

## *All Quiet on the Western Front* - Group Work #4 - Chapter 9

1. Closely examine the following lines and comment on them - first looking at the literal and then any secondary meanings or allusions to other works you have read. Try to connect it with what's come earlier (in this book first, then others)

- "I can see him [Gérard] indistinctly" (217)
- "Then I notice *my bloody hand* and suddenly feel nauseated. I take some *earth* and rub the skin with it..." (217 — italics mine)
- "but how slowly a man dies!" (220)
- "But every gasp lays my heart bare." (221)



2. Do you believe that Gérard can be compared to any other famous figure (a pointed question if ever I wrote one). Think of 1) his death 2) its affect on Paul 3) Paul's determination that Gérard will not have died for nothing. We learn that "in 'the afternoon, about three, he is dead'" (221) – Someone else, according to popular tradition, died at this time (feel free to ask other groups or to utilize the pictures here).



3a. When speaking to Gérard, Paul states that he was "only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response" (223). How does this mesh with what Paul learned at the Russian Prisoner Camp (Chapter 8)? What quote from that experience may be placed next to this one in order to come to a greater understanding? Also consider the earlier quote: "We lose touch with the enemy." Finally, consider his experience with French girls across the river (use a specific quote from that experience). Use the notes you took during our discussion of these lines.

3b. How does this movement of the abstract ("the enemy") to the real ("Gerard Duval") also work in the opposite direction. Think of the quotes you've seen so far in this text about men and columns, stars and sky, sand and pebbles?

3c. Speaking of "sand" – look back on your other texts you've read – can you think of any specific examples of this consideration that moves from the specific to the abstract (we talked about it in class)? Be very specific and give at least one concrete example.

4a. On page 140, Paul began to have a feeling that he must do something about the war: "so we shall march, our dead comrades beside us, the years at the Front behind us; --against whom, against whom?" (140). Now, in this (Ch 9) chapter, after the killing of the printer, Paul seems to have a better idea of what he wants to do. Just what do you think that is? Discuss and find three quotes that point to Paul's new determination (one may come from chapter 8). Notice, he quickly realizes that he won't write to the printer's family or do the other things he promised but he does believe he will do *something*.

4b. Compare this incident, Paul's tragic encounter with Gerard Duval, with Tim O'Brien's (the character) encounter with the pale young man (from *The Things They Carried*). On the back of this sheet, I have given you an excerpt from that book that may be pertinent (if you have your books and the time and inclination – you may find a better, more applicable quote). Relate these two incidents – **now pay attention**: both as incidents (be very specific in this part of your answer, using at least two quotes from each) and as how you see those respective (in each novel) incidents affecting the book as a whole (for *All Quiet* you will have to look backward, and interpolate). Look at the end of the excerpt and compare Kiowa's advice to what Kat tells Paul...

5. **How does Paul's leave back home contribute to his predicament with getting caught in *no-man's land*.** We discussed at least three quotes related to this in class – find at least two quotes (any you find pertinent) to use in your answer.

6. At the end of this chapter Paul returns alive but in the middle of a moral crisis. Kat and Albert assure him that he only did what he had to do in order to survive. Ah ha – how did one of the questions that Paul's father asked him on leave prepare the reader for Paul's encounter with Gerard Duval? Later, Kat draws Paul's attention to the sniper. Is what Paul did (to Gerard Duval) the same thing as what the sniper is doing? If not, how is it different? Isn't killing, after all, killing? How are their actions after the death of their (Paul's & the sniper's) victim different? How does it fit in to your answer? Finally, recall Kiowa's words (intended to comfort him) after Tim kills the pale young man. Check out the song on the back of this sheet. (see the last part of what you wrote for 4b)

**HOMEWORK (revised) – Weds (1/8/2020) Chapter 10 Part 1 (thru 244) Thursday – the rest of Chapter 10**

**Friday – Chapters 11 & 12 (only 4 pages) – make sure you read the last 2 pages. I revised this and will add 25 points EC to each passing quiz for this reading.**

