AOWF Introduction Lecture

The “Great War”—World War I

World War I, also known as the “Great War,” engulfed many of the world’s powerful nations between ___________ and ___________. It remains one of the most deadly military conflicts in world history, having taken the lives of more than_______________________.

The events that led to World War I are varied and complex. Europe’s long history of ________________ and a series of territorial disputes challenged the balance of power within Europe. An _______________ throughout Europe also contributed to competition between the different colonial powers, further threatening the power equilibrium between nations. Moreover, a network of ________________ in Europe that had evolved since the mid-nineteenth century had become increasingly complex, and European nations struggled to keep up with shifting ________________________ allegiances.

The two significant alliances in Europe consisted of the _________________________ (also known as the _________________________) comprising ___________, ______________, and ______________ and the Triple Entente, formed by ______________, the _________________________, and ________________________. After the beginning of the war, the _________________________, and a host of other nations also became associated with the Triple Entente.

Historians generally agree that the War was ultimately triggered by the assassination of Archduke _____________________ of Austria and his wife Sophie on June 28, 1914 in Sarajevo, Serbia. Austria had long hungered for an opportunity to eliminate the Serbian state, and the assassination of the Archduke proved to be an ideal opportunity to declare war on Serbia. Due to the network of alliances, the Austria-Hungarian Empire relied on support from ______________, but, at the same time, knew that declaring war on Serbia would spark a conflict with ______________________. When Austria-Hungary, supported by Germany, invaded Serbia, the complicated system of treaties within Europe triggered a European-wide, and soon worldwide, military conflict—__________________________.

By the summer of 1918, the Central Powers had collapsed, and an armistice was signed on the ___________day of the _____________month at the _______________hour! (November 11, 1918).

TRENCH WARFARE

Soldiers on the Western Front in World War I saw the horrors of ________________ a new form of warfare that required combat troops to occupy fortified trenches. This focus on ________________ rather than ________________ forced soldiers on both sides to stay in their entrenched positions on the battlefield for lengthy periods of time. The territory between the trenches, often referred to as “________________________,” was dangerous, and leaving the trenches in order to attack the enemy exposed soldiers to ______________________ and artillery fire and generally resulted in mass casualties. New types of weapons, such as ______________________ and flamethrowers, made life in the trenches even more deadly.

Life in the trenches was ________________ and __________________. Often, soldiers spent weeks locked in their positions, and they were surrounded by the _________________________ that littered the battlefield. Unsanitary conditions and the lack of _________________________ caused disease and _________________________ to spread quickly among the soldiers. With little protection from the weather and frequent delays in the delivery of supplies to the front lines, many soldiers suffered from _________________________ and _______________________.


The ___________________________ effects of trench warfare on the soldiers were no less significant. Unable to leave their positions, soldiers often laid in waiting for undetermined periods of time as they prepared for the next __________________________. Many soldiers displayed symptoms of __________________________ and suffered the consequences of _______________________________.

THEME #1: BRUTALITY AND CARNAGE AND THE FUTILITY OF WAR

Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* was published in ___________ and immediately took its place within a long-standing tradition of literary representations of war. Unlike most war novels, however, Remarque’s account of World War I focuses singularly on realistic depictions of life on the _______________ ________________ and refuses to sentimentalize and __________________________ war, nationalism, and military pride. The novel depicts the life of the ________________ soldier in stark and un-idealized terms.

Much of the novel’s plot focuses on the _______________ ________________ of trench warfare on the Western Front. The novel’s narrator, _____________________________ ______, explains how experiences with new weapons technologies such as gas bombs contributed to the unpredictability and brutality of life on the front lines:

“The dull thud of the gas-shells mingles with the crashes of the light explosives. A bell sounds between the explosions, gongs, and metal clappers warning everyone—Gas—Gas—Gaas. Someone plumps down behind me, another.”

