

Before You Read

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 6–8

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Does it help or hurt to talk about traumatic experiences?

Discuss

With a small group, discuss whether talking about traumatic experiences is a good idea. Under what circumstances might communicating about trauma be helpful? Under what circumstances might it be counterproductive? Share your opinions with other groups.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out whether Paul Bäumer can communicate with his family and former friends.

BACKGROUND

Time and Place

World War I was a “total war,” meaning the populations of entire nations were caught up in the conflict. Factories produced weapons, ammunition, and military supplies. Women replaced many male workers in industry, and civilians sacrificed food and supplies to help support the war effort. Near the battlelines, civilians were also exposed to the dangers of shelling; in some cases, entire villages were obliterated.

As the fighting wore on, all of the participating nations experienced food shortages. In response, wartime governments in Europe instituted food rationing, which led to long lines at stores for what little food was available. In Germany, shortages were especially severe because the Allies had blockaded German ports. With little grain available, turnips and potatoes were used to make *krieg* (war) bread, and acorns were gathered and ground up to make coffee. By the winter of 1916–1917, German citizens were becoming weak and thin, and some were dying from starvation.

Did You Know?

The Germans were the first to use poison gas on a large scale. At the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915, German soldiers in a front-line trench released chlorine gas from more than five thousand pressurized cylinders, timing the release with a westward-blowing wind. Chlorine gas, visible as a greenish-yellow cloud, is a lung irritant that causes extreme pain in the nose and throat and slow suffocation. Death results if the concentrated gas is inhaled for more than a few minutes. Many people thought the German's use of poison gas was barbaric, but the British and French quickly developed their own gas weapons. The most widely used gas, mustard gas, was introduced in mid-1917. Odorless and colorless, it burned the skin, eyes, and respiratory tissues. Gas attacks caused at least one million deaths during the war. After gas masks were developed, few men were killed by gas, but gas attacks were still used to unsettle the enemy.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

