

WAR IN THE WASTELAND

By Douglas Bond

A Study Guide

"A man may have to die for his country, but no man must, in any exclusive sense, live for his country. He who surrenders himself without reservation to the temporal claims of a nation, or a party, or a class is rendering to Caesar that which, of all things, most emphatically belongs to God: himself." C.S. Lewis (*Learning in War Time*)



"*War in the Wasteland* is proof positive of what I have known for many years now: Douglas Bond is a great storyteller. Indeed, this novel combines all the attributes of a can't-put-it-down thriller with the intellectual tensions of a historical drama: taut plotting, strong characters, and soaring backdrop. Put this one on the top of your must-read list."

George Grant, author, teacher, pastor at Parish Presbyterian Church

"*War in the Wasteland* is a gripping, informative, adrenalin-producing picture of World War I. The awful moments of fear and the reflective conversations of men who don't know if they'll survive the day, are captured on every page of this book." **Douglas E. Lee**, Brigadier General, USA (Ret), President, Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty

"Douglas Bond is one of my family's favorite authors. A new Bond book produces a thrill of anticipation around our table. His latest,

War in the Wasteland, lives up to this reputation. Through the eyes of his protagonists we see the horrors of the First World War and the spiritual struggle of young C. S. Lewis. Weaving in ideas from Lewis' own writings, Bond gives us a glimpse of what it might have been like to listen to Lewis as he opposed the faith and then slowly began to be drawn to Jesus Christ, all within a compelling, emotive story which illuminates the reality of life in World War I. You won't want to miss this one." **Ray Van Neste**, Chair of Biblical Studies, Union University

Study Guide Questions by Chapter

1 Birthday Conscription

1. What were Nigel's initial thoughts and aspirations about the war? Contrast them with his father's opinion of the war. Though he saw little benefit to the war, what did his father say it might do for Nigel if he joined up?
2. What else do you know about Nigel that might suggest an unrealistic outlook on himself in the world?
3. What famous English poet wrote poetry in support of the war? What did he tell his son the war would do for young men? What would eventually happen to his son?

4. Who was prime minister in Britain when war was declared? Who was the king? Who was the Secretary of State for War; what public role did he play in promoting the war, and what happened to him?
5. Why had Nigel's initial feelings about the war undergone a degree of change? Site specific statistics that contributed to the change.
6. How would you feel if it was your eighteenth birthday and you were living between 1914 and 1918 and hearing the mounting casualty reports?
7. "It seemed that the war had outdone itself." In what ways was this observation true in World War I?

8. ESSAY: Look up the word "propaganda" in the dictionary and write down a concise definition. What various ways was propaganda used in Britain to rally popular support for World War I? How do other governments use propaganda to emotionally manipulate the populace to support or not support a war or jihad? In times of national security is it justifiable to use propaganda? Give support for your position. How were the young men of Britain affected by the propaganda in the initial phase of World War I? Give several specific examples of facts that began to erode the propaganda and change many people's attitudes toward the war.

2 Sauerkraut Spy

1. Research the various ways dogs were used during World War I. What are some of the extraordinary roles that dogs played in the war? What roles did other animals play in the war?

2. Describe how Nigel felt on his eighteenth birthday. What family member had he planned not to leave behind?



3. When he was discovered at the pier, what challenge did the sergeant give Nigel and his dog?

4. Was Nigel being insubordinate when he pointed out that simply eating sauerkraut did not make one a German and a spy? Was this a legitimate questioning of authority or was it an example that reveals Nigel's need to be under authority?

5. ESSAY: Who was Mata Hari, and what was her role and the role of other spies in World War I? Research the role that German spies played in World War I. What was always the penalty for spying? Was this penalty biblically just?

3 Blood on the Pier

1. What happened to the spy? Who did it? Describe Wallace and what Nigel thinks of such a soldier.

2. What evidence did they have that the man who smelled of sauerkraut was a German spy? Should the spy have been shot when he ran before they knew if he was a spy or not? Discuss the ethics of military justice and national security in time of war.

3. How does the sergeant react to Hank's role in uncovering the spy? What new information is found on the dead man's body?

