

Student Essay on How Was Your Death?

How Was Your Death? by Erich Maria Remarque

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Essay

The novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque shares the same theme as Siegfried Sassoon's poem, "How to Die." Putting these two works together makes up into one general theme on how soldiers die, whether they die with peace or disturbance addressing World War I.

Many soldiers die unexpectedly, therefore, they all die differently. Some soldiers die through bombings, poison gases, machine guns, and starvation. Most soldiers die with misery and suffering, but one soldier dies peacefully. "He fell in October 1918, on a day that was so quiet and still on the whole front." Paul Baumer, the narrator of the novel, dies without disturbing emotions. He was calm and quiet, which is similar to one of the poem's stanza. "The dying soldier shifts his head/ To watch the glory that returns" (3-4). The soldier here is dying and he is glad that his time had come. The soldier's death resembles Paul's death, therefore, both the novel and the poem signify the same theme on "how to die." Paul's "face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come."

Death is also shown in different ways in both the novel and the poem. Some of Paul's comrades die with agony, and the poem itself shows sufferings from a soldier. "He lifts his fingers towards the skies/ Where holy brightness breaks in flame" (5-6). At first, the soldier thinks of peace as he dies, but the mood changes when the brightness is taken over by flame. Flame symbolizes evil and in this case, agony for the soldier. In the novel,

Kemmerich dies with difficulty. Some parts of him want to die and some parts do not, but



basically he wants to finish up his life so that the suffering would end. But every soldier has to wait for their right time, and that is the hard part. More or less, they have to face the sufferings and witness their own death.

Siegfried Sassoon's poem, "How to Die", has a theme that is displayed as a theme in Erich Maria Remarque's novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Both works' themes blend into one general theme. In other words, what their death is like.