Published on *Great Writers Inspire* (http://writersinspire.org)

First World War

The Great War (also known as World War One, and the First World War) was a global combat centred in Europe that began on 28 July 1914 and lasted until 11 November 1918. The Great War was so ferocious in its magnitude and destruction that it inspired, more than any other conflict in human history, hundreds of writers to produce work related to the combat. These were not only the combatants in the trenches but modern authors writing in the generations that followed.

Following the start of the combat in July 1914, the overall belief was that the Great War would be over by Christmas. This attitude encouraged thousands of young men to enlist in a wave of enthusiastic patriotism that swept through Britain. However, as the fighting progressed with much disorganisation and bloodshed, it soon became disappointingly apparent that this was not to be the case.

The world was suddenly more uncertain and far more dangerous than it had ever appeared before. Much of the poetry produced during this period was written in an attempt to negotiate the unfamiliar and precarious situation many found themselves in. A majority of the poems were written in angry response to the false portrayal of the front line reported in the country's newspapers. During the First World War, the poem became a site in which the writer attempted to present the horrors of war and reconcile their own mortality. The poetry written during this period is important because it shows the personal, human response of the ordinary man which became lost within the inhuman atrocities of combat. However, the great paradox of the fighting was that those involved in the combat found a greater sense of comradeship and purpose than they found in peacetime.

Although it is the poetry produced during the Great War that is chiefly celebrated today, there were many important prose texts written about the combat. Vera Brittain's autobiographical memoir *Testament of Youth* provides a riveting, touching account of life as a woman in wartime England. Robert Grave's *Goodbye to All That* offers an unsentimental autobiographical account of life as a British army officer in the First World War.

Pat Parker's *Regeneration* trilogy provides an example of the powerful, resonating influence of the First World War on contemporary fiction. The trilogy offers an imagined documentation of the brutalities of the war, and the affects this had on soldiers such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon.

Source URL (modified on 08/15/2013 - 17:34): http://writersinspire.org/content/first-world-war