

All Quiet On The Western Front

Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet On The Western Front* is his seminal work, published in 1929, exploring the ideas and preconceptions of warfare at the time. Based on his own experiences of the first world war, of which he was drafted into in 1916, it's most salient property is the debunking of romantic connotations in war. Whilst most works detailing warfare did explore some of the more grim realities of combat they had always held an unflinching concept of patriotism, glory and honor in fighting for your country and it's civil liberties. Remarque delineated the complete reverse; he highlighted the horrible atrocities of war, advocating pacifism as to avoid the very real dangers of a soldier in combat. This was in stark contrast to the vernacular consensus of war at the time; in the 1930's Adolf Hitler ordered the burning of his works, including *All Quiet On The Western Front*, for the very fact that they attacked the idea of blind faith in government and gave a greater position of the awful living conditions of soldiers in the fray, something which would put German citizens off joining the cause.

Many positive attributes of the protagonists are lost due to their participation in the first world war. All the characters of the work are under the age of twenty years old and one of the main attributes they lose to war is their innocence; Paul Baumer, the narrator of the story, notes that, while they were all young, they all lost their youth. The characters also start to lose their humanity within the horror of warfare. One instance involving Kemmerich, a soldier who lost his leg to gangrene, having his boots eyed up by fellow comrade Muller. A complete lack of sympathy or empathy is exhibited by the cast and Paul Baumer himself notes that such emotions as grief and fear are lost if one is to mentally survive combat.

In conclusion the book serves as a candid look into the lives of soldiers in active combat, stripping them of the rose-tinted perspective of patriotism and dignity that military propaganda purports.