



Photo of German prisoners of war carrying a wounded soldier on a stretcher while wearing German made gas masks
Online Collections Database, 2006.33.4.9, www.theworldwar.org/research/database. National WWI Museum and Memorial.
Online.

Letters of War: A Creative Writing Activity for *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Recommended Grade Levels: 9-12

Course/Content Area(s): English Language Arts, U.S. History,
World History

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LESSON OVERVIEW:	This activity asks students to go beyond typical character analysis and tie the experiences of the young men in <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> to experiences of our modern veterans (Vietnam and/or Afghanistan or Iraq) and the struggles they faced during and after their war experience.
OBJECTIVES:	<i>Students will:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● demonstrate their understanding of character development in <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> by writing letters from the perspective of a character and connecting their experiences to modern-day issues. ● reflect on the process of writing letters from the perspective of characters in <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> and explore the impact of connecting historical fiction to modern-day issues.
STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:	<p>English Language Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.) ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. ● CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
TIME NEEDED:	200-270 minutes
INTERDISCIPLINARY:	Social Studies, Creative Writing
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students will need to have read <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> by Erich Marie Remarque and have chosen a modern veteran's story from

	the Veterans History Project Collection . (Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq Wars)
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Copies of <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> for each student (now available in public domain) ● Copies of “Ambush” by Tim O’Brien from <i>The Things They Carried</i> ● Copies of letters from the National WWI Museum and Memorial’s Online Collections Database. Linked below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Letter 1 ○ Letter 2 ○ Letter 3 ○ Letter 4 ● Chosen stories from veterans of the Vietnam War. ● Writing materials or laptops/chromebooks for a digital version of the activity. ● Copies of “Tunnel Rats of the Vietnam War” by Jonathan Curran ● Access to or copies of articles from the 9/11 Museum found below. Beneficial articles and exhibits have been linked below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An Escalating Threat – Article about how Osama bin Laden became such a threat to the United States ○ General overview/timeline of the War in Afghanistan ○ Various primary sources showing the timeline and response to the attacks on 9/11 ● Headphones for modern soldiers’ stories ● Copies of Character Analysis Graphic Organizer ● Copies of letter format ● Copies of reflection activity ● Letter Writing Rubric

LESSON

PRE-ASSESSMENT/INTRODUCTION/HOOK:

Have students engage in a quick-write. Prepare a selection of instrumental music that you feel is vibrant and varied that reflects the emotions experienced in the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* and other pieces of writing. It is recommended to tell students to focus on describing what images and emotions come to their minds based on the music.

- Here are some music suggestions:
 - [Serene music](#) to represent the innocence of the soldiers at the beginning of the novel.
 - [War music](#) to represent the fighting
 - [Music](#) for Paul's death at the end

Play a minute or two of each one to encompass the emotions experienced by Paul and the other characters. Once finished, have students share what types of emotions, scenes, etc. that came to their mind when they heard the music and what thoughts/experiences came to them while hearing this music.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Context:

- Provide students with the chosen letters, articles, and other pieces for students to obtain a good understanding of soldiers' experiences, emotions and struggles, from during and in the aftermath of war.
 - i. Ensure students have background information/explanation of the Vietnam and Afghanistan wars.
 - 1. Use the provided resources linked above to choose which experiences you feel are most appropriate for your students.
- Once students have a good grasp of the soldier's experience, lead students in a class discussion of various experiences they all feel are good options to represent veterans of war most accurately.

2. Character Selection:

- Have students choose a character from the novel, such as Paul, Kat, or Muller, to focus on for this activity.

3. Character Analysis:

- Instruct students to analyze the chosen character's personality, experiences, and development throughout the novel.
- Encourage them to consider how the character's struggles and growth relate to universal themes and issues.
- Use the provided character analysis graphic organizer.
- This graphic organizer helps students analyze the character's traits, key experiences, development throughout the novel, relationships with other characters, and

connections to modern-day issues in *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Students can use this organizer to gather information and insights about the character for writing letters or further analysis.

4. **Letter Writing:**

- Explain to students that they will be writing a letter from the perspective of their chosen character, reflecting on their experiences in the war.
- Challenge students to connect the character's challenges to modern-day issues such as the impact of war on mental health, the importance of camaraderie, or the dehumanizing effects of conflict.
- This letter format organizer provides a structured framework for students to write letters from the perspective of a character in *All Quiet on the Western Front* and connect their experiences to modern-day issues. Students can follow this format to ensure their letters are well-organized and convey a deep understanding of the character's development and relevance to current events.

5. **Modern-Day Reflection:**

- After writing their letters, ask students to reflect on how the character's experiences and struggles parallel contemporary soldier's experiences.
- Encourage them to draw connections between the character's story and real-world events, social issues, or personal challenges faced today.

6. **Group Discussion:**

- Divide students into small groups to share their letters and discuss the modern-day connections they made.
- Facilitate a group discussion on the relevance of the character's experiences to present-day society and the lessons that can be learned from their story.

7. **Reflection and Application:**

- Have students reflect on the insights gained from the activity and consider how understanding historical perspectives can inform their views on current events.
- Encourage students to think about how literature can provide valuable insights into contemporary issues and inspire empathy and understanding.

POST-ASSESSMENT:

Letter rubric can be found [here](#).

MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS

- If there are students who need extra support, this lesson can be done in pairs or small groups.
- If the content is too upsetting for students, direct them towards stories that do not involve as much description of the suffering and experiences of soldiers.

Further Resources:

This website provides a collection of videos where veterans tell their stories and experiences while serving in areas of combat.

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/veterans-history-project-collection/serving-our-voices/vietnam-war/in-country/>

This website contains an article with visuals describing what it was like for a Vietnam soldier who was assigned to infiltrate tunnels and face combat in these conditions.

<https://www.thenmusa.org/articles/tunnel-rats-of-the-vietnam-war/>