4. ESSAY: Find and read the mission statement of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Discuss the validity of their arguments for what they term the ethical treatment of animals. Animal lovers sometimes tend to agree with more of the claims of PETA than others who are more indifferent towards animals. How do a person's likes and dislikes effect their opinions about ethical issues? Should dogs and other animals have been used in the ways and to the extent that they were in World War I? Support you reasoning with historical and biblical evidence. Read Genesis chapters one and two and chapter six. Compare and contrast the ethics of PETA with the Bible's theology of human and animal life. In a precis essay (300 words), give the most persuasive evidence that demonstrates the difference in world view between the Bible and PETA. With another reader of *War in the Wasteland*, have a debate on this topic.

4 Torpedo

1. This book employs two points of view, Nigel's and Elsie's. Summarize Elsie's family background.

2. What was the WAAC and why was Elsie so eager to join up? Did she have a mixture of motives? What were they?

3. Compare and contrast Elsie's character with her friend Trudy's.

4. Elsie indulged herself in mental "Hun hating" in this chapter. Why do you think she doesn't find doing so as satisfying as she wishes it was? Have you experienced this when you have given vent to your hatred of someone or something? Read Psalm 11 (or any other imprecatory Psalm) and discuss the difference between an imprecatory Psalm in which the Psalmist declares that he hates evil doers and the kind of sinful hatred you have toward others at times.

5. Why was Elsie's father so reluctant for her to join the WAAC? What had happened to Elsie's cousins and uncle?

6. ESSAY: Research the use of U-Boats in World War I. What were their strengths, their weaknesses? You may want to read more about the *Lusitania* and other passenger vessels targeted by German U-Boats (Erik Larson's *Dead Wake* may be helpful). Is it ever ethically justifiable for a government specifically to target the civilian population of their enemy? Does it make a difference if the country is the aggressor or the defender? Support your answer biblically. What effect did German indiscriminate targeting of non-military targets have on the United States and her involvement in World War I?

5 Bayonet

1. CS Lewis wrote a letter to his father April 8, 1918, one week before he was wounded in which he told his father they had had "a fairly rough time." He goes on to tell of several friends

that had been killed in action, “in particular a fellow called Perrett who used to be at Malvern.” Lewis wrote no more about Perrett so the author felt free to create a personality for him and place a character like him in the story. Describe Perrett’s character. Why do you think Nigel is protective of him?

2. As you read this episode, at what point did you figure out that it was a training exercise and not real combat? What were the clues?

3. Describe how Nigel feels about his squad sergeant. Do you know someone who has a similar effect on you?

4. ESSAY: Does the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” mean that a Christian young man ought never to join the military and train his hands for war? How is killing in combat in a just war different from premeditated murder? Is this difference important? Create a dialog between a Christian who believes there is a great deal of difference between these two kinds of killing and someone under the influence of postmodern secularism who labors to conflate all killing into one category. In your dialog, be sure to discuss abortion and euthanasia. Research by reading essays and articles written by secularists so that you avoid the fallacious reasoning of creating a straw-man argument. With another reader of *War in the Wasteland*, have a debate on this topic.

6 The Advocate

1. What is the commendable request that Nigel makes on behalf of his fellow soldier in this chapter?

2. What was Perrett good at? What did Nigel conclude about his fellow soldier from Perrett’s particular skills? Do you agree or disagree and why?

3. ESSAY: A number of soldiers were court martialed for cowardice in World War I and some faced firing squads for desertion or other open displays of fear. Research Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). What was it called in World War I? The British had a more colloquial name for it; what was that name, and what does the very name suggest about their attitude toward those with the disorder? Do you think a man should have been thought of as a coward if he had this disorder?

7 Bacon

1. What do you learn about Lieutenant Lewis’s view of God and the Bible in this chapter?

2. Do you agree or disagree that dogs and other animals are not atheists? Give reasons to support your position.

3. ESSAY: From Francis Bacon’s “meaty axiom” formulate several points of criteria that make a book worthy of being “chewed, swallowed, and digested.” Give specific examples of several books you have read that fit this criteria and contrast them with other books (sometimes called pop or escape fiction) that do not meet the criteria.

8 French Boots

1. What would you be feeling if you were in Nigel’s boots, artillery thundering ever louder as he drew closer to the Front with every tread?

