

Daniel M [REDACTED]

Murphy P.1 - W.O.W.

12/14/14

Part I: Formal Written Analysis

Go somewhere where you are away from society for a good period and notice how you change as a person when you come back. There is always a different perspective on life and the people around you when you return to society. The people who have the hardest time returning to society are war veterans. Whether the veterans are from Vietnam, Afghanistan, or any other war, they all have the same struggle when they come home and have to return to society after being in a completely different environment. The three books that portray this topic are All Quiet On The Western Front, Erich Maria Remarque, The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien, and A Long Way Gone, Ishmael Beah. Remarque's story is during WWI, and the men he writes about are in the German army, so they have a different society to return to compared to the men who fought for the United States. Tim O'Brien writes about his own experiences in the war. His writing helped him cope with the war when he returned to society. He writes about how him and his comrades have had different ways of returning to society from fighting in the Vietnam War, which was not easy because the war was opposed by most American citizens. Americans do not notice war if they are not involved, so most people do not know about the recent wars that go on in Africa. Ishmael Beah writes about his incidents in the war in his country of Sierra Leone, when he was a kid.

WWI was a very violent war considering the new technology that was becoming common in war. Soldiers spent most of their time in trenches, which changes the men

for a number of reasons. The men do not change only during the time of war, the effects of being part of such a gruesome experience last a lifetime and the soldiers must return to society with these psychological changes. Remarque writes about Paul Baumer coming home on leave. For a man in his early 20's, Paul Baumer has not lived life yet and has already gone through so much stress and seen so much death and gore that returning to society even for a short period of time is not something he can do. He can no longer see the world like he did before. When Baumer was in his room on leave, he no longer had a connection to things he used to love, the war was all he had now, it changed him forever. These changes make coming home very hard. Returning to society for Paul Baumer was regretful and he said he wish he never came home. This goes to show how returning to society is not as easy as some people may think.

Remarque also writes, "The first shell to land went straight for our hearts. We've been cut off from real action, from getting on, from progress. We don't believe in those things any more; we believe in the war." These men are expected to go to war and if they survive, then they should return to society and live normal lives. This quote depicts the loss innocence in soldiers, these men will live the rest of their lives thinking about their time in the war. So returning to society is the hardest thing to do for a soldier. He will no longer be around the things he is used to, but most importantly, when he does return to society, he will no longer have the group of people that understand him and his experiences the best. Society does not know what these men have experienced, and do not treat these veterans with the respect they deserve.

Tim O'Brien writes about his friend Norman Bowker and how he had a hard time when he came home from Vietnam. O'Brien writes, "He wished he could have explained

some of this. How he had been braver than he ever thought possible, but how he had not been so brave as he wanted to be. The distinction was important.” Norman Bowker fought in the war just like Tim O’Brien did, but Bowker thought he was responsible for Kiowa’s death, and he could not accept the fact that he thought he was responsible. This made his life very hard when he got back from Vietnam, and he could not adjust to society. When Norman Bowker got back to his village, all he did was drive in his dad’s truck around the lake because he was “stuck in a rut” with his past. The war changed him, society was not the place for him. Nobody wanted to talk to him, and he did not want to talk about his past. He ends up committing suicide. Tim O’Brien had an easier time adjusting to society because he wrote, which helped him cope. In his books he writes that after so many years of living in the world after the war, he had to go back to Vietnam to make peace with Kiowa because he knew that it was his fault that Kiowa died. This is an example of how soldiers who return to society think about their experiences for their whole lives.

Now a more recent war that people have little knowledge of, the War Of Sierra Leone was very violent and consisted of many boy soldiers. These boys were recruited with false information, they were given drugs, and were brainwashed by the armies. Just because they were boys did not mean they did not fight. The armies took advantage of them and made them fight like the real soldiers. Rejoining society for Ishmael Beah was different than the others. He did not want to return, the war was all he had left, he lost everything at a very young age so he did not have much to look forward to. Beah did not plan on leaving the army, but UNICEF got him and the other boy soldiers away from the war and into rehabilitation. To him this was the last thing he

wanted to do, returning to society was extremely difficult. He was suffering from withdrawal and could not connect with anyone at first. The rehabilitation eventually helps Beah come to terms with the things he has done and he is able to start a normal life with his uncle. Although it is hard to pretend like he was never part of the war, the memories will be there forever and he has to live with that everyday when he returns to society. Beah writes, "One of the unsettling things about my journey, mentally, physically, and emotionally, was that I wasn't sure when or where it was going to end. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. I felt that I was starting over and over again." Adjusting to society at such a young age is very difficult because it is hard to get a grasp on life being a boy who fought and killed in war thinking it was the right thing to do at the time. He is doing fine right now, however society likes to ask him questions about his past, and that's another thing that he has to live with.

