All Quiet on the Western Front Socratic Seminar Prompts & Prep Work
CCS: LRA 3.3, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.11; WS: 1.1, 1.4; WA: 2.2

What is a Socratic Seminar? For our purposes, in this class, it is a formal full-class discussion – the desks will be arranged in a giant circle – that is student lead, based on the prompts below. How many of the prompts we get to, and in which order we address them, is determined in the moment. Every student is required to participate meaningfully for a minimum of two times. Your contributions will be informed by, but not limited to, the prep work you do beforehand (other than your quotes – when relevant – you will not be reading.) [Should the class period end without you participating, it will be a zero. Participating once=50% or less. No recourse.]

Students who are absent will need to see me for the written equivalent assignment.

Be prepared to: Discuss each of these topics to the best of your ability. As you do not know which topics I will call, you will be expected to be able to effectively and insightfully discuss every one.

Preparation Homework: You are required to select five from the eight topics, and for each of those five, prepare a thesis statement that clearly asserts your opinion on the topic as it relates to your reading of the text. Also, for each of your five, locate at least one passage from the text to support your thinking – either provide the entire passage and page number in your TYPED document (you could copy & paste from the full text electronic versions), or, provide page numbers and brief summaries, and have the actual passages marked in your book.

[Optional: It may help to further outline your thoughts on each topic beyond the required thesis]

**Note** Do not limit yourself to only repeating what all of your other classmates are likely to say. That is, move past the initial obvious responses and explore your unique thoughts and viewpoints. TYPE this prep work.

For those of you without the book, the full text is posted in pdf format in the edline AQWF folder

You will be assessed on: [This assignment falls under Exam category]

Participation / Behavior: Taking notes, paying attention, on task at all times, listening to others, no side conversations, exhibiting patience, self-advocating while also helping others to contribute, exhibiting respect and using appropriate language.

Contributing meaningfully to the discussion at least TWICE: Sharing your original thoughts or responding to someone else’s remarks. Adding something of value to the discussion, not repeating what has already been said many times over. [*Note: you are free to redirect the conversation, jump back to an earlier point, raise a question, etc.] It is your responsibility to advocate for yourself.

Quotations: Students’ performance will be enhanced by their inclusion of quotations into the discussion, as relevant. [Prep work will be assessed on passages’ quality and relevancy.] Bring your book: be prepared find new quotes as relevant on the spot during our discussion. Give page numbers!

Quality of response: Do your contributions exhibit critical thinking and a thorough understanding of the reading? Are you producing original thought, or rehashing the obvious? Are you misrepresenting the text? Is your logic faulty? Are you only chiming in at the end of a conversation, repeating what’s already been said? Did you rush to get something in just to beat the clock?

A. How is this book an anti-war statement? [The following indented prompts, B-F all feed into and inform this broader question]

   B. Paul says, “It is Chance that has made us indifferent” (101); what role does chance play in this novel?

   C. What are the moments in the book that depict the soldiers as something other than themselves – less than human? What is the significance of this?

   D. In what way does All Quiet on the Western Front critique the romantic rhetoric of the war, honor, and patriotism? To what end? [How might this critique extend to nineteenth-century ideas of Nationalism?]

   E. What significance lies in Kat and Paul – veteran soldiers who survive innumerable dangers – dying the ways they do?

   F. What does the novel assert about the nature of enmity? Is this assertion essential to the purpose of Remarque’s novel?

   G. Paul recognizes a failure in language – what is that failure? Why is it significant?

   H. Paul talks about his generation in two regards: A.) Asserting that the men of his generation have all been rendered ‘lost’; B.) Depicting them as betrayed by, and disillusioned in, the older generation. How is each of these: 1. True? 2. Significant?
I. While on leave, Paul encounters many people who clearly do not understand what the frontline is really like, and yet, he makes no effort to illuminate them. Paul’s reasons for not telling are manifold. What possible reasons are there for telling while at home? On the same note, how is misrepresenting conditions for the Kaiser’s visit counter productive?

J. Analyze whether there are any heroes presented in *All Quiet on the Western Front*. What is the nature of their heroism? Are there any villains in the novel? What makes them villainous?

K. What are the ethics of depicting, war in art? Should it be depicted? How should it be depicted? (Consider not only literature, but also art in other forms)

L. How do “Dolce Decorum Est” and *All Quiet* assert the same argument?

Which character's death is the most important? Why? // How does Paul react to Kat's death differently than to Kemmerich's death? / Was Kemmerich’s death the turning point for Paul and how he feels about future friends death?

Does the gore on the front juxtaposed with the book's light-hearted vignettes lessen or strengthen the book's intended purpose?

Would you rather have the current ending or Paul describe his death with the military description and why?

How is Paul's relationship with Kat different from his other friends?

How do the different narrative styles/tones take a role in the book?

How do the dying horses affect the spirit of the soldiers and and what do the horses represent?

If Paul had not been responsible for Kemmerich would he have told his mother how he died?

Why did Remarque chose to end the way he did? What effect does it have on the themes of the book?

What is remarque's greater purpose in using juxtaposition (ex. life vs. death) so much throughout the book?

Was Kantorek really to blame for Paul's class enlisting in the war, or was it inevitable?

Was Kantorek really to blame for Paul's class enlisting in the war, or was it inevitable? If Paul hadn't had Kantorek as a teacher would he have voluntarily enlisted to war?