Another horror of trench warfare embodied by Remarque’s novel is the continuous presence of ____________ in the trenches. With little chance to recover dead bodies from the battlefield due to the great risks soldiers took whenever they entered “No Man’s Land,” troops were frequently forced to ________________ with the bodies of their dead companions that littered the battlefield and were often blown asunder by explosions in times of bombardment. In unsentimental terms, Remarque’s narrator Paul Bäumer represents the reality of ________________ with the ________________:

“With a crash something black bears down on us. It lands close beside us; a coffin thrown up… The coffin lid is loose and bursts open, we are easily able to pull it off, we toss the corpse out, it slides down the bottom of the shell-hole, then we try to loosen the under-part.”

The novel, however, also reminds readers that soldiers were not only faced with the death of their own ___________________________ but likewise with the death of soldiers fighting in close proximity on the ________________ side. According to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trench warfare caused individual soldiers to call into question why and how ________________ are drawn between nations and under what circumstances war is ________________. In chapter nine, Paul Bäumer stabs a French soldier who is leaping into a hole where Paul is hiding. Consequently, Bäumer must face the presence of the dying soldier and his own feelings of guilt:

“By noon I am groping on the outer limits of reason. Hunger devours me, I could almost weep for something to eat, I cannot struggle against it. Again and again I fetch water for the dying man and drink some myself. This is the first time I have killed with my hands…But every gasp lays my heart bare. This dying man has time with him, he has an invisible dagger with which he stabs me: Time and my thoughts. I would give much if he would but stay alive.”

The ___________________________ of the governments involved in the war is called into question time and time again throughout the novel. Remarque’s characters are ________________ soldiers, far removed from the leaders of their country. They are swayed by a strong sense of ________________ and patriotic vigor, yet they are not aware of the ________________ leading up to the war and, months into the conflict, they can no longer see a credible ________________ for fighting. To Paul Bäumer and his comrades, it becomes painfully obvious that the enemy soldier is not distinguishable from them by anything but a ________________. Beyond that, the enemy soldiers are ________________ just like them. Yet, Paul and his comrades are ordered to kill them by a commander or general who received his orders from a ________________ government. Paul explains:
“A word of command has made these silent figures our enemies; a word of command might transform them into our friends. At some table a document is signed by some persons whom none of us knows, and then for years together that very crime on which formerly the world’s condemnation and severest penalty fall, becomes our highest aim.”

The ________________________ of having young men carry out war orders formulated by ________________ or governments who do not take the ________________________ of the individual soldier into account when making their decision to go to war is one of the central ________________________ of the novel.

THEME #2: COMRADESHIP

_____________________________ and comradeship are important elements in All Quiet on the Western Front. Throughout the novel, the fate of narrator Paul Bäumer is closely associated with the fate of his former ________________. When the war begins, Paul Bäumer and his classmates volunteer to join the army, swayed by national ________________ and ________________ and persuaded by the stern words of their __________________________ Kantorek. Only one young man, Joseph Behm, hesitates to follow the others, but he is pressured into enlisting by his peers. Paul Bäumer later recalls how Behm was ________________ to sign up for the war by peer pressure and false ________________:

“There was, indeed, one of us who hesitated and did not want to fall into line. That was Joseph Behm, a plump, homely fellow. But he did allow himself to be persuaded, otherwise he would have been ostracized.”

During training, Paul Bäumer and his comrades soon learn that the __________________ of war are too severe to be borne by each man ________________. Consequently, the soldiers form a close _________________ that comes to function as a substitute ________________ for the young men once they reach the front line:

“But by far the most important result [of training] was that it awakened in us a strong, practical sense of esprit de corps, which in the field developed into the finest thing that arose out of the war—comradeship.”

In fact, when Paul Bäumer visits his family back in his hometown while on leave from his company, he realizes how ________________________ his life as a soldier has become from the life he lead as a ________________ and student before the war. Paul finds that he has little in common with the men and women who remained in his hometown, and he feels______________________________ by his family and friends. Unable to shed the ________________ of the front and eager to rejoin his company to assist his fellow soldiers, Paul leaves his hometown and, in fact, ________________ his decision to visit in the first place. He feels confused and does not understand why he is unable to relate to the very things that were important to him and occupied his time before the war began. Paul states,

“I cannot feel at home amongst these things. There is my mother, there is my sister, there my case of butterflies, and there the mahogany piano—but I am not myself there.”

