

Name: Date: Period:

**Close Reading Organizer - Chapter 6**

**Directions:** Read each summary entry and think about which themes listed in the Themes Key apply to it, then color

in those themes in the Theme Tracker. Next, write a few sentences of Analysis to explain how the themes you chose apply to each summary section.

**Themes Key**

The Horror of Modern War

Survival

The Lost Generation Comradeship

The Hypocrisy of the Older Generation

**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

The company is sent to the front two days earlier than usual, after hearing rumors of a new offensive. On their way, they pass a large stack of brand-new coffins. The men joke about the spectacle, but they understand that the coffins are meant for them.

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When they reach the front, the men notice that the enemy artillery has been reinforced. Worse yet, the German artillery is so worn out that they often shoot into their own trenches, occasionally wounding men.

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**Paul** recognizes that life on the front is uncertain, and that chance alone determines whether he lives or dies. He has a detached understanding of the risks he faces: “no soldier outlives a thousand chances,” he says, “but every soldier believes in Chance and trusts his luck.”

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The company’s trench is in deteriorating condition, and it is infested with fat, revolting rats that the men call “corpse- rats.” Tired of the rats eating their bread,

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

the men make a pile of bread and use shovels to kill any rats that come near it.

Rations of cheese and rum are handed out to the soldiers, but the men understand them to signify hard times ahead. The men receive more ammunition, and set to remove serrated blades from their bayonets, because the enemy will brutally kill any German found to be using a saw- blade bayonet.

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The uneasy German soldiers hear the enemy fortifying its lines, but no major moves are made by either side. **Kat** is dejected—he predicts intense violence to begin soon—and this worries **Paul**, because Kat is an experienced frontline fighter. Only **Tjaden** remains unsuspicious and content during the lull.

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After a few more days of uncertainty, the men relax slightly. Then, in the middle of one night, their lines are shelled heavily. The men are shaken; some of the new recruits are even vomiting. The bombing continues. The men become numb and silent, and their trench is nearly destroyed.

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Attempts to bring food and ammunition to the trench fail because the enemy barrage cannot be traversed. The men grow hungry, and they cannot sleep at night. The next morning, the trenches are beset by an onslaught of fleeing rats. A rat-killing melee ensues, and the exhausted men stop just short of striking one another in the confusion.

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The company continues to wait. At midday, one of the new recruits begins convulsing and tries to escape the front. **Paul** says the recruit suffers from claustrophobia, and the other soldiers beat the raving man in an attempt to restore his sanity. The other recruits witness this episode fearfully, and

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

Paul pities them for being thrown inexperienced into such a harrowing bombardment.

The dugout **Paul** is inside sustains a direct hit, and only barely remains intact. The claustrophobic recruit goes insane and butts his head against a wall. Others begin to rave. **Paul** and **Kat** try to distract themselves with card games but cannot focus.

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The bombardment lets up, and the soldiers understand that an enemy attack is now coming. They throw grenades into the no- man’s-land between the trenches and recognize a charging line of French soldiers. **Paul** sees an enemy soldier fall into barbed wire with his hands clasped in front of him; when Paul looks again, only the stumps of the soldier’s arms remain hanging in the wire.

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The company begins to retreat. **Paul** makes eye contact with an enemy soldier, and the connection momentarily removes him from the entire “circus” of violence around him. Paul then throws a grenade at the man and runs toward the rear.

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The mayhem has turned the men into animals defending themselves against annihilation. The soldiers continue to flee, and **Paul** reaches a manned German trench. From this point, the Germans begin to drive back the enemy advance. Paul and his comrades follow the retreating French and brutalize any stragglers, and the Germans reach the enemy line at roughly the same time as the retreating French do. The Germans clear out the French frontline and quickly retreat with provisions.

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**Paul** and his comrades return to their frontlines. They are so drained by their experience that an hour passes before anyone speaks. Gradually, they regain their

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

usual demeanor, and begin to enjoy the French provisions they have looted.

**Paul** is placed on evening sentry duty. During the night he is haunted by unsettlingly calm visions from his childhood and hometown. He laments that the desires of his youth are now lost to him. Even if Paul and his fellow soldiers were to return to the scenes of their youth, their exposure to the “hard facts” of life would make them indifferent.

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The back-and-forth attacks continue for days. **Paul’s** company tries to collect the dead, but some of the injured are too far away to retrieve, and the soldiers are forced to listen to their agonized cries. One man screams for days, but cannot be found. His cries become steadily weaker and more delirious until they taper off into a death rattle.

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After another brief lull in fighting, a bombardment begins. Inexperienced recruits die in droves, and **Paul** notices that their faces have the expressionlessness of dead children. Paul comes across **Himmelstoss** cowering in a trench, pretending to be injured. He yells at Himmelstoss, but the officer will not budge. A lieutenant orders a charge, and Himmelstoss eagerly runs ahead. Paul tries to teach the new recruits the skills that will keep them alive, but they are unable to learn quickly enough and repeat the same mistakes.

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**Haie** suffers a significant wound and fears for his life. Finally, **Paul** and his fellow soldiers are relieved from the frontlines. At roll call, Paul discovers that only 32 of the original 150 men in the Second Company are still alive.

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