2. What did he see coming from the Front, and what effect did it have on him?
3. How did Wallace change as the platoon drew closer to the Front? Why did he undergo this change?
4. Orient yourself to this sector of the battlefield by finding on the map all place names mentioned in this chapter.
5. Why was this chapter entitled “French Boots”? Read Lewis’s description of the long dead in chapter XII of his spiritual autobiography *Surprised by Joy*.
6. ESSAY: Trench warfare in the Western Front became what is called a “war of attrition.” What was meant by this term? Describe what life would have been like in a WW I trench.

9 Trench Billet

1. What were the ingredients to Maconochie Stew? Visit bondbooks.net and find the recipe.



Make this standard World War I trench meal for your family dinner.

2. Further develop Wallace’s reaction to being at the Front. What does he use for a pillow? Speculate as to why he is so eager to face off with the Germans.

3. Nigel flashes back to his boyhood. What does he imagine about the trenches and boys?

4. What did Nigel think his father would be seeing if he were

there gazing over the wasteland of the Front?

5. Why was the penalty for sleeping on sentry duty so severe? Do you think this is just or unjust? What are some of the differences between military justice in time of war and civil justice in peace time?

5. ESSAY: To what extent is it accurate to say that World War I was a monument to the failure of Modernism, the preferred world view of the industrialized Western world on the eve of The Great War?

10 Nowhere Safe

1. How did the captain of the *HMS Amazon* troopship avoid the torpedo?
2. What were Elsie’s unexpected first impressions when she arrived at her billet in France? What does it reveal about her character?
3. The episode with the biplane strafing the camp at Étaples was created from reading the memoir of a young woman in the WAAC. Read the eyewitness account found at www.bondbooks.net and compare and contrast the fictional account with the memoir.

4. How would you have felt if you had been in Elsie and Trudy's place that first night in France?

5. ESSAY: Research the development of the airplane and the changes in its roles and use throughout the war. Who were leading developers of airplanes for the Germans, for the Triple Entente?

11 Bullet and Barbed Wire

1. Read this excerpt from CS Lewis's spiritual biography *Surprised by Joy*:

"The first bullet I heard 'whined' like a journalist's or a peacetime poet's bullet. At that moment there was something not exactly like fear... a little quavering signal that said, 'This is War. This is what Homer wrote about.'"

2. What were the first thoughts Lewis had on his nineteenth birthday when this happened to him?

3. What are specific ways Sergeant Ayres shows respect for his superior officer, teen Lewis, a far younger and less experienced soldier than Ayres?

4. ESSAY: Do you think it is legitimate for younger men who are commissioned officers to have authority over older men who have far more military experience? Talk to an enlisted soldier who goes to your church and ask them this question. Then talk to a commissioned officer and ask them the same question. How were their responses different? Why do you think this ordering of command in the military has been the standard for centuries?

12 Night Raid

1. Discuss why you think Nigel was right or wrong to have disobeyed Sergeant Ayres's orders.

2. How does Nigel react to what Wallace does to the German soldier in the artillery crater? How did you respond to what he did? Based on what you know about Wallace at this point in the story, do you like or dislike him, trust or distrust him?

3. ESSAY: Is it ever right to do wrong to do right? Research the difference between absolutists and relativists in ethics. Which one are you? Give biblical reasons to support your position.

13 Latrine Duty

1. Was Sergeant Ayres being just to put Nigel on latrine duty in this chapter? Give evidence to support your answer.

2. Have you ever been unjustly punished for something? What was your attitude as you engaged in your punishment? Resentment, anger, bitterness, begrudging?

3. Look up I Peter 2:23. Contrast Jesus' reaction to being unjustly treated with Nigel's, with your own attitude at times.

14 Wrong Duty

1. What did Kaiser Wilhelm II predict about the duration of the war, and what figure of speech did he employ?

2. Was Nigel's intercession for his fellow soldier necessary and commendable?

3. ESSAY: Have you ever had a relationship with someone who you felt you needed to protect? We are commanded to love our neighbor as our self, but is there ever a point where you could take on more responsibility for the actions and attitudes of others than is yours to take on? Give an example of this.

15 Prisoner

1. Draw a sketch of Trudy, of Elsie. Write down five characteristics about each of them. How are they different? Based on what you have read so far, speculate about Trudy and her role in the story.

2. Research the role of Zeppelins in the war. How effective were they militarily, psychologically? Write a precis descriptive essay that explains how a Zeppelin worked.

