‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’ - Wilfred Owen

A) Before reading the sonnet

1. With a partner make a spider diagram of everything that you know about the First World War.
2. Now look at the extracts or books and make another diagram about the conditions suffered by the soldiers.

B) Read the sonnet

1. In pencil underline any words that you do not understand and look up their meanings in a dictionary. In pencil write the meaning next to the word.
2. What are your first impressions of the poem?

C) Detailed study of the sonnet

1. Why is the poem called ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’?
2. What does the simile, ‘who die as cattle’ suggest about the deaths of the young soldiers?
3. Which weapons of war are described in the octet (the first eight lines of the sonnet)?
4. How does the poet try to capture the sounds and atmosphere of the battlefield where the soldiers died? Use quotations from the octet (the first eight lines of the sonnet) to support your answer.
5. Why do you think religious words are used in the octet? What is the poet trying to say about organised religion and its relevance to the soldiers?
6. Why is there a break in the sonnet after the octet? Which words link the two parts of the sonnet together?
7. Which words used in the sestet (the last six lines of the sonnet) would we associate with a funeral?
8. What do the young soldiers have instead of a funeral?
9. Why are these two ideas contrasted in the sestet?
10. What is the overall impression of the war that the poet is trying to create for the reader?