

REGENERATION TEACHERS' NOTES

SYNOPSIS

The film 'Regeneration' is about a real life encounter that occurred at Craiglockhart War Hospital in 1917 between Dr William HR Rivers (Jonathan Pryce, an army psychologist, and the poet Siegfried Sassoon (James Wilby). The story is also about the young poet Wilfred Owen (Stuart Bunce) whose support from Sassoon enabled him to write poetry encapsulating the horrors of the First World War.

Rivers is tormented by doubt about the morality of what is being done in the name of medicine. The film contains vivid imagery of war and death and contrasts the devastation of war with the tenderness of another patient, Billy Prior's, love affair with Sarah a factory girl. The story questions whether those who have been broken by war - or those like Sassoon whose moral courage have removed them from the battle front - can or should achieve regeneration

Director Gillies MacKinnon Certificate 15 Running time 113 mins

INTRODUCTION

"War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things: the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks nothing worth a war, is worse ...A war to protect other human beings against tyrannical injustice; a war to give victory to their own ideas of right and good, and which is their own war, carried on for an honest purpose by their own free choice - is often the means of their regeneration"

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) Philosopher and Economist (Taken from 'Dissertations and Discussions-The Contest in America' (1859) which John Stuart Mill wrote in opposition to the proposal that England should side with the slave-owning Confederacy during the American Civil War (1861-1865)

As we rapidly approach the end of the twentieth century two events which have taken place over the last hundred years still cast their shadow over the ways in which we think today - the First World War (1914-1918) and the Holocaust.

In looking at the film 'Regeneration' we are seeing the ways in which this legacy continues. The poet Vernon Scannell (born 1922) begins his poem 'The Great War':

"Whenever war is spoken of
I find
The war that was Great invades the mind:"

For some reason, which we will explore later, the Great War, or First World War remains a touchstone for our imagination and for historians throughout this century.

One could say that from a historical perspective the ways in which we in the 21st century and people before us, perceive the First World War is not only through history books but also through the poetry and large amount of literature on the Great War which has appeared since.

Our outlook is formed through the culture which has developed around the war itself. One could say that the poet Lieutenant Wilfred Owen MC (1893-1918) has had a greater effect on many people's view of the war than, for instance, a history book on the First World War.

HISTORICAL SOURCES

“Fact and fiction are so interwoven in this book that it may help the reader to know what is historical and what is not”.

Pat Barker author of the novel 'Regeneration' (Author's Note)

In both the novel and the film of *Regeneration* you, as a student of history, are faced with the fact that the true historical story of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen has been filtered down to us through a number of sources. The events shown in the film, the characters and their actions are, as Pat Barker points out, about a mixture of historical fact and fiction.

Consider the different ways in which we could find out about what happened at Craiglockhart War Hospital in 1917.

- The events are recorded in autobiographies written after the war by Siegfried Sassoon. 'Sherston's Progress' (The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston) and Robert Graves' 'Goodbye to All That'.
- Wilfred Owen writes about his meeting with Sassoon and his own experiences of the First World War in letters to his family and friends.
- The events are recorded in a number of history books.
- The events are interpreted in Pat Barker's novel 'Regeneration'.
- The events are represented in the film 'Regeneration'.

As a historian what do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of using any of these five types of sources as historical evidence?

LANGUAGE AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

It is important to realise the ways in which the events of the First World War affected not only people's lives but also how they talked about the events which had occurred. There is no doubt that at the outbreak of the war in 1914, most people's views of what would happen were influenced by the way in which war had been described in the past. In his book 'The Great War and Modern Memory', Paul Fussell gives examples of imagery of war that existed in 1914:

A friend is a	comrade
The enemy is	the foe, or the host
To attack is to	assail
The dead on the battlefield	are the fallen
Dead bodies constitute	ashes, or dust
A soldier is a	warrior

If you look at some of the poems in the appendices of this guide you will see that by 1917 these words were no longer appropriate. The First World War was not a war of charging horses, gallant attacks over open countryside. It was a stalemate where death usually came from an unseen enemy and those who were killed were often blasted into pieces. The memorial at Thiepval on the Somme in France lists over 70,000 names of British soldiers whose bodies were never found. This was not war as had been seen previously. The Great War had not been fought in the manner of the nineteenth century. It was a new type of war - total war - and more importantly, a mechanised and technological war.

Language and ideas changed after this experience. Whilst never doubting the courage of those that died one can say that the tragedy often lay in the ways in which they were killed. The war, with its poison gas, high explosives and machine guns pitted against flesh introduced a whole new meaning into the idea of warfare.

TASK

How would you think that this change in the use of language might have affected historians? Do you think that historians have to use a particular type of language? What would this be? How do you think that it is different from the language of poets, such as, Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen?

VISUAL IMAGES

As well as a new way of thinking about war there was also a new way of portraying war, both in paintings and also in film. This process which developed after the Second World War has had a great influence on filmmakers today. Whilst many films show historic and thrilling exploits of soldiers there have been others which have questioned war and its outcome. There have been films which have shown the glory of war and those which are anti-war. We need to consider this when looking at 'Regeneration' and think of what our expectations would be of both types of films.



Imperial War Museum

In thinking about these two types or genres of film we need to consider what our expectations of each would be as members of a cinema-going audience. What would we expect to see in each?

TASK

Make a list of what your expectations would be of each of the war genres that exist, that is, glory of war and anti-war films.

When you have seen the film 'Regeneration' compare it with the list of expectations that you have drawn up and see which type of film it is. Was there anything in it which you did not expect?

