

THE GLENCOE LITERATURE LIBRARY

Study Guide

for

**All Quiet on the
Western Front**

by Erich Maria Remarque



 **Glencoe
McGraw-Hill**

New York, New York Columbus, Ohio Woodland Hills, California Peoria, Illinois

Meet Erich Maria Remarque



I write by ear. I hear everything that I write. I choose words for their sound. . . . my novels all sound good when they're read out loud. I find easy what other authors find most difficult: writing dialogue.

—Erich Maria Remarque

Like the main character in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Erich Maria Remarque served as a German soldier in World War I. Drafted in November 1916 at the age of eighteen, he was sent to the Western Front in Flanders (now Belgium). There he worked in a support unit behind the lines, laying barbed wire and building bunkers and dugouts to help fortify gun sites. His work often took him within range of enemy gunfire. In July 1917 he was wounded while retrieving an injured soldier during an attack. He was sent to a hospital, where he spent most of the rest of the war recuperating. Later he would incorporate some of his own war experiences into his popular war novel, *Im Westen nichts Neues*, or *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Remarque, whose ancestors were French, was born in Osnabrück, Germany, in 1898. Although his family was poor, Remarque's childhood was happy. Interested in music at an early age, he played both the organ and piano. By the time he was seventeen, he had begun to write essays and poems and had started a novel.

During his wartime hospital stay, Remarque continued to write short pieces that were published in a popular German magazine.

After the war, Remarque finished his education but remained unsettled by his wartime experiences. He worked briefly as a teacher and at various odd jobs. In 1925 he became an editor for a sports magazine. The financial success of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, an international best-seller published in 1929, allowed Remarque to quit his job and write full time. In 1931 he moved to a villa in Switzerland on Lake Maggiore.

The publication of *All Quiet on the Western Front* brought controversy to Remarque, as well as fame and wealth. Many readers viewed the novel, which stresses the wasteful destruction of the war, as a humanitarian antiwar statement. To the Nazis, the rising political faction in Germany at the time, the book was unpatriotic and subversive. In 1933 *All Quiet on the Western Front* was one of the first books that the Nazis burned in public, declaring it a “betrayal of the soldiers of the First World War.” The successful American film of the novel, made in 1930, was also banned by the Nazis. Had Remarque remained in Germany, he would have faced certain persecution. The Nazi government later revoked his German citizenship in 1938.

In 1939 Remarque moved from Switzerland to the United States, living first in Hollywood and then in New York City. There he continued to write novels, several of which were made into films, though none were as greatly admired as his first. Most of them focused on the lives of Germans in the aftermath of the two world wars. Meanwhile, Remarque moved in glamorous circles, acquiring well-known friends and acquaintances including Greta Garbo, Charlie Chaplin, and Ernest Hemingway. Remarque kept his apartment in New York City but divided his time between New York and Hollywood, his villa in Switzerland, and several European cities. After years of heart problems, Remarque suffered a fatal heart attack in Switzerland in 1970.

Introducing the Novel

This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped its shells, were destroyed by the war.

—Erich Maria Remarque, preface to
All Quiet on the Western Front

The subject of *All Quiet on the Western Front* is the worldwide conflict of 1914–1918, called then the Great War. World War I, as we refer to it today, was a shockingly intense conflict that not only transformed the political landscape of Europe but also changed forever the values and perceptions of civilized Western society.

In the years before the war's outbreak, the major countries of Europe had formed alliances that divided the continent into two hostile camps. On one side were the Central Powers, which included Germany, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary; on the other were the Allies, which included France, Great Britain, and Russia among others. The “tinderbox of Europe” ignited when the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria sparked a series of threats and counterthreats that drew the two alliances into war. Germany, the leading military and industrial power in Europe, quickly embarked on a war of expansion. The German plan, which its leaders had worked on for decades, called for fighting on two fronts. First the Germans planned to launch a massive offensive against France in the west. They thought their offensive would be completed in six weeks, allowing them time to turn east and invade Russia on a second front.

