Who are these? Why sit they here in twilight?
Wherefore rock they, purgatorial shadows,
Drooping tongues from jaws that slob their relish,
Baring teeth that leer like skulls’ teeth wicked?
Stroke on stroke of pain,- but what slow panic,
Gouged these chasms round their fretted sockets?
Ever from their hair and through their hands’ palms
Misery swelters. Surely we have perished
Sleeping, and walk hell; but who these hellish?

- These are men whose minds the Dead have ravished
  Memory fingers in their hair of murders,
  Multitudinous murders they once witnessed.
  Wading sloughs of flesh these helpless wander,
  Treading blood from lungs that had loved laughter.
  Always they must see these things and hear them,
  Batter of guns and shatter of flying muscles,
  Carnage incomparable, and human squander
  Rucked too thick for these men’s extrication.

Therefore still their eyeballs shrink tormented
Back into their brains, because on their sense
Sunlight seems a blood-smear; night comes blood-black;
Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh.
- Thus their heads wear this hilarious, hideous,
  Awful falseness of set-smiling corpses.
- Thus their hands are plucking at each other;
  Picking at the rope-knouts of their scourging;
  Snatching after us who smote them, brother,
  Pawing at us who dealt them war and madness.

What things are these?

Before you begin, make a guess at what the things being described are.

We learn a lot about how the beings look.
Read the first and third verses again and, using your own words, write a list of at least five ways the poet describes the appearance of the things.

In the second verse we learn a little of the things’ past.
What have they seen? What have they heard? How have they felt?

Having thought a little more about the poem, write down any more ideas you have about who or what the things are.

Think of a title for the poem.