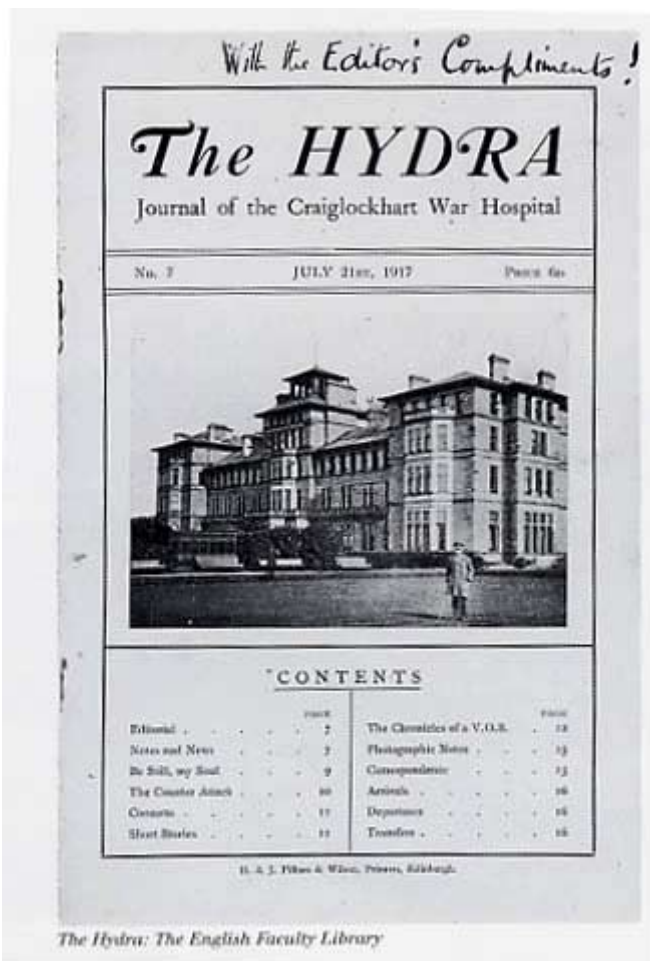
Could you repeat this process with different events in history? In looking at the First World War, how would, say, a military historian look at events as opposed to a social historian? Choose two different events in history and explain how a military historian and a social historian would depict them.

THE PERIOD OF THE FILM

The period covered by the film 'Regeneration' deals with the poet Siegfried Sassoon's stay at Craiglockhart War Hospital after his statement 'Finished With The War – A Soldier's Declaration' had been read out in the House of Commons.

Craiglockhart was a military hospital for officers who were suffering from shell-shock. At Craiglockhart Sassoon met both Dr William H R Rivers, the distinguished anthropologist and psychiatrist (who was to become his life-long friend) and the poet, Wilfred Owen. Sassoon encouraged the young poet and after the war edited and published Owen's works.

Pat Barker says that one of her initial inspirations for writing her novel 'Regeneration' which the film is based upon, was visiting the forbidding and claustrophobic Craiglockhart Castle – originally a thirteenth century keep. In 1916 the army requisitioned it and up until 1919 Craiglockhart was used as a military hospital for treating soldiers suffering from the nervous condition then known simply as shell-shock.



Craiglockhart Hospital produced its own in-house magazine called 'The Hydra'. The production of the magazine was encouraged by the hospital doctors, especially A J Brock (Owen's therapist) as part of the patients' therapy. Both Brock and Rivers believed that it was essential for shell-shock victims to be as active as possible. The magazine was run by and for the patients. Wilfred Owen was editor of 'The Hydra' for six issues from July 21, 1917. He published two new poems by Sassoon, 'Dreamers' and 'Wirers' and (anonymously) two of his own poems, 'Song of Songs' and 'The Next War' which were the first of his poems to appear in print.

FILMING REGENERATION

One of the difficulties the film crew for 'Regeneration' faced was the need to re-create the trenches of the First World War. During the seven weeks of principal photography the cast and crew had to endure wind, rain and snow and worst of all several feet of mud. They dug trenches and used barbed wire and dummies of dead soldiers and their horses to simulate the squalor and horror of the scene in a field just outside Airdrie in Scotland. They were assisted in establishing an authentic look and feel to the film by appalling weather conditions which meant the army of extras

had to stagger through a sea of mud in sub-zero temperatures.

TASK

Think about the importance of locations and sets in films. How do they contribute to the mood and atmosphere of the film? Can you think of other films in which the sets are not merely a background or location but are conducive to the mood, tone and even the action of a film?

Armistice Day (November 11) came a week after shooting had started. The cast and crew observed a two minute silence as a mark of respect for the soldiers who fought and died in the First World War.

In his 'Notes From The Front', the director of the film *Regeneration* Gillies MacKinnon records his experiences of filming on Armistice Day:

"We were soaked to the skip knee-deep in freezing trenches, the camera and tracks were clogged with mud, everything took three times longer to accomplish. But we knew that we could go home at night to warm beds and, for us, there would be no bombardment."

"Surrounded by about a hundred prosthetic corpses all glistening with frost, the cast and crew observed a two minute silence for Armistice Day. It was a humbling experience for all concerned."

"Later, Jonny Lee Miller (the actor who plays Billy Prior) and eighty extras walked over No-Man's Land. The sound of machine gun fire, the smell of smoke, the music of Jenny's voice calling out orders all cast an eerie spell. After walking about fifty yards, Jonny was the only one standing. The extras lay stretched out behind him, a poignant proof of how many seconds it must have taken for eighty men to die."



TASK

As a researcher for the film 'Regeneration' you have to put together a portfolio of material for the director and designers. The sources that you choose for your portfolio can be images, newsreel footage and written descriptions of locations, costumes and sets. There are two major locations that you need to research - the trenches and Craiglockhart Hospital.

BEGINNINGS

"Where do all the women who have watched so carefully over the lives of their beloved ones get the heroism to send them to face the cannon?"

Kathe Kollwitz (1867-1945) German artist (Diary entry for August 27, 1914)

We now refer to the 1914-1918 war as the First World War. However, for the generation that grew up after 1918 it was known as the Great War. It was an event of unparalleled horror where millions of men faced each other across a 'No-Man's Land', bombarded with shell fire, gassed, burnt and shot. Nine million men were killed in the long murderous offensives that more often than not achieved nothing. It is estimated that a further five million civilians perished under occupation, through disease, hunger and bombardment.