3. ESSAY: Write a poetry explication essay on Martin Rinkhart's hymn sung by the German prisoners at Étapes. Organize your essay with five paragraphs: The first one includes the basic situation, including relevant information about the poet and the historical context in which he wrote the poem. The second paragraph will observe and explain the various kinds of figurative language used, including biblical allusions. The third paragraph will trace the form of the poem, the meter and number of syllables per line, the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables, the number of lines per stanza, and the rhyme scheme. The fourth paragraph examines and explores the effect of the poet's use of sound devices: alliteration, assonance, enjambment, and the effect of the parallelisms of sound (look these literary terms up if you don't know what they mean). The final paragraph explains the meaning and enduring qualities of the poem, including comparing it with other literature and authors writing on similar or contrasting themes.

16 Morning Hate

1. Why did the armies fighting in the Western Front resort to trench warfare?

2. Describe the daily routine in the trenches including "morning hate."

3. ESSAY: What specific things happened in the early weeks and months of the war that led to digging in and going underground? Look up the term "war of attrition," and explain the factors that turned World War I into a war that historians describe as a "war of attrition."

17 Captains of Our Fate

1. Look up and read all of *Invictus* by Henley. Discuss how this poem serves as a literary preparation for the mindset that led to the arrogance and Great War.

2. Read Psalm 130 and find five or six phrases that Lewis alluded to in his poem *De Profundis*. Do you agree with Lieutenant Johnson that this is blasphemous poetry? Why or why not? Read Mark 3:22-30 and discuss what the unpardonable sin is. Did Lewis blaspheme against the Holy Spirit with this poetry?

3. Lewis did find a publisher for his World War I poetry. *Spirit's in Bondage* was his first published book, released before his twentieth birthday in 1918. In a letter to Arthur Greeves, his childhood friend, Lewis summarized the content of the poetry in the book as “mainly strung around the idea that nature is diabolical and malevolent and that God, if he exists, is outside of and in opposition to the cosmic arrangements.” What does Lewis’s summary reveal about his world view at that time?

4. ESSAY: World War I or The Great War is sometimes thought of as a monument to the failure of Modernism. Define Modernism (Read the two chapters on Modernism and Postmodernism in Phillip Graham Ryken’s book *Our Father’s World*). How was Modernism different from Postmodernism? What particular challenges does Postmodernism pose for Christians in the 21st century?

18 Quarrelling

1. Role play a discussion with an atheist employing Lewis’s argument.

2. In light of all the Scriptures say about total depravity, discuss the limitations of Evidentialist apologetics.



3. The Apostle Paul urges us to be prepared to “demolish arguments.” Is Lewis’s logical apologetic a valid application of demolishing arguments that set themselves up against God?

4. ESSAY: To confront Lewis’s teen atheism, the author has shaped the voice of Lieutenant Johnson and others from Lewis’s own later Christian apologetic writings. Read chapter 1 from Lewis’s *Mere Christianity*. Summarize in an outline the logical sequence of Lewis’s argument for the existence of God based on there being a common moral standard for right and wrong. Discuss this with your parents or others in a class or small group.

19 Cosmic Sadist

1. What do you think Lieutenant Johnson means when he tells Lewis, “Unbelief is more difficult than belief”? Do you agree? Support your answer biblically.

2. Compare and contrast Lewis’s “Liar, Lord, Lunatic” argument from *Mere Christianity* (end of chapter three), with Chesterton’s original version (which Lewis tells us in *Surprised by Joy* he was reading while an atheist during his time in World War I), then compare and contrast these with Lewis’s imaginative application of the logical argument in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

3. Describe the role of Christmas in Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia*.

4. What episode in Lewis’s childhood caused him to become an atheist? What could he not remember about his mother? Lewis will actually say this about his wife after she died from cancer. Have you ever lost a loved one? If so, you might want to consider reading with your

parents Lewis's book *A Grief Observed*. I reread it with benefit the morning after my father died of cancer June 12, 2006.

5. Johnson gently attempts to help Lewis see the inconsistency of deciding not to believe in God because of anger or bitterness at God for failing to do what we ask him to do. What are some ways that you may have attempted to show your resentment toward God for not answering prayer the way you think he ought to have answered it?

6. Research the Christmas Truce. There often is a great deal flawed about the modern celebration of Christmas; nevertheless, what are specific ways a thoughtful Christian might take advantage of the holiday to share the Gospel with unbelieving neighbors?

