

Pat barker's novel regeneration



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The objective of an ideal medical practitioner, who is true to his profession, is to reform and rehabilitate his patient. Assist in recouping one's physical and mental health. A patient is a wounded personality in many areas. The novel "Regeneration," by Pat Barker details the consequences and psychological effects of World War I, on the fighting forces, especially the sensitive individuals. For a soldier, fighting is not all about earning bread and butter for him and his family. He has a cause for the fight, the heart for the fight, the will, grit and determination for the fight; and finally, to receive the rewards or punishment of the fight with a balanced mental attitude provided he lives through to fight another war! In fierce wars, the casualties-- death and wounded--are many. A soldier obeys the commands and fights the war; he is not supposed to question the whys and the whereabouts related to the wars! In the novel, Barker introduces a soldier, S. Sassoon, who questions the merits of the war that he has been asked to fight. One of the important clauses of his protest letter as recorded by the author (1993, p. 3) is: "I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed." Dr. Rivers, though professionally a medical man, has his opinions about wars and the futility of using the brutal force by one section of the humankind against the other. The patient I choose to make an argument about how this awareness affects him is Siegfried Sassoon. The dilemma of Dr. Rivers is-- he is rendering a yeoman service to the country by healing soldiers, mostly by treating them for anti-war-complex which amounts to preparing them for another round of war. Once physically fit, they are bound to report for duty. Dr. Rivers is not happy about the state of

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affairs. Nevertheless, it is his professional duty to make the soldiers fit, and leave the rest to the demands of the military discipline. Any laxity on the part of the Doctors will not be tolerated by the military high command. On getting the news that S. Sassoon is being referred to the hospital for treatment, Barker writes about the feelings of Dr. River, thus: " Better for him perhaps. What about the hospital? Can you imagine that our dear Director of Medical Services is going to say, when he finds put we're sheltering " conchies" as well as cowards, shirkers, scirms hankers and degenerates? We have to just hope there's no publicity."(p. 4) Dr. River's moral dilemma is evident. His professional integrity demands that he should treat the patients to the best of his ability and judgment and make them fit to resume their military duties. His conscience pricks him. By treating them he is indirectly responsible for dispatching them to the killing field---either to kill or get killed. His immediate reaction on reading " A Soldier's Declaration is, ' and I'm sure he was right.' Rivers folded the paper and ran his fingertips along the edge. So they're sending him here?"(p. 4)His traditional Victorian education demands that he perform his duties to change others, with all sincerity. But the final outcome of his treatment is the constant source of worry for him. His tender emotions score over his hard logic. He wonders how he has been contributing to the success of the drama, from the side wings, for the annihilation of an entire generation. Whereas Sassoon is a sincere soldier, he has strong personal convictions about the futility of mindless wars that result in loss of lives and immense suffering to the people. References Barker, Pat, Regeneration, Plume, July 1, 1993.