YOUNG MEN AT WAR

"There were a great number of young men who had never been in a war and were consequently far from unwilling to join in this one"

Thucydides (5th Century BC) Greek historian

The Western Front, that is the lines of trenches stretching from the Swiss border to the Channel coast, was the main arena of conflict for the duration of the war. It was here that men would endure long periods of inactivity punctuated by extremely costly battles, such as, the Somme (1916) and Passchendaele (1917) which saw the loss of 300,000 men. The first day of the Battle of the Somme (July 1, 1916) was the bloodiest single day of battle in the Great War. More than a thousand officers and twenty thousand enlisted men were killed; twenty-five thousand more were seriously wounded. A breakthrough was not achieved. When the Battle of the Somme ended four months later the allies had advanced six miles - a gain for which 95,675 Britons and 60,729 Frenchmen paid with their lives. The German death toll in defence was 164,055.

Whilst the American Civil War was the first war "in which really large numbers of literate men fought as common soldiers" (Theodore Bopp, literary historian author of 'Out of Battle') the Great War was fought by young men brought up with a firm belief in the educational and redemptive powers of classical and English literature.

SECOND LIEUTENANT SIEGFRIED SASSOON MC (1886-1961)



On September 8, 1886 Siegfried Sassoon was born into a wealthy family, one of three brothers. Sassoon is one of the few writers of the Great War who may be said to fit the stereotypical profile of the 'war poets'. They are often perceived as being, for the most part, the privileged public school educated products of Edwardian England. Sassoon received a traditional public school education at Marlborough College before 'going-up' to Clare College, Cambridge, where he was an undergraduate from 1905 to 1907. He read law at Cambridge though he later swapped to history. Sassoon was never comfortable as an academic and his later feelings of intellectual inferiority to Dr Rivers stem mainly from his mediocre record at school and to the fact that he left university without taking his degree.

Sassoon preferred to return to his family home in Kent where he lived like a country gentleman - riding, hunting, playing cricket and writing poetry. Sassoon had already begun to establish his reputation as a poet when, at the age of twenty-eight he enlisted as a cavalry officer. He was soon transferred to the Royal Welsh Fusiliers where he met another poet, Robert Graves.

Initially, Sassoon like the majority of young men at this time, was an avid supporter of the war. Indeed, his poem, 'The Kiss' which revels in the 'blind power' of 'Brother Lead and Sister Steel' seems to be the work of a 'happy warrior'. Sassoon saw the war as an opportunity to refine his art and in 1916 was able to write "I am going up to the trenches very shortly..and I mean to suck in all I can when I get up there. I am always trying to impress things on my memory, and make as many notes as I can."(letter to another poet Sir Edward Marsh (1872-1953))

The trenches were constantly subjected to artillery bombardments and men would literally be sent 'over-the-top' to fight the enemy. In doing so they risked almost certain death from the constant blaze of machine-gun and rifle fire, shellings, grenades, poison gas and flame throwers which made their advance virtually impossible.

The suffering of soldiers during the war was on an unprecedented scale, particularly in the front line trenches. On the Western Front most of the Great War was fought in trenches or between trench lines. These trenches were dug deep enough to protect the men from enemy fire. They were continuously muddy, often flooded, and were frequently filled with the bodies of wounded or dead men and animals. The men in the trenches were tormented by rats, lice, shell fire, and enemy snipers. Men from both sides ate, slept and died in the trenches.

In the trenches periods of frantic action were broken by long periods of waiting, training and preparation. During the relaxed times some soldiers took the opportunity to write diaries or letters to friends and family in England. Several writers like Richard Aldington (1892-1962), Edward Thomas (1878-1917) and Wilfred Owen reworked their experiences into poems whilst they were back behind the lines or in English training camps.



Imperial War Museum

TASK

Compare Owen's poem 'The Sentry' with the letter to his mother (Appendix I). How has he used the material of his own experience to create his poem? What are the differences in emphasis between the two pieces of writing? How is the audience for his poem different to that of the audience for his letter? As a historian which of the two sources is the most useful? How would you use both sources in describing the Western Front in 1917?

MAD JACK

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle".

Sun Tzu (6-5th century BC) Chinese general (The Art of War, Chapter 3, Axiom 18)

Sassoon swiftly won the admiration and respect of his troops. "It was only once in a blue moon that we had an officer like Mr Sassoon." recalls Frank Richards, one of Sassoon's soldiers. When he was wounded in the shoulder Sassoon returned to action in France as rapidly as he could, such was his concern for the troops he commanded. When Sassoon eventually agrees to return to the Western Front, Rivers recognises that it is Sassoon's anxiety about the welfare of the ordinary soldiers that drives him back to the war, not any change of heart brought about by his treatment at Craiglockhart.

TASK

Look at Rivers' initial medical report on Sassoon (Appendix II). Write Rivers' final report on his patient after Sassoon has left Craiglockhart. (The novel ends with the date of Sassoon's discharge from Craiglockhart, November 26, 1917 and the comment 'Discharged to duty').

Though Sassoon returned to the war he was eventually wounded in the head - by one of his own soldiers - and invalided back to England. Unlike many of his contemporaries Sassoon survived the Great War and spent the rest of his life writing about his experiences. Sassoon gained a reputation as a reckless, courageous soldier and earned the nickname 'Mad Jack'.

When he was awarded the Military Cross the citation read as follows:

"For conspicuous gallantry during a raid on the enemy's trenches. He remained for one and a half hours under rifle and bomb fire collecting and bringing in our wounded. Owing to his courage and determination, all the killed and wounded were brought in."

We see an incident of heroism depicted in an early part of the film - Sassoon's single-handed bombing raid on the German trenches in 1916 for which he was nearly awarded the Victoria Cross. This act of individual heroism was largely provoked by Sassoon's fury at the death of a close friend, David Thomas.

TASK

Why might Gillies MacKinnon, the director, have decided to show this incident at an early stage of the film?

