

All Quiet on the Western Front
Chapters 2 & 3 Reading Activity

Person A: _____
Person B: _____

Person C: _____
Person D: _____

A: Read the first two paragraphs of Chapter 2 aloud to your group. Ask the group, “What does Paul mean when he says: ‘We however have been gripped by it and do not know what the end may be.’” Write the answers below:

B: Read pp. 20 to the break in 27 aloud to your group. Ask the group, “A major theme of the book is first introduced here. What is it? What details can we find to support Paul’s ideas about this theme?” Write answers below.

C: Read from p. 27 through the end of the chapter. Before you read tell your group to keep their eyes and ears open for vivid description and imagery. When you are finished ask the group, “Give two examples of vivid details Paul uses in describing this scene.” Write answers below.

D: Ask group, “What is the *tone* of the novel so far? How do you know/why do you feel this way?” Write answers below.

D: Read pp. 35-36 aloud to your group. Ask group, “How has the attitude shifted? How do Paul and his comrades feel at the beginning of the chapter and why?” Write answers below.

C: Read pp. 37 through the break in p. 40 aloud to your group. Ask group, “How does this group of friends feel about Kat? Why? What has he done for them?” Write answers below.

B: Read pp. 40-45 aloud to your group. Ask, “Who is Himmelstoss and why do you think Tjaden is so excited at this point?” Write answer below.

A: Read to the end of the chapter. Ask group, “How does the 1st person point-of-view affect the story? How do you (the reader) feel at this point in the story?” Write answers below.

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A: Read the first two paragraphs of Chapter 2 aloud to your group. Ask the group, “What does Paul mean when he says: ‘We however have been gripped by it and do not know what the end may be.’” Write the answers below:

He is talking about the young students who went off to war. They are so heavily involved and have such little life experience that they cannot view the fighting from an outsider’s perspective nor can they remember life outside of the war. There is nothing from home that has ever been this important, and so the war itself is the only experience that has ever changed them. They simply continue to fight as if it is the only life they’ve ever known, and have no idea of when it will be over.

B: Read pp. 20 to the break in 27 aloud to your group. Ask the group, “A major theme of the book is first introduced here. What is it? What details can we find to support Paul’s ideas about this theme?” Write answers below.

THEME: Camaraderie. Through the grueling hours of training and a mutual hatred of Corporal Himmelstoss, the young recruits grow closer together. He gives specific details of the repetitive exercises Himmelstoss put them through, in rain, snow and mud. He talks about how physically worn out and worn down they were. Physical challenges also challenge people emotionally and mentally, and through such challenges, Paul and his classmates grow closer than they could have been in school. Also, they bond by planning ways to disempower Himmelstoss

C: Read from p. 27 through the end of the chapter. Before you read tell your group to keep their eyes and ears open for vivid description and imagery. When you are finished ask the group, “Give two examples of vivid details Paul uses in describing this scene.” Write answers below.

“His lips have fallen away, his mouth has become larger, his teeth stick out and look as though they were made of chalk...” (28)

“The atmosphere of carbolic and gangrene clogs the lungs, it is a thick gruel, it suffocates.” (29)

“Outside the door I am aware of the darkness and the wind as a deliverance. I breathe as deep as I can, and feel the breeze in my face, warm and soft as never before.” (33)

D: Ask group, “What is the *tone* of the novel so far? How do you know/why do you feel this way?” Write answers below.

Desperation, despair, longing to be home. Paul gives gruesome details of the horrors of war but equally as peaceful and beautiful details of memories of better times. It is obvious that life is rough, and almost too difficult for these young men to be able to handle. They are simply surviving. Although they have nothing else

to live for, it is also obvious that they would rather be anywhere fighting in this war.

D: Read pp. 35-36 aloud to your group. Ask group, “How has the attitude shifted? How do Paul and his comrades feel at the beginning of the chapter and why?” Write answers below.

At the beginning of the chapter Paul and his comrades are in a position of power and they feel a bit more lighthearted. They are laughing at the new recruits and remembering what it was like to be so inexperienced. They feel old and worn but experienced and therefore secure. Paul reflects on what a great help Katczinsky has been, and that without him, he and the others might still feel just as young and stupid as the new recruits. Again, there is a feeling of camaraderie among the soldiers who have been together so long and through so much.

C: Read pp. 37 through the break in p. 40 aloud to your group. Ask group, “How does this group of friends feel about Kat? Why? What has he done for them?” Write answers below.

The younger guys feel a great deal of respect for Kat. They look up to him almost like a father or a mentor. He has provided food when there was none. He is adept at problem solving and he always seems to make the situation less bad by figuring ways to add comfort to discomfort. He is “street smart” and gives his comrades confidence and a feeling of security. As long as Kat is around, it is almost as if everything is going to be OK.

B: Read pp. 40-45 aloud to your group. Ask, “Who is Himmelstoss and why do you think Tjaden is so excited at this point?” Write answer below.

Tjaden is excited because all of a sudden the man they hate so much has been brought down (at last) to their level. In fact, even lower because of his inexperience. He is no longer in charge of them in the safety of training. Now that they are on the battlefield, it is as if experience alone decides a man’s rank. Himmelstoss has been sent to the front as punishment for everything the boys hated about him during training. This is a moment of glory for them to see their old Corporal brought down to the level that he acts rather than continuing on the power trip he once held over them.

A: Read to the end of the chapter. Ask group, “How does the 1st person point-of-view affect the story? How do you (the reader) feel at this point in the story?” Write answers below.

It is easy to feel and hear and taste and smell the front line with Paul because of his vivid description. Because the point-of-view is also present tense, it is as if the reader is experiencing the action, the horror, and the peace at the same time. The soldier’s fears, worries, and moment-by-moment thoughts are obvious as the reader is able to be directly connected to Paul’s inner commentary. It also provides good insight into the mind and thoughts of a young man during that time. Female readers have an easier time identifying with a subject we might otherwise have no direct and personal experience with.