chasten [chā' sən] *v.* to punish; to make humble

devastated [dev' əs tāt əd] *adj.* overwhelmed; ruined

listless [list' lis] *adj.* lacking energy

ludicrous [lōō' də kres] *adj.* ridiculous; laughable

melancholy [mel' ən kol' ē] *adj.* depressed in spirit; sad

obliquely [ō blēk' lē] *adv.* indirectly; in a slanting or sloping direction

parapet [par' ə pīt] *n.* low wall of stone or earth to protect soldiers

rave [rāv] *v.* to speak wildly or angrily

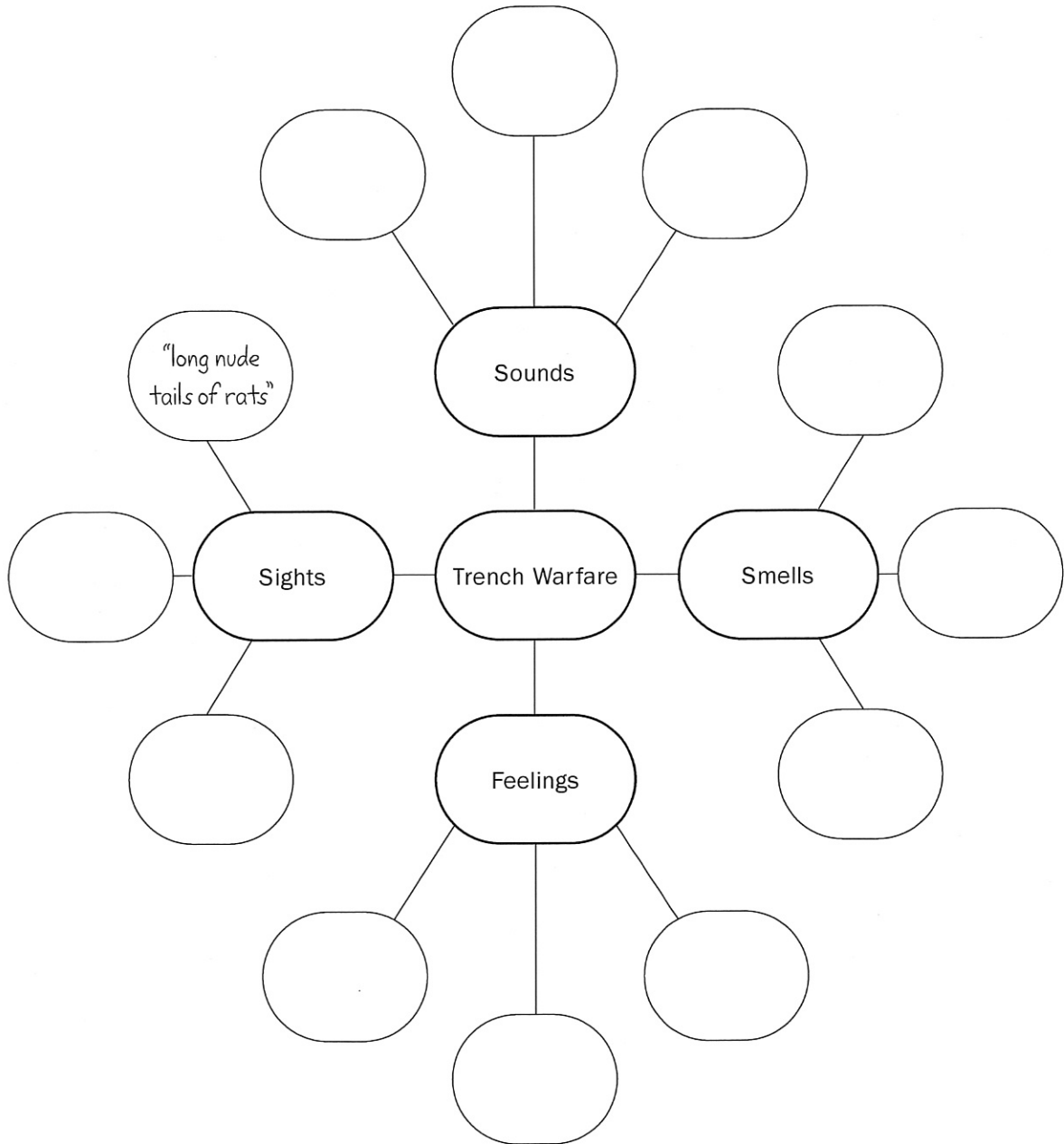
remnant [rem' nənt] *n.* small surviving part

solace [sol' is] *n.* relief; comfort

Active Reading

All Quiet on the Western Front Chapters 6–8

Chapter 6 gives a vivid account of life in the trenches from the common soldier's point of view. As you read this chapter, use the cluster diagram to note the sights, sounds, smells, and feelings described. You may not fill all the circles in some categories, and you may need to add circles to others.



Stop the Violence!!

Your task is to write a persuasive letter from the point of view of a nurse who treats Kemmerich, or Paul and Albert. Your desire in writing this letter is to convince a politician or military leader that the war is senseless. In the letter, be sure to structure ideas logically, support assertions (e.g., appeal to logic through reasoning; appeal to emotion), defend positions with evidence, and address readers' concerns. You should also integrate quotations and citations into written text.

Being that the vast majority of war novels and recollections have been written from the male perspective, this activity should give you some ideal as to what it would have been like having a female perspective of the war. In order to assist you in this process, feel free to use the following websites:

Mademoiselle Miss

URL: www.aaa.si.edu/resources/publications/journal/pdfs/vol47_3-4.pdf

Comments: This site contains letters from an American girl serving with the rank of lieutenant in a French army hospital at the front. These letters are similar to diary entries and expose students to not only first person point of view, but also to a woman's perspective of the horrors of the war.

W.W.I Thirty Thousand Women Were There

URL: <http://userpages.aug.com/captbarb/femvets4.html>

Comments: This site provides information about American Women in W.W.I and can be used for background information in order to understand the roles of women in W.W.I. This site also provides a link to The Unsung Women of World War One - The Signal Corps Women.

