's clear enough; although

Does the speaker sound sure about why he killed the man? Or is he just trying to reassure himself that he had a good reason? What things can you point to in the stanza above or elsewhere in the poem to support your answer?

21. Write a paragraph describing the speaker. What is he like as a person? What social class do you think he belongs to? What has he done and how does he feel about what he's done? Quote lines from the poem to support your answer.
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Answer sheet

I. Vocabulary

A. nipperkin (noun) - a small cup or a small cup of beer  
ranged (verb, but used as adjective in past participle form) - to arrange in a line or row  
infantry (noun) - soldiers or units of soldiers who fight on foot with small arms  
foe - enemy  
'list (= enlist) - to join the military  
traps - belongings or tools of one's trade  
curious - arousing interest because of novelty or strangeness  
crown - an English coin worth 25 pence (five shillings)

B. Sentences will vary but each word should be used in accordance with the definitions in part A.

II. Sound

1. a  5. b  
2. c  6. d  
3. b  7. b  
4. d  8. Bonus Question: a

III. Meaning

9. b  
10 false, "But ranged as infantry,
11. because the man was the speaker's enemy  
12. e  
13. d  
14. false, I shot at him as he at me, (the man was also shooting at the speaker in battle)  
15. a  
16. Off-hand  
17. The speaker would have bought him a drink in a bar and given him some money if he needed it.  
18. He was unemployed and he had sold all his belongings.

IV. Synthesis

19. Answers may vary. Hopefully, the student will see that the man the speaker killed had not really done anything to the speaker to deserve the name of "foe" and that they could easily have been friends or at least shared a drink together. It was only the fact that they happened to be on opposite sides of a war that turned them into deadly enemies.  
20. Answers may vary. The answer should include some of the ideas in the following: The speaker does not sound too sure why he killed the man. The repetition of "because" and the pause after the first "because" in the first line, indicated by a dash, express his uncertainty. The speaker repeats "he was my foe"/"my...foe he was" and says "of course", "Just so" and "That's clear enough" more to convince himself than to affirm certainty. The stanza also ends in mid-thought with "although,"a word indicating contrast and contradiction, which casts doubt on the reason he just proffered. The fact that, elsewhere in the poem, the speaker says the man he killed could have been a lot like him and that he could have bought the man a drink is evidence that he (the speaker) did not really see the man he killed as a foe, undermining his reason for the killing.  
21. Answers may vary. The answer should include some of the ideas in the following: The speaker is a man who has fought and killed another man in battle. The speaker was a foot soldier ("But ranged as infantry") who enlisted in the army because he was unemployed and had sold all his belongings or tools of his trade ("He thought he'd 'list, perhaps, / Off-hand like — just as I — / Was out of work — had sold his traps —"). The speaker is an ordinary man, probably of the working class. The fact that he has killed a man, a man a lot like himself, bothers him, but being a simple person he can only say "quaint and curious war is!" His condemnation of war goes no further than that. Yet, he is humane and compassionate because he can see that the man he killed was very much like himself and could have been a friend had circumstances been different.

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