PROTEST

"And all this madness, all this rage, all this flaming death of our civilization and our hopes, has been brought about because a set of official gentlemen, living luxurious lives, in ostly stupid, and all with out imagination or heart, have chosen that it should occur rather than that any one of them should suffer some infinitesimal rebuff to his country's pride"

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) Philosopher, mathematician (letter to 'Nation' periodical) The letter was written August 12, 1914, eight days after the outbreak of war.

In 1915 one of Sassoon's brothers was killed at Gallipoli and by 1917 many of Sassoon's friends and comrades were either dead, maimed or mutilated. Though he had initially supported the war, Bassoon had become disillusioned and believed that the war was being needlessly prolonged. In his poetry and in his semi-autobiographical works, 'Memoirs of an Infantry Officer' and 'Sherston's Progress', Bassoon records his growing horror at the conduct of the war. He was appalled at the carnage, the meaningless sacrifice of young lives and the disgraceful complacency of the English public. Sassoon's poem 'Blighters' (Appendix III,).

Whilst on leave, Sassoon met with the noted philosopher, Bertrand Russell, who was a committed pacifist. His friend, Robert Graves, believed that Bassoon was suffering from severe shell-shock and that Russell and other pacifists, like Lady Ottoline Morrell, took advantage of Sassoon's weakened condition to further their aims In Graves' memoirs 'Goodbye-to All That' he writes that:

"The thought of France nearly drove him (Sassoon) dotty sometimes. Down in Kent he could hear the guns thudding ceaselessly across the Channel, on and on, until he didn't know whether he wanted to rush back and die with the First Battalion, or stay in England and do what he could to prevent the war going on. But both courses were hopeless. To go back and get killed would only be playing to the gallery - the wrong gallery -and he could think of no means of doing any effective preventive work at home, His name had gone in for an officer-cadet battalion appointment in England, which would keep him safe if he pleased; but it would be a dishonourable way out".

TASK

Can you think of three key points in the film where the director makes clear to the audience Sassoon's feelings about the war?

When Sassoon's statement 'Finished With The War' (Appendix IV) was read out in the House of Commons on July 30, 1917, it was conveniently dismissed as the work of "an extremely gallant young officer who had done excellent work at the Front" but who was now "not responsible for his actions, as he was suffering from a nervous breakdown". Writing the declaration had been an act of private and public courage for Sassoon. Through publishing the declaration he risked being court-martialled, cashiered and imprisoned - even executed.

TASK

Why might the government have preferred to dismiss Sassoon's statement as the work of a shell-shocked war hero rather than destroy Sassoon through a court-martial?

In 'Goodbye to All That' Robert Graves stated his concern that Sassoon "should not become a martyr to a hopeless cause in his present physical condition". Though he was suffering from shell-shock himself, Graves used his influence to ensure that Sassoon attended a medical board rather than a court-martial.

SHELL-SHOCK

"War has always been the grand sagacity of every spirit which has grown too inward and too profound; its curative power lies even in the wounds one receives?"

Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) German philosopher (Foreword to 'Twilight of the Idols' 1889)

After the war, Rivers told Sassoon that the local Director for Medical Services, Dr Lewis Yealland, who was hostile to the very existence of Craiglockhart "took strong exception" to the fact that the soldiers walked about in slippers! Yealland had said that he "never had and never would recognise the existence of such a thing as shell-shock" Nevertheless, by 1916, shell-shock was beginning to be recognised as a medical condition and doctors were employed to cure the victims of this condition.

Many doctors believed it best for the shell-shock victims to try to forget the terrible events that had caused their condition but his studies had lead Dr Rivers to the conclusion that it was far better for soldiers to come to terms with the cause of their illness, He commented that doctors who tried to persuade soldiers to forget their experiences..."merely accentuated the disease, and even produced new manifestations, by encouraging the patient to believe in the physical character of his conditions". Rivers encouraged his patients to discuss their problems and their war experiences. The approach adopted by Dr Yealland towards his patient Callan would have represented all that Rivers did not believe in.

TASK

Rivers does not challenge Yealland or prevent him from treating Callan. Though Callan does regain his speech how does the film make clear Rivers' abhorrence of Yealland's methods?

Here is Robert Graves' view of Rivers :

"At Craiglockhart, Siegfried came under the care of Professor WH R Rivers...we already knew of him as a leading Cambridge neurologist, ethnologist and psychologist. He was now busily engaged with morbid psychology. He had over a hundred neurasthenic cases in his care, and diagnosed their condition largely through a study of their dream-life, based on Freud's work...His posthumous work 'Conflict and Dream' is a record of his labours at Craiglockhart."

FRIENDSHIP AND ADVICE

"I came out in order to help these boys - directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of theirs as well as a pleader can. I have done the first."

Wilfred Owen (October 1918)

Wilfred Owen was on the Continent teaching until he visited a hospital for the wounded and then decided, in September 1915, to return to England and enlist. He was injured in March 1917 and sent to Craiglockhart. He was passed fit for duty in August 1918, and returned to the Western Front. On November 4, just seven days before the Armistice, Owen was caught in a German machine-gun attack and killed. He was twenty-five years old when he died.

At the centre of the novel and film is the relationship between Sassoon and Owen. When they first met Owen was very much in awe of Sassoon, whose reputation and poetry he was already familiar with. Owen wrote about Sassoon to his friend, Leslie Gunston:

"... I have beknown myself to Siegfried Sassoon. Went into him last night (my second call) The first visit was one morning last week. The sun blazed into his room making his purple dressing suit of a brilliance - almost matching my sonnet! He is very tall and stately, with a fine firm chisel'd (how's that) head of ordinary short brown hair The general expression of his face is one of boredom. After leaving him, I wrote something in Sassoon's style, which I may as well send you, since you asked for the latest."

The poem which Sassoon is most famous for influencing is Owen's 'Anthem For Doomed Youth' (Appendix V). They worked together on the poem at Craiglockhart and copies of various drafts of this poem in Owen's handwriting with Sassoon's corrections and amendments still exist. It was Sassoon who suggested the poem should be an Anthem and the poem started life as 'Anthem For Dead Youth' (Appendix V - handwritten Anthem to Dead Youth' version), though it had its earlier genesis in 'To a Comrade in Flanders' and two fragments, 'All Sounds Have Been As Music' and 'Bugles Sang' which Owen asked his mother to send him after his first meeting with Sassoon.

