

# Themes that are relevant in today's world in johnny got his gun

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



## **Johnny Got His Gun: Social Connections**

Though written during the American interwar period during the first half of the twentieth century, Dalton Trumbo's "Johnny Got His Gun" contains themes that remain relevant in today's world, especially with the increasing number of armed conflicts in foreign countries that the United States military is becoming involved in, despite a lack of public support or understanding of the U. S.'s role in these conflicts. Many people become involved in these wars, despite having no real connection to the causes of the conflict, putting themselves at great risk of personal injury or death. Furthermore, such injuries can destroy the relationships people had, either due to the various forms of post-traumatic stress disorders that arise following a return from the battlefield, or simply due to the grievous injuries sustained by those who aren't lucky enough to make it out intact. This is precisely the same fate that befalls Trumbo's fictional character, Joe, during his time as an American soldier during World War I. Joe explicitly describes his lack of a connection to Germany or Europe, and his regret towards his decision to enter the war, as well as being horrifically mutilated so as to suffer a fate worse than death, destroying his ability to maintain effective relationships with people, despite his development of a rudimentary communication system later on. The circumstances surrounding what happens to Joe, while exaggerated and unlikely to happen in real life, are still within the realm of possibility and are in accordance with the struggles faced by many today.

While considering himself an American, Joe states that he had less to do with "with Germany... or even with Washington D. C." than he had to do with the

"man in the moon". While Joe did consider himself a patriot, he never truly had any real reason to enter the war other than to fight for his country. Joe neither understood the political situation in Europe at the time, stating that he had never even heard of Romania outside of a geography class, and only entered the war because "America entered the war, and he had to come too". Similarly, today, wars are being fought in the Middle East for reasons that the general public does not understand either due to a lack of connection to the issues surrounding the war or because of information being withheld by politicians. The most obvious example of this that springs to mind is the Iraq War. The majority of the American public was not fully informed about why the U. S. entered the Iraq War, or the details surrounding it, but simply supported it due to the mere mention of "WMD's" by political entities that preyed upon the feelings of the public at the time to gain support, similar to how in World War I, mentioning "Germany" would stir the feelings of people who, despite supporting the war, knew little of the complex geopolitical environment of Europe at the time. That is not to say that Germany did not deserve the punishment it received, rather it is that the American public simply did not know the details about the war.

During his time as a soldier, Joe is gravely wounded and as a result cannot move, hear, speak, or see. His arms, legs, and face have been destroyed, terminating his career as a soldier, and rendering him incapable to communicate anything more than simple morse code taps with his head. His arms get amputated, but he can not give consent to proceed with the amputation, and is horrified by the discovery that his arms have been

removed without his approval in a passage on page thirteen. As a direct result of this, he laments on page nineteen that he will never be able to hold Kareen, the woman he loves, ever again. Similarly, today people returning from battlefields often have irreversible physical damage done to them, and while they may not be as severe as Joe's, they still leave them incapable to do many things. Many veterans come home from wars nowadays missing limbs due to IED explosions or similar events. If they are physically unscathed, they may develop PTSD as a result of spending so much time around so much death and bloodshed, inhibiting their ability to maintain relationships with the ones they love. While the circumstances of these disabilities are slightly different than those that befall Joe, they are still indicative of a major traumatic effect that wars have on people, physically and emotionally, both in the time of WWI and even in modern times.

Though circumstances through the years may have changed, war still leaves many unable to maintain emotional and interpersonal stability, especially when people fight in or support these wars without adequate knowledge of what they are supporting, a phenomenon that has existed forever and will continue to, unfortunately, exist well into the foreseeable future. Dalton Trumbo's "Johnny Got His Gun" provides this message that continues to remain relevant in today's climate of American involvement in foreign armed conflict.