

# **All Quiet on the Western Front Book Notes**

**All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque**

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# Author/Context

Erich Maria Remarque was born June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1898, in the northwestern German city of Osnabruck. His parents named him Erich Paul Remark. His family was very poor, and they moved often. At a young age, Erich was forced to earn money to buy his own clothes by giving piano lessons. He was a lover of art, writing, music, and nature.

At the age of 18, while at teacher's college, he was drafted to fight in World War I. He was trained and placed in a battalion. Unlike his character Paul, he was frequently granted leave to care for his dying mother. While a soldier, he fought bravely, but became extremely disheartened with the war when a friend whom he had rescued died in the hospital from grenade splinters in his head that no one had noticed. Erich spent some time in the hospital himself, and then more had training. His mother died while he was in the hospital. In a tribute to her, he replaced his middle name, Paul, with hers, Maria. By the war's end, he had become a strong opponent of back-line patriots who did not understand the evils of war, and frequently came into conflict with leaders in his town about the war's outcome.

He began a career as a teacher and writer, but his work was not well received. His first novel was such an embarrassment that he changed the spelling of his last name from Remark to Remarque. In 1929, he published *All Quiet On The Western Front*, which was an effort to rid himself of the depression that his war experiences gave him. It became one of the highest-selling books in Europe.

It is important to note that *All Quiet On The Western Front's* important moments are all autobiographical, but the novel is not pure autobiography. The sick mother, the time in the hospital, and the loss of a friend due to unnoticed splinters in the head, all point to an author who was trying to rid himself of the memories of war that haunted him. In writing it, he made a statement about his hatred of war by showing the reader the experiences that led him to his anti-war beliefs.

*All Quiet On The Western Front* was banned by the German government. Erich himself was persecuted by the Nazis and then forced into exile, first in Switzerland, and then America, where he became friends with famous actors, actresses, and writers, including Charlie Chaplin and Ernest Hemingway. He wrote several more books over the next few years. He died in Switzerland in 1970.

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# Plot Summary

*All Quiet On The Western Front* begins somewhere near the German/French front during World War I. It is told by Paul Baumer, a 19-year-old soldier. He and his friends are eating a well-deserved meal after fighting and encountering heavy losses. After the meal Paul, Kropp, and Muller go to use the outdoor toilets and play cards.

Paul and some of his comrades all attended school together and were encouraged to join the army by their teacher, Kantorek. Now, as soldiers, they know that Kantorek has little understanding of the war. One of their friends, Kemmerich, is dying in the hospital. They go to visit him. While there, Muller asks him for his boots. They bribe an orderly to give him some pain medication and leave.

When Paul visits Kemmerich again, Kemmerich gives him his boots to give to Muller because he knows he is going to die. Paul does as he asks. New recruits come up from training, and they soon learn the hard lessons of fighting on the front. Paul and his comrades pass the time watching airplane battles and smoking. They are told that Himmelstoss, the corporal who abused them in training camp, is being sent to the front, and are happy that they will be able to take revenge against him.

They are sent to the front to string barbed wire. While there, they get shelled and have to take cover. A new recruit that Paul helps is badly hurt. All of this Paul takes for granted. After the shelling, they return to camp, where they pass the time killing lice. Paul's friend Tjaden encounters Himmelstoss and is rude to him. Himmelstoss reports him to the commander, Bertink, for insubordination. The Lieutenant gives Tjaden a light punishment, and lectures Himmelstoss about the realities of the front versus training camp. Paul and Kat, their mentor, steal geese and cook them.

The men are sent to the front for an offensive. They spend many days in trenches with the tension building, until the fighting finally begins. The fighting is madness and many men are killed. Finally, after many weeks, they are sent back to camp, but with only 32 of the original 150 men who went to the front.

They get some rest time while their numbers are being built back up, and they use it well, relaxing and enjoying themselves. Paul and his friends see some French girls across the canal from their camp, and sneak away that night to give the girls food and have sex.

Before his company is sent back to the front, Paul is given leave to go home and then to have a month of training. He takes the train home. When he arrives, he discovers that his mother has cancer. He feels strange being back at home, and avoids talking to people about the war, because it is clear to him that they don't understand what is going on. He finds out from an old classmate that Kantorek, his teacher, has been drafted as a soldier. He visits Kemmerich's mother, who cries and begs him to tell her about her son's death. Paul spends more time with his mother, but by the time he leaves for training, he regrets having gone home at all because he is miserable.

During training, he spends most of his time watching the Russian prisoners encamped next to the training camp. He feels sorry for them because they are just soldiers like himself. After a month, his father and sister visit him and tell him that his mother is in the hospital getting an operation. He returns to the front with a heavy heart.

Back at the front, Paul fears that leave has made him soft, and is scared of the war around him. He ends up trapped in a hole during shelling, and then kills an enemy soldier with his knife. He is very upset because he knows that he has killed another human being, but he pushes the feelings away.

He and his comrades guard a bombed-out, deserted village for a few weeks, and live happily cooking for themselves. Next, they are sent to evacuate a village, where Paul and his friend Albert are both wounded. They are sent to the hospital by train, where Paul is fixed up. Albert, on the other hand, loses his leg. They spend a long time there healing, and befriend other soldiers in their room. While there, Paul walks around the hallways and sees all of the death and destruction going on, and realizes that his hospital is just one of thousands like it, full of dying boys. He is overwhelmed by the hopelessness of war.

Paul is sent back to the front, where many of his friends have been killed or get killed soon after he arrives. Finally, on a hot summer day, Kat is hit. Paul picks him up and carries him to safety, but it is too late--a splinter from a grenade is stuck in Kat's head, and he has died. Paul is now the last of his comrades. A few months later, with talk of peace going on around him, Paul gives up and dies, with a look of relief on his face.



# Major Characters

**Paul Baumer:** The narrator of the book. Paul is a young soldier who witnesses and reports the horrors of World War One and how it changes him forever. The story follows Paul at the front, in camp, on leave, in training, and in the hospital.

**Albert Kropp:** Paul's clear-thinking classmate and best friend from school. He is Paul's closest friend next to Kat. He loses his leg due to an injury, and is hospitalized at the same place Paul is.

**Muller:** The scientist of the group, who still studies and thinks about physics during battles. He's somewhat rude. He takes Kemmerich's boots after Kemmerich dies.

**Tjaden:** A tiny locksmith with a huge appetite who eats all the time. More than any of the others, he hates Himmelstoss with a passion and can't wait for revenge against him.

**Haie Westhus:** A giant boy about 19, he is a peat-digger by trade. He is Kat's main helper.

**Katzinsky:** The old man of Paul's company and his closest friend, Kat teaches all the young men how to survive. He is the older soldier who can get anything at the drop of a hat.

**Kemmerich:** Paul's classmate who dies in the hospital. Paul feels responsible for him and must tell his mother of his death.

**Himmelstoss:** The cruel man who trained them when they enlisted. When he is sent to the front, his first fight teaches him a lesson and he is much nicer to the men after that.

## Minor Characters

**Ginger:** The company cook. Ginger tries to be in control and bossy about the food, but the men have no respect for him and mock him.

**Leer:** Paul's rude, crass classmate, who talks about sex a lot. He is the most experienced of Paul's friends. He is killed by the same shell as Bertink.

**Detering:** A peasant farmer, he misses his farm more than anything. Ultimately, this leads to him deserting, but he is captured and court-martialed.

**Kantorek:** Paul's old school teacher, who convinced the boys to sign up. He is made fun of because his patriotism is blind to the horrors of war. Later in the book, he becomes a soldier and his own student bosses him around.

**Joseph Behm:** A classmate who is bullied by Kantorek into joining the army, and dies almost immediately in combat.



**Bertink:** The Company Commander of the Second Company, Paul's company. Bertink is a smart, brave soldier who understands his men.

**Sister:** Paul's sister, who is caring for their sick mother.

**Mother:** Dying of cancer, she worries about Paul from her sick-bed. She is the only person who doesn't ask Paul for details about the war.

**Father:** Paul's father is proud of him, and tries to get Paul to tell him war stories, much to Paul's annoyance. He is hard working, but very poor, and must work extra hard to pay Paul's mother's hospital bills.