All these authors write about the struggle of returning to society because it is very common in all wars, but each author has a different purpose when they write about it in their own ways. Remarque depicts the topic by showing how some soldiers cannot adjust to society because the war is all they think about when they come home. O'Brien has a different approach to the topic. He illustrates the topic by writing about himself and his comrades and how they have lived through the years returning to society. He also writes about how some soldiers get "stuck in a rut" with their war experiences and cannot adjust to society. A more modern depiction of returning to society is done by Ishmael Beah. He writes about his own experiences, similar to O'Brien, but Beah was a kid when he went to war, so there is a different effect on him. Beah found it did not want to adjust to society at first, but now that he did, the road ahead of him is much easier. All

veterans have had to return to society after war, but it depends on how he/she makes the best of it. Not all veterans can adjust, and commit suicide, which goes to show what war can do to a person. Returning to society is not as easy as it may seem.

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Murphy P.1 - W.O.W.

Part II: Narrative-Style Reflection

Rejoining Society

I always knew that soldiers usually return to society after they serve, but I never really knew what it was like for them to rejoin. Before I took Winds Of War, I did not have a clear understanding of the things that soldiers go through during war, and how they have to live with that for the rest of their lives when they come home.

Most people think that when soldiers come home from serving, they can just go on with their lives without a problem, but this is not always true. It is very hard to for veterans to rejoin society because of the stress and different mind set they have after war. I will never understand what it is like to fight in a war and go through the things that our veterans have gone through, but the more I learn about it the more I realize how hard life can be for them when they return home. I find it very heartbreaking that the veterans from older wars did not get the homecoming that they deserve. These men should have been treated with more respect and received better treatment. This issue has improved very much over the years, but the men who did not get a fair chance when they came home deserved much more for the things that they went through. I have heard many times about soldiers not being able to rejoin society, it is very depressing to think about how these were all men with normal lives before going into a war and not being able to cope with the war effects on them.

Too many people don't know or acknowledge this issue. I think it is very important to know about this topic because people need to realize the struggle that our veterans go through everyday of their life. Even though not all veterans may show it, all veterans have the images and effects still in there heads, no matter how hard one may try to forget, it will always be there for every single one of them, and society does not give these men the respect and sympathy that they deserve. To teach people about this

topic/issue I would make winds of war or something very similar a mandatory class in all high schools in America. This way more people would be more accepting and understanding of veterans returning to society. If everyone knew hard it is for soldiers to adjust to “normal” life again, then more people would be willing to help these men. The topic should be more known across America because people are always thinking that our Veterans are fighting for freedom and come back all happy and can just make an easy transition from war to society, but sadly this is not true at all. More people need to realize how being in a war really changes a person and makes them look at life differently.

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12/3/14

Murphy P.1 - W.O.W.

Part III: Images

### **WWI Era (1900-1930)**

*One Sculptor's Answer To WWI Wounds: Plaster, Copper And Paint*



*Anna Coleman Ladd, 1918, (Archives Of American Art), Sculpture*

<http://www.npr.org/2014/09/25/351441401/one-sculptors-answer-to-wwi-wounds-plaster-copper-and-paint>

Anna Coleman Ladd did a great job showing how soldiers come home from war. She made sculptures of actual soldiers faces when they came home from the war. Anna made her sculptures from the men that were badly injured on their faces, so she can make masks for them to wear and hide the damage of the war effects. The original sculptures show how soldiers would have to rejoin society with the injuries that happened to their faces. These men's faces were almost half blown off, and the world expects them to go back to their normal lives and try to forget about the war. This artwork shows the real physical effects of war. You cannot get the same feeling when reading about this kind of damage and mutilation in a book. Seeing the actual damage on real sculptures of Veterans returning home from war really gives a more realistic

reaction to show others what war is really like.

