

- 0. WAR MOMS - Story Preface
- 1. A WORLD AT WAR
- 2. THE LUSITANIA
- 3. MUNITIONS ON BOARD?
- 4. A TERRIBLE COINCIDENCE
- 5. TORPEDO ATTACK on LUSITANIA
- 6. DEATH OF A SHIP
- 7. VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS
- 8. AMMUNITION ON BOARD?
- 9. WAR MOMS**
- 10. A BELLIGERENT MILITARY
- 11. FATAL RUMORS
- 12. ALL IN THE FAMILY
- 13. AMERICA ENTERS WWI
- 14. THE WAR EFFORT
- 15. END OF THE WAR



Soldiers from both sides lived in trenches during WWI. They were wretched places, as depicted by this image of a German trench occupied by British soldiers. Allied trenches were often built by the non-fighting Chinese Labor Corp (around 100,000 with British forces and about 40,000 with French forces). Maintained by the Imperial War Museum, and online via Wikimedia Commons, the original photo for this image was taken in July of 1916 during the Battle of the Somme. Troops are from A Company, 11th Battalion, The Cheshire Regiment. Click on the image for a better view.

The story of [Kathe Kollwitz](#), a German mother and artist, typifies the [anguish endured by mothers](#) on *both* sides of a conflict.

It was the summer of 1914 - the start of war. All was not "[Quiet on the Western Front](#)."

Peter Kollwitz wanted to join the German Army. His country did not start the conflict but had been pulled in because of its alliance with the [Austro-Hungarian](#) Empire. Archduke Ferdinand, the assassinated heir to the throne, was Kaiser Wilhelm II's friend.

The Kaiser, according to *his* [view](#) of things, neither planned for nor wanted war. Not everyone in his government agreed with him, however.

One could argue the Kaiser should have followed his instincts and resisted harder. As [trenches](#) were dug and battles fought - many to a draw with little to show for the effort except [dead people](#) - it would have been interesting for the Kaiser to answer the question: "What are we fighting for?"

Even now, many decades later, it is difficult to assess why a world war erupted after an heir to the throne was killed. Was something more than alliances at work? Or did governments value peacemaking efforts less than they valued national alliances?

Whatever the motives of national leaders, Kathe Kollwitz did not want her son Peter to join the Kaiser's [Army](#). Within a few months, the young man was dead in Belgium, buried in a Flemish field with many other fallen Germans.

Although his mother never got over his death, she used her anguish to create "[Grieving Parents](#)," a moving tribute to Peter. [Watching](#) over his grave in Belgium, the [sculptures](#) express a profound indictment of war and what it does to families.

The Great War was not the only armed conflict which ripped apart the home of this German mother. Kathe Kollwitz' grandson Peter was also killed ... in World War II.

Her art, which profoundly portrays the range of maternal emotions, celebrates the [joy](#) of [Family](#) and the pain of [Killed in Action](#) (1921). Both a [Visit to the Hospital](#) and [Widows and Orphans](#) (1919) convey the bewilderment Kollwitz must have felt as she watched the men around her make war and take life. Viewing her art makes a person wonder: "How much can one woman bear?"

The women of France were also shouldering huge burdens. More worrisome than managing homes, and producing war matériel, was finding enough food for their families. America - while she was neutral and later when she was not - helped to feed the people of Europe.

For 2½ years the United States had managed to stay out of the war. But when *Lusitania* sank, and 123 Americans died, there was a huge public outcry against Germany's actions. Examining the evidence, one can safely conclude the *Lusitania's* demise changed America's attitude about remaining neutral.

There were hardliners, within the Kaiser's government, who could not have been more pleased about that.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WAR-MOMS-Lusitania-Sinking>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WAR-MOMS-Lusitania-Sinking>

Questions 2 Ponder

What Are We Fighting For?

During World War I, soldiers from both sides were living in, and fighting from, miserable trenches. For months they fought to a stalemate.

With no progress, and men dying every day, month after month, year after year, people began to question why the war was being fought at all.

Examine the picture which illustrates Chapter 9 of the "*Lusitania* Sinking" story. What does this picture tell you?

If someone, during WWI, had asked the question - "What are we fighting for?" - would the answer be different depending on which side the person was on? Explain your answer.

Do you think that the reason for war, at the end of WWI, was the same as the reason at the beginning? Explain your answer.

