

Enrich maria
remarque's all quiet
on the western front



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Enrich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* is a war story told by a 19-year-old named Paul Baumer. He and his friends were persuaded by the speeches of their teacher to enlist in the German army in World War I. Once enlisted, Paul and his friends realized that war is not honorable like their teacher said.

They're in constant fear both physically and mentally. *All Quiet on the Western Front* portrays idealism versus reality on the front lines of war. The novel shows how a soldier's mind slowly breaks down. Symbolism can be found in *All Quiet on the Western Front* to show the seriousness and brutality of war.

In *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Remarque shows a transition from idealism to realism. In chapter one, Paul remembers his teacher who he once respected, Kantorek. Kantorek was a man with strong patriotic values. He made war sound honorable. Paul resents him and blames Kantorek for pressuring him and his friends into the army with his ideals without explaining the realities of the horrors of war. Paul along with his friends would find that war was death, that there would be a disconnect between home and war, constant fear, a lack of training, lack of food, and disease.

In chapter 11 of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Paul compares the war to a disease like the flu and cancer. Like some diseases can't be controlled, the soldiers no longer control their thoughts. Their thoughts are controlled by daily activities. When they are in battle, their minds are blank slates in order to cope with the realities of war without losing their minds. The men have begun to identify as soldiers first and men last in order to survive the

conditions of war fare. The soldiers in the Second Company have formed a close bond. Although these soldiers have conditioned their minds to be hard and cold, they begin to crack with the longevity of the war. The breakdown of Paul's mind begins when Detering tries to go AWOL, but is captured, tried, and never seen again. Muller is shot in the abdomen and endures a long and painful transition to death. The quality of the food worsens, and food becomes scarce. When Paul's dearest friend Kat is killed by a piece of shrapnel, it is seen that war has become a mental prison.

The novel includes a few pieces of symbolism. Kemmerich's boots are passed from one soldier to another as each owner dies. Before Kemmerich's death, he took the boots from the body of a corpse. Muller claimed the boots for himself as Kemmerich is dying. Paul gave the boots to Muller after he dies. Ironically, Paul received the boots when Muller dies. The boots symbolize the lack of respect for life during the war. The boots are more useful and durable during war than human life. Additionally, Paul is killed in October of 1918. The army report states, *All Quiet on the West Front* (Remarque p. 296). The narrator described Paul's face as calm, as though almost glad the end had come (p. 296).

This phrase spoken by an unknown narrator in third person symbolizes lack of respect and care for the soldier's lives. The narration is cold and disrespectful. The narrator doesn't care enough to explain Paul's death in detail. The narrator simply states that Paul fell.

All Quiet on the Western Front by Enrich Maria Remarque is a story that explains the realities of war through the eyes of a young soldier, Paul

Baumer. Paul soon realizes that the romances and ideals of war are quickly
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overshadowed by the realities of war. In order to deal with the realities, Paul finds himself in a mental prison to cope with warfare. The symbolism found in the novel strengthens the authors point of view against war because of its irreversible affects.