It is Owen's most famous poem, perhaps the most famous anti-war poem ever written, 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' (Appendix VI) which is used to powerful effect in the film. The magazine 'Punch', which was hugely influential in promoting the war and keeping up morale on the home front, published a patriotic poem 'Pro Patria' (Appendix VII) written by Owen Seaman in 1914 (Seaman was editor of Punch from 1906 until 1932). Owen's poem is an angry counter-blast to the sentiments of 'Pro Patria'.

TASK

Why do you think we have the scene in the film in which Sarah asks Billy to translate the Latin tag 'Dulce Et Decorum Est Pro Patria Mori'? (The tag comes from a work by Horace (65-8 BC, Roman poet and satirist) and translates as 'it is sweet and proper to die for one's country').

DIFFERENT VOICES

"I am no longer an artist, interested and curious. I am a messenger who will bring back word from the men who are fighting to those who want the war to go on for ever. Feeble, inarticulate, will be my message, but it will have a bitter truth, and may it burn their lousy souls?"

Paul Nash (1889-1946) British war artist (letter, November 13, 1917, to his wife)

It is important to remember that despite the inclusion of historical events and real characters (Sassoon, Owen, Graves, Rivers, Yealland and Brock) the book 'Regeneration' is a work of fiction. It is instructive to look at the novel alongside some of Pat Barker's sources for the book for example, Owen's and Sassoon's letters.

Not only do we have the film version of events from Sassoon's life we also have Sassoon's own version in the semi-autobiographical 'Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man', 'Memoirs of an Infantry Officer' and 'Sherston's Progress' to refer to, as well as Robert Graves' deliberately fictionalised version, 'Goodbye to All That'.

Frequently there are contradictions and one of the most interesting is the matter of Sassoon's Military Cross ribbon. Here is Sassoon's version of the incident taken from 'Memoirs of an Infantry Officer':

"Wandering along the sand dunes I felt outlawed, bitter and, baited. I wanted something to smash and trample on, and to a paroxysm of exasperation I performed the time-honoured gesture of shaking my clenched fists at the sky. Feeling no better for that, I ripped the M. C. ribbon off my tunic and threw it into the mouth of the Mersey. Weighted with significance though this action was, it would have felt more conclusive had the ribbon been heavier. As it was, the poor little thing fell weakly on to the water and floated away as though aware of its own futility. One of my point-to-point cups (riding trophies) would have served my purpose more satisfyingly, and they'd meant much the same to me as my Military Cross."

Pat Barker makes skilful use of this version in the novel *Regeneration*. Here Sassoon tells Rivers about throwing away his decoration:

(Sassoon) "It was a futile gesture. I'm not particularly proud of it"

(Rivers) "You threw it in the Mersey, didn't you?"

(Sassoon) "Yes. It wasn't heavy enough to sink, so it just..bobbed around. There was a ship sailing past, quite a long way out, in the estuary, and I looked at this little scrap of ribbon floating and I looked at the ship, and! thought that me trying to stop the war was a bit like trying to stop the ship would have been. You know, all they'd've seen from the deck was this little figure jumping up and down, waving its arms, and they wouldn't've known what on earth it was getting so excited about."

The film 'Regeneration' deals with this incident in quite a different way. It is depicted as a solitary action; Sassoon hurls a medal into a lonely loch not the Mersey estuary - whilst we hear his statement 'Finished With The War' on the soundtrack.

TASK

Why do you think MacKinnon, the director, decided to film Sassoon's throwing away of his Military Cross in this way rather than adhering to Sassoon's or Pat Barker's version?

Near the beginning of the film there is a powerful and disturbing scene in which Wilfred Owen comforts Burns, a soldier, we learn, who has been traumatised by being blown up and thrown by an explosion into a rotten German corpse. Burns has stripped off his clothes and in a bizarre ritual - hinted at in the film but dealt with more explicitly in the novel - surrounded himself with the decaying corpses of vermin strung up by a gamekeeper. In the novel this is a solitary secret action which takes place sometime after Sassoon's arrival at Craiglockhart.

TASK

Why has MacKinnon introduced this scene at the beginning of the film? Why has he included Owen in the sequence?

The film takes up some of the literary hints that the novel offers. At the beginning of Part Three of the novel Rivers stands in church, contemplating two stained-glass windows one of which depicts the crucifixion and the other which shows Abraham about to sacrifice his son Isaac:

"... the two bloody bargains on which a civilization claims to be based. The bargain, Rivers thought, looking at Abraham and Isaac. The one on which all patriarchal societies are founded. If you, who are young and strong, will obey me, who am old and weak, even to the extent of being prepared to sacrifice your life, then in the course of time you will peacefully inherit, and will be able to exact the same obedience from your sons. Only we're breaking the bargain, Rivers thought. All over northern France, at this very moment, in trenches and dugouts and flooded shell-holes, the inheritors were dying, not one by one, while old men, and women of all ages, gathered together and sang hymns."

Gillies MacKinnon goes back to the probable literary source of this scene - Wilfred Owen's poem 'The Parable of the Old Man and the Young' (Appendix VIII). This is the poem which we hear at the end of the film as the camera moves over territory familiar to us from Owen's dreams. The camera continually moves until we see Owen's corpse half-hanging in the water in a posture reminiscent of a painting in the Imperial War Museum 'The Dead Stretcher Bearer' by Gilbert Rogers MBE. The bells were ringing on November 11, 1918 in Shrewsbury to celebrate the Armistice when the doorbell rang at Owen's home; it was a telegram bringing his parents the news of their son's death.

BILLY PRIOR

"Colonial system, public debts, heavy taxes, protection, commercial wars, etc., these off shoots of the period of manufacture swell to gigantic proportions during the period of infancy of large-scale industry. The birth of the latter is celebrated by a vast, Herod-like slaughter of the innocents."