Paul Bäumer’s closest confidante throughout the war is his troop leader Stanislaus Katczinsky (Kat). Kat teaches Paul how to be a_________________________ on the front, and he becomes a __________________ and quasi-father figure for the young man. Paul describes his relationship with Kat as a close and intimate bond:

“We sit opposite one another, Kat and I, two soldiers in shabby coats, cooking a goose in the middle of the night. We don’t talk much, but I believe we have a more complete communion with one another than even lovers have.”

THEME #3: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND DEHUMANIZING EFFECTS OF WAR
Throughout All Quiet on the Western Front, Remarque outlines the severe and tragic ____________________ implications associated with life on the front line. Remarque describes the ________________________ effects the involvement in war and the killing of fellow ________________________ can have on the________________________ soldier. When faced with the reality of death and carnage, soldiers quickly
lose their __________________________ and commit atrocious acts in the name of ___________. Remarque’s narrator explains:

“We march up, moody or good-tempered soldiers—we reach the zone where the front begins and become on the instant human animals…Farther on the mist ends. Here the heads become figures; coats, trousers, and boots appear out of the mist as from a milky pool. They become a column…A column—not men at all.”

Remarque frequently uses language that likens the young soldiers to ______________________, indicating that the soldiers’ lost humanity is replaced by a ______ _____________________ instinct that enables them to move forward and continue attacking the enemy. Bäumer recalls,

“[w]e have become wild beasts. We do not fight, we defend ourselves against annihilation.”

Later, Bäumer describes how committing ________________ contributes to a loss of humanity among the soldiers:

“[C]rouching like cats we run on, overwhelmed by this wave that bears us along, that fills us with ferocity, turns us into thugs, into murderers, into God only knows what devils…But we are swept forward again, powerless, madly savage and raging; we will kill, for they are still our mortal enemies.”

Paul Bäumer explains that this process of dehumanization is ______________________________ and happens ______________________ when human beings are forced to commit murder in the name of war. It becomes a coping mechanism that allows these men to commit deeds they are ________________________________ and ________________ opposed to. But many soldiers are unable to come to terms with the reality of war. Paul Bäumer claims that many of his comrades, and particularly the ________________ recruits, often crumble under the psychological pressure of warfare:

“By midday what I expected happens. One of the recruits has a fit. I have been watching him for a long time, grinding his teeth and opening and shutting his fists. These hunted, protruding eyes, we know them too well. During the last few hours he has had merely the appearance of calm. He had collapsed like a rotten tree.”

After World War I, the soldiers who had entered the war at a very young age became known as __________________________________. They felt ______________________ and without ______________ after the end of the war, since they had no life to ______________________ to and had become adults only within the context of the war. In the novel, Paul and his comrades discuss the difficulties of returning to a different life after the war ends:

“Albert expresses it: ‘The war has ruined us for everything.’ He is right. We are not youth any longer. We don’t want to take the world by storm. We are fleeing. We fly from ourselves. From our life. We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces.”

Later, Paul Bäumer reflects on his inability to adjust to a life outside of war:

“We are forlorn like children, and experienced like old men, we are crude and sorrowful and superficial—I believe we are lost.”

Many soldiers emerging from World War I suffered from shell shock, a disorder now better known as __________________________________.

ELEMENTS OF “BILDUNGSROMAN”

All Quiet on the Western Front contains elements of the _____________________________ genre. In a typical Bildungsroman, the ________________ embarks on a journey that will lead him away from his familiar surroundings in his ________________ for experience. The novel’s principal subject is the moral, psychological, and intellectual development of a usually ________________ main character. Paul Bäumer and his comrades enlist in the war and leave their hometown when they are merely teenagers, barely out of school. As the war progresses, Paul and his friends are forced to ___________________________ the world of their childhood and learn how to survive in a world marked by war and destruction.
Chapter One:
1. What is ironic about the additional rations made available to the soldiers at the start of chapter one?
2. How does the use of the latrines illustrate that definitions of privacy have changed for the soldiers who are well-established with their companies?
3. According to the narrator, which character provided the motivation for the young men to enlist in the army?
4. What does the fact that all boys volunteered reveal about the theme of comradeship?
5. In what ways does the chapter criticize the influence of authority figures?
6. How do Kemmerich’s boots function as a symbol?
7. What is ironic about Paul Bäumer’s statement “we are old folk”?

