

SOAR Curricular Material #9

Influence of War (May 1916—Original Version)

With the thought of war there comes over us an irresistible shudder due to the accompanying horrors and bloodshed. So accustomed are we to see and hear of the awful consequences of the bloody contest of the nations that to imagine any good arising from it seems not only improbable but even impossible. However, strange though it may appear, the present war is affecting a far greater awakening among the nations involved in it than they have ever experienced. In each, this revival is noticed in its own peculiar way, but perhaps it is most remarkable in the vast territories of Russia. During the Russo-Japanese war, Russia was scarcely shaken because the conflict was too remote to have much effect. But the *present war comes close to her vital centers and is being waged at her front door*. It has signaled to her somnolent spirit and she has awakened to the realization that she could claim little organization; that the army was not well officered because of the paucity of educated men. The result is that great movements in Russian organization in military, educational, and industrial lines will soon be witnessed. The great Empire has awakened to more than this. She is experiencing a new patriotism; a patriotism containing Russian religion. Here, as even more so in France and Germany, with the rising of a strong national feeling came a spiritual awakening. There is a longing for something higher which their nation cannot supply. In the time of their distress the people feel their weakness and they implore help from the highest possible authority, being ever mindful of showing reverence by the sign of the cross before temple and shrine. Then, too, Russia has awakened to a national self-consciousness. She has discovered that a real Russian being exists, and the spirit thus aroused is seen throughout the Empire. With that spirit present, no force is required to cause men to fight. For now each realizes that he is part of a great national force to which he willingly gives his all. In a recent address before the National Service School for Women, President Wilson asserted that the spiritual awakening of the United States, as of the belligerent countries, might come through war. We have seen what a regenerating influence war has had and is having upon other nations and we are glad for it. But how much better it would be if this had been brought about without war; why should war with its horrors be required to cause a spiritual regeneration? If some great common cause is demanded to affect us thus, cannot we be united and revived by the necessity of overcoming those enemies of our moral and spiritual characters which are always with us? Rather than wait for a conflict to rouse us, it would be more honorable to force ourselves from our sleep and present to the higher spirits within us the need of regeneration.

~~H.A.K.

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Contextualizing and Analyzing

- 1) “The *present war comes close to her vital centers and is being waged at her front door.*”
 - a. What information does this statement give us about when this article was written?
 - b. What other key events were taking place, or had taken place, by this time that may help us contextualize the statement?
- 2) What is the author’s main idea?
- 3) What is the war influencing or affecting according to the author? How does this information reflect the author’s main idea?
- 4) What is the purpose of this article? What is the author trying convince his audience of?
- 5) Who is the intended audience of this piece? In other words, for whom is this article written? How do you know?
- 6) “It would be more honorable to force ourselves from our sleep and present to the higher spirits within us the need of regeneration.” What is this statement trying to say? What is its significance in relation to the rest of the article?