Karl Marx (1818-1883) German political theorist, social philosopher. 'Das Kapital' volume I, chapter 31 1867)

Unlike Sassoon, Billy Prior is a working class character and is a completely fictional creation. Prior represents many officers who 'rose from the ranks' who did not have the education and class advantages of many other officers. In the film we see his ambitious mother who is eager to ensure that her son rises above his lowly origins; in the novel Pat Barker also introduces Billy's father, a brutal and brutalising man. He is a product of the environment which Billy, through enlisting, is attempting to escape. Prior is an exceptional character. A young working class man in command of men like himself. Many men who enlisted in the army to fight in France were enticed by regular food and pay - better conditions than those they experienced in England.

Prior's initial mutism and breakdown originate in his attempts to suppress the hideous image of a dead comrade's eyeball which he picks up after the soldier has been blown to fragments. As Rivers points out this incident is the culmination of many terrible occurrences which have eroded Prior's sanity.

Prior's mutism is viewed with interest and concern by Rivers who points out that shell-shocked officers rarely suffer from mutism though they tend to stammer..as Rivers begins to do as Prior somewhat gleefully points out resulting in Rivers' stammer getting progressively worse Allan Scott who wrote the screenplay for the film 'Regeneration' observes that Rivers:

"..managed to make sane men mad enough to go back to war and he had to live with that. Or rather he didn't. He himself becomes shell-shocked through treating their shell-shock."

Like the novel the film keeps relationships compartmentalised We learn about Rivers' relationship with Sassoon and Prior. Sassoon's relationship with Owen, and Prior's relationship with Sarah. Prior, however, does not converse with Sassoon or Owen and we learn little of Owen's relationship with his therapist, Brock.

TASK

Why do you think that there is no meeting between Prior and Sassoon or Owen in the film?

APPENDIX I

THE SENTRY

We'd found an old Boche dug-out, and he knew,
And gave us hell, for shell on frantic shell
Hammered on top, but never quite burst through.
Rain, guttering down in waterfalls of slime,
Kept slush waist-high and rising hour by hour,
And choked the steps too thick with clay to climb.
What murk of air remained stank old, and sour
With fumes of whizz-bangs,
and the smell of men
Who'd lived there years, and left their curse in the den,
If not their corpses...

There we herded from the blast
Of whizz-bangs, but one found our door at last,
Buffeting eyes and breath, snuffing the candles,
And thud! flump! thudi down the steep steps came thumping
And splashing in the flood, deluging muck-
The sentry's body, then his rifle, handles
Of old Boche bombs, and mud in tuck on ruck
We dredged him up, for killed, until he whined
'O sir, my eyes - I'm blind, - I'm blind, I'm blind!'
Coaxing, I held a flame against his lids
And said if he could see the least blurred light
He was not blind, in time he'd get all right.
'I can't' he sobbed. Eyeballs, huge-bulged like squids',
Watch my dreams still; but I forgot him there
In posting Next for duty, and sending a scout
To beg a stretcher somewhere, and flound'ring about
To other posts under the shrieking air.

* * *

Those other wretches, how they bled and spewed,
And one who would have drowned himself for good, -
I try not to remember these things now
Let dread hark back for one word only: how
Half-listening to that sentry's moans and jumps,
And the wild chattering of his broken teeth,
Renewed most horribly whenever crumps
Pummelled the roof and slogged the air beneath,
Through the dense din, I say, we heard him shout
'I see your lights!' But ours had long died out.

Wilfred Owen

APPENDIX I CONT.

LETTER TO SUSAN OWEN (Wilfred Owen's mother)

16 January 1917

2nd Manchester Regt., B.E.F.

I can see no excuse for deceiving you about these last 4 days. I have suffered seventh hell. I have not been at the front.

I have been in front of it.

I held an advanced post, that is, a 'dug-out' in the middle of No Man's Land.

We had a march of 3 miles over shelled road then nearly 3 along a flooded trench. After that we came to where the trenches had been blown flat out and had to go over the top, It was of course dark, too dark, and the ground was not mud, not sloppy mud, but an octopus of sucking clay, 3, 4. and 5 feet deep.

relieved only by craters full of water. Men have been known to drown in them. Many stuck in the mud & only got on by leaving their waders, equipment, and in some cases their clothes.

High explosives were dropping all around out(side), and machine guns spluttered every few minutes. But it was so dark that even the German flares did not reveal us.

Three quarters dead, I mean each of us 3/4 dead, we reached the dug-out, and relieved the wretches therein. I then had to go forth and find another dug-out for a still more advanced post where I left 18 bombers. I was responsible for other posts on the left but there was a junior officer in charge.

My dug-out held 25 men tightly packed. Water filled it to a depth of 1 or 2 feet. Leaving say 4 feet of air, One entrance had been blown in & blocked. So far, the other remained.

The Germans knew we were staying there and decided we shouldn't.

Those fifty hours were the agony of my happy life.

Every ten minutes on Sunday afternoon seemed an hour.

I nearly broke down and let myself drown in the water that was now slowly rising above my knees.

Towards 6 o'clock, when, I suppose, you would be going to church, the shelling grew less intense and less accurate: so that I was mercifully helped to do my duty and crawl, wade, climb and flounder over No Man's Land to visit my other post. It took me half an hour to move about 150 yards.

I was chiefly annoyed by our own machine guns from behind, The seeng-seeng-seeng of the bullets reminded me of Mary's canary. On the whole I can support the canary better.

In the Platoon on my left the sentries over the dug-out were blown to nothing ... I kept my own sentries half way down the stairs during the more terrific bombardment. In spite of this one lad was blown down and, I am afraid, blinded.

This was my only, casualty.

