

All quite on the western front research paper examples

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Foot Soldiers vs. Commanding Officers

During the World War II, foot soldiers were infantry troopers who fought on foot. Most of the foot soldiers did not hold any official ranks and were mainly comprised of enlisted civilians from the public. The foot soldiers spent a lot their time in the trenches except in situations where their commanding officers decided they could stage surprise attacks on their enemies.

According to Massie, the World War II came at time a general feeling of naturalism, patriotism and loyalty was sweeping through Europe (72). In fact when the countries started declaring wars on each other, there were open celebrations in the streets. People started to flock to enlistment centers to register. The young people were particularly very excited by the war and saw it an epic adventure not to be missed. Their peers and elders were at the forefront of convincing the young men to join the army. For instance, in ' All Quiet at the Western Front', Paul Baumer, a young German was convinced by his school master, Kantorek to join the German forces. Kantorek who was a fiercely patriotic individual used relentless pressure to convince Paul and his friends to enlist (Remarque 14).

It was only after experiencing the war that the enlisted foot soldiers realized that it was such a smooth affair. The war proved to be a traumatic experience that left huge emotional and physical scars on soldiers from all sides of the war. One of the factors that contributed to this was the relative lack of training of the new recruits. For instance, the soldiers only received a few days of target practice and combat techniques. This lack of training rendered them prone to definite demise at the war front (Evans 43). By the ends of the war, most of foot soldiers were completely disillusioned by the

war. In spite of this, there was however a huge chunk of foot soldiers who maintained the same mentality of loyalty throughout the war. They believed that the interests of their country superseded their own interest as and as such, they fought with undivided devotion. Some of them believed that the war was a test that would ultimately come to pass. To them the pitiful state that the war led then to was temporary and had a deep belief that their results would be sweet. They fought fiercely with the belief that they were doing what was good for their countries. According to Evans, Most of the foot soldiers witnessed the deaths of colleagues on a daily basis. At the beginning, events such as these troubled the soldiers deeply but as time proceeded, they became used to such sights and came to view the death of a colleague as an acceptable collateral damage (78). The war was however long and things got worse for the foot soldiers as time proceeded. The soldiers started to become increasingly frustrated with the war. They started questioning why they had joined the war in the first place. The sight of dead and dismembered bodies coupled with the horrendous conditions at the war zone only helped to fuel the foot soldiers disillusionment with the war.

The commanding officers did not make things any easier. As a matter of fact, most of them were loathed by the foot soldiers who felt they undermined them. The army particularly the German army had placed a lot of power and authority in the commanding officer's hands even when it was clear that some of them were clearly not qualified for these positions. Most of them used the enormous power placed in their hands to exploit the poor foot soldiers. Unlike the foot soldiers, most of who harbored patriotic feelings, the commanding officer's commitment to their home countries was sometimes

questionable (Orlow 50). For instance, they randomly ordered the foot soldiers to make their way across no man's land and into the enemy's territory where sure death awaited them. In fact some of them used lies to convince the soldiers to make their way across enemy lines, for example they told the soldiers not to worry about the enemy's snipers because they had already been wiped out. This however inaccurate and some soldiers were killed the moment they jumped over the trenches by precisely aimed enemy sniper rifles.

The commanding soldiers had only one objective in sight-to win the war at any cost. The plight of the foot soldiers was not a concern to them. They thought that by randomly staging surprise attacks on the enemy, they would ultimately weaken them and win the war at the end. The commanding officers often issued unquestionable orders to the foot soldiers that followed them to the wire. Questioning an order by a superior was unheard of and could result in huge punishments for the soldier in question. Some of the foot soldiers openly detested their commanding officers although they could not individually question their orders. The commanding officers were also notorious for overseeing the practice of army rituals that virtually made no contribution to the war (Orlow 53). For example, the soldier's commanding officers often demanded that the soldiers salute them whenever they passed them. Corporal Himmelstoss is an example of a commanding officer from the book "All Quiet on the Western Front". Formerly a postman, Himmelstoss was assigned the role of a training officer and used this position to exact a lot of torment on Paul Baumer and his fellow recruits during their training (Remarque 33). He however tried to make amends to

them after he experience the appalling horrors of the war.

In light of the issues described above, it is quite clear that that there was a differing pint of view on the World War I. This differing obviously had an effect on the war and had the soldiers and their commanding officers had a common point of view, maybe the war would not have dragged on as it did.

Foot Soldiers vs. Enemy in the Trenches

Most of the foot soldiers who participated in World War I had joined their respective armies had a great desire to inflict harm on their “ enemies’. They were greatly motivated by feelings of patriotism and those who did not harbor these feelings were convinced by their peers and elders that enlisting would be in the best interest of their countries (World War I: The Great War 2008).

There was a general animosity between the foot soldiers and the enemies in the trenches. A foot soldier would grab any opportunity to kill an enemy that availed itself. The trenches offered protection to both parties (the foot soldiers and the enemy) and no one even dared to raise their head the trench because they were bound to be shot by an accurately aimed rifle of the opposing side).

In spite of the mutual hatred and disgust that existed between the two parties, not one side was willing to give up. In fact, there was a deep belief in both set of trenches that their side would win the war eventually.

However as time went on, most of the foot soldiers started to lose the hatred that they had held for the enemy for too long and even began to sympathize with them. For instance, after fatally wounding a French soldier, Paul Baumer

started to sympathize with him. He asked him about his country, his family and in the process he got to know him better. In the end, he realized that the soldier was just a fellow victim of the irresponsible administration that arrogantly sent men to the warfront to “fight for their country” instead of sitting down and amicably solving their differences.