20 Trench Foot

1. What caused trench foot and what could happen to a soldier who contracted the condition? Research statistics on the number of men that suffered from trench foot in the war. How might they have avoided trench foot (aside from avoiding the war in the first place)?

2. C. S. Lewis contracted Trench fever and was sent to hospital in February of 1918. What were other names for this condition? Summarize the causes, symptoms, treatment, longer term effects, and recovery rate of men who contracted this condition.

21 Whispers in the Night

1. Who do you think the WAAC female voice is in the whispered conversation beginning this chapter? What evidence can you find that leads you to your conclusion? What are specific ways young men and women ought to guard their hearts and their bodies from sexual temptation and sin?

2. Summarize the instruction Elsie's father gave her before she joined the WAAC?

3. "Honor your father and your mother," says the Lord in the fifth commandment. How was Elsie being tempted by her zeal for the war to dishonor her father in her thoughts? What are ways you are tempted to dishonor parents and others God has placed in authority over you?

22 Villains by Necessity

1. Carefully reread the lines Nigel recited from Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Now read them in the context of the play, Act 1, scene 2. Who is speaking these lines? What is a soliloquy? Why is it significant that Shakespeare would have this character saying these words? Go back and reread Lewis's *De Profundis* again. Do you think Nigel is correct in his conclusion about the poem being a fallacious evasion?

DE PROFUNDIS

Come let us curse our Master ere we die,
For all our hopes in endless ruin lie.
The good is dead. Let us curse God most High.

Four thousand years of toil and hope and thought
Wherein man laboured upward and still wrought
New worlds and better, Thou hast made as naught.

We built us joyful cities, strong and fair,
Knowledge we sought and gathered wisdom rare.
And all this time you laughed upon our care,

And suddenly the earth grew black with wrong,
Our hope was crushed and silenced was our song,
The heaven grew loud with weeping. Thou art strong.

Come then and curse the Lord. Over the earth
Gross darkness falls, and evil was our birth
And our few happy days of little worth.

Even if it be not all a dream in vain
—The ancient hope that still will rise again—
Of a just God that cares for earthly pain,

Yet far away beyond our labouring night,
He wanders in the depths of endless light,
Singing alone his musics of delight;

Only the far, spent echo of his song
Our dungeons and deep cells can smite along,
And Thou art nearer. Thou art very strong.

O universal strength, I know it well,
It is but froth of folly to rebel;
For thou art Lord and hast the keys of Hell.

Yet I will not bow down to thee nor love thee,
For looking in my own heart I can prove thee,
And know this frail, bruised being is above thee.

Our love, our hope, our thirsting for the right,
Our mercy and long seeking of the light,
Shall we change these for thy relentless might?

Laugh then and slay. Shatter all things of worth,
Heap torment still on torment for thy mirth—
Thou art not Lord while there are Men on earth.



2. ESSAY: Write a literary analysis essay comparing and contrasting these lines from Shakespeare and Lewis's teen atheist poetry. Further contrast Lewis's own poetry with the significant changes in his world view after his conversion to Christ in 1931.

23 Backs to the Wall

1. What was the strategy in the Hindenburg-Ludendorff Offensive? Who were the two men whose names were attached to this offensive?
2. Discuss the German policy regarding employing women in their factories. What effect did their policy have on German manpower at the Front?
3. ESSAY: How were the policies of France, Britain, and later America different from the German policy about women workers? Do you agree or disagree with these policies? Give historical, logical, and biblical evidence to support your answer.

24 Conscience Round

1. Who went to sleep while on sentry duty? Why was this a capital offense in World War I? Do you think it was just to court-martial a man for this kind of dereliction of duty and have him face a firing squad?
2. What was the “Conscience round”? Why did Nigel hope someone else in the squad had loaded the blank round in his rifle? Was it right for Nigel to want to shoot Spike for what he did?
3. What is the etymology of the word “fusillading” (look up the word “etymology” if you need to)?
4. Would it ever be just before God for a Christian to participate as a shooter in a firing squad? Support your answer historically and biblically.

