

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Section\_\_\_\_\_

Cooper 8 English

February 2012

### AQWF Letter from Paul

The first section of the novel deals with Paul's experiences at and near the front. These chapters highlight how these experiences have changed Paul from the innocent student he once was to the hardened soldier he now is. The terrors and horrors of war have clearly scarred Paul, yet he copes by burying his feelings and finding comfort in the company of his comrades, his brothers-in-arms.

Then, after a series of devastating battles that wipe out most of Paul's company (**chapter 6**), Paul is given leave to go home for a few weeks. Away from his comrades (**chapter 7**), Paul no longer feels at home in the presence of his family and relics from his former life. He also senses that his mother is dying of cancer, but neither of them can be honest with each other about their feelings or worries. They both try to shield the other from the truth. Still, Paul is losing control of his feelings, which threaten to come to the surface and overwhelm him.

At the end of **chapter 8**, just before Paul returns to the front, his father and sister visit him at the camp, and they discuss his mother's illness; the doctors are now certain that she has cancer, and she is at the hospital. This visit confirms for Paul that he may never see his mother again, and this fact weighs heavily on his heart.

And then in **chapter 9**, Paul is back at the front; he is relieved to find his comrades safe. Adjusting back to life in war, Paul finds that he is no longer in control of his emotions. Then, while lost in No Man's Land, Paul encounters a French soldier, Gerard Duval, whom he stabs with a mortal wound. Trapped in a shell-hole, Paul watches this man slowly die; he recognizes that Duval is a man much like himself (see page 223), forced to fight and die in a conflict that has little to do with them.

**Your task:** Write a letter from Paul in which he grapples with what has happened to him at any point in these four chapters.

**First**, you must decide to whom the letter will be written. You can write to any number of characters, including:

- his mother, his father, or his sister;
- one of his comrades, such as Kat or Albert Kropp;
- his former teacher Kantorek;
- the wife of Gerard Duval.

**Then** you need to decide the content of this letter; what will Paul say to this person about his experience. Some questions that might guide you:

- What is the relationship that exists between these characters? How does Paul feel about this relationship/this person?
- What event is prompting Paul to write this letter-- what has happened to make Paul want to contact this person?
- What does Paul want or need to say to this person that he has not been able to say in the past? What message is he trying to communicate?
- What worries or fears does Paul have for the future? What hopes might he have?

**Finally**, you need to think about the theme Paul will explore in his letter. This will provide the main focus for this letter. Possible themes include:

- how the violence and terror found in war have made the young men a lost generation and old before their time; not Iron Youth, but stone-aged veterans.
- that even if they survive the war, they will find adjusting to a “normal” life impossible, that what were once their ambitions and dreams have been swept away by war;
- that the experience of the common soldier is the same, and that they are not truly enemies;
- that the older generation, especially the leaders of the nation, have betrayed the younger generation by sending them to war;
- how the only good thing found in war is the sense of comradeship between the soldiers, that they have become a band of brothers;

Whichever theme you select from above, you need to provide specific moments/events from the novel that demonstrate/illustrate/highlight this theme.

Tonight’s homework: Fill out the outline sheet to guide you in writing your letter.

