

## Compare and contrast the following texts :

### Document A

Presently he began to feel the effects of the war atmosphere—a blistering sweat, a sensation that his eyeballs were about to crack like hot stones. A burning roar filled his ears.

Following this came a red rage. He developed the acute exasperation of a pestered animal, a well-meaning cow worried by dogs. He had a mad feeling against his rifle, which could only be used against one life at a time. He wished to rush forward and strangle with his fingers. He craved a power that would enable him to make a world-sweeping gesture and brush all back. His impotency appeared to him, and made his rage into that of a driven beast.

Buried in the smoke of many rifles his anger was directed not so much against the men whom he knew were rushing toward him as against the swirling battle phantoms which were choking him, stuffing their smoke robes down his parched throat. He fought frantically for respite for his senses, for air, as a babe being smothered attacks the deadly blankets [...]

There was a singular absence of heroic poses. The men bending and surging in their haste and rage were in every impossible attitude. The steel ramrods clanked and clanged with incessant din as the men pounded them furiously into the hot rifle barrels. The flaps of the cartridge boxes were all unfastened, and bobbed idiotically with each movement. The rifles, once loaded, were jerked to the shoulder and fired without apparent aim into the smoke or at one of the blurred and shifting forms which upon the field before the regiment had been growing larger and larger like puppets under a magician's hand.

The officers, at their intervals, rearward, neglected to stand in picturesque attitudes. They were bobbing to and fro roaring directions and encouragements. The dimensions of their howls were extraordinary. They expended their lungs with prodigal wills. And often they nearly stood upon their heads in their anxiety to observe the enemy on the other side of the tumbling smoke.

The lieutenant of the youth's company had encountered a soldier who had fled screaming at the first volley of his comrades. Behind the lines these two were acting a little isolated scene. The man was blubbing and staring with sheeplike eyes at the lieutenant, who had seized him by the collar and was pommeling him. He drove him back into the ranks with many blows. The soldier went mechanically, dully, with his animal-like eyes upon the officer. Perhaps there was to him a divinity expressed in the voice of the other — stern, hard, with no reflection of fear in it. He tried to reload his gun, but his shaking hands prevented. The lieutenant was obliged to assist him.

The men dropped here and there like bundles. The captain of the youth's company had been killed in an early part of the action. His body lay stretched out in the position of a tired man resting, but upon his face there was an astonished and sorrowful look, as if he thought some friend had done him an ill turn. The babbling man was grazed by a shot that made the blood stream widely down his face. He clapped both hands to his head. 'Oh!' he said, and ran. Another grunted suddenly as if he had been struck by a club in the stomach. He sat down and gazed ruefully. In his eyes there was mute, indefinite reproach.

Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*, 1895, Ed. Oxford World's Classics.

### Document B

Well, how are things in Heaven? I wish you'd say,  
Because I'd like to know that you're all right.  
Tell me, have you found everlasting day,  
Or been sucked in by everlasting night?  
5 For when I shut my eyes your face shows plain;  
I hear you make some cheery old remark—  
I can rebuild you in my brain,  
Though you've gone out patrolling in the dark.

10 You hated tours of trenches; you were proud  
Of nothing more than having good years to spend;  
Longed to get home and join the careless crowd  
Of chaps who work in peace with Time for friend.  
That's all washed out now. You're beyond the wire:  
15 No earthly chance can send you crawling back;  
You've finished with machine-gun fire—  
Knocked over in a hopeless dud-attack.

Somehow I always thought you'd get done in,  
20 Because you were so desperate keen to live:  
You were all out to try and save your skin,  
Well knowing how much the world had got to give.  
You joked at shells and talked the usual 'shop,'  
Stuck to your dirty job and did it fine:  
25 With 'Jesus Christ! when *will* it stop?  
Three years ... It's hell unless we break their line.'

So when they told me you'd been left for dead  
I wouldn't believe them, feeling it *must* be true.  
30 Next week the bloody Roll of Honour said  
'Wounded and missing'—(That's the thing to do  
When lads are left in shell-holes dying slow,  
With nothing but blank sky and wounds that ache,  
Moaning for water till they know  
35 It's night, and then it's not worth while to wake!)

Good-bye, old lad! Remember me to God,  
And tell Him that our politicians swear  
They won't give in till Prussian Rule's been trod  
40 Under the Heel of England ... Are you there? ...  
Yes ... and the war won't end for at least two years;  
But we've got stacks of men ... I'm blind with tears,  
Staring into the dark. Cheero!  
I wish they'd killed you in a decent show.

Siegfried Sassoon, 'To Any Dead Officer' in *Counter-attack and other poems*, 1918,  
Ed. E.P. Dutton

### Document C

In the evenings I'd sometimes borrow my father's car and drive aimlessly around town, feeling sorry for myself, thinking about the war and the pig factory and how my life seemed to be collapsing toward slaughter. I felt paralyzed. All around me the options seemed to be narrowing, as if I were hurtling down a huge black funnel, the whole world squeezing in tight.

5 There was no happy way out. The government had ended most graduate school deferments; the waiting lists for the National Guard and Reserves were impossibly long; my health was solid; I didn't qualify for CO status – no religious grounds, no history as a pacifist. Moreover, I could not claim to be opposed to war as a matter of general principle. There were occasions, I believed, when a nation was justified in using military force to achieve its ends, to stop a  
10 Hitler or some comparable evil, and I told myself that in such circumstances I would've willingly marched off to the battle. The problem, though, was that a draft board did not let you choose your war.

Beyond all this, or at the very center, was the raw fact of terror. I did not want to die. Not ever. But certainly not then, not there, not in a wrong war. Driving up Main Street, past  
15 the courthouse and the Ben Franklin store, I sometimes felt the fear spreading inside me like weeds. I imagined myself dead. I imagined myself doing things I could not do — charging an enemy position, taking aim at another human being.

At some point in mid-July I began thinking seriously about Canada. The border lay a few hundred miles north, an eight-hour drive. Both my conscience and my instincts were  
20 telling me to make a break for it, just take off and run like hell and never stop. In the beginning the idea seemed purely abstract, the word Canada printing itself out in my head; but after a time I could see particular shapes and images, the sorry details of my own future – a hotel room in Winnipeg, a battered old suitcase, my father's eyes as I tried to explain myself over the telephone. I could almost hear his voice, and my mother's. Run, I'd think. Then I'd  
25 think, Impossible. Then a second later I'd think, *Run*.

It was a moral split. I couldn't make up my mind. I feared the war, yes, but I also feared exile. I was afraid of walking away from my own life, my friends and my family, my whole  
30 history, everything that mattered to me. I feared losing the respect of my parents. I feared the law. I feared ridicule and censure. My hometown was a conservative little spot on the prairie, a place where tradition counted, and it was easy to imagine people sitting around a table down at the old Gobbler Cafe on Main Street, coffee cups poised, the conversation slowly zeroing in on the young O'Brien kid, how the damned sissy had taken off for Canada. [...] They didn't know history. They didn't know the first thing about Diem's tyranny, or the nature of  
35 Vietnamese nationalism, or the long colonialism of the French—this was all too damned complicated, it required some reading—but no matter, it was a war to stop the Communists, plain and simple, which was how they liked things, and you were a treasonous pussy if you had second thoughts about killing or dying for plain and simple reasons.

Tim O'Brien, 'On the Rainy River' in *The Things they Carried*, 1990,  
Ed. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt