Edward & Helen Thomas



About these letters

This following letters were written between the poet Edward Thomas and his wife Helen, while he was serving in the army in WW1.
Edward Thomas was killed on 9th April 1917, the day after he wrote the letter included here. Helen's last letter to Edward was returned to her after his death. The 'Postscript' (April-June 1917) is taken from Helen's Commonplace Book in the Edward Thomas Collection at Oxford University.
GRAMPS
Genre: Letters and postscript
Register: Informal (shows they are close and know each other)
Audience: For each other, but now for history lovers.
Mode: Written discourse
Purpose: To inform the reader about their lives in that moment
Subject: Letters are between Edward and Helen, when Edward was fighting in the first world war, which he writes in a lot of detail about his experiences. There would've usually been only a little detail allowed in the letters to back home, as they would've wanted it to sound great, not terrible.

Discourse

Narrative voice in all letters is first person
The letters fit **typical schema of letters** - they introduce with dear and sign off also.
The **conventions of the letters show the sort of people they were** - we see through Edward's letter that he was a poet through the use of lexical choices.

Grammar

Short declaratives sentence - shows sadness in the letters - "I am so unstable" and "But I cannot do that" - shows loss of hope, and tone of sadness.
Long declarative sentences - points that are most important events to him - very descriptive - "the artillery is like a stormy tide breaking on the shore of the full moon that rides high and clear among white cirrus clouds"
Polysyndeton - "But the sun shone and larks and partridge and magpies and hedge sparrows made love and the trench..." - repeated use of **conjunctions** give power to the words and gives rhythm to the sentence.

Pragmatics

Relationships: "dearest", "Edwy", "Baba"
Implied meaning of the text is negative.

Context

Edwards was a British poet in the 1900's - was a very well-educated person who became a history scholar at Oxford.
He went to fight in the first world war where he was one of the 37 million people to die.

Lexis and Semantics

Metaphor, simile, use of imagery "(artillery sentence)". Artillery is continuous like the waves. This is contrasted to the image of the "white cirrus clouds" which predicts fine weather- but also could be a sense of hope.
Antithesis - "pretty village" , "stark tree trunks"
Metaphor - "the wounded that will be harvest in a day or two" - emphasis that they are not human and emphasis on how many of them are like crop - millions wounded.
Register - informal - through use of colloquial language - "Baba says 'give Daddy 100 loves' " - shows the love between the couples and their familiarity.
Semantic field of love - "beloved", "dearest", "love", "beautiful"
Tripling - "terror and death and grief" emphasis on the negative of losing a husband - negative lexical choice.
Parallelism - "your beauty, your beautiful" - focus on the love

Phonology

Rhythm of the letters through the contrast use of polysyndeton throughout the letters.
Alliteration of plosives - "difficult... darkness... despair" - emphasis on hardships of war through harsh words.
Rhyme - "saw one enemy fall on fire and one of ours tumble into the enemy's wire" - poetic technique.

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