



Nettles -Vernon Scannell

Vernon Scannell (1922 – 2007) was a British poet, author and at one time a professional boxer. He once received a special award from the Wilfred Owen Association "in recognition of his contribution to war poetry", with subtle references to the theme noted here. The poem is a simple narrative which tells of an accident the poet's son had one day. The personification of the nettles as enemy soldiers provides an interesting topic for discussion.

[Click to access an audio visual of the poem](#) courtesy of Spoken Verse

**My son aged three fell in the nettle bed.
'Bed' seemed a curious name for those green spears,
That regiment of spite behind the shed:
It was no place for rest. With sobs and tears
The boy came seeking comfort and I saw
White blisters beaded on his tender skin.
We soothed him till his pain was not so raw.
At last he offered us a watery grin,
And then I took my billhook, honed the blade
And went outside and slashed in fury with it
Till not a nettle in that fierce parade
Stood upright any more. And then I lit
A funeral pyre to burn the fallen dead,
But in two weeks the busy sun and rain
Had called up tall recruits behind the shed:
My son would often feel sharp wounds again.**