In most occasions, there was also the use of propaganda to propagate the civilian's and the soldiers' attitude towards the enemy. The allied forces of France, Britain and Russia were particularly notorious for using propaganda to admonish the Germans. Posters describing the Germans as bloodthirsty monsters and animals were common sight in many streets. Not to be left behind, the Germans to come up with their own propaganda about the enemy. It was such propaganda that further fuelled the soldier's desire to enlist in their respective forces and go to the warfront (World War I: The Great War 2008).

Foot Soldiers vs. the enemy” (female version) in the village

Women were for a long time never given consideration for active war duty.

In fact, most countries prohibited the enlistment of women into the army. To many, women lacked the necessary technical creativity as well as physical ability to actively fight in a war. When the World War I broke out however, it was clear that women were definitely going to play an important role.

Nearly all men were summoned to war and homes were left with only children and women. The women took over the roles and positions previously occupied by the deserted men. They gave it their all knowing that their men were fully representing them at the warfront. The women tried as much as

possible to assist their men for example by acting the links for food and medical supplies. Most of them even volunteered to work in hospitals caring for the wounded patients. Some of them however remained in their villages. The despicable state of the soldiers who came home was enough for the women to have a point a view that the war was not beneficial at would only lead to family trauma and breakage (Woodward 102).

In regards of this, the foot soldiers were initially very bitter about this female version of the enemy that was not actively involved on the trench warfare. They saw the women as the factor that was strengthening the enemy through the provision of food and medicine. As such, the foot soldiers often tried to intercept this link and it was not uncommon to find whole villages massacred by the soldiers as they tried to break the link between the enemy in the trenches and those in the village.

A time dragged on however, it became clear that the soldier's ill feelings towards the female enemy in the village were misplaced. The enemy's women were only doing what was required of them and that was to take care of their men who were actively fighting at the at the war front. A classic example of such attitude from " All quiet on the Western Front" is the part where Paul Baumer and his friends made acquaintance with some girls form the opposing side. Paul in fact developed a relationship with one of them who was French. The French were fighting against the Germans and hence Paul was dating an enemy technically. The reason for Paul willingness to engage with the enemy woman was because he has witnessed the atrocities of the war and he wanted to place a clear distinction between war and love. It was however in vain because the relationship failed to flourish and ended

because the French woman was only interested in Paul if he died in the war as a "hero". (Remarque 46).

Foot Soldiers vs. their families back at home.

The World War one was responsible for breaking up a lot families. Mothers, wives and children witnessed their sons, husbands and fathers go away never to come back. Those who did manage to come back witnessed such atrocities that the warfront that they were not themselves and failed to fully connect with their families ever again. In spite of the fact that some families had enthusiastically persuaded the male members to enlist in the army because they did not think that it would last this long or that it would be even that destructive, they began to question themselves on why they had allowed their men to go to war in the first place (Woodward 102).

The foot soldiers on the other hand dearly missed their families back at home and wished for the war to end so that they could go home. However, as the full scale of the war revealed itself, it became more and clearer that it would virtually not be able to ever go back home. This is because they would either become dead or they would be too emotionally unattached after what they had seen at the warfront (Orlow 34).

The soldiers were of the opinion that the fight was in the best interests of their countries and that by fighting; they were indeed keeping their families back at home safe. On the other hand, their families back at home had by now started to completely hate the war and wish for its ending because they realized that it only brought family breakage.

Foot Soldiers vs. other townsfolk Paul encounters while home on leave

The young German foot soldier, Paul Baumer came across several townspeople when he was given a seventeen day leave and went home to see his family. In spite of his best efforts to interact with them normally, he realized that it was virtually impossible because they could understand his plight.

Paul Baumer was of the view that both the townspeople and his family would never really understand his experiences at the war front. Moreover the townspeople would never really comprehend how these experiences had changed him. In fact, Paul could wait for his leave to end so that he could go back to his comrades who he felt were more emotionally closer to him and understood him better.

Of his comrades, he says that "" I belong to them and they to me, we all share the same fear and the same life." (Remarque 68)

Having not experienced the full brutality of the World War I, the townspeople could be forgiven for their point of view about the war. Most of them did not really take it seriously and only saw it as a game. They had absolutely no idea of the tribulations and trials that Paul and the other foot soldiers faced at the trenches daily.

Paul's Discovery that he cannot really go home

The enthusiasm that the young foot soldiers like Paul Baumer and his friends had when joining the war had already been wiped out by the time the war ended. Unlike some of the soldiers who had previously held jobs and who had wives and children back at home to get to, Paul and most his comrades

had no such thing. The men with families were very eager to fight, win the war and get back home because they viewed the war as a basic interruption of their busy family schedule. Paul and his comrades joined the war at the verge of their youth and as such, they had not fully enjoyed a life of maturity.

According to Remarque, the only option that Paul and his friends actually thought about was seeking revenge against Colonel Himmelstoss for the torment that he had rendered them through during their training in their first days at the trenches (76).

It was such factors such as this that made Paul and his comrades not have any future plans. The young bunch of foot soldiers, the life they knew was only that of a soldier. They could not differentiate between a soldier's life and a normal life because to them, the soldier life was the normal life (Massie 45).

Paul realized that he could not go home after the war because he could not envision any life for himself beyond the war zone. Living with his family and other civilians was unthinkable because he knew they would never understand him and he would be forever be disconnected from them.

Paul's and his comrade's plight represent on the most destructive effects of the World War I and that was that it led to emotional disconnect of the foot soldiers from the rest of humanity.

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