German forces quickly swept through Belgium, but they were halted just outside Paris. From that point on, Germany's plan for a quick victory in the west unraveled. Newly developed weapons of war, especially modern cannons and machine guns with tremendous firepower, made the battlefield so violent that traditional, organized attacks quickly disbanded. For shelter, the soldiers had no choice but to burrow into the ground. As a result, by 1915 a strategy called *position warfare* developed. Both sides

dug a series of trenches that ran all the way from the Belgian coast to the Swiss border. From these trenches, the armies fought a stationary war of defense rather than a war of movement and offense. Their aim was to hold their ground at any cost. The war thus became a stalemate as each side tried to wear down the other. Military leaders, trained in nineteenth-century tactics, continued to stage countless small frontal offenses, ordering infantry soldiers to go “over the top” of the trenches. But the results were murderous and success was rare, with gains measured only in yards. Trench warfare was incredibly costly in terms of human lives.

The war had far-reaching political and social consequences. It broke up the four great empires of Europe—the German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Turkish empires—leaving Europe unstable. The war also brought more deaths and casualties than any war in the previous one hundred years. Some 8.5 million people died, and 21 million were wounded. By 1916 few families in Europe were left untouched by the death of a son, husband, father, cousin, or friend.

The war also had a profound psychological effect on those who survived it, like Remarque, and those who came of age in its wake. Sometimes called the “lost generation,” many of these young people developed a pessimistic and uncertain outlook on life and society after the war. The traditional social values that had led to the war—honor, duty, glory, and discipline—seemed hollow, and many survivors blamed the older generation for permitting the war's ghastly and wasteful destruction. They felt the old order was morally corrupt, and no new order had risen to provide a sense of hope and stability. Remarque's novel, published in 1929, some ten years after the war's end, spoke to and of this generation. As one critic noted, “*All Quiet on the Western Front* seems to encapsulate in popular form, the whole modern impulse: the amalgamation of prayer and desperation, dream and chaos, wish and desolation.”

The novel also speaks to readers who wonder what the war was like for the average soldier. Narrated by a young German infantryman, *All Quiet* provides a picture of the war that,

in one critic's words, is "unsurpassed for vividness, for reality, for convincingness, which lives and spreads and grows until every atom of us is at the Front, seeing, mingling, suffering." Written in a clear and lively style, Remarque's fictional account has an eyewitness authenticity that still engages and moves readers today.

THE TIME AND PLACE

All Quiet on the Western Front takes place during the last two years of World War I, between

1916 and November 1918. The action occurs in the trenches, behind the lines, and away from the front, in Paul Bäumer's hometown. Remarque, however, does not give exact place names, suggesting that what Paul experienced was typical of many soldiers on the Western Front, regardless of their location. Indeed, many foreign readers who fought in the war have confirmed that Paul's experiences were essentially the same as those of soldiers from other nations.

Did You Know?

The daily scenes encountered by soldiers at the front were nightmarish. In the trenches, men fought and lived among the dead—and pieces of the dead, for the new weapons of war could shatter human bodies. Corpses were also strewn across the narrow stretch of ground known as "No Man's Land," which separated enemy trenches that faced each other. The sights, sounds, and smell of death were everywhere. Because conditions in the front line were so horrific, soldiers generally were not placed there for more than a week at a time. They were sent from the front line to a support trench, then farther back to a reserve trench, and then to a quiet base camp at the rear for rest.

Trenches, typically about ten feet deep, were built in zigzags. This pattern limited the destruction caused by bursting shells and protected soldiers from gunfire if the enemy

entered the trench. Short lengths of trench jutted into No Man's Land to allow better listening and observation of the enemy. In addition, narrower communication trenches, used to bring up supplies, troops, and orders, connected the main trenches from front to rear.

Soldiers in the front line were not always under attack. Days in the trenches tended to be boring, although the danger of sniper fire and random artillery shelling always lurked. In the daytime, the men cleaned their rifles and wrote letters. Most work was done at night when the men could move about more safely. Creeping on their bellies, soldiers ventured out into No Man's Land to string barbed wire, scout enemy positions, or rescue the wounded. Much time was also spent repairing trenches damaged by shellfire, raids, or rain. As one veteran recalled, "The men slept in mud, washed in mud, ate mud, and dreamed mud."

Before You Read

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 1–5

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What are the general characteristics of your parents' generation or grandparents' generation? How would you describe your own generation?

Freewriting

Take ten minutes to freewrite about your impressions of the older generation and younger generation. In general, do you respect the opinions of persons older than you? Do you think older people have the same values or perspectives that younger people do? Do you think all young people have the same values and points of view? Explain.

Setting a Purpose

Read to discover nineteen-year-old Paul Bäumer's ideas about his own generation and that of his elders.

BACKGROUND

Time and Place

The scenes in *All Quiet on the Western Front* take place in three basic locations: the front itself, settings near the front but away from the fighting (such as a camp or hospital), and settings away from the front (such as Paul's hometown or the army training camp). By shifting between calm and violent scenes, Remarque emphasizes the contrast between life at the front and life everywhere else.

Did You Know?

Soldiers in the trenches could distinguish the different kinds of shells being fired by the sounds they made in the air. In World War I, artillery—or cannon-like weapons—were used in far greater numbers than ever before. These long-range and close-range guns fired large missile-shaped shells of different types. Of these, shrapnel shells were especially deadly because they contained a large powder charge and hundreds of sharp metal bits. When the charge exploded over enemy trenches, the deadly projectiles flew through the air making a singing sound. Large shells nicknamed “Jack Johnsons,” after a famous heavyweight fighter of the day, made a high-pitched whistle. The “whizz bang,” a lighter shell, buzzed briefly just before it arrived at its target.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

barrage [bə rāzh'] *n.* curtain of heavy artillery fire just in front of friendly troops to screen and protect them

billets [bil'its] *n.* lodgings assigned to soldiers

helter-skelter [hel'tər skel'tər] *adj.* in disorder or confusion

insubordination [in'sə bōrd'ən ā'shən] *n.* disobedience to authority

laconically [la kon'ik lē] *adv.* with few words

queue [kū] *n.* line of people

rail [rāl] *v.* to scold or denounce harshly

restive [res'tiv] *adj.* restless

satchel [sach'əl] *n.* small bag with a shoulder strap

windfall [wind'fōl] *n.* unexpected sudden gain

Active Reading

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 1–5

Chapters 1–5 introduce most of the major characters in the novel. As you read, make notes about each character’s traits, actions, and attitudes in the chart below.

Character	Traits, Actions, and Attitudes
Paul Baumer	narrator, a former student who enlisted because of his sense of patriotism, now disillusioned, bitter toward elders, cool in battle, values comradeship

Responding

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 1–5

Personal Response

Based on Paul's description of the front, what part of the experience do you think would be the hardest to bear? What could provide consolation?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. In the opening scene, why does Paul's company have extra food to eat? Why is Franz Kemmerich dying? How are Müller's feelings about Kemmerich's dying different from Paul's feelings?

2. How does the schoolmaster Kantorek refer to his former students? Why do Paul and Kropp scoff at the term Kantorek uses? How do the young men feel about Corporal Himmelstoss? Why?

3. What mission at the front is Paul's group sent to perform? What do the men rely on to survive?

Responding

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 1–5

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. What scene provides a contrast to the tension and horror that the men experience at the front?

5. What does Kropp mean when he says of himself and his classmates, “The war has ruined us for everything”?

Literature and Writing

Bulletin from the Front

Imagine that you are a newspaper reporter accompanying Paul’s group on the night they perform their mission in No Man’s Land. Write about the scene in a news bulletin for your readers. Include details of sight and sound to convey the dangers the men face during the bombardment. Describe the actions of the men and their emotions and attitudes before, during, and after the fighting. After you have written a first draft, review it critically. Does your report have an interesting lead? Does it give readers a feeling of actually being present in the situation you are describing? Does it convey “human interest”? Revise and proofread your report.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Remarque often uses vivid images as well as symbols in his description of a soldier’s life at the front. An **image** refers to something that can be perceived by the senses. A **symbol** is something—an object, place, character, or action—that stands for something else.

In your group, assign one chapter to each person and skim the text to find two or three passages that contain striking images or symbols. Write the sentences on a separate sheet of paper. Take turns reading your sentences aloud to the group by chapter. For each sentence, briefly discuss the effectiveness of the image or symbol. Invite others to give comments on your examples. Then, as a group, select the most significant image or symbol from each chapter. Compare your selections to those of other groups.

