Erich Maria Remarque’s novel, based on his own experiences, embodies the optimism lost during World War I. Explore the changes experienced by the main character, Paul Baumer, an 18-year-old German soldier who plans to be a combat hero. Examine why his story holds as an enduring antiwar novel.

I. Introduction (14 min.)
II. Total War (16 min.)
III. Descent Into Madness (13 min.)
IV. The Antiwar Novel of Our Time (10 min.)

Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Review *All Quiet on the Western Front*.
- Consider other works about war.
- Write a poem about war.

Materials

- *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque
- Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Discuss the scope of the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, including its content, length, and impact on readers. Then offer the observation that poems and other short works of literature can have a great effect on readers.

2. Explain that students will try their hand at writing poems inspired by *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by firsthand war stories they might have heard, or by other works of literature or art about war.
3. Ask students to share any firsthand stories of war experiences they have heard from relatives, civic leaders, friends, or other sources. Have these stories made war appear glamorous or horrifying—or both?

4. Lead students in a brief discussion of other works of war literature they have already encountered. (Examples: *The Red Badge of Courage* and the poem “War Is Kind,” by Stephen Crane; *Catch-22*, by Joseph Heller; “Beat! Beat! Drums” and “As Toilsome I Wandered Virginia’s Woods,” by Walt Whitman; “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner,” by Randall Jarrell; “Beware of the Dog,” by Roald Dahl; and *Wartime Journal*, by Mary Chesnut.) Ask students for their opinions about whether individual works suggest a patriotic call to arms or promote anti-war sentiment; have them share their reactions to these works.

5. Tell students they may get poetic inspiration for their poems from reading *All Quiet on the Western Front* or similar literature; from strong images they have seen; or from words related to the subject of war, or from any other source.

6. Once students have a preliminary subject for their poem—a person, animal, object, scene—share with them the following list of questions, which may generate additional thoughts. Help with any confusion about terminology as students look over this list. Share with students a few examples of highly metaphoric poetry. Examples include:

   **Content**
   - What is the subject of your poem?
   - How does the subject make you feel as the poet?

   **Wording**
   - What images of sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch does the subject call to mind?
   - What figures of speech—metaphors, similes, personification—can you connect to your subject?
   - Can you think of a phrase or a line you would like to repeat in the poem?

   **Form**
   - Can you tell the length of your poem at this point?
   - Can you tell whether each line will have the same number of beats?
   - Can you tell whether the lines will rhyme?

7. Suggest that students look at poetry and books about writing in the school media center. They might also wish to visit the Web site [http://teenwriting.about.com/](http://teenwriting.about.com/). The home page’s left-hand menu includes links to Editing/Revising, Grammar Help, Light Poems/Prose, and Poetry Composition (with explanations and examples of alliteration, onomatopoeia, and other techniques).

8. As students prepare to write, advise them to select a word or phrase and to try to build a sentence or line around it. A second line will grow out of the first; the first line could end up as the last line or deleted altogether, but it’s critical to get that first single thought down at this point.
9. As students write, they may want to follow the stanza or line form that occurred to them earlier. They can always work on form later, after they’ve put sounds, words, and thoughts together in a first draft. Suggest that students may want to put extra effort into the final line of the draft to leave the reader with a strong image. Encourage students to title their poems while writing the first drafts.

10. Direct students to put their first drafts away for at least a day. When they return to the drafts, suggest the following techniques for revising and editing.
   - Read the poem aloud to see what it sounds like.
   - Would the poem benefit from more sound devices such as alliteration or onomatopoeia?
   - Do the lines sound natural or forced? Should the writing style be more or less formal?
   - Does the poem need more sensory language to appeal to sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste?
   - Are all the words strong? Have you used weak adjectives and nouns instead of strong ones?
   - If the poem contains fragments rather than sentences, was it your intention to use fragments?
   - Most important, does the poem clearly communicate what you want to say about war?

11. When you and your students are satisfied with their poems, have students share their poems with the class. Then ask if students would like to invite another class to hear the poems.

12. Post the poems on a bulletin board in the classroom.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students’ work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students actively participated in class discussions, successfully synthesized information about the writing of poetry, and wrote a poem that clearly and artfully reflected the war theme.
- **2 points:** Students participated in class discussions, synthesized some information about the writing of poetry, and wrote a poem that reflected the war theme.
- **1 point:** Students were reluctant to participate in class discussions, had difficulty synthesizing information about the writing of poetry, and struggled to write a poem that reflected the war theme.