**Mittelstaedt:** Paul's friend who is stationed back in his home town and gets to boss Kantorek around.

**Josef:** The man with the shooting license in the hospital. He is a little crazy, but knows a lot about hospital life, because he has been there so long.

**Peter:** The man who tries to avoid going to the dying room and succeeds, surviving through force of will.

**Lewandowski:** An older man in Paul's hospital room. He has sex with his wife when she visits.



## Objects/Places

**The Front:** The line that Paul is a part of between the German army and their French, English, and American enemies. The front is not simply an area, but the embodiment of dehumanizing horror.

**Kemmerich's boots:** These comfortable boots are passed from Kemmerich to Muller, and from Muller to Paul, because the men are comrades. The boots are a sign of the pragmatism of the soldiers: they have no problem asking for them so that they can lay claim when their friend dies.

**Haricot beans:** The main food of the soldiers at the front.

# Quotes

Quote 1: "The leader of our group, shrewd, cunning, and hard-bitten, forty years of age, with a face of the soil, blue eyes, bent shoulders, and a remarkable nose for dirty weather, good food, and soft jobs." Chapter 1, pg. 3

Quote 2: "The soldier is on friendlier terms than other men with his stomach and intestines. Three-quarters of his vocabulary is derived from these regions, and they give an intimate flavour to expressions of his greatest joy as well as of his deepest indignation. It is impossible to express oneself in any other way so clearly and pithily. Our families and our teachers will be shocked when we go home, but here it is the universal language." Chapter 1, pg. 8

Quote 3: "One could sit like this forever." Chapter 1, pg. 9

Quote 4: "The wisest were just the poor and simple people. They knew the war to be a misfortune, whereas those who were better off, and should have been able to see more clearly what the consequences would be, were beside themselves with joy. Katczinsky said that was a result of their upbringing. It made them stupid. And what Kat said, he had thought about." Chapter 1, pg. 11

Quote 5: "Yes, that's the way they think, these hundred thousand Kantoreks! Iron Youth! Youth! We are none of us more than twenty years old. But young? That is long ago. We are old folk." Chapter 1, pg. 18

Quote 6: "We have lost all sense of other considerations, because they are artificial. Only the facts are real and important to us. And good boots are hard to come by." Chapter 2, pg. 21

Quote 7: "That is Kat. If for one hour in a year something eatable were to be had in some one place only, within that hour, as if moved by a vision, he would put on his cap, go out and walk directly there, as though following a compass, and find it." Chapter 3, pg. 40

Quote 8: "'You take it from me, we are losing the war because we can salute too well.'" Chapter 3, pg. 40

Quote 9: "Give 'em all the same grub and all the same pay/And the war would be over and done in a day." Chapter 3, pg. 41

Quote 10: "To me the front is a mysterious whirlpool. Though I am in still water far away from its centre, I feel the whirl of the vortex sucking me slowly, irresistibly, inescapably into itself." Chapter 4, pg. 55

Quote 11: "'The war has ruined us for everything.'" Chapter 5, pg. 87



Quote 12: "We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces. The first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. We believe in such things no longer, we believe in the war." Chapter 5, pg. 88

Quote 13: "We lie under the network of arching shells and live in a suspense of uncertainty. If a shot comes, we can duck, that is all; we neither know nor can determine where it will fall." Chapter 6, pg. 101

Quote 14: "Bombardment, barrage, curtain-fire, mines, gas, tanks, machine-guns, hand-grenades--words, words, words, but they hold the horror of the world." Chapter 6, pg. 132

Quote 15: "There is a distance, a veil between us." Chapter 7, pg. 160

Quote 16: "'But now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me. I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship. Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us that you are poor devils like us, that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, and that we have the same fear of death, and the same dying and the same agony--Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy?'" Chapter 9, p. 223

Quote 17: "I will come back again! I will come back again!" Chapter 10, pg. 258

Quote 18: "I am young, I am twenty years old; yet I know nothing of life but despair, death, fear, and fatuous superficiality cast over an abyss of sorrow. I see how peoples are set against one another, and in silence, unknowingly, foolishly, obediently, innocently slay one another." Chapter 10, pg. 263

Quote 19: "Our thoughts are clay, they are moulded with the changes of the days;--when we are resting they are good; under fire, they are dead. Fields of craters within and without." Chapter 11, pg. 271

Quote 20: "Trenches, hospitals, the common grave--there are no other possibilities." Chapter 11, pg. 283

Quote 21: "Do I walk? Have I feet still? I raise my eyes, I let them move round, and turn myself with them, one circle, one circle, and I stand in the midst. All is as usual. Only the Militiaman Stanislaus Katczinsky has died. Then I know nothing more." Chapter 11, pg. 291

Quote 22: "Let the months and years come, they can take nothing from me, they can take nothing more. I am so alone, and so without hope that I can confront them without fear. The life that has borne me through these years is still in my hands and my eyes. Whether I have subdued it, I know not. But so long as it is there it will seek its own way out, heedless of the will that is within me." Chapter 12, pg. 295

Quote 23: "He fell in October 1918, on a day that was so quiet and still on the whole front, that the army report confined itself to the single sentence: All quiet on the Western Front. He had fallen forward and lay on the earth as though sleeping. Turning him over one saw that he could not have suffered long; his face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come." Chapter 12, pg. 296



# Topic Tracking: Comrades

## Chapters 1-2

Comrades 1: The bond between soldiers is very important. Here, Paul's comrades are introduced, and their closeness is illustrated. Their defiance of Ginger is as a group, and so is their reading mail together on the toilet.

Comrades 2: Training camp was an awful experience, and largely meaningless, but it forged a tight bond between Paul and his friends. This bond is part of what helps them survive at the front.

## Chapters 3-4

Comrades 3: The downtime between trips to the front is when each man's individual personalities comes out. They bicker and argue, but that is part of the camaraderie. Here we see the group as individuals, but not in a way that breaks up the strength of the group.

Comrades 4: The boys are excited because Himmelstoss, the man who united them through hate, is now on their territory. They become closer through their reactions to bad things, like to the front or to Himmelstoss.

## Chapters 5-6

Comrades 5: Tjaden and Kropp get in trouble with Himmelstoss, and are locked up for the night. Paul and Kat, in order to help their friends, cook stolen geese, feed the prisoners, and play cards to keep them entertained and happy.

## Chapters 7-8

Comrades 6: As Himmelstoss once brought the comrades together, now the horror of war has humbled him and made him their comrade. They now accept him especially after being given good food.

Comrades 7: Here is an example of personal desire breaking the bond of the comrades: they get Tjaden drunk so they can leave him behind when they meet the girls. Again, like the arguing earlier, away from the front their individual personalities sometimes win out over camaraderie.

Comrades 8: Back at home, Paul feels very separated from the people who don't understand the front. His encounters with people and memories of his past only make him miss his comrades, who are now the only people he can truly relate to.

Comrades 9: At training camp, Paul realizes that he has more in common with the Russian prisoners than the leaders of his country. He and the Russians are all soldiers. In that way, they are more comrades than Paul and someone who has never been to



the front are. However, Paul is drawn to them because he is separated from his true comrades back at the front. When it is time to go back, the Russians are forgotten.

### **Chapters 9-10**

Comrades 10: At first, when Paul returns from home, he is uneasy because his time away seems to have lessened the bond to his comrades. However, at the same time, he is happy because he is back with his dearest friends.

Comrades 11: Again, Paul bonds to an enemy soldier. The man he kills becomes his comrade, for the time when he is trapped and alone. Paul again bonds to the enemy when separated from his own comrades.

Comrades 12: Back with his true comrades, Paul can dismiss the man he killed. They give him strength to get past the horror he went through.

Comrades 13: Albert is one of Paul's closest friends, and he goes through great lengths to stay with him so they can support and take care of each other in the hospital. Paul will do anything, including bribery, to stay with his comrade.

Comrades 14: The men, in helping Lewandowski to have sex, are acting out of brotherhood. Lewandowski, can trust them to keep an eye out and to be discreet because they take care of each other.

### **Chapters 11-12**

Comrades 15: One by one, the men closest to Paul at the front are picked off and killed. More and more Paul's strength, his comrades, is gone, leaving him alone.