Learning for Life

Paul’s teacher Kantorek persuades his students to join the army by telling them that they will be fighting for the glory of the fatherland. Many military recruiting posters at the time did the same. Recruiting posters were one form of propaganda because they were designed to influence public opinion on social or political issues. Create a military recruiting poster aimed at young people. Select a strong visual image for your poster and a complimentary slogan or message. Your poster may appeal to emotion or to logic.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 6–8

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Does it help or hurt to talk about traumatic experiences?

Discuss

With a small group, discuss whether talking about traumatic experiences is a good idea. Under what circumstances might communicating about trauma be helpful? Under what circumstances might it be counterproductive? Share your opinions with other groups.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out whether Paul Bäumer can communicate with his family and former friends.

BACKGROUND

Time and Place

World War I was a “total war,” meaning the populations of entire nations were caught up in the conflict. Factories produced weapons, ammunition, and military supplies. Women replaced many male workers in industry, and civilians sacrificed food and supplies to help support the war effort. Near the battlelines, civilians were also exposed to the dangers of shelling; in some cases, entire villages were obliterated.

As the fighting wore on, all of the participating nations experienced food shortages. In response, wartime governments in Europe instituted food rationing, which led to long lines at stores for what little food was available. In Germany, shortages were especially severe because the Allies had blockaded German ports. With little grain available, turnips and potatoes were used to make *krieg* (war) bread, and acorns were gathered and ground up to make coffee. By the winter of 1916–1917, German citizens were becoming weak and thin, and some were dying from starvation.

Did You Know?

The Germans were the first to use poison gas on a large scale. At the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, German soldiers in a front-line trench released chlorine gas from more than five thousand pressurized cylinders, timing the release with a westward-blowing wind. Chlorine gas, visible as a greenish-yellow cloud, is a lung irritant that causes extreme pain in the nose and throat and slow suffocation. Death results if the concentrated gas is inhaled for more than a few minutes. Many people thought the German’s use of poison gas was barbaric, but the British and French quickly developed their own gas weapons. The most widely used gas, mustard gas, was introduced in mid-1917. Odorless and colorless, it burned the skin, eyes, and respiratory tissues. Gas attacks caused at least one million deaths during the war. After gas masks were developed, few men were killed by gas, but gas attacks were still used to unsettle the enemy.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

