

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES
“Generals Die In Bed”

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AREA 1:

READING & RESPONDING:

GENERALS DIE IN BED

Chapter 1

GENRE

A text can usually be categorized into the general kind or type of text that it is. There are many different genres to appeal to the various personal preferences of people who read.

Memoirs are a kind of autobiography. They do not usually cover a person's entire life, but are rather about a certain period of his life, usually when he feels that he was dealing with important events and experiences. Memoirs may contain a number of qualities:

There is a central character, being the author.

They are intended as a history of a part of the author's life.

The subject matter is the author and his actions and relations with others, mainly other soldiers, officers, the enemy and civilians [especially townspeople and relationships with women].

The subject matter is the author's remembrances, explanations and opinions, which may not necessarily accord with those of others who were also involved in the events.

The plot may be in the form of a theme [he writes about the life of the common soldier, and does not deviate from this into other aspects of his life].

The author may have evolved and grown by the end of the memoir [while he may have been a volunteer, consider his attitude towards war by the end of the memoir].

Genre:

Memoir.

Generals Die in Bed is a type of biography. It does not cover the author's whole life, but the period of it when he was a soldier during World War One.

1.1 Title

The text's title can often be revealing – what it tells about itself. It may give direct and/or indirect indications of genre, and also of aspects of plot, characters and/or themes. The memoir is not about Generals at all; in fact, the author has no personal dealings with them. The memoir is actually about the conditions and dangers of the common soldier in the trenches of World War One. There is a very clear implication in the title that Generals do not experience the personal day-to-day life-and-death risks of warfare that the common soldier must do.

What the title seems to tell about the memoir:

Generals Die in Bed

The title is *ironic*, being deliberately worded to mark the contrast between apparent and intended meaning, that Generals do not suffer the risks and the living and fighting conditions of the common soldier.

1.2 Audience

A writer will have a target audience in mind when he writes. These are the people whom he is writing for. Genre can often be useful to help determine who the audience may be. Read the introduction. It was written in 2001, some 73 years after initial publication, and so its opinions cannot be considered as contemporaneous with the memoirs. However, it does refer to the ‘general public’, and claims that the memoirs were written to inform the general reading public about the real conditions of war for the common soldier as told by one who had first-hand experience.

The audience of the memoir:

The reading public in general. Those who read books about war in particular.

1.3 Purpose

A writer will write a memoir for a particular reason. Often, the purpose can be recognized, especially in relation to the major themes, as the writer may wish to address a particular issue. Taking the clue from the introduction, the reason for writing the memoirs was to give an account of the personal experience of war, and to inform the public about the real conditions of war for the common soldier. The memoir also questions the value of war, often by implication rather than statement.

The purpose for writing the memoir:

To give an account of the personal experience of war, so to inform the public about the real conditions of war for the common soldier, and to question the value of war.