Comrades 16: Paul, alone as the last of his group, feels that nothing more can be taken from him, because the thing that gave him strength, his comrades, has already been taken. He gives up because the war has taken his only friends who understand him.



# Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost

## Chapters 1-2

Innocence Lost 1: Humorously, Paul points out that the war has taken their modesty. He laughs when he thinks of how shocked their families would be to see the way they act now.

Innocence Lost 2: When Paul says "old folk," it is a statement of how war destroys a boy's innocence in such a way that there is no turning back. Like aging, they have been changed forever.

Innocence Lost 3: The end of their innocence begins in training, where the corporal beats it out of them. Even that, however, is not the true end of their innocence. It is just the beginning, because the war at the front destroys even more.

## Chapters 3-4

Innocence Lost 4: Here Paul witnesses the destruction of an innocent person, the new recruit. The episode of the boy soiling his underwear shows that he is too innocent for the front, and then he is critically hurt before he can learn and adapt.

## Chapters 5-6

Innocence Lost 5: Again, with this quote, Paul comes back to the idea of the permanent damage that has been done to his soul. He will never get his innocence back, no matter what he does.

Innocence Lost 6: Happiness and satisfaction come from stolen food and survival. At times like this, Paul thinks of the things he misses from home and wonders if he will ever be able to love them again. On some level he is sad that he gains so much pleasure from food and rest, that he has been stripped so bare.

## Chapters 7-8

Innocence Lost 7: When Paul and Kropp look at the picture, they see a girl they can only dream of. The man in the picture makes them angry because they cannot compete with him. They are dirty and damaged while he is clean. They rip him away so they can love the girl without being reminded of how far gone they are.

Innocence Lost 8: Paul's misery over the encounter with the girl is because nothing, not even passion, can pull him away from the front. Later, when the girl doesn't care that he is leaving, the lack of innocence in their relationship bothers him even more.

Innocence Lost 9: The war has placed a wall not just between Paul and his past, but between him and his family as well as those who have not had their innocence taken.

Innocence Lost 10: Although he is trying to be kind, Paul's lie to Kemmerich's mother signifies the ultimate act of lost innocence. He swears on all that is important, but there is literally nothing important left to him. He is empty inside.

### **Chapters 9-10**

Innocence Lost 11: Here, Paul displays another example of his belief that he is no longer worthy of good things. He is dirty and doesn't want to get in the bed, because to him the bed is innocent, while he is not. In the same way, the fact that the nurse is young and pretty makes him unable to ask her for help urinating, because to him, she is an innocent.

Innocence Lost 12: Here Paul thinks about himself and everyone else whose innocence has been destroyed. What is most terrible is that it was done on someone's orders, and not for any good reason of the people involved.

Innocence Lost 13: The importance of Lewandowski's desire, regardless of the fact that it meant having sex in front of everyone, shows that modesty and innocence are not concerns to them, even in the hospital.



# Topic Tracking: Isolation

## Chapters 1-2

Isolation 1: Paul observes that the soldiers his own age are isolated from life because they have not been let to establish anything for themselves. Unlike the older farmers, they have gone from school to war, and don't know anything else. They are cut off from the world they are defending.

## Chapters 5-6

Isolation 2: Here, Kropp observes the same thing Paul did previously. The boys from Paul's school have nothing going for them. They are separated and isolated from life.

## Chapters 7-8

Isolation 3: Part of the reason why Paul was upset about his encounter with the girl is that he feels cut off from important things, like love and passion. Although better than a brothel, there was little meaning between him and the French girl, and it gave him no happiness. There was simply no true connection.

Isolation 4: Here, we see how cut off Paul is from everyone. While at the front he has his comrades, but the experiences he has seen have made it impossible for him to relate to those who don't share his experiences. His homecoming is miserable because he is completely isolated.

Isolation 5: The man telling him that as a soldier, he doesn't understand the war, is another example of how different Paul is from the people he once respected.

Isolation 6: Paul cries and wishes he had never come home because it has only made him aware of how isolated he now is from his family and his townsfolk. The only person he can enjoy being with was Mittelstaedt, a fellow soldier. He is powerless to help his sick mother, who cannot understand what he has been through.

Isolation 7: Since he no longer knows anyone at the training camp, Paul watches the sickly Russian prisoners. Like him, they are cut off from everything.

## Chapters 9-10

Isolation 8: Paul's isolation doesn't end when he returns to the front. Instead, he must spend the first few days completely alone, because he cannot find his comrades.

Isolation 9: Separated from his comrades, Paul loses heart. When he hears Kat's voice, he begins to respond, but shelling traps him away from them.

Isolation 10: Peter, the man who is taken out to die, is a symbol of the battle against isolation. In Paul's room, there is a community. By going to the Dying Room, Peter is removed from that community.

### **Chapters 11-12**

Isolation 11: Within the first few pages of chapter 11, all of Paul's close companions except Kat have been killed. The isolation Paul feels is becoming more real as he loses his comrades.

Isolation 12: Paul dies alone. He gives in to the isolation and the end comes.

# Chapter 1

The book opens with Paul Baumer, the narrator, and the rest of Second Company a few miles from the front. They have just returned from the front the night before, having suffered unexpected and heavy losses. Half of the men from the company are dead or wounded. Ginger, the cook, has made a meal for 150 men instead of the 80 that are left. The men get out of bed around noon to line up for food. First in line is Albert Kropp, then Muller, Leer, and Paul. All four boys, aged 19, were in school together, and joined the army on the same day. Behind them is Tjaden, a 19-year-old locksmith; Haie Westhus, a 19-year-old peat-digger; Detering, a peasant farmer, and Stansislaus Katczinsky: "the leader of our group, shrewd, cunning, and hard-bitten, forty years of age, with a face of the soil, blue eyes, bent shoulders, and a remarkable nose for dirty weather, good food, and soft jobs." Chapter 1, pg. 3

Once in line, the men get impatient when Ginger ignores them. The men dislike Ginger because he is a coward and won't bring food very close when the men are being shelled. He tells them that he can't serve them until everyone is there. Katczinsky tells him of the losses they suffered, and Ginger gets angry that he has cooked too much. He doesn't want to give out all the food or the double ration of tobacco. Kat, angry, tells him that he has cooked for Second Company and he should give everything to Second Company. They are about to fight him when the company commander arrives and orders Ginger to give all the food as well as the full bread and tobacco rations to the men. Ginger, flustered, gives the food out to the men. Everyone happily eats the huge meal, and Muller and Tjaden even take extra. After the meal, the stuffed men read their mail. Paul, Kropp, and Muller decide to go to the bathroom to play cards.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 1

Out in the meadow near camp, there is a common latrine and several small boxes that the men use to go to the bathroom. Paul thinks back to how embarrassed they were when they were first forced to go to the bathroom in a common room as recruits. Now, they don't care. They have no modesty, and going to the bathroom outdoors is an enjoyable experience.

*"The soldier is on friendlier terms than other men with his stomach and intestines. Three-quarters of his vocabulary is derived from these regions, and they give an intimate flavour to expressions of his greatest joy as well as of his deepest indignation. It is impossible to express oneself in any other way so clearly and pithily. Our families and our teachers will be shocked when we go home, but here it is the universal language."* Chapter 1, pg. 8

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 1

They pull three boxes together, read their mail, and smoke. Using a lid from a margarine tub as a table, they sit and play skat, a three-man card game. "One could sit like this forever." Chapter 1, pg. 9 Sometimes they mention something about the battle, but they



never really discuss it. There is no need to. Kropp asks if anyone has seen their friend, Kemmerich, who is in the hospital, wounded. They decide to go visit him later that afternoon. Kropp pulls out a letter from their old teacher, Kantorek, who sends his greetings. They all laugh, trying to imagine him there on the front.

Paul thinks back to Kantorek, who encouraged them all to join the army. Kantorek was a small, short man. He lectured them so much about the importance of joining the army and patriotism that he convinced his entire class to volunteer. Only Joseph Behm thought twice about joining, but he didn't want the others to think he was a coward. None of the boys knew what going to war meant, but they went anyway.