chasten [chā’ sən] *v.* to punish; to make humble

devastated [dev’ əs tāt əd] *adj.* overwhelmed; ruined

listless [list’ lis] *adj.* lacking energy

ludicrous [lōō’ də kres] *adj.* ridiculous; laughable

melancholy [mel’ ən kol’ ē] *adj.* depressed in spirit; sad

obliquely [ō blēk’ lē] *adv.* indirectly; in a slanting or sloping direction

parapet [par’ ə pit] *n.* low wall of stone or earth to protect soldiers

rave [rāv] *v.* to speak wildly or angrily

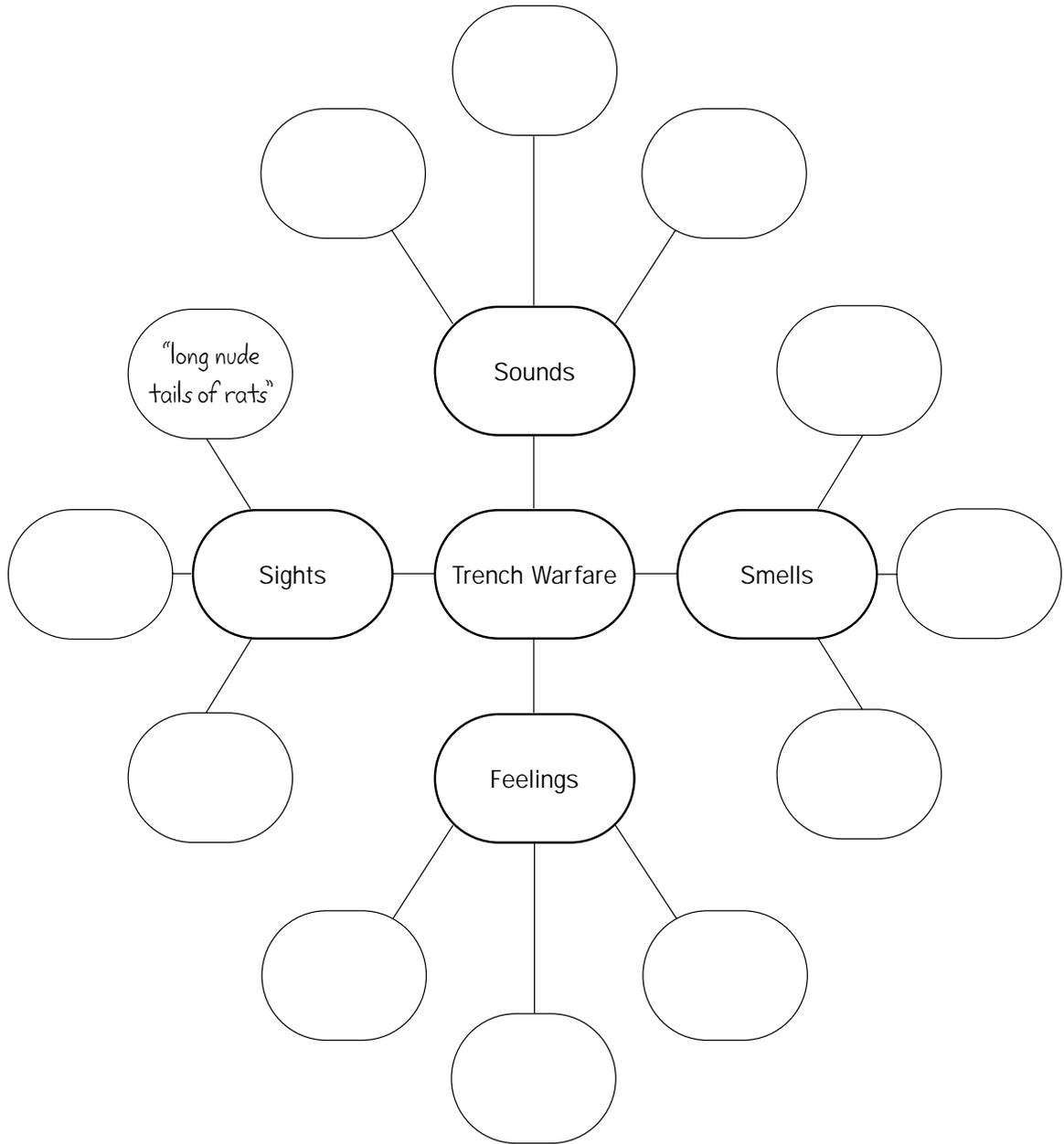
remnant [rem’ nənt] *n.* small surviving part

solace [sol’ is] *n.* relief; comfort

Active Reading

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 6–8

Chapter 6 gives a vivid account of life in the trenches from the common soldier's point of view. As you read this chapter, use the cluster diagram to note the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings described. You may not fill all the circles in some categories, and you may need to add circles to others.



Copyright © by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Responding

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 6–8

Personal Response

Paul says that “every soldier believes in Chance and trusts his luck.” If you were a soldier in combat, do you think you would find yourself trusting chance or trusting something else instead? Do you feel differently about chance as it relates to your everyday life? Explain.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why are Paul and his company moving back to the front? How does the battle progress over the two weeks the company spends at the front?

2. When Paul tells Kemmerich’s mother about her son’s death, why is he surprised at her grief?

3. At the training camp, what sights seem to soothe Paul’s mind? What thoughts does Paul have as he observes the Russian prisoners of war?

Responding

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 6–8

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Were you surprised that the three young French women were willing to spend the evening with Paul, Kropp, and Leer? Why or why not?

5. How does Paul's classmate Mittelstaedt taunt and humiliate Kantorek? Do you think this treatment of Kantorek is justified? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Lost in Thought

In Chapter 6, Paul daydreams about his home. What specific things does he recall in his daydream? How do his memories affect him? Why does he say of himself and his friends, “I believe we are lost”? Reread Paul's reflections in Chapter 6. Then write a *paraphrase* of the passage; that is, restate Paul's ideas in your own words. In your paraphrase, use the third person (“he” and “they,” rather than “I” and “we”). In your concluding sentence, explain the significance of Paul's daydream.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Review the section in Chapter 7 in which Paul returns home. How does he act when he is there? How does he feel? Why does he make the statement he does at the very end of the chapter? Then recall the discussion you had as part of the **Focus Activity** for this section of the novel. Does Paul's homecoming experience affect your opinion of whether talking about traumatic experiences is a good idea? Why or why not?

Psychology Connection

When people are under severe stress or dealing with strong negative emotions, they often fall back on certain coping strategies. Also called defense mechanisms, these strategies may temporarily protect a person from painful situations or thoughts, but they usually do not work as long-term solutions. Common coping strategies include *denial*, or refusing to recognize an emotion or problem; *compensation*, or making up for a weakness in one area by excelling in another; *daydreaming*, or inventing situations to escape unpleasant facts; *displacement*, or transferring emotions from the true source to some other thing or person; *rationalization*, or making excuses for one's actions or feelings; and *regression*, or returning to immature behavior to express emotions. Find examples of these strategies as used by Paul or other characters in the novel. What other strategies do the soldiers in the novel use to cope with the unbearable stress of war?



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 9–12

FOCUS ACTIVITY

When your life seems difficult, what keeps you going and gives you hope?

List

Think of some situations in which people might feel depressed or paralyzed by their troubles. What thoughts, feelings, or ideas might help them to see things more positively and keep from giving up? In a chart, list some troubling situations and some possible sources of strength that could help people endure or see beyond their troubles.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out whether Paul Bäumer survives the war.

BACKGROUND

Time and Place

During most of the period of the novel (1916–1918), Germany was fighting on two fronts. By late 1917, Russia had withdrawn from the war after accepting harsh terms for peace with Germany. German troops in the east were then sent to the Western Front to try to break the stalemate there. Earlier that year, however, the United States had entered the war on the side of the Allies. Strengthened by American troops, Allied forces stopped a massive German offensive launched in the spring of 1918. By October the Allies had driven the German Army back to Germany's pre-1914 borders and crushed morale. German troops were exhausted and replacements, many younger than fourteen years of age, were too inexperienced to fight a major war. The armistice ending World War I was signed on November 11, 1918.

Did You Know?

The Allies, as well as the Germans, designed new weapons to try to break the deadlock of trench warfare. The British thought that tank warfare would be the solution. Tanks could easily roll over barbed wire and cross trenches up to ten-feet wide, clearing the way for advancing infantry. Tanks were prone to breakdowns, however, and often got stuck in the mud. Noisy, cramped, and hot inside, tanks could travel at only six miles per hour and were stressful for the crew to operate. British tanks were first used in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme. Looking like “mysterious monsters” that nothing could stop, tanks incited fear in the enemy, but there were too few of them to make a significant impact. Later in the war, the Allies launched two massive tank attacks. Both attacks used over three hundred units and were successful in breaking through German lines. Great Britain deployed almost three thousand heavy tanks between 1916 and 1918, while the Germans used only twenty. Although tanks proved increasingly helpful to the war effort, their full potential would not be realized until World War II.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

banal [bə nal'] *adj.* ordinary; lacking originality

convalescent [kən'və les'ənt] *adj.* recovering health and strength gradually after a sickness

forlorn [fôr lôrn'] *adj.* sad and lonely

idyll [id'əl] *n.* carefree episode

invulnerable [in vul'nər ə bəl] *adj.* unable to be harmed or wounded

repulse [ri puls'] *v.* to fight off an attacker

shrewdly [shrōōd'lē] *adv.* wisely; cleverly

surreptitiously [sur'əp tish'əs lē] *adv.* sneakily; secretly

Active Reading

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 9–12

In Chapters 9–12, Paul frequently reflects on the strong feeling of brotherhood among soldiers. Using the chart, list statements in which Paul reflects on the importance of comradeship. Also note the situation he is in when he has these thoughts. More than one statement may be attributed to one situation.

