

All quiet on the western front – essay 7



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Nothing can be gained from the futility of war, only lost; a loss of hope, loss of life, loss of innocence and a loss of identity. This sense of hopelessness has been reflected within the anti-war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque. The negative representation of World War I displayed in this novel has made us question authority as to why time and time again, they abuse their power to force our innocent young men to fight in a monotonous battle. Through the construction of this novel, a very effective, thought provoking, anti-war story has been created which has become a timeless literary text within society today.

In particular, the narrative conventions of characterization, setting, language and plot have enriched this novel with meaning to represent the horrid, yet true, nature of war. The settings within this novel, of the front line, hospital and base camp have been described extensively with horrific detail. The imagery which is associated with the descriptions of these settings is found to be very confronting to the reader and enhances a very negative attitude towards the war. In chapter four, the young men are forced to take cover from the enemy within a cemetery.

The setting of the cemetery reinforces the brutality of war, as these young men can not show respect for their dead comrades for they destroy their place of rest. “ The dark turns into madness. It rocks and rages. Dark things, darker than the night itself, rush upon us in great waves, over us and onwards. ” The darkness and fear associated with wars has been depicted in this setting for it can be said that this fear is the “ Dark things” which rush upon them like waves. This imagery which has been used to portray the cemetery has reinforced the anti-war attitude of Remarque. It smells of

carbolic, pus and sweat, just like it always does. You get used to a lot of things when you are in the barracks, but this can still really turn your stomach. ” This quote describes the setting of the hospital in which Kemmerich spends his last few days. It reinforces the ghastly realities of the conditions these men were forced to live in and that the bravery of these young men is treated with disrespect. The settings used to enhance the horrid nature of war have contributed immensely to Remarque’s negative connotation of war.

The monotonous and futile tone of language which is associated with wars has been reflected within this novel. The language of this novel is very descriptive and realistic which enhances the negativity of World War I and wars in general. The tone used to speak about the innocent young dying Kemmerich is very morose. The language is reflective of the normality yet horrid impact of death during wars. “ There is no longer any life pulsing under his skin – it has been forced out already to the very edges of his body, and death is working its way through him” Symbolic elements have been interwoven within this quote.

The life which has been said to have been forced out of him symbolizes the loss of all of his memories, identity and innocence as a result of war.

Repetition has been used as a language tool to heighten the devastating fact that such young and innocent men are losing their lives to the war. “Such young lads -’ He says it again: ‘ Such young, innocent lads-’” This repetitive quote makes the reader question authority as to how they can willingly send men, who have barely even lived their lives, to wars to be killed. These young men are like “ Lambs to the slaughter”.

All Quiet on the Western Front has been constructed with deep and confronting, descriptive and emotive language to portray the negativity of wars. First person point of view is an incredibly powerful literary technique when it is used in war novels as it acts as a firsthand account. This novel has been constructed through the point of view of a young German soldier named Paul Baumer, whose life has been consumed by the war. All of the horrific ordeals which this boy has been forced to experience on the front line have been recounted with realistic and confronting details. I fall into a belly that has been ripped open, and on the body is a new, clean, French Officers cap. " This experience has been told without any embellishment; it is straight forward and to the point for Paul is telling the story as it happens. This young man feels very negatively towards the war, therefore seeing as the story has been written through his point of view the reader is positioned to also respond to the war with Remarque's same disgust. Throughout the novel, loss of innocence and alienation from the world he once knew as a result of war has been reflected through his changing attitudes, values and emotions. I am young, I am 20 years of age; but I know nothing of life except despair, death, fear and the combination of completely mindless superficiality with an abyss of suffering. " This represents that his childhood innocence and memories have been replaced by the journey of war which is now all he knows. In the conclusion of the novel, the story shifts to third person point of view as a means to truly represent the monotony and hopelessness of war. The construction of this story through the eyes of one of the young men has contributed greatly to the effectiveness of this anti war novel.

The lives which soldiers lead during wars are monotonous; the plot of this novel has reflected this pointless pattern of life during war. All Quiet on the Western Front has been structured around a pattern of young men fighting on the front line, being injured and sent to hospital, then sent home on leave, having to return to the front line and then to be killed. The accounts of the ordeals experienced within each aspect of this routine, indicate to the reader the effect that war can have both physically and emotionally.

Conforming to this pattern of life, Paul is sent home on leave after fighting on the front line. When he returns to this world, in which his biggest worry in life was school, it is represented that he has been completely transformed by the war so that he is now alienated from his home. “ But there is an awkwardness which will not leave me, I can’t get used to everything yet” After saying this Paul goes on to explain that everything is how he left it however “ I am not quite there myself yet. The plot brings Paul home for a second time after being injured, yet this account of his home stay is described with merely seven lines indicating that the war has stolen the identities of the boys. The plot conforms to the monotonous pattern of army life for in the end of the novel, after returning to the front line, he is killed. The plot of this novel has stayed true to and truly represented the futility and meaninglessness of life at war.