"The wisest were just the poor and simple people. They knew the war to be a misfortune, whereas those who were better off, and should have been able to see more clearly what the consequences would be, were beside themselves with joy. Katczinsky said that was a result of their upbringing. It made them stupid. And what Kat said, he had thought about." Chapter 1, p. 11

Ironically, Behm was one of the first of Paul's class to die. He was left for dead on the front, and when he tried to crawl back, blinded, he was killed before anyone could help him. Paul believes that they cannot blame Kantorek for Behm's death. There were too many teachers and older people in authority who sent boys who trusted them off to war, and would never know the truth of combat.

Paul, Muller, and Kropp go to the hospital to visit Kemmerich. The hospital stinks of infection. Kemmerich is very weak. Someone has stolen his watch off his wrist. He will not live long. His foot has been amputated, but he doesn't know it. The others don't tell him. They try to be encouraging, telling him he will be going home soon, but Kemmerich can barely respond. Paul thinks of Kemmerich's mother, who cried when they left home and asked Paul to look out for him. Now, Paul can barely look at Kemmerich's waxy skin.

Muller puts Kemmerich's things underneath his bed. He sees Kemmerich's prized pair of boots, more comfortable than what they wear, and asks Kemmerich for them. He wants to get them before they are stolen as well. Kemmerich doesn't want to give them up, and Paul stops Muller before he can argue. After a while, they leave, bribing an orderly to give him some morphine for his pain. As the walk back to their camp, Muller talks about how nice the boots are. Better that he should have them when Kemmerich dies than anyone else. There is no hope for him. Paul thinks about the letter he will have to write to Kemmerich's mother. Kropp gets very angry and swears, upset about Kemmerich. Once he calms down, he tells them that Kantorek called them "the Iron Youth" in his letter.

*"Yes, that's the way they think, these hundred thousand Kantoreks! Iron Youth! Youth! We are none of us more than twenty years old. But young? That is long ago. We are old folk."* Chapter 1, pg. 18

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 2

## Chapter 2

Paul thinks of his home and the writing he used to do. Now, writing poems and plays is completely unreal to him. There is no connection for him or any of the younger men to their home. The older men had lives they will return to, but for Paul and his companions, there is nothing to return to because his life hasn't begun yet. Their lives are empty, but they are not sad.

Topic Tracking: Isolation 1

Paul knows that Muller is very sympathetic about Kemmerich. He truly cares about him. But they all understand that Kemmerich can no longer use the boots, and Muller wants them because they no longer serve a purpose. As a foot-solider, it is better that he should have them than an orderly at the hospital. "We have lost all sense of other considerations, because they are artificial. Only the facts are real and important to us. And good boots are hard to come by." Chapter 2, pg. 21 Paul thinks back to when they first enlisted, when they were young and innocent. They were romantic and had no real plans for the future. They were just boys. But by the end of their training, they had their innocence knocked out of them by the army and its drills. There were just tools, not heroes, and even the drills they learned during training were mostly unimportant.

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 3

At the start of their training, Paul, Kropp, Muller, and Kemmerich were assigned to No. 9 platoon, where their commander was Corporal Himmelstoss, a short little man who was a strict and mean officer. Before the army, he was just a postman. Himmelstoss was especially mean to the boys, forcing them to do all kinds of ridiculous drills to break their spirits. He forced Paul to do things like clean the Corporal's Mess with a toothbrush. He made them clear snow with a hand-broom and a dust-pan in the cold until a superior officer stopped him. He heaped many different abuses on the boys. Finally, Paul and Kropp rebelled against him and refused to follow his orders. After that, he abused them and called them swine, but his power was gone. Through the whole training period, his abuse made the boys hard and mean, but it gave them a sense of comradeship that made the trenches of the real war survivable.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 2

Paul goes to visit Kemmerich again the next morning. More wounded are flooding into the hospital. Kemmerich now knows that his foot has been amputated. Paul tries to encourage him, but Kemmerich knows he is going to die. He gives Paul his boots to give to Muller. Paul stays by him, sad that someone he grew up with is dying so horribly. He has seen death before, but it is harder when it is an old friend. Kemmerich slowly fades, barely talking. Finally, when he begins to die, Paul goes to get a doctor. The doctor passes him off to an orderly, because he has no time to look at Kemmerich. The orderly indifferently tells Paul that Kemmerich is the seventeenth to die that day. Paul takes his things and leaves. On his way back to camp, he feels the breeze in his face

and begins to run, angry at Kemmerich's death but happy to be alive himself. At camp, he gives Muller the boots, and they drink rum and tea.

## Chapter 3

Replacements for the many dead men of Second Company come, and many are younger than Paul or his friends. Kropp calls them infants. Kat joins them as they, old veterans, go and inspect the new men. Kat asks one young man what he's had to eat lately, and the new boy complains of the food they've been eating. Kat mocks him and tells him that they often get bread made from sawdust. He offers the boy Haricot beans, which he has stashed in a tub. Paul and Kropp are amazed at Kat's stash of food, which he got from Ginger. He gives some to the boy, and tells him that the next time he wants some, he will have to give Kat some tobacco or a cigar in trade. Paul and Kropp, of course, get it for free.

Kat is a resourceful man. He's smart, experienced, and can get things out of nothing. Paul is happy that he and Kropp have him as a friend. One time, in unknown territory, Kat took Haie and found straw to sleep on. Since they were all very hungry, he asked an artilleryman about food. The man laughed at him, but Kat just went back out. The others didn't have a lot of hope, but Kat soon returned with two loaves of bread and a bag of horse meat. The artilleryman was amazed, but Kat didn't give him anything. Instead, the other men ate well and went to sleep happy.

*"That is Kat. If for one hour in a year something eatable were to be had in some one place only, within that hour, as if moved by a vision, he would put on his cap, go out and walk directly there, as though following a compass, and find it."* Chapter 3, pg. 40

The men sit out in the sun next to the hut. They have just finished practicing saluting for an hour because Tjaden didn't salute an officer properly. Kat says, "'You take it from me, we are losing the war because we can salute too well.'" Chapter 3, pg. 40 Kropp and Kat begin to argue about the war while laying a bet on an airfight overhead. Kat, with his experience, quotes a rhyme: "Give 'em all the same grub and all the same pay/And the war would be over and done in a day." Chapter 3, pg. 41 Kropp, argues that war should be like a sports event: the generals should be given clubs and fight it out in an arena while the people watch. They drop the subject, and the men begin to reminisce about hot summers at the training barracks and drills they were forced to practice--a long way away from the front line. Overhead, the German airplane is shot down, and Kropp, the loser, gives Kat money for a beer. They talk about Himmelstoss and why he's so mean, and Kat tells them that human nature makes men like Himmelstoss desire power and abuse power. Only in the army are men free to abuse others and force them to do pointless things. Discipline is good to learn, but what they learned in training is pointless and everyone knows it.

### Topic Tracking: Comrades 3

As they talk about this, Tjaden rushes up with news: Himmelstoss, their hated Corporal, has been ordered to the front. Tjaden holds a grudge against Himmelstoss, because he was abused by him more than anyone else during training. Himmelstoss, angry at Tjaden for wetting the bed, forced him to sleep in a bunk under another bedwetter as

punishment. They haven't seen him since the night before they left for the front, when they took revenge on him for his abuse. Paul, Haie, Kropp, and Tjaden waited for him one dark night when he was coming back from the pub, pulled a bed-cover over his head, pulled his pants down, and beat him with a whip. Haie punched him twice in the head, and the boys ran away. He never found out who attacked him. Now, Himmelstoss will be coming to the real war, where the boys know more than he does.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 4



## Chapter 4

Paul's group is sent to the front to string barbed wire. They ride in the dark, jammed in the back of lorries, or trucks. They drive without lights to avoid alerting the other side. During the ride, Paul hears geese cackling from a house, and he and Kat make plans to return. At the artillery lines, the group is surrounded by gunfire. Kat predicts that the English will bombard them soon. Paul and the others aren't afraid, but are tensely aware of what is going on around them and ready to take cover.