Statement(s)	Situation
<p>"We must work the army medical sergeant-major so that we can keep together, Albert."</p>	<p>Paul and Kropp are both wounded and will be sent by train to a hospital.</p>

Responding

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 9–12

Personal Response

Did you expect the novel to end the way it did? Why or why not? Do you think the ending is appropriate, or would a different ending fit the novel better? Explain.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why doesn't Paul flee from his foxhole after he stabs the French soldier? How does the incident affect Paul? How do you interpret his comment afterward: "After all, war is war"?

2. What happens at the hospital after Paul and Kropp are each wounded in the leg? What does Paul see and think as he walks through the rooms of the hospital?

3. After Paul returns to the front, what happens to his comrades? What does Paul learn about the progress of the war?

Responding

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 9–12

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. What incidents in Chapter 11 show that the men’s nerves are frayed? What metaphor does Remarque use to make this same point?

5. What is ironic, or dramatically unexpected, about the book’s ending?

Literature and Writing

A Soldier’s Letter

Although Paul feels detached from his family since going away to war, he cares for his mother and knows that she is close to death. Imagine that Paul decides to write her a letter from the front. Put yourself in his place and write this letter. Incorporate some of the specific experiences and thoughts that Paul has in Chapters 9–12 of the novel. At the same time, think about what Paul might want to say to his mother about his youth, his family, his society, his future, or the war in general. You may also want to reflect on the list you made for the **Focus Activity**.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

What are the origins of war? This is the question that Paul and his friends discuss in Chapter 9 after they parade before the kaiser. Reread the characters’ comments, and then discuss the causes of war. Consider the following questions: Do you agree with any of the characters’ assessments of war? Can you give examples of the generalizations they make, from the past or the present? Do their ideas apply to the world now or only to the world as it was then? Can you think of other explanations for war? Are wars inevitable?

Learning for Life

Obituaries, or death announcements, are a regular feature in daily newspapers. Locate the obituary section of a local or national newspaper, and read five or six of the notices. Make a list of the kinds of details that are given and of the general form and style of an obituary. Then, using your notes and these examples as a model, write an obituary for one of the characters in the novel. Incorporate what you know about the character’s life from details given by the author. Make up other details to round out the obituary.

Copyright © by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Käthe Kollwitz and Vladslo

Jay Winter

Before You Read

Focus Question

How are the ideas of memory and mourning related?

Background

Peter Kollwitz, the son of the well-known artist Käthe Kollwitz, enlisted in the German Army just after World War I broke out and was sent to the Western Front. He was killed two months later, at the age of nineteen. This selection describes how Kollwitz created a memorial to her son, who had given his life for his country.

Responding to the Reading

1. Where did Peter die? What was Kollwitz's first idea for a memorial to honor him? What design did she eventually settle on?

2. Did Kollwitz share her son's feelings about the war? Explain. Why did it take Kollwitz eighteen years to complete the sculpture?

3. **Making Connections** Do Erich Maria Remarque and Käthe Kollwitz share similar ideas about who was responsible for the war? Explain. In Winter's opinion, why is the memorial so effective?

Art Connection

Hold a design competition for a war memorial to honor those killed in World War I. First, have individual students or groups sketch designs for the memorial. Each sketch should be accompanied by a description of the project, including the materials that will be used to construct it, its location, and the reasoning behind the design. Then, assemble a review committee to evaluate the proposals and select the best one.

Battlefield	August Stramm
Postcard	Guillaume Apollinaire
The Dug-out	Siegfried Sassoon
Vigil	Giuseppe Ungaretti

Before You Read

Focus Question

Why might poetry be an effective way to communicate about the experience of war?

Background

Some of the young men who fought and died in the trenches of World War I were poets. After the war, the surviving writers in many nations sought to express the thoughts and feelings of soldiers like themselves. As a group, they came to be known as “the war poets.”

Responding to the Reading

1. What images do the first five lines of “Battlefield” contain? Who do the “childish eyes” belong to? How do they respond to what they see and why?

2. What is the setting of “Postcard”? What startling sight does the speaker describe? What might the flowers that “before existing fade” symbolize?

3. Describe what happens in “The Dug-out.” How is the style of this poem different from the other three?

4. **Making Connections** What parallels can you find between the experiences of the soldiers described in the four poems and those of Paul Bäumer in *All Quiet on the Western Front*?