Why was Paul so sympathetic towards the Russian prisoners instead of towards his comrades when they were suffering? [ex. Kemmerich’s death wasn't important whereas the prisoners were affecting him?] >> I don't think that's exactly what Paul says

How has the war already killed Paul before he dies?

How does Paul change his view of Kemmerich’s death and death in general?

How do Paul's views of civilization change throughout the war?
How does chance decide the fate of soldiers?

Why are the enemy lines arbitrary?

How does this book provide a powerful anti-war message?

How has war changed since WWI? Is it still as terrible and destructive towards the soldiers?

Is the soldiers' pragmatism actually benefitting them, or is it taking away their humanity?

What would have happened if the war had ended sooner? Why?

What would Paul's life be like after the war had he survived? Was his own vision accurate? Why?

Explain Kropp's emotional and psychological journey in the Catholic hospital.

If Kat had survived the war, would Paul have survived?

If Paul never went on leave would he have survived? What are the costs and benefits of going on leave?

How in many ways have the boys retained or regained their innocence?

Does it matter what nationality the author and narrator of the book is?

If not the ending we get, what ending would better serve the story and the author's intended purpose? Why and how so?

Was Paul's stay in the Catholic hospital significant to his emotional and psychological journey as a character? How did Paul change after his stay in the Catholic hospital? Why?

How does or does not AQWF follow a traditional plot graph? How does this contribute to the book's greater purpose?

How do the various moments of irony affect the book?

How do the soldiers change when on the battlefield? Go beyond animals -- their reactions, decisions, thought process, etc.?

What is the difference in the perceptions of the war between those fighting it and those far off from the frontlines?

What is the role nature plays in the lives of the soldiers? Why so?

Going home for Paul Baumer was a different experience than for Heinrich Bredemeyer, why so? What is the significance in the differences in their mindsets?

Paul's death -- how does it or does it not contribute to the book's purpose? Could it have ended any other way? [think past just the fact that he died...]

In what ways do the shifts in narrative style contribute to the themes of the book? Cite specific moments that reveal Paul's emotional landscape and connect this to Remarque's purpose.
Does Remarque accomplish his purpose? How so? Why isn't the power of a book like this, or poetry like "dulce et decorum est"?

Throughout the book Remarque, through Paul, stresses the role of Chance in the soldiers lives -- how is this only partially accurate, and what is the greater significance of it?

Looking at things from another’s point of view is a significant theme in To Kill a Mockingbird. To Kill a Mockingbird’s central theme asserts that if

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF NATURE in this book?

in at the end of a conversation, repeating what’s already been said?

M. How is this book an anti-war statement? Is the book a successful anti-war statement?
N. Paul says, “It is Chance that has made us indifferent” (101); what role does chance play in this novel? What is its affect on the central characters?
O. What are the moments in the book that depict the soldiers as something other than themselves -- less than human? What is the significance of this? (Why is it necessary?) Fits in with the first category… what experiences in war—if any—might make young soldiers more human.
P. Paul recognizes a failure in language -- what is that failure? Why is it significant?
Q. In what way does All Quiet on the Western Front critique the romantic rhetoric of the war, honor, and patriotism? [How might this critique extend to nineteenth-century ideas of Nationalism?]
R. Paul talks about his generation in two regards: A.) asserting that the men of his generation have all been rendered ‘lost; B.) depicting them as betrayed by and disillusioned in the older generation; how are each of these: 1. True, 2. Significant? What does the novel assert about the nature of enmity? Is this assertion essential to the purpose of Remarque’s novel?
S. Debate the ethics of how war should be depicted—not only in literature, but also in other art forms.
T. What significance lies in Kat and Paul—veteran soldiers who survive innumerable dangers -- dying the ways they do? Is this assertion essential to the purpose of Remarque’s novel?
U. In what way does All Quiet on the Western Front critique the romantic rhetoric of the war, honor, and patriotism? To what end? Analyze whether there are any heroes presented in All Quiet on the Western Front. What is the nature of their heroism? Are there any villains in the novel? What makes them villainous

While on leave, Paul encounters many people who clearly do not understand what the frontline is really like, and yet, he makes no effort to illuminate them. Paul’s reasons for not telling are manifold. What possible reasons are there for telling while at home? On the same note, how is misrepresenting conditions for the Kaiser’s visit counter productive? (would it change things ??)
The disconnect between the younger generation and the older generation -- the younger generation’s disillusionment in the older. 

Young men fight an old man’s war -- the leaders and elders who encourage young men to volunteer for the war are morally bankrupt.

Example of the men’s pragmatism.

Despite the fact that the book’s preface asserts that the story is “[not] a confession,” Paul defends the soldiers’ pragmatism and lack of emotion.

Paul’s experiences in the war have changed his outlook on things.

Enemy lines seem to be arbitrarily drawn -- an enemy is an enemy because it has been commanded such -- there is a universal connection between all the men fighting in this war -- the cause of the war has no meaning to the soldiers fighting it.

A strong sense of camaraderie arises among the men of “the lost generation”.

Paul asserts that the young men for whom fighting the war comprises their entire knowledge of the world have been rendered a “lost generation”.

After spending so much time amidst the destruction of war, a soldier comes to appreciate the sensual experience of the small moments of life -- the assertion of self in the face of the nothingness of war, through sensual experience and through contact with nature.

On the front, the men instinctually turn into something less than human; there is a separation of self from what is living.

People further removed from the front have little understanding of the realities of the war.

Chance