"To me the front is a mysterious whirlpool. Though I am in still water far away from its centre, I feel the whirl of the vortex sucking me slowly, irresistibly, inescapably into itself." Chapter 4, pg. 55 This is how Paul thinks of the front. At the front, he lives on instinct. He clutches the ground for protection, doing what has become natural. That is how he survives. He has no need to explain it. He and his companions simply let animal instinct take over at the front.

They arrive at a wooded area and get out of the trucks. A column of men pass by them in the mist as the trucks leave. The men load up with barbed wire and begin to walk to where it needs to be placed. They are ordered to put out their cigarettes, to avoid being a target. The horizon glows red, and they can see rockets being fired. Searchlights cross the sky, shooting down an airplane. The men begin stringing the barbed wire, attaching it to iron stakes. Paul cuts his hand while working. After a few hours, they are done with the job and settle in to wait for the trucks to pick them up. Paul falls asleep, but is awakened by shells exploding nearby. The new recruits are scared. The men begin to crawl away quickly as the shelling gets closer. One hits in the middle of their group. Paul bumps into a new recruit, scared to death, holding his head to the ground. He is small and scared, and reminds Paul of Kemmerich. Paul grabs the recruit's helmet and covers his rear with it. The men stay down and wait out the shelling. He hears cries in the distance. Once it quiets down, Paul shakes the recruit and tells him it's safe. The recruit puts his helmet back on and realizes that he's soiled his underwear. Paul tells him that is happens to everyone and sends him off to throw his underwear away. Kropp reports that there are wounded some distance away. The cries, however, are of horses, not men. Detering, the farmer, loves horses and says that someone should shoot the horses and put them out of their misery. They listen to the screams for some time, getting more and more upset. Using binoculars, they see wounded horses running while soldiers move wounded men on stretchers. Finally, after the wounded men are moved, the soldiers start shooting the horses. It takes a long time to finish them off.

Paul's group starts heading back to the trucks. Just as they get back to the wooded area, the shelling begins again and trees explode around them. The men take cover in a cemetery, where they are trapped. Paul is hit in the head by something, and almost faints. Directly in front of him, a shell hits and blows a hole in the ground. Paul dives into the hole for cover, but the hole is part of a grave. He stays close to the dead body in the ground until Kat grabs him and tells him to put his gas mask on. They are being hit with mustard gas, which burns the lungs and will kill them very slowly if they breathe it. A few feet away, a new recruit is on the ground. Paul crawls to him, pulls his gas mask on, and

then jumps back into the shell-hole. Kat, Kropp, and another man take cover there as well. They can barely see through the goggles of their gas masks. Gas starts collecting in the hole, but they are trapped by the shelling. A shell hits the ground and sends a coffin flying on top of them. It hits the fourth man and traps his arm. They free him and use wood from the coffin to make a splint for his broken arm. The gas masks are suffocating. The shelling stops, and Paul crawls out of the hole. The gas has cleared enough for Paul to pull his mask off. All around him, the graveyard is a pile of bodies that have been blown out of the ground. Paul and Kat stop to help a man whose hip has been destroyed. As they try to dress his wound, Paul sees that he has no underwear on and realizes that it is the boy he helped earlier. The boy is badly hurt and begs them not to leave him. Kat and Paul contemplate shooting him to end his pain, but before they can, others start to gather. They get a stretcher for the boy, and move on.

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 4

After the eight wounded are taken care of and the five dead buried, the men walk another hour in the rain to get back to the trucks. As they ride back to camp, the rain pours down on them. The men start to doze. They hear another explosion in the distance, but when nothing else happens, they fall back asleep.

## Chapter 5

Paul and the rest of the men are back at camp killing the lice and other parasites that cover their bodies. Tjaden has made a stove out of a candle, some wire, and the lid to a tin of boot-polish, and they throw the bugs on the stove, where they die. The men compare bugs and laugh, but they are all more interested in the recent arrival of Corporal Himmelstoss. He has indeed been sent to the front, punishment for overzealously abusing recruits.

Muller begins asking the others what they would do if it was peace-time again. Kropp grumpily tells him he would get drunk. Kat tells them they would all go home and shows them a picture of his wife. Haie says he would find a beautiful girl and spend a week in bed with her. They all contemplate this for a minute, and then Haie says he'd probably stay in the army if he was a noncommissioned officer. Paul cannot believe this, but Haie says the army during peace-time is better than digging peat. Afterwards, he could become a police officer. Kat tells him that he will never become a non-com, and that silences him. Muller asks Tjaden what he would do, and Tjaden can only think of revenge against Himmelstoss. When asked, Detering says that he would simply go on working on his farm.

Himmelstoss appears, and greets the men awkwardly. They are hostile. Tjaden calls him a dirty hound, and Himmelstoss orders him to stand up. When Tjaden responds rudely and passes gas, Himmelstoss threatens him with court-martial and storms off. Everyone laughs but Kat, who knows Himmelstoss is serious. Tjaden, however, doesn't care, and leaves to avoid the superiors.

Muller continues asking his question. Instead of answering him, Kropp starts talking about the subjects they studied in school. It is clear to all that what they learned in school isn't very useful to them. Kropp says that while Kat, Haie, and Detering have jobs back home, none of the boys know how to do anything but fight. They never had the chance to learn anything else. "The war has ruined us for everything." Chapter 5, pg. 87

Topic Tracking: Isolation 2

*"We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces. The first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. We believe in such things no longer, we believe in the war."* Chapter 5, pg. 88

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 5

Himmelstoss returns with a fat sergeant-major, looking for Tjaden. The men pretend they don't know. The sergeant-major announces that Tjaden is ordered to report to the Orderly Room in ten minutes. Paul goes and tells Tjaden that they are looking for him, and he goes to find another place to hide. Himmelstoss returns after a half-hour and

tells them that they should look for Tjaden. Kropp responds by mocking him, and Himmelstoss storms off again. That night, the trial is held. Lieutenant Bertink calls them all as witnesses. When Paul and Kropp explain why Tjaden hates Himmelstoss, Bertink lectures Himmelstoss on the difference between the front and the parade-ground in training camp. He gives Tjaden three days in the camp's jail and Kropp one, but only because he is obligated to. The others are free to visit them and play cards, which they do for most of the night.

After the game, Kat and Paul go hunting for the geese they heard on the way to the front for wiring detail. They hitch a ride on a supply wagon back to the shed where the geese are held. It is part of a regimental headquarters. Paul climbs over the wall and sneaks to the shed. He grabs the two geese, but they put up a mean fight and make a lot of noise. A guard dog tries to bite his neck, so Paul stays still with his collar protecting his neck. He is stuck for a long time, until he manages to slowly pull his gun and fire it at the dog. He jumps up, grabs a goose, and runs. At the wall, he throws the goose to Kat and climbs out of the way just as the dog jumps at him. Paul and Kat run back to camp and roast the goose. As it cooks, Paul thinks about how much he and Kat have in common due to the war, dozes off, and dreams of a place like heaven. When the goose is finished, the two men eat heartily. They wrap the rest in newspaper and take it to the jail to give to Kropp and Tjaden. After the two in jail happily eat, Paul and Kat walk back to their hut to sleep as dawn comes.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 5

## Chapter 6

Paul's group is sent to the front early to prepare for a coming offensive. On the way there, they pass a huge wall of brand-new coffins. The men joke crudely about them, but they know that the coffins are there for them. At the front, they can hear the sound of trucks bringing supplies to the enemy. It is obvious that the English are preparing for something big. Morale is very low. That night, while keeping post in the dug-outs, they are shelled by their own artillery. This is not the first time that this has happened.

Paul thinks about a time that he left a dug-out and when he returned it was gone. To him and his comrades, life and death become meaningless on the front. "We lie under the network of arching shells and live in a suspense of uncertainty. If a shot comes, we can duck, that is all; we neither know nor can determine where it will fall." Chapter 6, pg. 101

Rats eat the men's bread so they come up with a plan to kill them. They throw bits of bad bread in a pile and wait in the dark until the rats come, and then kill them with their spades. This helps for a short time. They find a few recruits who own saw-edged bayonets. They take these away and give them regular ones. They say that the enemy kills and brutalizes soldiers using the more destructive saw-edged bayonets. Paul comments that sharpened spades are more common in combat, anyway.

