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Final Research project

Did you hear? That man over there, he looks so much different, the war really took a toll on him. These books will show use the transformation of a civilian into a soldier. *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque, *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien, and *A Long Way Gone* by Ishmael Beah. With the transformation soldiers go through.

In our adventure through World War One, in the book *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Paul Baumer had to go through lots of experiences that have changed him into a different man. During the beginning of war he had to see all the gruesome ways people can die. Yet he had to witness a death first hand, of an enemy soldier. "Comrade, I did not want to kill you. . . . But you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response. . . . I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship. Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us that you are poor devils like us, that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, and that we have the same fear of death, and the same dying and the same agony— Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy?" Paul was only trying to stay alive, after seeing the weapons the French soldier had. After killing him, Paul found his diary who he was writing about his wife and experiences. Paul was transformed by war making him think that any soldier who is not German is an enemy. When Paul received a break from the front lines, he decided to come home and reunite with his family. As he returns home, he learned that his mother is dying, and cannot believe it. Although when he enters his room it doesn't feel the same to him. "I wait, I wait. Images float through my mind, but they do no grip me, they are mere shadows and memories. Nothing—nothing—My disquietude grows." Thus Paul realizes that

coming home wasn't the wisest of ideas, since nothing at home can give him any happiness. Paul has transformed from a boy who would be happy looking at his awards, into a soldier who finds no happiness at home.

O'Brien once said "Sometimes I can even see Timmy skating with Linda under the yellow floodlights. I'm young and happy. I'll never die. I'm skimming across the surface of my own history, moving fast, riding the melt beneath the blades, doing loops and spins, and when I take a high leap into the dark and come down thirty years later, I realize it is as Tim trying to save Timmy's life with a story." O'Brien transformed at a young age of nine years old when his first love, Linda, died of a brain tumor. Ever since her death, O'Brien always incorporated Linda into any of his stories, because O'Brien does not want to forget about her, no matter how long ago it was. "Anyway,"rat said, "the days aren't so bad, but at the night the pictures get to be a bitch. I start seeing my own body. Chunks of myself. My own heart, my own kidneys. It's like—I don't know—its like staring into this huge crystal ball." O'Brien later heard about what happen to Kiley. The war completely changed Kiley, he didn't get disgusted at looking at blood, or the insides of soldiers. He grew accustomed to it, which started driving him crazy, that he imagined himself being dead, with his insides hanging out.

Beah's life story, about how he became from a civilian into a soldier, than back into a civilian shows that he had to go through plenty of changes in his life. In his first battle Beah was extremely scared, since he had to face something which everyone feared. "I have never been so afraid to go anywhere in my life as I was that day. Even the scuttle of a lizard frightened my entire being. A slight breeze blew and it went through my brain with a sharp swoop that made me grit my teeth in pain. Tear had begun to form in my eyes, but I struggled to hide them and gripped my gun for comfort." After Beah joined in a couple more battle and took some more

drugs, he wasn't scared of fighting anymore. "I was sweating, and they threw water on my face and gave me a few more of the white capsules. I stayed up all night and couldn't sleep for a week. We went out two more times that week and I had no problem shooting my gun." After He got used to fight, he became the junior lieutenant, which Beah was quite proud of achieving. Beah finally found another set of men whom he can call, "family". "My squad was my family, my gun was my provider and protector, and my rule was to kill or to be killed." Thus showing Beah's transformation from his prior scared self, into a soldier who was ready to charge into battle without a single worry about what might happen to him.

Each of these soldiers, Paul, Tim, and Ishmael, had to face lots of situations that will be changing them. Even joining into war happened to change them quite a bit. They all were young kids, joining something that will ruin their childhood. Like Ishmael who joined the war at twelve, and Paul who joined at eighteen. Yet each one of their transformations was completely different, because of how they went through the war. Whether it be not having to even killing your first enemy soldier, or killing plenty of soldiers without a single thought. Paul's transformation was much different since he had to face chemical warfare, drastically changed every soldiers state of mind.

## **Section Two: Narrative-Style Reflection**

### **Topic: Transformation**

Back when we were going over what courses we would want to take our senior year, Winds of War, may have been the first one that caught my eye. I had a good idea of what books we would be reading in the class, but my first thoughts about war would differ from what I would think about war now. At first when I would hear that there is going to be a war, I just

presumed that someone just did something extremely stupid causing the other to retaliate in violence. Now from the knowledge I have acquired from this class I learned that these wars were actually started because the ones who start them, would only profit from this war whether it be acquiring oil, or some other precious material. Also the books that we have read in the class and the projects showed me there is much more in war then what the media is showing us. Whenever I heard of a soldier doing something absolutely crazy when he came back home, I thought he just couldn't handle the war and was scared. Now I realize that he may have been diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder or PTSD for short.

