



DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE AND FILM
ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT AUDITION SIDES

SPEECH ONE (All Actors Prepare) -

PAUL BAUMER is the central character in the novel, All Quiet on the Western Front. PAUL volunteered for the war with their classmates, but quickly find the claims of grand duty made by their parents and teachers were very different from the reality they found at the front. This speech takes place at the beginning of the play, directly to the audience, after PAUL has watched their classmate killed in No-Man's Land.

PAUL

This story is to be neither an accusation nor a confession...

and least of all an adventure...

for death is not an adventure to those who stand face to face with it.

It will try to simply to tell of a generation who, even though they may have escaped its shells, were destroyed by the war.

PLEASE SELECT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SPEECHES TO PREPARE

SPEECH TWO -

Corporal Himmelstoss was a postman before the war, but the power from being a drill sergeant, and his first taste of authority, has puffed up his self-importance, ego and opinion of himself to almost cartoonish, and yet dangerous levels. Himmelstoss is railing against the second company in the speech below as they are going about their daily training in boot camp. Picture a group of who can't do anything right, regardless of their efforts, and you are a blustering, thin haired, heavy mustachioed blowhard making sure they know it.

HIMMELSTOSS

Damn you all!

This barrack square was to be cleared of snow by morning!

Unacceptable!

I'll be damned if I don't teach you school boys more in this ten weeks than you ever learned in ten years of that damned school of yours.

Stand up!

Attention!

Line up! Stand up! Line up!

We'll stand here at attention for an hour if we have to in order to learn the discipline I find all together lacking in you and your cohorts here.

Too slow!

You're dead. You're dead because you're lazy.

SPEECH THREE -

TJADEN is a private in second company, friend of Paul's, but was drafted and never went to school. TJADEN and the rest of the company has just defied HIMMELSTOSS, and TJADEN, standing right in front of HIMMELSTOSS, is explaining to both him and the rest of the company why they won't get in trouble in a stare down with the man who has been bullying them for the last ten weeks.

TJADEN

He won't say a thing.

He won't risk it. You know why?

Because if the higher ups make an inquiry, they'll see how he treats us, us soldiers heading up to do all the work at the front—and if they hear truth of what he's being doing, the corporal knows he'll be on the next truck right up there with us...

...and he doesn't want that.

He wants to hold on to this soft job as long as he can.

So he's not going to say a thing.

SPEECH FOUR -

The following is almost like a spoken word poem—driving rhythm as PAUL paints a visual picture of the battle they see unfolding in front of them.

PAUL

We begin to overtake the enemy. Young French soldiers are caught lagging behind—one puts up his hands but still has a hold of his rifle so Haie puts a spade through his face. Another is shot in the back. A third throws away his rifle in time and is taken prisoner.

Suddenly we reach the enemy trenches.

Kat smashes in the face of a machine gunner as we stream down on top of him—we bayonet the rest at the bottom of the trench before they can attack back.

We thirstily drink the water from the cooling reservoirs of their machine guns—our canteens have been empty for days.

We clear the trench with bombs, stepping over slippery lumps of flesh and yielding bodies.

The fight ceases as we lose touch with the retreating enemy. But we cannot stay here long.

SPEECH FIVE -

Though the characters in the original novel are predominately male, the cast will reflect and be comprised of an equitable reflection of our community. One of the female characters in the play is a young French woman who PAUL meets. PAUL swims across a canal, bringing food the woman and her friends, and spends the night. Despite the intimacy of their time together, PAUL never asks her for her name, nor does Remarch offer one in the novel. Despite their omission, the young woman is living and striving to survive near the front line, speaking to a strength and depth of character PAUL takes for granted. In the following, she tries to speak to PAUL in an unfamiliar language, sometimes slipping back into French.

YOUNG WOMAN

Parlez-vous français?

No?

No.

I...don't speak...your...very good...but I'll try—do you understand?

Yes?

Yes.

You eye brows—when you are thinking—they...they...I don't know the word—they look nice.

Je ne comprends pas?

I know. I—I'm sorry.

This is nice, yes?

Yes.