

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Megan Brewer	School:	Olentangy Local Schools
Book Title:	All Quiet on the Western Front	Genre:	Historical Fiction / WWI
Author:	Erich Maria Remarque	Pages:	295
Publisher:	Fawcett Crest	Copyright:	1929

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

All Quiet on the Western Front concerns the lives of seven high school graduates who, during World War I, enlist in the German army with the prompting of their teacher. They become soldiers with youthful enthusiasm. But the world of work, duty, culture and progress they had been taught breaks into pieces under the first bombardment in the trenches. Through the years of vivid horror, Paul learns to fight against the principle of hate that meaninglessly pits young men of the same generation but different uniforms against each other.

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

All Quiet on the Western Front was chosen because it provides a personal story that chronicles a soldier's perspective in World War I. Since the course is history-based, it provides a solid connection between World History and World Literature.

1. Gain and demonstrate a deeper understanding of the human story by reading varieties of genres
 - a. critique author's style
 - b. evaluate the use of figurative language and literary techniques
 - c. explain how symbolism enhances a literary text
 - d. identify similar and occurring themes across different works

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be "cut and pasted" (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

Remarque's ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT

In one of the most graphic scenes in Erich Maria Remarque's generally gory novel All Quiet on the Western Front, the first-person narrator, Private Paul Baumer, finds himself suddenly caught in a bombardment, in a little

grove of trees where he and his fellow soldiers “know every foot of ground here. There’s the cemetery with the mounds and the black crosses” (65). The ferocity of the explosions, the rain of clods, and the flames, however, prevent them from escaping from this place. The only possible cover, it appears, will be the graveyard. Baumer is hit twice and fights against losing consciousness. Crawling desperately through the mud, he blindly claws his way toward cover, feels something yielding, and shoves in under it.

Protected momentarily from the bombardment, he opens his eyes only to discover that the thing he lies beneath is not a wounded man, as he first thinks, but a corpse dislodged from its tomb. He tries to recoil, but his instinct for survival is stronger than his sense of revulsion.

My hand gropes farther, splinters of wood—now I remember again that we are lying in the graveyard.

But the shelling is stronger than everything. It wipes out the sensibilities. I merely crawl deeper into the coffin, it should protect me, and especially as Death himself lies in it too. (67)

“[. . . A]s Death himself lies in it too.” Baumer and his companions do survive the shelling, but only because other coffins are also disentombed and provide shelter: “The graveyard is a mass of wreckage. Coffins and corpses lie strewn about. They have been killed once again; but each one of them that was flung up saved one of us” (70–71). This scene constitutes a vividly ironic and yet quite believable variation on the motif of *Et in Arcadia Ego*, which occurs with startling frequency in the literature of World War I, as discussed in such models as Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory*, especially his chapter on “Arcadian Resources.” This pastoral tradition, in its terse Latin phrasing, had apparently been long interpreted in England, and blandly so, as “And I too dwelled in Arcadia”; but as discovered by Erwin Panovsky, its deeper significance in classical literature meant “Even in Arcadia, I, Death, hold sway” (or more appropriate here, “I, who am now dead, also once lived in Arcadia”), with such visual elements as a half-hidden tomb, a skull, a fly, and sometimes a mouse, with surprised shepherds marveling at the discovery (depicted, for example, by Giovanni Guercino and at least twice by Poussin). Remarque’s depiction of Private Baumer’s encounter with the unearthed corpses not only partakes of this classical tradition—reminding his readers of the bizarre characteristics of “the Great War” being fought in the bucolic setting of the Western Front—but also anticipates Baumer’s senseless death, as

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objectively reported at the close of the novel, in the final days of the war, immediately after he has been reveling in the autumn beauties of the countryside and vaguely hearing “the canteens hum like beehives with rumours of peace” (291).

—THOMAS C. WARE, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

WORKS CITED

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford UP, 1975.

Panovsky, Erwin. “*Et in Arcadia Ego*.” *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*. London: Oxford UP, 1936. 295–320.

Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*. 1928. Trans. A. W. Wheen. Boston: Little,

Review #2

ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT Erich Maria Remarque 1929 Antiwar Novel

Barely out of school, the nineteen-year-old Paul Baumer finds himself in the trenches of the Western Front. After having his patriotic idealism crushed by the chicaneries of basic training, Paul increasingly hardens in his efforts to survive the endless shellings, the gas attacks, the nightly patrols, and the maddening fear of ever-present death. Only the bond of a cynical, though not insensitive, camaraderie among the common soldiers and a brief idyll with three French girls provide moments of human warmth in the general atmosphere of indiscriminate slaughter. Baumer is forced to acknowledge how completely his life at the front has estranged him from the values of conventional society when he spends two weeks on home leave with his family. He must admit to himself that he will never be able to assume a normal existence in a postwar world and returns to the war, resigned to the fact that he has become a member of a lost generation for whom not even the prospect of peace holds any hope.

When guilt is assessed, Baumer and his comrades-in-arms place it with their parents and teachers, who had deceived them with sermons about love of fatherland and heroism. For the rest, this lost generation cannot even muster the strength to lash out against those who callously planned and executed its destruction.

Although written in the sparse style of an almost impassive objectivity, the novel was bound to arouse passionate reactions. In 1933, the Nazis publicly burned it and deprived Remarque of his German citizenship, actions, as it turned out, which only emphasized the novel's artistic and moral distinction.

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See also: A FAREWELL TO ARMS, by Ernest Hemingway.

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What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

<u>Title:</u> A Farewell To Arms	<u>Author:</u> Ernest Hemingway
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

Document any potentially controversial content:

Descriptions of trench warfare are used in the novel to depict the fear that the soldiers experienced on a daily basis. The novel contains mild language such as "hell" and "damn" as the soldiers engage in combat and conversation. The novel allows students to understand the perspectives of soldiers of the "Lost Generation." Remarque wrote the anti-war novel as a testament to the brutality of war; the descriptions are truthful, and the following describes Remarque's intention when writing the novel:

"This book is 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 the shells, were destroyed by the war."

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable): 10th grade

Date Submitted to Department Chair:

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults