

David W Fletcher, October 2001

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Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trans. by A. W. Wheen from the German *Im Western Nichts Neues* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1929; paperback reprint, New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 295 pages, no index.

Questions for Discussion

1. How accurate is Remarque's short description of his own work: "This book is to be neither an accusation nor a confession, and least of all an adventure, for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it. It will try simply to tell of a generation of men who, even though they may have escaped shells, were destroyed by the war"?
2. Identify some of the literary or rhetorical devices used by Remarque. Are these effective? Are they overdone?
3. What role does the idea of "Earth" play in Remarque's novel? Does he speak from his own war experience and literally about the Earth? Or is there a deeper symbolic meaning to what he says about Earth?
4. Does the lack of a specific context for some of the events in Remarque's novel add to or take away from the effectiveness of the whole?
5. Sometimes Remarque's character development lacks completeness (i.e., nebulous and vague). Does Remarque intend to focus on the evolution of the young men that he introduces in light of the effect of the war, or does he purposely keep details about these soldiers unknown as part of the shadowy war experience? Is this to be seen as a symptom of the introspection of the narrator, Paul Baumer, or is this better viewed as a deficiency in the capabilities of Remarque himself as a writer?
6. How does Remarque develop the theme of comradeship? Is this his main theme in *All Quiet*?
7. Can you find elements of idealism in *All Quiet*? Elements of realism? Elements of romanticism? Explain your answers.
8. Is Remarque bitter against the war, or can his feelings or judgment about the war be expressed better in another way?
9. How effective is the conclusion offered by Remarque? Is there any resolve to the novel? Is the plot open or closed, or does the novel just " peter out"?