APPENDIX II

Dr. William H R Rivers' Initial Report on Siegfried Sassoon

MEDICAL CASE SHEET.*

No. in Admission and Discharge Book.	Regimental No.	Rank.	Surname.	Christian Name.
397 T. (F)		2nd Lieut.	Sassoon	Siegfried.
Year		Unit.	Age.	Service.
1917		R.W.F.	30	2 11/15
Station and Date.	Disease			
Craiglockhart War Hospital, 23/7/17	<p>Patient joined ranks of the Sussex Yeomanry on Aug. 3rd, 1914. Three months later he had a bad smash when schooling a horse, and was laid up for several months. In May 1915 he received a commission in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. He was in France from Nov. 1915 until Aug. 1916, when he was sent home with trench fever. He had received the Military Cross in June 1916. He was on three months' sick leave and returned to France in Feb. 1917. On April 16th, 1917, he was wounded in the right shoulder and was in the surgical wards of the 4th London for four weeks and then at Lady Brassay's Convalescent Home for three weeks. He then understood that he was to be sent to Cambridge to instruct Cadets.</p> <p>From an early stage of his service in France, he had been horrified by the slaughter and had come to doubt whether the continuance of the War was justifiable. When on sick leave in 1916 he was in communication with Bertram Russell and other pacifists. He had never previously approved of pacifism and does not think that he was influenced by this communication. During his second visit to France, his doubt about the justifiability of the War were accentuated; he became perhaps even more doubtful about the way in which the War was being conducted from a military point of view. When he became fit to return to duty in July of this year, he felt that he was unable to do so, and that it was his duty to make some kind of protest. He drew up a statement which he himself regarded as an act of wilful defiance of military</p>			

APPENDIX II CONT.

authority : (See Times, July 31st, 1917). In consequence of this statement he was ordered to attend a Medical Board at Chester about July 16th, but ~~refused~~^{refused}. It was arranged that a second Board should be held at Liverpool on July 20th, which he attended, and he was recommended for admission to Craiglockhart War Hospital for special treatment for three months.

The patient is a healthy-looking man of good physique. There are no physical signs of any disorder of the Nervous System. He discusses his recent actions and their motives in a perfectly intelligent and rational way, and there is no evidence of any excitement or depression. He recognises that his view of warfare is tinged by his feelings about the death of friends and of the men who were under his command in France. At the present time he lays special stress on the hopelessness of any decision in the War as it is now being conducted, but he left out any reference to this aspect of his opinions in the statement which he sent to his Commanding Officer and which was read in the House of Commons. His view differs ~~entirely~~ from that of the ordinary pacifist in that he would no longer object to the continuance of the War if he saw any reasonable prospect of a rapid decision.

(8½)
He had an attack of double pneumonia when 11 years old, and again at 14. (15½) He was at Marlborough College, where he strained his heart at football. He was for four terms at Clare College, Cambridge, where he read first Law and then History, but did not care for either subject. He left Cambridge and spent the following years living in the country, devoting his time chiefly to hunting and cricket. He took no interest in Politics. From boyhood he has written verses at different times, and during his convalescence from his riding accident in 1914 he wrote a poem called "The Old Huntsman" which has recently been published with other poems under that title.

L. H. King

APPENDIX III

BLIGHTERS'

The House is crammed: tier beyond tier they grin
And cackle at the Show, while prancing ranks
Of harlots shrill the chorus, drunk with din;
'We're sure the Kaiser loves our dear old Tanks!'

I'd like to see a Tank come down the stalls,
Lurching to rag-time tunes, or 'Home, sweet Home',
And there'd be no more jokes in Music-halls
To mock the riddled corpses round Bapaume.

Siegfried Sassoon

APPENDIX IV

FINISHED WITH THE WAR A Soldier's Declaration

(This statement was made to his commanding officer by Second Lieutenant S L Sassoon, Military Cross, recommended for O50, Third Battalion Royal Welch Fusiliers explaining his grounds for refusing to serve further in the army. Sassoon enlisted on August 3, 1914, showed distinguished valour in France and was badly wounded.)

I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it.

I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest. I believe that the purposes for which I and my fellow soldiers entered upon this war should have been so clearly stated as to have made it impossible to change them, and that, had this been done, the objects which actuated us would now be attainable by negotiation.

I have seen and endured the suffering of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust.

I am not protesting against the conduct of the war, but against the political errors and insincerities for which the fighting men are being sacrificed.

On behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practised on them; also I believe that I may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realize.

S. Sassoon

July 1917

APPENDIX V

ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

- Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
- Only the stuttering rifles rapid rattle
- Can patter out their hasty orisons.
- No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
- Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, -
- The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
- And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles maybe held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall,
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Wilfred Owen

APPENDIX VI

DULCE ET DECORUM EST

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge.
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots Of tired,
outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in tire or lime...
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori

Wilfred Owen

APPENDIX VI CONT.

Dulce et Decorum est
(To Jessie Pope etc.)

Bout
~~Hamlet~~, like old rag + bone men under sacks;
Knock-kneed; coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge.
Till on the glimmering
~~And then, on a~~ flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Halling each mile.
~~And~~ ~~for~~ ~~some~~ had lost their boots,
And limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoarse
Of ~~disappointed~~ shells that dropped behind.
Then somewhere near in front: Whew, fup, fup, fup -
Gas-shells or dud? We loosened masks in case -
And listened... Nothing... Far guns grumbled krupp -
Then smartly Poison hit us in the face.
Gas! GAS! An ecstasy of fumbling,
~~At first, at first, at first, at first,~~ just in time.
Fitting the clumsy helmets

P.T.O.

Wilfred Owen's - Dulce et Decorum est.
(OEF 316 and 317); The English Faculty Library

But someone still was yelling out, and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.
There, through the misty panes and dim green light,
As under a thick sea, I saw him drowning... 37

I must not speak of this thing as I might.
In all my dreams I ~~see~~ ^{hear} him choking, drowning.
In all your dreams if you could slowly pace
Behind the wagon that we laid him in,
And watch the white eyes turning in his face,
His hanging face, tortured for your own sin, -
If you could see, ~~the~~ at every jolt, the blood
Come belching ^{how} black and frothy from the lungs,
And think ~~that~~ once his face was like a bud,
Fresh as a country rose, and clear, and young,
You would not go on telling with such zest,
To ~~your children~~ ^{children} ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Oct 8. 1917

PRO PATRIA.

