
An Analysis of the Two Themes in All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque

AQWF Section Analysis Pages 85-88

The scene when the soldiers are discussing how school never prepared them for war in All Quiet on the Western Front shows two of the novel's themes, which are that war ruined them and that they were not prepared for war. The soldiers show that war has ruined them when they say that they can't go back into society after the war. They also show that they were not prepared for war when Paul states all the things school didn't teach them.

The author uses symbolism and breaks the 4th wall to show these big ideas. Some of them didn't have jobs before the war, making it harder for them to resume their lives when the war ends. Jobs are used as a symbol in this passage of the book to show that these soldiers had lives before the war and that they are normal, everyday people. Kat, Deterring, Hair, and Himmelstoss all had jobs before that war, and the others are saying that when the war ends, it will be easier for them to resume their lives from before the war even started. "Kat and Deterring and Hair will go back to their jobs because they had them already. Himmelstoss too. How will we ever get used to one after this, here?" Albert says this to show without jobs before the war, the others are afraid that it will be harder to resume their prewar lives. This connects to what soldiers were worried about in the world during the war. Soldiers were worried about their lives before the war, and if they will even have one after the war. The author breaks the 4th wall by using the soldiers to ask questions to show their confusion. The soldiers ask questions like "When was the battle of Zana?" and "How many inhabitants has Melbourne?" The author does this to show that they are indeed The Lost Generation. The syntax in this passage is the repetition of questions, showing what little the soldiers know about certain things. The author does this to further show that the soldiers are The Lost Generation. One of the big ideas of this passage, that they were not prepared for war, is shown when Paul says how school never taught them about war or how to fight. "At school nobody ever taught us how to light a cigarette in a storm or rain, nor how a fire could be made with wet wood -- nor that it is best to stick a bayonet in the belly because there it doesn't get jammed, as it does in the ribs." They had to learn "how to light a cigarette in a storm or rain," "how a fire could be made with wet wood," and that "it is best to stick a bayonet in the belly because there it doesn't get jammed."

This passage in All Quiet on the Western Front shows two of the novel's many themes, which are that war ruined the soldiers and that they were not prepared for war. The soldiers are worried about their lives after the war and are left in the middle of this war confused about what will happen to them.