Chapter Two:
1. In what ways does the war affect the identities of older soldiers differently from younger soldiers?
2. What does training teach the young soldiers about authority?
3. How does the phrase “circus ponies” help establish the role of the soldiers and relate to the theme of national pride?
4. How does the chapter characterize Corporal Himmelstoss?
5. What theme is described by the term “esprit de corps”?
6. In what ways does the experience of being naked call into question the identity of the soldiers and at the same time underscore the powerful burden of wearing a uniform?
7. How does Kemmerich’s death affect Paul Bäumer’s outlook on the purpose of war?

Chapter Three:
1. How does the euphemism “vacancies” in the first line of the chapter underscore the expendability of the individual in war?
2. In what ways does Kropp’s idea of war as a “popular festival” help establish Remarque’s criticism?
3. How does a uniform impact the character of a man like Himmelstoss?
4. According to Kat, what is the basic principle of war? (What is the army based on?)
5. Why does Remarque uses the simile “like a signal mast” to describe the way Haie Westhus raises his arm to strike Himmelstoss?

Chapter Four:
1. How does Paul Bäumer’s metaphor “mysterious whirlpool” help describe the terror of war?
2. How does the front transform the soldiers?
3. According to Paul, what is the soldiers’ attitude toward Chance?
4. Why do the soldiers consider additional rations of cheese and rum to be an ominous sign? (cont. on next pg.)
5. How does this chapter comment on the advances in weapons technology in World War I compared to earlier wars?

6. How does the simile “like a rotten tree” (pg. 109) help reinforce the psychological trauma experienced by the soldiers?

7. To what extent do animal imagery and metaphors like “wild beasts” (pg. 113) help describe how the horror of bombardment on the front line transforms the soldiers?

8. How does Paul’s description of memories of home help establish his portrayal of the “Lost Generation”?

9. How does the simile “they fall like flies” (pg. 129) help explain the role the new recruits play on the battlefield?

10. How do the soldiers experience the passage of time on the front line?

Chapter Seven:
1. How does the soldiers’ relationship to Himmelstoss change after the bombardment?

2. How are the soldiers able to make the French girls interested in them?

3. How is the evening at the French women’s house ironic?

4. How does the metaphor of the “veil” (pg. 160) help establish Paul’s sensations when he returns to his home?

5. What does Paul learn about his father, his German teacher, and the headmaster when he converses with them about the war?

6. How does Remarque’s use of one-word sentences (pg. 173) emphasize Paul’s alienation during his leave?

7. How has Kantorek’s status changed?

Chapter Eight:
1. Why does Paul suggest that the Russian soldiers should be “threshing, reaping, and apple picking” (pg. 190)?

2. From Paul’s observation of the Russian prisoners, what is the author’s critique on the politics of war? (193-4)

Chapter Nine:
1. Upon seeing the Kaiser, what is Tjaden primarily preoccupied with?

2. How does the word “country” (pg. 204) complicate the notion of going to war?

3. In the context of this chapter, how does the phrase “sputtering speck of existence” (pg. 212) help reinforce the theme of comradeship?

4. Describe how Paul’s up close encounter with an enemy soldier was foreshadowed by Remarque in chapter 8.

5. What is the significance of Paul’s realization, “you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response”?

Chapter Ten:
1. What do Paul and his fellow soldiers consider to be an “idyll” when they are ordered to guard an abandoned village?

2. Why does Paul resolve not to allow the doctors to administer chloroform after he is injured on the battlefield?

3. Why does Paul suddenly pretend to be in excruciating pain on the train to the hospital?

4. What is the significance of the “dying room”?

5. Explain Paul’s evaluation of the war on pages 263-264: “Our knowledge of life is limited to death.”

Chapter Eleven:
1. Explain Paul’s use of the following 2 metaphors: “war is the cause of death”, and “our thoughts are clay.”