Time passes and the men become bleak, until the bombing finally happens. The men awake and collect themselves. The bombing seems to go on forever, and the men are stuck in their dug-out. Not even Kat can get them any food. The next morning, they get a little bread. One new recruit gets stir-crazy and insists on leaving the dug-out. Kat and Paul hold him down and slap him around to knock some sense into him. Finally, they have to tie him up and try to play cards to pass the time.

That night, the bombing finally stops, and the men prepare for the attack. They throw grenades out of the dug-out and then crawl out to meet the French enemy. Paul looks into the face of one of the enemy soldiers and almost freezes up--at the last minute, he throws his hand grenade and hits the man's chest. Paul's comrades retreat. There is destruction everywhere, but the enemy is hurt as well. Around noon, the men get in a trench and prepare for their counter-attack. They fight their way back to their first trench and a little beyond. They reach the enemy front line and fight in the trenches, then steal food and return to their position behind the protection of their artillery. That night, they eat happily. Afterwards, on watch, Paul thinks of memories that are calm and quiet. He wonders when he will have such things again, or if the war has ruined him for nice things forever.

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 6

The days drag on, the attacks continue, and the dead increase. One of their men is trapped somewhere in the distance, hurt and screaming. They cannot find him, but must listen to his cries. Eventually, his voice dies out. The men kill time collecting the small parachutes from the shells in between attacks and bombardments. New recruits are

sent up, but they are so inexperienced that they are more harm than good. Many of them are killed almost immediately--five to ten for every one experienced soldier.

Paul encounters Himmelstoss in the trenches and ends up in the same dug-out as him. When they charge again, Paul discovers that Himmelstoss has stayed behind, in a daze. Paul gets angry that Himmelstoss is hiding while young boys are getting killed, and yells and kicks Himmelstoss to get him to fight. A lieutenant comes along and orders them to follow him, and Himmelstoss snaps out of his daze. He boldly rushes out to fight.

*"Bombardment, barrage, curtain-fire, mines, gas, tanks, machine-guns, hand-grenades--words, words, words, but they hold the horror of the world."* Chapter 6, pg. 132

Paul thinks of how tired of battle he is, and it is all he can do to fight and show less experienced people how to fight. He and his friends teach the new recruits important details of avoiding being killed, but when the fighting starts again, the recruits mostly do it wrong. Haie Westhus is dragged away, badly wounded and knowing he is dying. At the end of the battle, only a few hundred yards have been lost, but the battlefield is covered with dead bodies.

Paul's group is relieved and they take a truck away from the front. Paul notes how much the season has changed from when they went to the front. They get off the truck and Company Commander Bertink shouts for Second Company to gather. He orders them to count off, but there are only thirty-two of the original 150 that went to the front at the beginning of the offensive. They march back to their camp.

## Chapter 7

Paul's company is taken back to a field depot to be reorganized and brought back up to strength. While there, the men get some well earned rest and relaxation. While loafing, Himmelstoss comes to them a changed man. His combat experiences have made him more friendly. The men welcome him, except for Tjaden. Soon, however, Himmelstoss is made cook for Second Company, and begins treating Paul and his comrades especially well, and even Tjaden accepts him. They are rested and well fed, and the terror of the front begins to sink down inside them. They never forget, however; they simply enjoy the rest while they have it.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 6

Kropp and Paul discover a poster for a theater company with a picture of a beautiful girl on it. She is perfect, and they can't take their eyes off her. There is a man next to the girl in the picture, but they tear him down, because he is clean and they are filthy. After looking at the beautiful girl some more, they decide to go get deloused and cleaned up. Leer and Tjaden come along and say vulgar things about the girl in the photo. Paul and Kropp leave to get cleaned up.

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 7

While swimming, Paul, Leer, Kropp, and Tjaden spy three beautiful French women walking on the bank of the river across from their camp, where they aren't allowed to go. Paul especially notices one, a beautiful brunette girl. Using a little French, hand gestures, and a loaf of bread, they make plans with the girls to meet late that night. They go drinking at the canteen and smoke and tell stories of their sexual experiences. Since there are only three women, they get Tjaden so drunk that he passes out, and then get bread, sausage and cigarettes for the girls. They put the presents in their boots, and then go to the river.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 7

They swim across, holding the boots out of the water. On the other bank, they put their boots on and run, naked, to the girls' house. Once there, they give the girls their presents and watch them eat. The girls are very hungry. They chat happily in French, which Paul and his comrades barely understand. They pair off, and Paul and the brunette go to a bedroom. He is nervous about the encounter, feeling naked without his soldier's gear. The girl kisses him, and Paul kisses her back, hoping that by making love to the girl, he will be able to forget the war, but he can't. On the way back to their camp, he is miserable, until they see Tjaden running, naked, to the river. They laugh and go to their quarters to sleep.

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 8

Topic Tracking: Isolation 3



Paul is issued leave--seventeen days. Bertink tells him that after traveling, he will report to a training camp before he returns to the front. His comrades are jealous. Kat advises him to try and get a safe desk job. They drink at the canteen and say good-bye to him, but Paul gloomily wonders who will still be alive when he returns from his training. That night, they meet the French girls again. Paul tells the brunette that he is going on leave, but she doesn't seem to care. Paul is confused, but realizes that the girl finds his leave boring, and would only be interested if he was going to the front. The next morning, Kropp and Kat walk him to the train station, and then say goodbye. Paul is left impatiently waiting for his train.

As Paul travels, he watches the countryside go by out the window and becomes nervous with anticipation as he approaches his hometown. Morning has just started by the time they pull into his station. He looks around, but doesn't know anyone. He leaves that station and looks around, memories of his pre-war life coming back to him as he walks home. Once there, he is greeted by his oldest sister, who hugs him in joy and calls for his mother. Paul almost faints, but pulls himself together. He looks in on his mother, who is very sick. He sits by her and thinks of how kind she is for making his favorite foods, but he is uneasy and cannot feel at home amongst his childhood things. "There is a distance, a veil between us." Chapter 7, pg. 160

#### Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 9

He gives his mother and sister the food he has brought from the front. His mother becomes anxious and asks him how it is at the front, because she has heard stories from other soldiers. Paul cannot answer her questions truthfully, so he tries to ease her worry. In doing so, he becomes more comfortable being home. After he leaves her side, he asks his sister about his mother's illness. The doctors are not sure, but they think it is cancer.

On the street, Paul encounters a Major who yells at him for not saluting properly. When the major hears that Paul is on leave from the front, he yells at him more and tells him that his "front-line manners" aren't welcome there. Paul goes home angry and throws his uniform in the corner. His old suit doesn't fit very well, but it is light after months of wearing a uniform. His mother is happy he has changed, but his father wants him to put his uniform back on so he can show off. Paul refuses.

#### Topic Tracking: Isolation 4

Paul goes to a beer-garden to have a drink. He sits quietly and thinks the townsfolk he can't bring himself to get along with. That evening, his father asks a lot of stupid questions about the front. Paul got annoyed with the questions, because his father didn't understand that talking about the front won't make you understand the front. When his father asked if he has fought in hand-to-hand combat, Paul left the house. On the street, he encountered his old German-master, who stopped him and insisted that he join a few other men and talk about the war. One of the men told him that a foot-soldier couldn't understand the grand scheme of the war, and could only understand his limited duty. Paul thought being on leave would be different, but the war has changed him too much





to just return home as if nothing was happening. He is happier alone, away from the people he no longer understands. He is attracted and repelled by normal civilian life all at the same time, and ultimately can only think of his comrades back at the front.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 8

Topic Tracking: Isolation 5

Back at home, Paul sits in his room and looks at his books and other possessions. He misses the joy he got in reading and learning. He hopes that after the war he will be able to return and love his books again. He thinks of Kemmerich, and contemplates visiting his mother, but that leads him to thinking about being with his comrades at the front. He turns his attention back to his room, and tries to find inspiration in his books. When he pages through them, however, he finds that they no longer inspire him the way they once did. Dejected, he puts them away and leaves the room.