How Does Art Express Pain?

Mothers don't want their sons fighting in wars. Kathe Kollwitz did not want her son to join the German Army during WWI.

Her worst fears came true when the young man died within a few months. Peter Kollwitz was buried at Roggevelde, the German-soldier cemetery in Belgium. His final-resting spot is not far from the town of Ypres, a place where many soldiers, from both sides, died during "The Great War."

An artist, Kathe Kollwitz did not live near the cemetery where her son was buried. She created a memorial for him, entitled "Grieving Parents," which stands near his grave.

Examine pictures of "Grieving Parents" contained in Chapter 9 of the "*Lusitania* Sinking" story. What do these sculptures tell you about the artist and the love she had for her son?

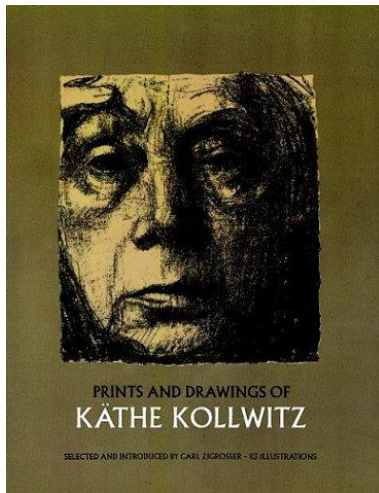
How does art express pain?

Have you ever expressed personal pain by creating some form of art work? What did you create?

Did expressing your pain, in that way, help you to get through the grief? Explain your answer.

Why do you think expressing pain through art sometimes helps us to cope with grief?

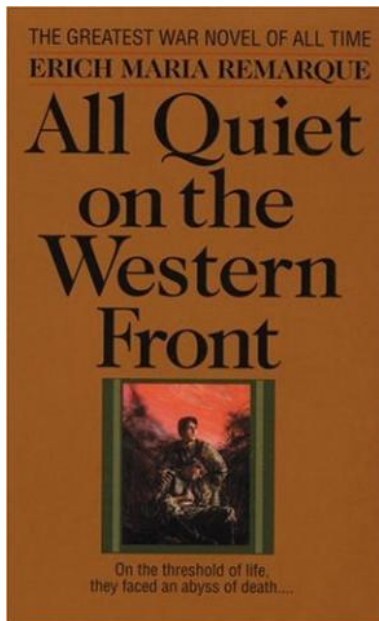
Media Stream



Käthe Kollwitz

Image online, courtesy goodreads.com website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Kathe-Kollwitz>



All Quiet on the Western Front

Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/All-Quiet-on-the-Western-Front>



War Victims at the KloosterKerk

Image online, courtesy the lostsplendor blog site.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Victims-at-the-KloosterKerk>



Sculpture: Grieving Parents

Image online, courtesy willofmemory.com website.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Sculpture-Grieving-Parents>



Watching Over His Grave

Image online, courtesy the eyes-and-ears.co.uk website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Watching-Over-His-Grave>



Art Expressing Profound Grief

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Art-Expressing-Profound-Grief>



The Joy of Motherhood Depicted by Kollwitz

Image online, courtesy artnet.com website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/The-Joy-of-Motherhood-Depicted-by-Kollwitz>



Kollwitz Drawing of Family Life

Image online, courtesy the masterworksfineart.com website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Kollwitz-Drawing-of-Family-Life>



Kollwitz Drawing of Killed in Action

Image online, courtesy the actingoutpolitics.com website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Kollwitz-Drawing-of-Killed-in-Action>



Visit to the Hospital

Image online, courtesy the argos-gallery.com website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Visit-to-the-Hospital>



Widows and Orphans

Image online, courtesy voiceseducation.org website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Widows-and-Orphans>



Map Depicting the Austro-Hungarian Empire

Image online, courtesy the Georgia Perimeter College website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Depicting-the-Austro-Hungarian-Empire>



Food for the Allies Poster

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Food-for-the-Allies-Poster>



Map Depicting the Western Front

Image online, courtesy the 36thulsterdivision.com website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Depicting-the-Western-Front>



Struggle to Provide Enough Food

Image online, courtesy the University of South Carolina, Thomas Cooper Library.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Struggle-to-Provide-Enough-Food>



WAR MOMS

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