Siegfried Sassoon – Briefing Notes

Life until 1916 (Audience aware)

* Born in Kent 1886
* Father left 1890 and died when Siegfried was 9
* Educated at Marlborough College
* Read first law then medieval history at Clare College, Cambridge 1906-7 but based his hopes on winning the Dean’s poetry medal.
* On not gaining the medal went down from Cambridge without a degree
* Lived the life of a country gentleman ‘A Fox Hunting Man’ until 1914. Poetry largely unrecognised.
* Joined Sussex Yeomanry as a trooper, 1914
* Commissioned into Royal Welch Fusiliers 1915
* Won Military Cross on the Western Front, July 1916.

Life After 1916 (Audience have not been told but many may know)

* Often took huge risks Fox Hunting and steeplechasing before the war.
* Prone to depression all his life.
* Wounded April 1917 at the Battle of Arras
* Published ‘Finished with the War: A soldier’s declaration’ after the death of his companion in arms Corporal O’Brien, many men and fellow officers and his friend David Thomas with whom it seems he was in love
* Threw MC into the Mersey
* Court Martial did not follow but ‘treatment at ‘Dottyville’ - Criaglockhart War Hospital
* Developed huge loyalty for WH Rivers, his psychiatrist.
* Rivers sent him back to the front where Sassoon was wounded once more

PTO

Ian L’s Questions

**Why did you fight so fiercely?**

Answer along the lines of ‘I enjoyed it’. It gave me the same thrill as steeplechasing. He is quoted as saying ‘I was not only a hero but a wounded hero’ ‘I felt capable of the most suicidal exploits’

**Was the country in your mind?**

Answer along the lines of ‘not particularly’. It was in the background, perhaps but I joined before war broke out in order to forget my lack of success. I was more anxious to prove myself by self-sacrifice.

**Why did you publish a document such as this (he will then read out the declaration)**

Answer along the lines of ‘I was angry’ So many had died and for what?

**If thousands had followed your example Britain would have lost the war. Did this worry you?**

Shrugs - I was angry

**Why then did you negate its effect by going back to the Front?**

I wanted to please my psychiatrist. He had been a father to me.

**Are you a patriot?**

**Answer as you think he might. Refuse to answer if you wish.**

Search to prove himself

Laying on his back in no man’s land ‘like a steeplechase’

The anger prompting ‘the Declaration’ O’Brien, his men, his fellow officers killed.

Confusion of the Declaration

Return to the front – devotion to Lewis. Sell out?