2. How does Detering’s desertion contribute pathos to the novel?

3. What symbol in this chapter does Remarque use to foreshadow Paul’s death?

4. Why does Remarque use the phrase “Summer of 1918” repeatedly throughout the chapter?

5. Why does the narrator use the phrase “all is as usual” (pg. 291) when discussing Kat’s death?

Chapter Twelve:
1. How does the chapter establish the problems faced by the “Lost Generation”?

2. Why does the narrative viewpoint change in the last paragraph of the novel?

3. What is the significance of the title, as indicated in the last paragraph of the novel?
Poem #1
DULCE ET DECORUM EST (1)
Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares(2) we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest(3) began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots(4)
Of tired, outstripped(5) Five-Nines(6) that dropped behind.

Gas!(7) Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets(8) just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime(9) . . .
Dim, through the misty panes(10) and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering,(11) choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud(12)
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest(13)
To children ardent(14) for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et Decorum est
Pro patria mori.(15)

Wilfred Owen
8 October 1917 - March, 1918

Notes on Dulce et Decorum Est
1. DULCE ET DECORUM EST - the first words of a Latin saying (taken from an ode by Horace). The words were widely understood and often quoted at the start of the First World War. They mean "It is sweet and right." The full saying ends the poem: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori - it is sweet and right to die for your country. In other words, it is a wonderful and great honour to fight and die for your country.
2. Flares - rockets which were sent up to burn with a brilliant glare to light up men and other targets in the area between the front lines (See illustration, page 118 of Out in the Dark.)
3. Distant rest - a camp away from the front line where exhausted soldiers might rest for a few days, or longer
4. Hoots - the noise made by the shells rushing through the air
5. Outstripped - outpaced, the soldiers have struggled beyond the reach of these shells which are now falling behind them as they struggle away from the scene of battle
6. Five-Nines - 5.9 calibre explosive shells
7. Gas! - poison gas. From the symptoms it would appear to be chlorine or phosgene gas. The filling of the lungs with fluid had the same effects as when a person drowned
8. Helmets - the early name for gas masks
9. Lime - a white chalky substance which can burn live tissue
10. Panes - the glass in the eyepieces of the gas masks
11. Guttering - Owen probably meant flickering out like a candle or gurgling like water draining down a gutter, referring to the sounds in the throat of the choking man, or it might be a sound partly like stuttering and partly like gurgling
12. Cud - normally the regurgitated grass that cows chew usually green and bubbling. Here a similar looking material was issuing from the soldier's mouth
13. High zest - idealistic enthusiasm, keenly believing in the rightness of the idea
14. ardent - keen
15. Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori - see note 1 above.

Poem #2
The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner
By: Randall Jarrell

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,  
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze. 
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,  
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.  
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.  

"A ball turret was a Plexiglas sphere set into the belly of a B-17 or B-24, and inhabited by two .50 caliber machine-guns and one man, a short small man. When this gunner tracked with his machine guns a fighter attacking his bomber from below, he revolved with the turret; hunched upside-down in his little sphere, he looked like the foetus in the womb. The fighters which attacked him were armed with cannon firing explosive shells. The hose was a steam hose." -- Jarrell's note.

Poem #3
The Charge of The Light Brigade
by Alfred, Lord Tennyson
Memorializing Events in the Battle of Balaclava,  
October 25, 1854--Written 1854

    Half a league half a league,  
    Half a league onward,  
    All in the valley of Death  
    Rode the six hundred:
5 'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
Charge for the guns' he said:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

    'Forward, the Light Brigade!'  
10 Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,

15
Theirs but to do & die,
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,

20
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd & thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,

25
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sabring the gunners there,

30
Charging an army while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack & Russian

35
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke,
Shatter'd & sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,

40
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse & hero fell,

45
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

50
When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,

55
Noble six hundred!