

***Im Westen nichts Neues* = In the West Nothing New**

A schoolmaster, Kantorek, urges his students to enlist in the German army: Paul Baumer (the protagonist), Albert Kropp, Peter Leer, Joseph Behm, Fredrich Muller. We follow them through training, led by a former postman, now a malicious corporal, Himmelstoss, then into the war itself, on the Western Front, where they come under the influence of Stanislaus “Kat” Katczinsky, who quickly becomes their mentor and protector. In the horrific conditions of trench warfare, amidst filth and starvation, some die of quickly; others linger with wounds and amputations; others go mad. At length, Paul Baumer returns home on leave; his father is proud he is a soldier; his mother, who is dying, feels only love and fear for Paul. Nowhere does Paul fit in comfortably anymore. When he returns to the front, on a quiet day, Paul welcomes death.

**Kantorek.** The hypocritical schoolmaster eager for the young and healthy to sacrifice for Germany. Later, when conscripted, Kantorek proves the butt of cruel pranks devised by former students.

**Himmelstoss.** Former postman, then corporal who drills recruits. He remains contemptuous of former students Baumer and his cohorts, enjoys torturing them and punishing them. But the recruits whip him the night before shipping out to the Front. Later, at the Front, we see Himmelstoss as a coward at first; but he matures and seeks forgiveness from those he harmed.

**Paul Baumer.** Our protagonist: student, age 18, enlists, trains, serves on Western Front. Changes from creative, kind, would-be poet to a man disconnected from comrades, family, ambition, self-assessment. He becomes an outsider everywhere and, eventually, welcomes death.

**Albert Kropp.** Student, good thinker and planner, Paul’s closest friend at war. Wounded and sent to RCC hospital along with Baumer (shrapnel wounds). Postpones suicide (because of amputation), because of camaraderie with Baumer in particular, who soon leaves hospital.

**Haie Westhus.** Tall, strong, 19-year-old peat digger. Contrast to scholars-turned-soldiers. Wounded horribly in back—wound so large Baumer can see his lung breathing.

**Fredrich Muller.** Another scholar-turned-soldier who brings books to Front, thinks about significance of learning. Inherits Kemmerich's lovely boots when he dies; later killed when shot with flare gun in stomach. Bequeathed boots to Baumer. (Note parallel from *Iliad*: a man's armor does not transfer peacefully to another; donning someone else's armor—or boots—leads to death.)

**Tjaden.** Baumer's locksmith friend who despises Himmelstoss, but later forgives him. Constantly eating or seeking food.

**Katzinsky.** Former cobbler, now a 40-year-old soldier who leads and looks after many men, including Baumer and comrades. Excellent mentor; resourceful in providing food and ammunition. When Kat wounded by shrapnel, Baumer carries him back to safety unaware of additional, mortal wound in Kat's skull. His death leaves Paul utterly disillusioned and disconnected.

**Peter Leer.** Another scholar-turned soldier—superior mathematician, adored by women, seducer. Bleeds to death with shrapnel wound in hip.

**Bertinck.** Leader of company, highly respected. Genuinely cares for the men he leads. Although he saves others during a trench attack, he is killed.

**Detering.** Farmer in the company who consistently longs to go home, loves horses and hates their mistreatment in war. Deserts, but is found and court-martialed.

**Hamacher.** Head-wound patient at RCC hospital with Kropp and Baumer; has "shooting license" because considered sometimes mad, which clearly is not the case.

**Framz Kemmerich.** Boy of 19 who enlisted with best friend, Baumer. Owner of beautiful, envied boots and watch. Ironically, leg amputated, followed by considerable suffering before death. Boots pass to Muller, then Baumer. All die.

**Joseph Behm.** Another scholar-soldier, but the one especially reluctant to enlist, unmoved by patriotic cant, but bullied by classmates and Kantorek. Early on Front, becomes blind in no man's land; next day, killed trying to make his way across no-man's land.