ENGLAND, in this great fight to which you go
Because, where Honour calls you, go you must,
Be glad, whatever comes, at least to know
You have your quarrel just.

Peace was your care; before the nations' bar
Her cause you pleaded and her ends you sought;
But not for her sake, being what you are,
Could you be bribed and bought.

Others may spurn the pledge of land to land,
May with the brute sword stain a gallant past;
But by the seal to which you set your hand,
Thank God, you still stand fast!

Forth, then, to front that peril of the deep
With smiling lips and in your eyes the light,
Stedfast and confident, of those who keep
Their storied scutcheon bright.

And we, whose burden is to watch and wait—
High-hearted ever, strong in faith and prayer,
We ask what offering we may consecrate,
What humble service share?

To steel our souls against the lust of ease;
To find our welfare in the general good;
To hold together, merging all degrees
In one wide brotherhood;—

To teach that he who saves himself is lost;
To bear in silence though our hearts may bleed;
To spend ourselves, and never count the cost,
For others' greater need;—

To go our quiet ways, subdued and sane;
To hush all vulgar clamour of the street;
With level calm to face alike the strain
Of triumph or defeat;—

This be our part, for so we serve you best,
So best confirm their prowess and their pride,
Your warrior sons, to whom in this high test
Our fortunes we confide. O. S.

A DETERMINED ISLAND.

ANYTHING more peaceful than the outward aspect of the Isle of Wight, as I have seen it from Totland Bay during the past week, it would be impossible to conceive. For the most part the sun has been shining from a blue sky on a blue and brilliant sea; men, women and children have been swimming and splashing joyfully in a most mixed manner, and the whole landscape has had its usual holiday air. These, however, are deceptive appearances. We have felt and are feeling the imminence of war, and, though our judgments are firm and patriotic and prepared for sacrifice, our minds are clouded with a heavy anxiety. Our newspapers arrive at about 11 o'clock, and at that hour there is a concentrated rush to the book-shop. There we make our way through stacked volumes of cheap reprints to the counter where two ladies are struggling womanfully against the serried phalanx of purchasers. These two dive head-first from time to time into a great pile of the morning's news and emerge triumphantly with *The Times* for Prospect House or *The Telegraph* for Orville Lodge, and so on through the crowd of applicants until all are satisfied. This is the great event of our day. At the grocery stores on the opposite

side of the road, news telegrams are shown on a board, and with these we eke out the knowledge of our fluctuating fate. Close by, too, is posted up a proclamation by the officer commanding the troops in the Island. He bids us not to walk too near a fort or to convey to any casual person such knowledge as we may have gained about the movements of troops, and we are commanded "to at once report" anything suspicious. I am sure the gallant officer will display as much vigour in the battering of his country's foes as he has shown in the splitting of the King's infinitives. Going for my newspaper this morning I saw at a distance an elderly gentleman of a serious aspect revolving steadily round and round a tall iron post. It was not until I came closer that I realised the meaning of his strange gyrations. The proclamation had been inconsiderately pasted round the post and he was endeavouring to read it.

On Thursday last, nearly a week before the actual proclamation of war, the wildest rumours were afloat here. A motherly lady assured me with a smile that the German fleet might be expected at any moment. "The British fleet," she told me, "has been overwhelmed and sunk in the North Sea. The Germans have determined to capture the Isle of Wight, so we are none of us safe." I asked her where she had heard this dreadful news. "Oh, it's all over the village." Thereupon she moved calmly into a bathing cabin and had a patriotic dip. In another quarter I was told that the Island could not fail to be cut off, and awful things were prophesied as to what would happen to us unless we made our way to the mainland with the utmost promptitude. The supply of eggs was to run short; meat was to go up to famine prices or be reserved entirely for the soldiery, our intrepid defenders; bread was to become a luxury obtainable only by millionaires. All this was reported on the authority of a man who had it from another man who had it from a banker who was in close touch with the War Office in London. So far what is true is that steamers no longer come to Totland Bay, and anyone who wants to visit us here can get no nearer by boat than Yarmouth—not, of course, the home of the bloater, but our own little island Yarmouth, round the corner. In the meantime a good deal of patriotic self-denial is going on amongst the juvenile population. A friend of mine, aged seven, hearing the talk about all the coming privations, has decided to remove chocolates, buns and sponge-cakes from his dietary, and several young ladies have agreed to take milk instead of cream with their breakfast porridge.

This morning we were brought face to face with the grimmest reality of war we have so far experienced. A boy-scout called at the house and produced an official paper asking for the names and addresses of any aliens who might be residing in the house. We have one such alien, a German maid for the children, a most unwarlike and inoffensive alien. Her name was entered on the form and the boy-scout disappeared to call at other houses. Since then, at intervals of about half-an-hour, other boy-scouts have called and produced similar forms. I have just dismissed a party of three, telling them that they seemed to be overlapping. They smiled and said, "Thank you," and retired. I look out of the window and behold two more approaching. They are doing the thing thoroughly.

P.S.—Another notice is out warning us that it is known there are a lot of spies in the Island, and that we must not loiter near a fort lest we be shot. It is rumoured that soldiers are to be billeted on us (enthusiastic cheers from the younger members of the family). R. C. L.

"Turnip, beef, carrots, and onions, if of suitable variety, would in a favourable autumn yield fair-sized bulbs."—*Manchester Evening News*.
New Song. "When father carved the bulb."

APPENDIX VIII

THE PARABLE OF THE OLD MAN AND THE YOUNG

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
And builded parapets and trenches there,
And stretched forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him.
Behold, A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns,
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.

But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

Wilfred Owen

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SUGGESTED VIEWING

'**The Great War**' (BBC television series)

'**Blackadder Goes Forth**' (BBC). A comedy series.

'**All Quiet On The Western Front**' (1930). The war seen from a German soldier's perspective

'**Paths Of Glory**' (1957) A Stanley Kubrick film

'**Oh What A Lovely War**' (1969). Obscures rather than clarifies the causes of the First World War but still packs a punch!

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