

Worksheet 1:

Soldiers as Heroes

Exercise 1: Read the information text below and summarise it in written gists.

Exercise 2: View the images Q1 and Q2 and read the document M1. Carve out the main qualities of a soldier, which are described in the documents.

Information text:

The conception of a hero before and in the beginning of the First World War was inseparably connected with the army. Because only war can make strong, unabashed and brave men through younglings. If they talked from war heroes, they simultaneously talked about victim heroes, soldiers who sacrificed voluntary for their nation. Dying for the fatherland was the Greatest a man could earn in his life.¹

Already in school the grown up boys got to know the ideal of a hero, who “in holy enthusiasm to may bleed for a good thing, fought in front row of the german youth and sacrificed himself for fatherland and freedom.”²

This illusion of war as hero-maker was destroyed quickly. Because the praised ideals, like readiness to combat, courage and willingness to sacrifice, which could be proved in a duel, were useless to the new form of static warfare.

Gists from the information text:

¹ Schilling, René: Kriegshelden. Deutungsmuster heroischer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1813-1945 (Krieg in der Geschichte (KRiG) 15). Paderborn 2002. P. 249ff.

² Cited after: Ibidem: P. 251.

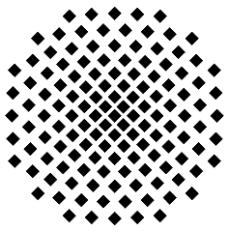


Image Q1: Soldier on an army postal service letter. Caption: "Volunteers first!" Dated to May 1915.

"Admonition to the young recruits "

"(...),The soldier wears the king's uniform; thereby he becomes another person. His walk will be proud and elastic, his attitude noble and self-confident. Through stresses and strains and the daily service his body gets hardened and steeled, therefore he suffers them with pleasure. (...) His sense of honour will improve. Only in arms a man feels pride and free, with army and arms he stands up, if God orders, for the honour of the nation.'(...)"

(Author's translation)

M1: Wilhelminian propaganda.



Image Q2: The effect of a soldier to the female community members. Caption: "The soldier, the soldier is the best man in the nation." Dated to November 1917.

Qualities of a soldier:

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Image Q1: Freiwillige vor! Courtesy of: <http://www.bildpostkarten.uni-osnabrueck.de/displayimage.php?pos=-10806> (31.01.2015).

Image Q2: Der Soldate, der Soldate, Ist der schönste Mann im Staate. Courtesy of: <http://www.bildpostkarten.uni-osnabrueck.de/displayimage.php?pos=-1528> (31.01.2015).

Text M1: Cited after: Planert, Ute: Wie man aus Menschen Soldaten macht. Aus der Trickkiste militärischer Erziehung. In: Warneken, Bernd Jürgen/Blashofer-Hrusa, Anke (Hrsg.): Der aufrechte Gang. Zur Symbolik einer Körperhaltung. Tübingen 1990. P. 78-87, P. 80.