

All quiet on the western front – essay 9

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All Quiet on the Western Front Essay Much like the present, there is a sort of intangible space between the older and younger generations. In All Quiet on the Western Front, youths like Paul Baumer must deal with the disillusion they feel towards what they were taught to believe in by those of the older generation. Once Paul and his fellow classmates are shipped off to war, he and the others learn that some of the things they were taught could not be farther from the truth. The author, Eric Remarque, depicts this notion of a lost generation.

He brings this idea to attention throughout the book in conversations between soldiers and through the thoughts of the main character, Paul Baumer. Remarque emphasizes separation between the older and younger generations caused mainly by the false romanticism the older generation attributed to war. Any thoughts the younger generation might have of glory or honor in war were immediately relinquished following first-hand experience. This sort of passed down propaganda aforementioned was and is an important societal issue. As seen in AQWF, this issue can ruin and even flat-out end lives.

As shown in the book the decision of many young soldiers to enlist was directly influenced by parents or teachers: “ Kantorek had been our schoolmaster... He gave us long lectures until the whole of our class went under his shepherding to the District Commandant and volunteered. I can see him now, as he used to glare at us through his spectacles and say in a moving voice: ‘ Won't you join up, Comrades? ’. ” Although Kantorek may have been speaking out of ignorance, the harm had been done nonetheless. Through his naivete he still believed his lies to be true.

In the book this is shown to be true of many of the older generation. It is seen when Paul comes back to his hometown after one year of enlistment and encounters a head-master: " He dismisses the idea loftily and informs me I know nothing about it [the war]. ' The details, yes,' says he, ' but this relates to the whole. And of that you are not able to judge. You see only your little sector and so cannot have any general survey... '". As you can see here the ignorant schoolmaster tries in vain to justify logically something he has come to believe illogically.

It is most likely that his beliefs were derived from his parent's generation, and he still has had no encounter with information that would change his views. This brings me to my next point. False information like this being passed down from generation to generation is what leads to widespread ignorance in a nation. An example of this ignorance is shown in a conversation Paul has with his mother when on leave. His mom asks, "'is it very bad out there, Paul? ' Mother, which I answer that! You would not understand, you could never realize it.

And you shall never realize it. " This ignorance can, in turn, cause the election of corrupt leaders and eventually the downfall of a whole country economically and otherwise. This is shown in AQWF by a conversation the young soldiers had. Due to first-hand experience they had shaken off their previous disillusionment and began to wonder what the point of this horrible war was: "' Then what exactly is the war for? ' asks Tjaden. Kat shrugs his shoulders. ' There must be some people to whom the war is useful. ' ... There are other people back behind there who profit by the war, that's certain,'

grows Detering. Once the youth come to the realization that they have been misled by the older generation the relationship between the two becomes strained. Parents, teachers, and elders, from which they were supposed to learn are now neither respected nor trusted. " The idea of authority, which they represented, was associated in our minds with a greater insight and a more humane wisdom. But the first death we saw shattered this belief. "

The younger generation refuses to listen to the older generation and they begin to act out in rebellion. Sound familiar? As you can see many of the ideas Remarque wrote about in Germany during the early 1900s, apply to modern day America. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why so many classes across the country today read AQWF. AQWF addresses an important and still relevant issue. That is there exists a wall between the older to younger generation that goes beyond just fashion or culture. How many times have you heard teachers complain of students?

Or students complain of teachers? Or parents and children complain of each other? There is a reason for this. As in AQWF there are things being blindly taught by the older generation to the younger that are not entirely true. Whether it be important, like politics or religion, or just harmless wives tales, there is a feeling among the younger generation that some things that are being taught are just not true. Maybe with new technology granting access to more information will help further the search for truth and help diminish this wall between one generation and the other.