I feel as if the topic of war should be important to learn about because there are just too many students who don't know much about war. I was one of those students who didn't know much about war, but after taking this class I learned quite a lot about the wars that we have covered. With how WWI was a war with modern weapons at the time including chemical weapons, but the strategy that they used was primitive to their time to their era. Then in Vietnam I also thought that the Vietcong were actually the military of the North Vietnam. I also learned that they used guerilla warfare against us, like how we did back in the revolutionary war. Even our own soldiers who were sent to Vietnam were buying drugs from the locals to use a stress reliever, or to make sure they won't remember anything that has happened to them.

If I were to find anything important in transformation, it would be the people who transformed. Whether it be single or person or a whole group, when there are transformed they are usually much different then what they were in the beginning. Imagine someone who is always kind and cares for others that is being drafted into a war. They will not come back home 4 years from when they were drafted and still be the same kind of person that everyone liked.

That's what happened with transformation no one can stop someone from being changed, all they can do is just hope the best.

## **Part Two: Narrative-Style Reflection**



The Picture above is titled Gassed by John Singer Sargent, Made in 1919.

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/wars\\_conflict/art/art\\_frontline\\_gal\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/wars_conflict/art/art_frontline_gal_01.shtml)

Sargent is depicting my topic with the sense of transformation because of what has happened with the soldiers. You can see that there are only a few soldiers standing, symbolizing the strong men who have face challenges, and all sorts of problems and be able to change because of them. Giving them the strength to continue on, no matter what has happened to them. You can get a very sad feeling just by looking at this, by the amount of men who have been effect by the mustard gas. Yet there are a few men you feel happy that survived such a terrible

thing that has happened, and being known as the lost generation. After acknowledging the soldiers for being a part of the only war that used chemical warfare to kill each other.



<http://lightbox.time.com/2013/09/11/the-best-photo-from-vietnam-one-photographers-defining-image-of-war/>

Art Greenston, April 1968

The soldier who is standing lifting his arms up into the air is the focal point of this artwork. You can depict the transformation that man has gone through, for enduring so much that

when he finally was able to see the sun, he was fulfilled with joy. You can get a lot out of looking at his piece of art, but there is just one dead man lying down on the ground knowing he is going to die soon. Yet the other soldiers around him, don't even to give a single thought about him. Its as if these soldiers have seen so much already, that a dying man wont ruin their day.



Skip Rodhe , Warrior 2008

<http://www.artcriesout.com/iraqwarmemorial.html#location1>

The transformation that has happened to this man had to be unbearable, he has lost both his legs and has to be in a wheelchair to move around now. You can also see on his face that he

does not seem to possess any kind of emotion other than being sad. What a person can get out of this is that no matter how big or small a war is, there are some fates that men cannot escape from. Whether it be losing your legs or your arms, you will never be able to regain happiness without having anything missing.

#### Section Four: Veteran Interview

Colonel, Jim Miles, U.S. Army, Paratrooper 508 Airborne regimental combat team a company, Vietnam War

Back when Jim Miles was in the first grade was when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. As he went to theaters they would usually show things about the war, which made Jim decided that he was going to join the military. So he left home at the age of seventeen join the military, and choose to join in the army. He choose the army out all of the branches because he had family members, and people who lived around him choose to join in the army. He also decided to join in on the paratroops back when that was a part of the army branch. In Jim's platoon, he had a soldier from Germany who was a lieutenant in the German air force, and I found this interesting because why would a lieutenant of the German air force decide to come to the U.S and join the army. During jump week at paratroop school, there was a soldier who was in his late thirties or early forties who wasn't scared to go first, whether it be jumping from a thirty-four foot tower or from an airplane. When it was Jims turn to jump, the sergeants told him that if he doesn't yell Geronimo he'd own him fifty. So Jim did and then the sergeant still made him do fifty push up for doing it. Later he boarded a ship to be shipped out to Germany, during the cold war time.

I found it very interesting that he had German air force pilot in his platoon who was a lieutenant, decided to come to the U.S. and serve in the military here. I also feel indifferent that

you couldn't wear glass back in the fifties if you were trying to join the paratroopers, because if you jump in a static line there shouldn't be much confusion when you are jumping out of the plane, on where to go. His sergeant just wanted to make someone to do pushup's just for yelling something dumb out when they jumped off the tower, which I found hilarious.

<http://www.glo.texas.gov/voices-of-veterans/interviews/miles.html>