

AIM: What does the literature and art of the Post-World War I era tell us about the impact of the war? Why was this an “Age of Anxiety”?

TASK: Examine the primary source documents in the group that has been assigned. Your job is to analyze the documents and be able to identify what they tell you about the attitude and atmosphere of the post-World war I era and the Age of Anxiety. Be able to identify specific evidence from the documents to support your findings. Highlight, underline, and annotate as needed.

GROUP A

1. All Quiet on the Western Front—Eric Maria Remarque

“While they continued to write and talk, we saw the wounded and dying. While they taught that duty to one’s country is the greatest thing, we already knew that death-throes are stronger. But for all that we were no mutineers, no deserters, no cowards—they were very free with all those expressions. We loved our country as much as they; we went courageously into every action; but also we distinguished the false from true, we had suddenly learned to see. And we saw that there was nothing of their world left. We were all at once terribly alone; and alone we must see it through.”

2.



“The Hero” – George Grosz (1936)

Notes for Group “A”

GROUP B

From the writings of Sigmund Freud (1930)

During the last few generations mankind has made an extraordinary advance in the natural sciences and in their technical application and has established his control over nature in a way never before imagined. ... But ... this subjugation of the forces of nature, which is the fulfillment of a longing that goes back thousands of years, has not increased the amount of pleasurable satisfaction which they may expect from life and has not made them feel happier. ... Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness, and their mood of anxiety.

2.



“The Match Seller” – Otto Dix (1921)

Notes for Group “B”

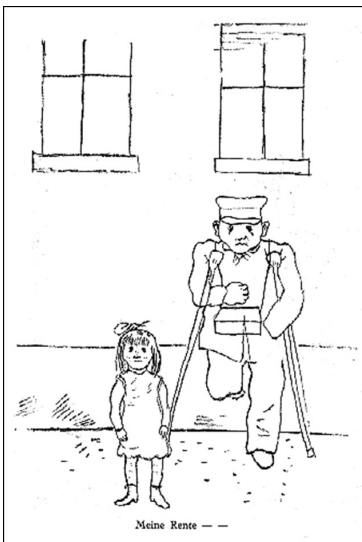
GROUP C

1. The Economic Consequences of the Peace – John Maynard Keynes

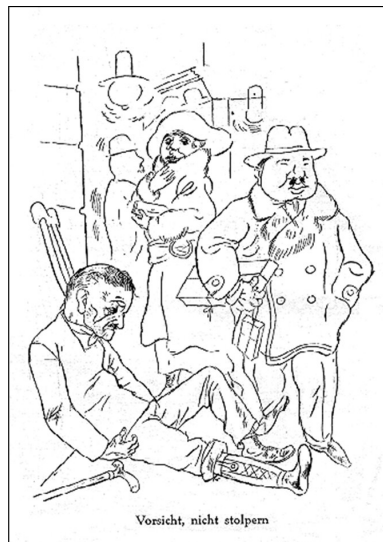
This chapter must be one of pessimism. The Treaty includes no provisions for the economic rehabilitation of Europe, - nothing to make the defeated Central Empires into good neighbors, nothing to stabilize the new States of Europe, nothing to reclaim Russia; nor does it promote in any way a compact of economic solidarity amongst the Allies themselves; no arrangement was reached at Paris for restoring the disordered finances of France and Italy, or to adjust the systems of the Old World and the New.

The Council of Four paid no attention to these issues, being preoccupied with others, - Clemenceau to crush the economic life of his enemy, Lloyd George to do a deal and bring home something which would pass muster for a week, the President to do nothing that was not just and right. It is an extraordinary fact that the fundamental economic problems of a Europe starving and disintegrating before their eyes, was the one question in which it was impossible to arouse the interest of the Four. Reparation was their main excursion into the economic field, and they settle it ... from every point of view except that of the economic future of the States whose destiny they were handling ...

2.



“My Pension” – George Grosz



“Caution: Don't Stumble” – George Grosz

Notes for Group “C”

GROUP D

1. The Stranger—Albert Camus

The opening lines of *The Stranger* sets the tone for the main character's attitude

“Maman (mother) died today. Or maybe yesterday, I don't know. I got a telegram from the home: ‘Mother deceased. Funeral tomorrow. Faithfully yours.’ That doesn't mean anything. Maybe it was yesterday.”

Setting for the quote. In prison, while awaiting the execution of his death sentence by decapitation, Meursault (the main character who had shot a man he just met) meets with a chaplain, but rejects his proffered opportunity of turning to God. Yet, Meursault grasps the universe's feelings towards mankind:

“As if that blind rage had washed me clean, rid me of hope; for the first time, in that night alive with signs and stars, I opened myself to the gentle indifference of the world. Finding it so much like myself — so like a brother, really — I felt that I had been happy and that I was happy again. For everything to be consummated, for me to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they greet me with cries of hate.”

2.



“Skin Graft” – Otto Dix



“Dead Sentry in the Trenches” – Otto Dix

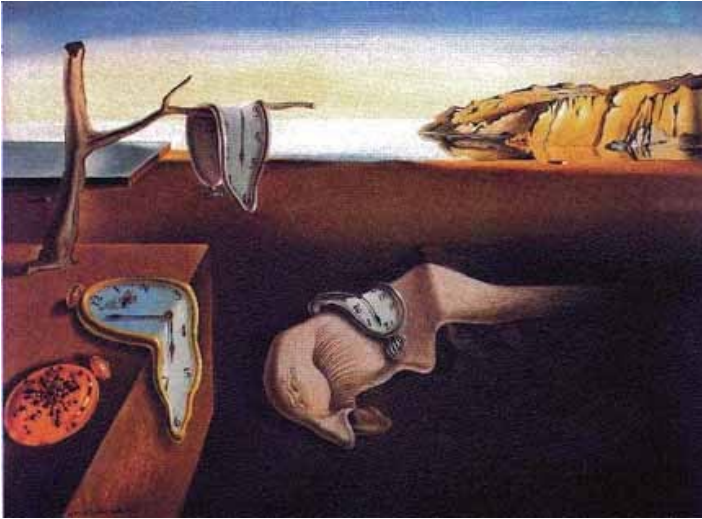
Notes for Group “D”

GROUP E

1. A Farewell to Arms –Ernest Hemingway

I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.

2.



“Persistence of Memory” – Salvador Dali (1931)

Notes for Group “E”

GROUP F

1. Aphorisms – Oswald Spengler

“The question of whether world peace will ever be possible can only be answered by someone familiar with world history. To be familiar with world history means, however, to know human beings as they have been and always will be. There is a vast difference, which most people will never comprehend, between viewing future history as it will be and viewing it as one might like it to be. Peace is a desire, war is a fact; and history has never paid heed to human desires and ideals ...”

2. Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life – Oswald Spangler

“Optimism is *cowardice*.”

Notes for Group “F”

3.



“Threatening Weather” – Rene Magritte