Vocabulary

disillusion

*Definition:* The condition of being disenchanted

*Context:* With the death of each friend, Paul and his comrades became more and more disillusioned.
futile
Definition: Completely ineffective
Context: Millions died in futile attempts to win the war.

ideology
Definition: A systematic body of concepts, especially concerning human life or culture
Context: The young soldier’s longing for home was much more powerful than any ideology or belief.

melancholy
Definition: Depression of spirits
Context: Remembered scenes from home filled the young soldier with melancholy.

nostalgia
Definition: A wistful or excessively sentimental yearning for return to or of some past period or irrecoverable condition
Context: Nostalgia for home created strong bonds among the young soldiers.

trajectory
Definition: The curve that a body in motion describes in space
Context: The young soldiers found themselves helpless under a crisscross of shell trajectories.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)
McREL’s Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit link: http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Language Arts—Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing; Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association have developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching the English language arts. To view the standards online, go to http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm

This lesson plan addresses the following NCTE standards:

- Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
• Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

• Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, and vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

• Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

• Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

• Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

• http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html

DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How To Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video — This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index — Here the video is divided into four parts (see below), indicated by video thumbnail icons. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. Brief descriptions and total running times are noted for each part. To play a particular segment, press
Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

**Curriculum Units**—These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher’s Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

**Standards Link**—Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

**Teacher Resources**—This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

**Video Index**

I. **Introduction (14 min.)**
An overview of the story told by *All Quiet on the Western Front* and an introduction to its author and the relationship between Erich Maria Remarque’s experiences and the novel.

II. **Total War (16 min.)**
A look at Remarque’s early life, the onset of World War I, and the horrors of industrialized warfare as seen through the eyes of the book’s main character, Paul, and military experts.

III. **Descent Into Madness (13 min.)**
Former soldiers discuss the thoughts and emotions of battle; through Paul, Remarque explores the idea of what becomes of a man once he enters battle. In his own life, Remarque descends into madness following WWI.

IV. **The Antiwar Novel of Our Time (10 min)**
The Nazis target the novel’s antiwar message, and Remarque is forced to flee Germany. In the last chapters of the book, Paul must come to terms with himself and the war.

**Curriculum Units**

1. **The Antiwar Novel of Our Time**

*Pre-viewing question*
Q: Why was World War I called The Great War?
A: World War I was the first industrialized war and the war that took the most casualties. It was considered “great” because of the intense horror surrounding it and because of the enormous number of people who were touched and altered by the war. World War I changed the course of history.

*Post-viewing question*
Q: Why is *All Quiet on the Western Front* considered an antiwar novel?
A: According to some, the book describes the act of war and the senseless dying associated with war more completely than any other war story ever has.
2. Paul Goes to War

Pre-viewing question
Q: Why do you think young men decided to stay with their units instead of deserting when World War I turned out to be a bloodbath?
A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question
Q: Why did young soldiers like Paul feel betrayed by their families and teachers?
A: Because their families and teachers filled them with patriotic stories of glory and sent them off to war. As soldiers they realize that war is nothing like the stories.

3. A Changed Man

Pre-viewing question
Q: How does *All Quiet on the Western Front* put a human face on war?
A: It allows readers to experience war through the eyes of a young soldier.

Post-viewing question
Q: In what ways does chance continue to play a role in Paul’s life near the end of the book?
A: Kat is killed by random pieces of shrapnel after having survived countless dangers. When the war finally ends, Paul is killed by chance by a single shot fired after the official end of World War I.

4. Remarque’s Life

Pre-viewing question
Q: Do you think Remarque would have still become a famous writer had he not had firsthand experience with war?
A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question
Q: Why was Remarque unable to write fiction before producing *All Quiet on the Western Front*?
A: The war was in his head, filling his thoughts. He had a story to tell before he could write fiction.

5. Circa World War I Germany

Pre-viewing question
Q: How did World War I change Germany?
A: Pre-war Germany was a booming industrialized nation. After the war, it was a defeated country with many unemployed people, orphaned children, and a generation of listless men.

Post-viewing question
Q: Why did Germany’s leaders go to war?
A: Although pre-World War I Germany was a thriving nation, the German government wanted to gain more power and colonies, and the only way to do that was to win a war.
6. Industrialized Warfare

Pre-viewing question
Q: Why did Hitler find *All Quiet on the Western Front* to be such a danger to his regime?
A: The book challenged Nazi propaganda by making German soldiers sound like unwilling participants in a tragic battle. Hitler wanted Germans to think of their soldiers as heroes and to place the blame for their defeat on outsiders.

Post-viewing question
Q: What is total war?
A: Total war is industrialized war. The chain of production in total war means that civilians working in a wartime factory are as much enemy targets as soldiers in the trenches. Total war includes biological weapons and the use of science for destruction. World War I was the first total war.