25 Vickers Machine Gun

1. Describe the reactions of Wallace, Nigel, Sergeant Ayres, and Lewis as the trench whistle is blown and the German soldiers go over the top and begin their advance across No Man’s Land. What do their various reactions reveal about their character?
2. How would you feel if you were in Nigel and Wallace’s place, German soldiers, bayonets fixed, rushing across No Man’s Land, intent on killing you?
3. Would it be just before God to mow down those soldiers with machine gun fire?
4. How ought a Christian to feel when his duty as a soldier requires him to kill the enemy?
5. ESSAY: Some sincere Christians, concluding that killing in war is so terrible that no Christian ought to become a soldier and fight in a war, have become Pacifists. Beginning with the sixth commandment, research what the Bible says about killing another human being. Make a list of the different kinds of killing about which the Bible gives instruction. Now prepare a dialogue with a Christian who is a Pacifist, supporting your side of the discussion with Scripture.

26 Killing Hate

1. What does Nigel begin to feel guilty about as he talks with Wallace? How does Wallace begin to reveal more compassion toward a fellow human being than Nigel felt toward the same human being?

2. The reader learns more in this chapter about why Wallace seems to enjoy killing Germans so much. Summarize the backstory that reveals why he is so driven to kill the enemy. In light of his story, is his eagerness to kill the enemy justified?

3. Though he feels it is right to kill the enemy, what does Wallace fear?

4. ESSAY: Look up and read about Edith Cavell. How is similar to Wallace's backstory about his sister? Before her death Edith Cavell said, "Patriotism is not enough; I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone." Contrast her statement with Wallace's attitude toward the enemy.

27 Don't Shoot

1. Read the account from *Surprised by Joy* (beginning of chapter XIII) of how more than sixty German soldiers surrendered themselves to Lewis and his platoon. How does Lewis's description of what must have been an exciting moment differ from how many men might have described



such an episode if it happened to them? What does this reveal about Lewis's character?

2. Does this episode in Lewis's experience in the war remind you of a similar celebrated episode in the life of the reluctant American war hero Sergeant York? Research both episodes and compare and contrast them with other accounts of the surrender of German soldiers in World War I.

3. What do Wallace and Nigel discuss as they watch their second lieutenant and their squad sergeant receiving the prisoners?

4. Is the author using the literary device of foreshadowing? Speculate what it may or may not be foreshadowing.

28 Sniper

1. How did Nigel end up in the sites of German snipers in this chapter?

2. Why was it so important that he get through to HQ before nightfall?

3. Nigel, in the role of a communication runner, faced a literal crossroads in the trenches in this episode. What were the different risks if he took the left or the right fork in the trench? Have you ever had to make an important decision about the direction you take? How do you weigh out the relative risks of either decision?

4. In a comparison/contrast essay, analyze and evaluate Bill Watterson's poem "I Made a Big Decision," Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken," and at least three passages from Proverbs or elsewhere in Scripture that give biblical wisdom about making decisions.

5. How would you feel if you heard what was in the orders from HQ?

29 The Quick and the Dead

1. The author created this chapter from an episode recounted in the memoir of a WAAC in World War I (you can read a portion of the memoir at www.bondbooks.net). What does the chapter title mean?

2. Review or reread chapter 19. Describe Elsie's discontentment with her father expressed in her thoughts in that chapter. How did her attitude about her father begin to change in this chapter?

3. Statistically the remains of 40% of men who were killed in World War I were unidentifiable. Research The Thiepval Monument and summarize the facts behind the commemoration. What famous British author, contemporary and friend of Lewis, was wounded nearby and commemorated here?

4. What does Elsie think is so vicious about World War I?

5. ESSAY: What does she conclude is missing in this war? Describe her prayer at the end of the chapter. Look up the literary device called *double entendre*. Is there a *double entendre* in Elsie's prayer? If so, what is it?

30 Meaningless

1. From what book of the Bible does Lewis claim to have found his favorite verse? Read several commentaries (start with Matthew Henry and Calvin) on this statement from the Old Testament, then write a reply to teen atheist C. S. Lewis about the real meaning of the verse he quoted as his favorite.

2. Both students of literature at Oxford, Lewis and Johnson make numerous allusions to classic literature throughout this novel. In this chapter they allude to and recite from Shakespeare's Henry V. Read Act IV of the play and find as many allusions and citations as you can.

3. Read Letter 27 from C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters* on prayer. What is the "Heads I win, tails you lose," argument against praying? How does Lewis refute the sceptic's argument?