He goes to visit another old friend, Mittelstaedt, at the local army barracks, and receives interesting news: their old teacher, Kantorek, has been called up as a territorial--a low-ranking soldier. Mittelstaedt tells Paul all about ordering Kantorek around, including yelling at him for the death of their classmate, Joseph Behm. He then shows Paul Kantorek himself, who is forced to wear old, badly fitting clothing for his uniform. Paul laughs and thinks about the days when he was scared of Kantorek. Mittelstaedt makes Kantorek do all kinds of torturous exercise, taunting him with Kantorek's own quotes from their old classroom.

The days go by and Paul's mother becomes increasingly upset that he will have to leave again. Paul tries to occupy himself by getting bones from the slaughter-house, but there are not enough for the entire town, so Paul uses his army rations from the base to give his family a good meal. With four days left in his leave, he decides to go see Kemmerich's mother. There, she cries and yells and begs him to tell her of her son's death. He lies to her and tells her he died quickly, but she doesn't believe him. She asks him to swear he's telling the truth "by everything sacred," but Paul is hard pressed to think of anything he finds sacred anymore. He swears anyway, and says he hopes he will never return from the front if he is lying. She gives him a picture of Kemmerich and he leaves.

Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 10

Paul's last night at home, his mother comes to his bed. They sit in silence for some time, and then Paul tells her to go to sleep. He assures her that he will try to visit while at training camp. She warns him about French women and tells him to be careful at the front. He assures her he's going to do everything he can to be safe, and walks her to her room. As they say goodnight, she gives him some underwear that she couldn't really afford, and goes to bed. Paul goes back to bed, agonized, wishing he had never come home on leave.

Topic Tracking: Isolation 6

## Chapter 8

Paul returns to the training camp on the moors where he first got his training at the hands of Himmelstoss. He knows very few people there anymore. Training is boring and nothing new to Paul. He instead devotes his attention to the beauty of the Nature around him. Sometimes he gets so wrapped up that he risks missing commands. Next to the camp is a Russian prison. Often prisoners come across the wire to Paul's camp to pick through the garbage for what little food they might find. Paul thinks that they don't look much different than his own German farmers, with honest faces of farmers and peasants. They are sick and starving, and beg the Germans for food. Sometimes they trade boots or carvings for food. They are tired and listless, although Paul is told that at first, they were lively and often fought amongst themselves. Paul watches them and understands them; they are only his enemy because someone said so. In reality, they are not that different from him. He thinks that his own officers are more of a true enemy than the Russians. He gives them each half a cigarette, and then leaves them be.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 9

Topic Tracking: Isolation 7

Towards the end of his training, his father and sister come to visit him. His mother is now in the hospital, waiting for an operation for her cancer. His father is very worried that he will not have the money to pay for the operation. Paul envisions him working late, slaving away in order to pay the expensive bills. He tells his father some army jokes to cheer him up. He walks them to the train station, and they give him some jam and potato-cakes that his mother made. He goes back to camp, but cannot eat the food. He considers giving it all away to the Russians, but thinks of the pain his mother was in when she made it, and gives the Russians just two cakes.

## Chapter 9

At the end of Paul's trip back to the front, he discovers that no one knows where his regiment is, and he must find it himself. As he searches, he asks about Kat and Albert, but no one has heard anything. He is forced to camp by himself for a few nights as he looks for his comrades. He finally finds some good information on them, but is told to wait until they return from the front in two more days to rejoin them.

Topic Tracking: Isolation 8

When the men return, he finds Kat, Albert, Tjaden, and Muller. He feels uneasy around them, but doesn't know why. He gives them shares of his mother's potato-cakes and jam. Kat compliments him on his mother's cakes, and Paul feels close to crying. He is sad, but he feels that for the first time since before his leave, he is where he belongs. Rumors go around that they are being transferred to the Russian front. Inspections increase, and then they find out that the Kaiser is coming to review his troops. Much fuss goes on for the next week, until the important day that their leader visits them. On the big day, Paul is disappointed. The Kaiser seems less impressive than his pictures. They talk afterwards and Kat makes fun of Tjaden for being so impressed by the Kaiser. Albert and Paul argue about the war and who is right, since both sides believe that they are right and deserve to win. The comrades discuss war, and why war happens, but in the end, they find no good answer for the fighting.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 10

On the way back to the front, they see a naked man hanging in a tree. Kat tells Paul it's because the man has been blown out of his clothes. Paul hasn't seen anything like it. They report the body to the stretcher-bearers and move on.

The men are sent out on patrol to scout out the enemy position. In front of them are "black troops," or men dressed in black uniforms that are hard to see. They move out beyond the trenches. A bomb goes off, and Paul is very frightened. He realizes that his leave has softened him, and that he is about to fall apart. He hears the voice of his mother and sees the Russians from the prison camp in his head. He stays on the ground and cannot convince himself to move. Finally, when he hears Kat's voice, his strength returns to him, and he can try to rejoin his comrades. On his way back to their trench, however, he gets lost in a field of shell-holes. A bombardment begins, and Paul is forced to take cover.

Topic Tracking: Isolation 9

Paul stays in the shell-hole through the entire bombardment and German counter-attack. Suddenly, a man comes flying into the hole on top of him. Before he can think, Paul stabs the French soldier with his knife. He has not killed the man, but wounded him severely. Paul cannot bring himself to finish the job, however, and is stuck in the hole

waiting for the man to die. Paul tries to help him be comfortable, but there is not a lot he can do. He dresses the man's wounds and calls him Comrade.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 11

After many more hours, the man dies. Paul, still stuck in the hole, closes the man's eyes and thinks of the man's wife. After a while he starts talking to the man, trying to explain why he killed him.

*"But now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me. I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship. Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us that you are poor devils like us, that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, and that we have the same fear of death, and the same dying and the same agony--Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy?"* Chapter 9, pg. 223

Paul goes through the man's wallet and finds pictures of his wife and daughter. He tries to read the letters he finds, but he can't read the French. Finally, he looks at the man's name--although he is scared that it will haunt him--and writes his address down.

Later, Paul calms down a bit. He is exhausted and hungry. The man's name isn't bothering him. He babbles promises to the body, but he knows he will not do anything for the dead man. As it gets dark, Paul prepares to leave the shell-hole. As he leaves, the dead man is forgotten. He sees someone moving on his wire, and he runs to it. He finds Kat and Albert with a stretcher, looking for him.

They return to the trench, where Paul tells them what happened. He doesn't mention the man he killed, but the next morning tells Albert and Kat. They comfort him, and eventually he begins to feel better, saying "War is war."

Topic Tracking: Comrades 12

## Chapter 10

The men are assigned guard duty in an abandoned village. They are supposed to guard a supply dump inside the village. Kat, Albert, Tjaden, Muller, and Detering are all there. Paul thinks of Haie Westhus, but he is dead. The men settle into a basement of a bombed-out home and relax. Paul and Kat patrol the empty houses and find two little pigs. The men decide to make a huge feast with fresh vegetables. They find a fully-equipped kitchen, slaughter the pigs, and get to work cooking. They make a huge meal of pig, potato-cakes, and vegetables. Two radio-men visit and join in the feast.

Soon, they realize their mistake. The smoke from their cooking has been spotted and the enemy begins to shell their house. They refuse to leave the food half-cooked. With shells exploding around them, they finish cooking and haul their food back to their basement. They all make it safely through heavy shelling. The food stretches out over several hours, and they find officer's coffee and tobacco in the supply dump. That night, they find a kitten and feed it, and eat yet again.

The men have stuffed themselves too much, however. The fat on the pig makes them all very sick, and they have to go to the bathroom frequently. By four in the morning, all eleven men are squatting outside, relieving themselves. The supply dump is blown open and other soldiers swarm in and steal food. Paul and the other guards trade the other soldiers food for things they need, including chocolate to calm their bowels.

Two weeks pass with Paul and his comrades happily wasting their days guarding the supply dump. They do nothing but relax and treat themselves. Another week, and they are ordered back to the front. They load some treasures on the truck, put the kitten in a birdcage, and head back, signing happily.