### **Vietnam Era (1955-1970)**

*Peace*



*With a helmet declaring "Peace," a soldier of the 1st Cavalry Division, 12th Cavalry, 2nd Battalion, relaxes June 24, 1970, Unknown Photographer, Photo, Flag Insider*

<http://www.flaginsider.com/2012/03/vietnam-veterans-day-march-29/>

I used an image instead of an actual art piece because finding actual art about soldiers rejoining society from the Vietnam War era is very difficult to find. This is because people did not accept the soldiers who came home from Vietnam, instead they blamed them for the madness that happened over there. The image that this

photographer took of a soldier ready to go home shows a lot of meaning. The soldiers were ready to go home and find peace after the war, but it is obvious that coming home was not as peaceful as they expected. The image depicts a soldier laying back with his hands behind his head and the word peace on his helmet. The photographer was trying to show what the soldiers felt like when they were about to leave Vietnam. This soldiers position and the words on his helmet go to show how relieved he must be that he is finally leaving the fighting behind, but this is what most soldiers felt like, just to find out that they cannot forget about something like this when they rejoin society. Yes they will have more “peace” when they go back home, but the war will always be part of them and it is very difficult to make peace with the things they have seen and done in Vietnam. Rejoining society for the men that fought in Vietnam was the opposite of peaceful and relaxing, it was more stressful and emotional than they ever imagined it.

**Current Art (2007-today):**

*IED Strike Casualty In Recovery*



*Jason P. Howe, March 20th 2012, Jason P. Howe Photoshelter*

Jason P. Howe <http://jasonphowe.photoshelter.com/image/I00005KYOXWfI3ZE>

This photograph is a piece of war art showing what war does to the men who risk their lives in it. More importantly it shows how these men are injured and expected to return to society and return to their normal lives. Jason P. Howe took this picture to show the people at home what happens to the men risking their lives for those people. The photograph shows the veteran trying to adjust his prosthetic leg while he is sitting down, and the look on his face seems to be eager to walk again, but also sad knowing that he has to live the rest of his life like not being able to walk like he used to. His arm has many battle scars, and it shows the pain he must have gone through while serving

his country who will give him some benefits, but expect him to return to society and live a normal life again. Looking at this picture makes you feel sorry for the man, you would certainly not want to be in his position. If you actually put some thought into the image, you realize that there are so many men like the man in the picture, and they all had to return to society with permanent wounds on the outside and inside. The picture shows what war really does to men, reading about it does not give you the same sensation as seeing an actual photo. By seeing the actual effects of war in this picture, maybe more people will treat our veterans differently when they return to society. It is not easy for these men to try and live normal lives with such injuries and pretend like everything is okay. The artist took the photo while the veteran was performing his daily routine which was adjusting his prosthetic leg, which gives the viewer an idea of what everyday life in society is because of the aftermath of being part of a war.

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Part IV: Veteran Interview

Being able to go and see art by Vietnam War Veterans was great, but being able to hear a Veteran talk and answer our questions was great. I learned a lot from the art that they had displayed there, but I thought hearing Captain Ned Ricks talk was just phenomenal. He is a Vietnam veteran who served in Vietnam from 1970-1971. Ned was head of the 9th Cavalry Division of the army for his men. Listening to his perspective and experiences in the war really changed my opinion about what the Veterans went through. You don't get to hear about the things he says from anybody else, it seems

that the public doesn't care if you learn about things like this.

What struck me most about Ned Rick's experience in the war is that he was scared for his life the whole time. I know that all men in Vietnam were scared for their life, but Ned's experience was different. Most men were scared of getting killed by the enemy, but Ned was scared of getting killed by one of his own men. This irritates me for so many reasons, but it also makes me feel bad for the solitude that some of these men in charge have to go through. I don't think that most people would be able to handle the stress and constant fear that Ned had to go through. He mentioned that he always had a gun ready everywhere he went, in case one of his men decided to kill him like they did to the Captain before him, which really made me think what the war was really about for him. I now see that the people who fought in Vietnam did not all have war buddies and comrades to help them cope with all the constant stress and gore. Ned Ricks made me realize that the Vietnam War was not just a war on Vietnam, but a war on the soldiers everyday lives.

Being able to hear Ned's experiences about how others treated him and his men really makes a person think. I find it hard to believe that some people asked for money from the soldiers just to entertain them. This just shows that there are very inconsiderate people in this world that take everything for granted. I would like to see those people go to Vietnam for a while and see what the soldiers go through. Ned Ricks mentioned that everyone in Vietnam was always tired and the war never let any of the soldiers get some decent rest. I feel lots of sympathy for the men that had to go through all that pain for their country, and when they came home, people didn't even thank them.

I will never be able to know what it is really like to fight in the Vietnam War, but I do have a better understanding after listening to Captain Ned Ricks talk about his thoughts and experiences. He explained things in a way that made me understand how he felt about everything he experienced. The way he talked just makes you have eye contact the whole time, but when things got emotional, it was too hard to look at him in the eyes now because he was talking about something that me or anyone else in that room will never understand. I appreciate his service and am very grateful to be able to get an experience like this.