4. The author borrowed and modified a poignant reflection about the war and the enemy from the pen of J. R. R. Tolkien, who fought in a different regiment and sector from Lewis, and put them in Lieutenant Johnson's words. "The enemy? His sense of duty was no less than yours, I deem. You wonder what his name is, where he came from. And if he was really evil at heart. What lies or threats led him on this long march from home? If he would not rather have stayed there in peace. War will make corpses of us all" (J. R. R. Tolkien). Compare and contrast Tolkien's attitude toward the enemy with Wallace's.

5. How would you feel the night before a major offensive, before “going over the top,” as they called it in trench warfare in World War I? What would you be thinking and doing if you knew that it was likely that you could lose your life in an impending battle?

6. Are you ever anxious and unable to sleep the night before some exciting or frightening experience or episode in your life? What is a good strategy for a Christian “when in the night I sleepless lie” (research the source of the previous quotation and cite specific phrases from the rest of the poem that help you form your answer)?

7. ESSAY: Summarize the apologetic that Lieutenant Johnson offers to Lewis in this nighttime conversation before battle. What are specific ways that you could borrow from this dialogue in your conversation with an unbeliever?

31 Creeping Barrage

1. Why had Lewis’s father wanted him in the artillery instead of the infantry? Why did Lewis prefer the infantry?

2. What is a creeping barrage? What were its tactical advantages? What was its great weakness?

3. As they wait the order to go over the top Perrett is squirming with something at his ammunition belt. What do you think he might be doing?

4. As the men are discussing the merits and limitations of the creeping barrage, Nigel takes out a piece of paper and writes something. What is it? CS Lewis actually wrote these lines in a letter from the Front to his friend Arthur Greeves. Lewis later altered the lines considerably and included them in his first book *Spirits in Bondage* (editors included it in 1994 in *Collected Poems*). Look up the altered version of the poem entitled *Song* and compare and contrast it with this first unpublished version. What do you think accounts for the difference?

5. When the men are drinking tea early on the morning they will go over the top, why does Lewis mention as an aside that it might be time to give out the rum ration (you will want to recall a discussion of this from an earlier chapter)?

6. ESSAY: Not only in World War I did soldiers have a rum ration, but historically most armies have issued alcohol to their troops before battle. Why do most modern armies not do so today? Discuss what the Bible teaches about alcohol; formulate a thesis statement, and defend it in a persuasive essay.

32 This is War

1. What does Nigel observe Sergeant Ayres do before they go over the top? How does this make Nigel feel?

2. Observing Sergeant Ayres, Nigel begins realizing some important considerations about leadership. Summarize what he concludes and discuss it.

3. As Nigel waits for the order to advance over the top into No Man's Land and face off with the enemy, what does he begin thinking about death?

4. How would you define courage? Does courage mean the absence of fear? When Nigel enquires about courage, Sergeant Ayres tells him what his father always said about courage. Evaluate what he says.

5. Put yourself in the place of these men about to hear the trench whistle and be ordered over the top to charge across No Man's Land and attack the enemy. How would you feel? What would you be thinking? What would you be doing? What might you want to say to the soldier's to left and right of you?

6. ESSAY: Though there are notable exceptions, historically women have not been included in direct combat. That is changing in modern warfare. Research the traditional military arguments against women in combat. Compare them with the politically correct arguments shaping new policies about women in combat today. Compare and contrast your findings with what the Bible teaches about the roles of men and women.