They are sent out to evacuate a village. They don't expect the French to fire on them while escorting civilians, but they do. The men scatter. Albert is hit in the knee. Paul grabs him and they run. They find a dug-out and stop. Paul realized he is wounded as well, and the two men bandage each other. Albert is having trouble moving his leg. Paul crawls to an ambulance, and they are taken to a dressing-station. While laying there, Albert swears he will kill himself rather than be a cripple. The surgeon comes to look at Paul, who refuses to be chloroformed out of fear that they will amputate his leg. The surgeon pokes around in his wound, digs out a piece of shell, and tells Paul he is going home.

Once back with Albert, Paul makes a plan to make sure the two of them stay together. He gives the medical sergeant-major some cigars and promises him more if Albert and he stay together. The next morning, they are loaded onto the train. Paul doesn't want to get in his bed, because he doesn't want to get in a clean bed with lice. The nurse laughs and tells him to get in.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 13



Later, Paul needs to go to the bathroom, but he cannot bring himself to ask the young pretty nurse for help. He falls out of bed trying to get up. Finally, Albert tells the nurse what Paul needs, and she gives Paul a bottle to urinate in. After a few hours, most of the men have bottles, and modesty isn't a problem anymore.

#### Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 11

Paul hears that Albert will be getting off the train to have his fever treated, so he fakes a fever as well. They are put in a Catholic hospital, where they get good care but are awakened by the nuns praying in the morning. Paul shouts for quiet, but one of the nuns tells him that prayer is more important than sleep. Finally, Paul throws a bottle at the door of their room, and the nuns, offended, shut their door. At noon, an investigator comes and yells at them for abusing the nuns. He asks who threw the bottle and another man, Josef, admits guilt before Paul can speak up. When the investigator leaves, the man tells everyone that he has a "shooting license," a certificate saying that he is not responsible for his actions.

That night, one of the men in their room complains that he is bleeding. It takes forever to get the night nurse to respond. When she does, they see that the man is looking very sick. Within a few days, he is gone. Josef tells them that they have taken him to the Dying Room, where terminal patients die. Later, another man, Peter, is rolled out of their room, but he realizes that they are taking him to die and tries to stop them. The last Paul sees of him is him yelling, "I will come back again! I will come back again!" Chapter 10, pg. 258

#### Topic Tracking: Isolation 10

Paul is operated on. It makes him very sick, and he vomits a lot. Two flat-footed men arrive at the hospital. Josef warns them that the Chief Surgeon likes experimenting on flat-footed men, trying to correct the problem, and that they should refuse any treatment that doesn't have anything to do with their injury. The men take his advice, but the surgeon wears them down and gets them to agree to the procedure. Meanwhile, Kropp loses his leg. He is threatening suicide. A new blind man tries to kill himself with a fork. As the days go on, many men die. The mood of the hospital is bleak, until one day, when Peter is brought back to their room. None of the men expected to see him come back from the Dying Room, but he is proud and much healthier. Josef is stunned.

As Paul gets better, he can use crutches, but he avoids Albert's gaze. When he moves around, he leaves the room, so he doesn't have to look at Albert. He wanders the hallways of the hospital and sees all the injured men dying. He thinks of how his hospital is just one of thousands in Germany, France, and Russia, and is blown away at the sheer number of soldiers dying:

*"I am young, I am twenty years old; yet I know nothing of life but despair, death, fear, and fatuous superficiality cast over an abyss of sorrow. I see how peoples are set against one another, and in silence, unknowingly, foolishly, obediently, innocently slay one another."* Chapter 10, pg. 263

#### Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 12

Lewandowski is a married man in Paul's room. He is very excited because his wife, who he hasn't seen in two years, is coming to visit. However, Lewandowski is worried that he won't be able to get away from the hospital to have sex with his wife. The men recommend some good spots in the town where they could be alone, but they don't know a sure way to get him out. When his wife arrives, he introduces her to the other men in the room. She changed her baby's diaper, and the two sit and talk. One of the men checks the hallway, and tells him that the coast is clear. Then they set up a distraction for the sisters and let Lewandowski and his wife have sex in his hospital bed while they play skat with their backs turned. Albert holds the baby. Once it is over, Lewandowski and his wife give out sausage slices to the men. They are very happy and glowing.

#### Topic Tracking: Comrades 14

#### Topic Tracking: Innocence Lost 13

After a few more weeks, Albert and Paul finally must separate. Albert goes to an institute for artificial limbs, and Paul goes home for sick leave, then back to the front.



## Chapter 11

The trees are green and spring has come to the front. Death is just another thing to deal with: "Our thoughts are clay, they are moulded with the changes of the days;--when we are resting they are good; under fire, they are dead. Fields of craters within and without." Chapter 11, pg. 271 For the men on the front, nothing exists besides life and death. All other distinctions are gone. They are soldiers, comrades, and that is all. That is what holds them together.

Paul thinks of Detering, who spotted a cherry tree in full bloom near their billets and picked a few blossoms. The men made fun of him. That night, Paul heard him moving around and spoke to him. Detering told him of his own cherry trees back home. Paul, suspecting that he would desert, stayed up all night waiting, but Detering didn't do anything. The next morning, however, he was gone. They later heard that he had been caught by the military police. They heard nothing else.

The men are now fighting crater to crater. The trenches can no longer hold. They are surrounded by the English, but then Berger brings up a machine-gun and the counter-attack frees them. They stay in cover, but Berger leaves again to put a dog out of its misery. Everyone tells him he's mad, but he leaves anyway, and is shot.

Muller is killed. Before he dies he gives Paul Kemmerich's boots. Paul promises them to Tjaden next. They cannot bury Muller because their line is falling back too quickly. Healthy, well-fed English and American troops are overrunning them, while they are sick and starving. Their supplies are almost gone, and their food is terrible. Even so, they don't think that the end is near. They know only two things, fighting and the hospital, where doctors send men who shouldn't fight back to the front to fight. Tanks roll over them, gas burns their lungs. "Trenches, hospitals, the common grave--there are no other possibilities." Chapter 11, pg. 283

Bertink is killed, hit in the chest while shooting an enemy soldier with no cover. He is hit in the face by a shell, the same shell that tears Leer's leg open. They both die.

Topic Tracking: Comrades 15

Topic Tracking: Isolation 11

Summer comes and it is obvious to everyone that they are losing the war. Airplanes now fly over them and kill at will. They are badly outnumbered. The heat and weather oppress them. On a particularly bad day, Kat is hit in the leg while bringing food. Paul fixes his leg up, but Kat is bleeding badly. Paul grabs him and drags him through the field to the nearest dressing-station. Kat is in a lot of pain. The shelling gets worse and they hide in a hole. Paul, worried, knows that when Kat goes to the hospital, he will have no more friends. They trade addresses, and then they move on. Finally, after a great amount of effort, Paul reaches the dressing station with Kat in his arms. He is exhausted, but overjoyed that Kat is going to be all right. At that moment, however, an orderly walks up and tells Paul that he has wasted his energy--Kat is dead. A splinter



from a grenade hit him in the back of his head. Paul cannot believe it at first, but Kat no longer moves or breathes. "Do I walk? Have I feet still? I raise my eyes, I let them move round, and turn myself with them, one circle, one circle, and I stand in the midst. All is as usual. Only the Militiaman Stanislaus Katczinsky has died. Then I know nothing more." Chapter 11, pg. 291

## Chapter 12

Summer turns into fall. Paul is the last of the boys from his class. Peace, it seems, is right around the corner. Paul is resting because he was hit with some gas. He thinks of going home, but he cannot make plans. He has been destroyed. No one will be able to understand him or any other soldiers, he thinks. He looks around and hopes that joy will return to him:

*"Let the months and years come, they can take nothing from me, they can take nothing more. I am so alone, and so without hope that I can confront them without fear. The life that has borne me through these years is still in my hands and my eyes. Whether I have subdued it, I know not. But so long as it is there it will seek its own way out, heedless of the will that is within me."* Chapter 12, pg. 295

Topic Tracking: Comrades 16

With that final statement, Paul dies. "He fell in October 1918, on a day that was so quiet and still on the whole front, that the army report confined itself to the single sentence: All quiet on the Western Front. He had fallen forward and lay on the earth as though sleeping. Turning him over one saw that he could not have suffered long; his face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come." Chapter 12, pg. 296

Topic Tracking: Isolation 12