Performing

Give a poetry reading that focuses on the works of the war poets. Consider works by the poets included here as well as poems by Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen, Rupert Brooke, and other war poets. Find works by three different poets to share. Read the poems aloud several times until you can read them comfortably and expressively. Then present them to the group.

The Somme, 1 July 1916: Infantry versus Infantry

John Keegan

Before You Read

Focus Question

How do you think troops communicated with each other during World War I?

Background

This selection, by historian John Keegan, recounts a portion of the Battle of the Somme, a five-month battle that took place along a thirty-mile stretch of the Western Front near the Somme River in northern France. The battle began with an attack by the British, but the Germans were well entrenched. The offensive failed. Virtually no territory was gained, and more than a million men were killed. The Somme thus became a symbol of the slaughter and futility of the war.

In the first phase of battle, German machine-gunners mowed down attacking troops as they advanced through No Man's Land. In the selection, Keegan describes what happened next for the foot soldiers at one location on the first day of the battle.

Responding to the Reading

1. What is a barrage? Why did attacking troops try to follow the barrage?

2. What often happened to units of attackers that became separated from the main group? Why did the close fighting take place in the trenches rather than "above ground"? What was the fighting in the trenches like?

3. What happened to many of the company commanders during the battle? What did Captain Sparks, commander of the London Scots, decide to do with his men and why?

4. **Making Connections** In general, how do the accounts of battle in the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* differ from the historical account Keegan gives?

Learning for Life

Communicating effectively often means using the fewest number of words to get your message across. Pictures or diagrams can also help to convey information clearly and quickly. Imagine that you are preparing a museum display to communicate the nature of infantry fighting in World War I, as described in Keegan's selection. Come up with a plan for presenting the information using visuals and brief related text.

Stab in the Back

John Toland

Before You Read

Focus Question

When you think of Adolf Hitler, what images or words come to mind?

Background

Adolf Hitler was born in 1889 in Austria-Hungary. A high-school dropout at age sixteen, he dreamed of becoming an artist. When he failed to get into an art academy, he worked intermittently as a commercial painter. Short-tempered and intolerant, Hitler lived an isolated life and had few friends. He enlisted soon after World War I broke out and served in combat in a reserve infantry regiment. In this selection from John Toland's biography of the German leader, we meet a discontented Hitler in the last year of the war.

Responding to the Reading

1. Where is Hitler at the opening of the selection? What injury does he have? How does Hitler feel about the many German lives that have been lost in the war?

2. How does Hitler respond when he hears soldiers say that Germany will be defeated? Who does he blame for this pessimistic attitude?

3. How did trench warfare help to break up the old political structure in Germany? What was Hitler's response when the kaiser stepped down near the end of the war? Why? How did Hitler feel after Germany's surrender?

4. **Making Connections** If Paul Bäumer had survived, how do you think he might have reacted to Germany's surrender? How do you think he might have felt about Hitler's rise to power?

History Connection

Using nonfiction books, reference works, and short biographies of Hitler, create a time line of Hitler's life.

Anthem for Doomed Youth

Wilfred Owen

Before You Read

Focus Question

What toll does war take on the human spirit?

Background

Poet and infantryman Wilfred Owen composed “Anthem for Doomed Youth” in the summer of 1917 at the Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was recovering from “shell shock,” a form of mental breakdown caused by the strain, noise, and terror of frontline fighting. He returned to France in August 1918, where he was killed in action just one week before the war ended.

Responding to the Reading

1. What sounds, instead of bells, will mark the passing of “those who die as cattle”? What choirs will sing for them? What image is suggested by the first line?

2. Will “those who die” receive a proper burial? Explain.

3. What do “those who die” have instead of flowers? What do you think is the meaning of the last line?

4. **Making Connections** How does the **tone**, or attitude, of the poem shift in the last six lines? How does the tone and the focus of Owen’s poem compare with the tone of Remarque’s novel?

Creative Writing

Write a poem commemorating the life and death of Paul Bäumer. You may want to imagine Paul’s funeral, as Wilfred Owen has done for the many dead soldiers described in his poem, or you may want to address Paul’s final thoughts and feelings.