33 Over the Top

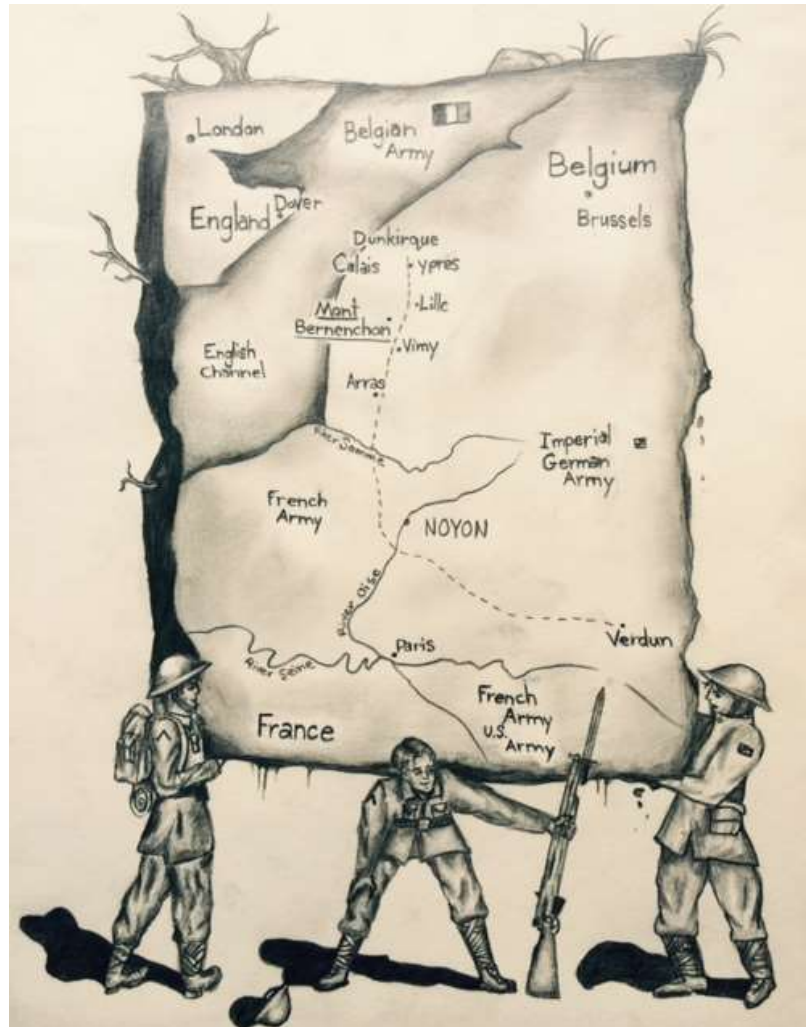
1. What did the terrain look like when Nigel and his squad went over the top into No Man's Land?

2. Read chapter XII of *Surprised by Joy*. At what exact location at the Front does Lewis tell his readers he was wounded? Find it on the map.

3. Research how many were killed by friendly fire during World War I. Compare this with several other conflicts, including more recent ones. What tactics are used by armies to avoid casualties against their own men? What else might they do?

4. ESSAY: Nigel will find Perrett's trench art in the mud after the battle, but no sign of Ayres or Perrett, in all likelihood, their bodies obliterated by the British artillery of the creeping barrage. Research the casualty statistics from World War I. Why were so many men's bodies never recovered in this kind of war?

34 No Man's Land



1. How would you feel going over the top?
2. Soldiers in WW I altered Onward Christian Soldiers to this:

Onward Christian Soldiers
 Marching without fear,
 With our brave commanders
 Safely in the rear.

How does the revised lyric reflect the changes in the way military leaders now led their men in battle?

3. ESSAY: Did militaries learn anything from the failure of some of the tactics used in this war? How has warfare changed since World War I? Have modern advances in weaponry like “Smart bombs” and other computer guided munitions made war more or less humane?

35 Extraordinary Destiny

1. Research where the final quotation of the book (and title for this chapter) comes from in Lewis’s writing. In what ways was CS Lewis’s an “extraordinary destiny”?

2. What does the reader know about what happened to Chips in the story? What does the reader not know for certain? Speculate about what happened to Nigel’s dog.

3. ESSAY: Watch the documentary short film on Social Darwinianism available at bondbooks.net. After discussing it with others, create a dialogue with a Darwinian evolutionist wherein you help him understand how specifically Darwin understood the social implications of his biological theory, and how much his theory shaped and prepared German intellectuals for their part in supporting and instigating World War I.

Bonus Essays

Paraphrase Lewis’s meaning in the following quotations. How might his time in WW I have helped him to develop this way of expressing himself? What biblical sources might be informing his thinking as he wrote these observations? How do these quotations apply to you the reader? In



what ways does your thinking need to change as you apply what Lewis wrote to your way of thinking about your life?

1. “Enemy-occupied territory – that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage. When you go to church you are really listening in to the secret wireless from our friends: that is why the enemy is so anxious to prevent us from going. He does it by playing on our conceit and laziness and intellectual snobbery.
2. “And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history — money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery — the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.”
3. “God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on [gasoline], and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our

spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.”