### **Sky Pilot – Eric Burdon and The Animals**

He blesses the boys as they stand in line  
The smell of gun grease and the bayonets they shine  
He's there to help them all that he can  
To make them feel wanted he's a good holy man  
Sky pilot.....sky pilot  
How high can you fly  
You'll never, never, never reach the sky

He smiles at the young soldiers  
Tells them it's all right  
He knows of their fear in the forthcoming fight  
Soon there'll be blood and many will die  
Mothers and fathers back home they will cry  
Sky pilot.....sky pilot  
How high can you fly  
You'll never, never, never reach the sky

He mumbles a prayer and it ends with a smile  
The order is given  
They move down the line  
But he's still behind and he'll meditate  
But it won't stop the bleeding or ease the hate  
As the young men move out into the battle zone  
He feels good, with God you're never alone  
He feels tired and he lays on his bed  
Hopes the men will find courage in the words that he said  
Sky pilot.....sky Pilot  
How high can you fly

You'll never, never, never reach the sky  
You're soldiers of God you must understand  
The fate of your country is in your young hands  
May God give you strength  
Do your job real well  
If it all was worth it  
Only time it will tell

In the morning they return  
With tears in their eyes  
The stench of death drifts up to the skies  
A soldier so ill looks at the sky pilot  
Remembers the words  
"Thou shalt not kill"  
Sky pilot.....sky pilot  
How high can you fly  
You never, never, never reach the sky

### **from *The Things They Carried* excerpt part 1**

He lay face-up in the center of the trail, a slim, dead, almost dainty young man. He had bony legs, a narrow waist, long shapely fingers. His chest was sunken and poorly muscled—a scholar, maybe. His wrists were the wrists of a child. He wore a black shirt, black pajama pants, a gray ammunition belt, a gold ring on the third finger of his right hand. His rubber sandals had been blown off. One lay beside him, the other a few meters up the trail. He had been born, maybe, in 1946 in the village of My Khe near the central coastline of Quang Ngai Province, where his parents farmed, and where his family had lived for several centuries, and where, during the time of the French, his father and two uncles and many neighbors had joined in the struggle for independence. He was not a Communist. He was a citizen and a soldier...

### **from *The Things They Carried* part 2**

The young man's fingernails were clean. There was a slight tear at the lobe of one ear, a sprinkling of blood on the forearm. He wore a gold ring on the third finger of his right hand. His chest was sunken and poorly muscled—a scholar, maybe. His life was now a constellation of possibilities. So, yes, maybe a scholar. And for years, despite his family's poverty, the man I killed would have been determined to continue his education in mathematics. The means for this were arranged, perhaps, through the village liberation cadres, and in 1964 the young man began attending classes at the university in Saigon, where he avoided politics and paid attention to the problems of calculus. He devoted himself to his studies. He spent his nights alone, wrote romantic poems in his journal, took pleasure in the grace and beauty of differential equations. The war, he knew, would finally take him, but for the time being he would not let himself think about it. He had stopped praying; instead, now, he waited.

And as he waited, in his final year at the university, he fell in love with a classmate, a girl of seventeen, who one day told him that his wrists were like the wrists of a child, so small and delicate, and who admired his narrow waist and the cowlick that rose up like a bird's tail at the back of his head. She liked his quiet manner; she laughed at his freckles and bony legs. One evening, perhaps, they exchanged gold rings.

Now one eye was a star. "You okay?" Kiowa said.

The body lay almost entirely in shade. There were gnats at the mouth, little flecks of pollen drifting above the nose. The butterfly was gone. The bleeding had stopped except for the neck wounds.

Kiowa picked up the rubber sandals, clapping off the dirt, then bent down to search the body. He found a pouch of rice, a comb, a fingernail clipper, a few soiled piasters, a snapshot of a young woman standing in front of a parked motorcycle. Kiowa placed these items in his rucksack along with the gray ammunition belt and rubber sandals.

Then he squatted down.

"I'll tell you the straight truth," he said. "The guy was