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A German Classic:
**Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western
Front (Im Westen nichts Neues)***
Essay Prize for Sixth-Formers
Essay Questions and Guidelines

We are delighted to announce the launch of this year's 'A German Classic'- our annual essay competition for sixth-form students. This year we would like to invite you to read with the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque's (1898 – 1970), regarded by some as one of the greatest (anti-) war novels of all time.

We have put together a free study pack, including a set of multimedia materials, that will help you delve into Remarque's topical novel.

ELIGIBILITY

Entrants must fulfil the following requirements as of September 2026:

- be beginning their final year of full-time study at a secondary school in the UK (upper-sixth form, Year 13 or S6 in Scotland);
- be between the ages of 16 and 18;
- hold a GCSE, IGCSE or equivalent qualification (in German for the essay) offered in the UK;
- be resident in the United Kingdom.

Entrants are not, however, expected to have prior experience of studying German literature.

PRIZES

Up to three prizes will be awarded: For the essay competition, we will award a first prize of £500, a second prize of £300, and a third prize of £100 (Prizes may be awarded jointly, in which case the prize money will be split). Prizes will only be awarded if work is of sufficient merit. All entrants will receive a Prize Certificate or a Certificate of Participation.



ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. How does Remarque's use of the first-person perspective provided by Paul Bäumer affect the reader's interpretation of the events?
2. How does the young generation contrast with, and relate to, the older generation in the novel and to what light does this shed on the novel's anti-war stance?
3. What part does the depiction of nature on the one hand and man-made things on the other contribute to our interpretation of *Im Westen nichts Neues*?
4. What is the significance of the title *Im Westen nichts Neues* and how does the conclusion of the novel shape our interpretation of the novel as a whole?

Notes:

Your essay must include a bibliography that lists all published sources you have used in writing your essay or translation and commentary, including any existing translations (please provide URL's for internet sources).

STUDY PACKS

Throughout July, we will be publishing ideas for further reading and free multimedia resources, including a series of podcast episodes we recorded especially for this competition, on our website: <https://www.ogn.ox.ac.uk/content/german-classic-2026-erich-maria-remarque>.

We also encourage all students interested in entering the competition to sign up for a free study pack (including the physical book in both German and English) **by 12 noon on 1st July** via this link: https://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/mml_apps/community/en/form?id=ogn-classic-2026-signup.

After 1st July, study packs will be posted for free to those who request them by this date. If you get in touch after this date, we cannot guarantee to post you a full pack, but we will email you a copy of the secondary literature reader.

SUBMISSION

Entries must fulfil the following requirements:

- be submitted by **12 noon, Wednesday, 9 September 2026**, via the online forms at https://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/mml_apps/community/en/form?id=ogn-classic-2026-signup (this is the same form as for requesting the study pack – in order to receive the study pack, you must submit this form by 12 noon on 1st July. If you miss this deadline,



you must still use this form to sign up for the competition. In this case you will still be sent the multi media reader.)

and https://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/mml_apps/community/en/form?id=ogn-classic-2026 – entries received by post, by email or after the deadline will not be considered;

- answer one of the four essay questions listed above in 2000-3000 words – the word count includes the footnotes, but excludes the bibliography;
- be written in English, with quotations from Remarque’s text in the original language;
- have footnotes and a bibliography including all relevant works consulted;
- conform to the following formatting: Times New Roman or Calibri 12 pt, all margins 1 inch, numbered pages;
- be submitted in one of the following formats: Microsoft Word document, Open Office document, or PDF;
- be named in the following way: EntrantSurnameEntrantInitialGCP2026, e.g. BloggsJGCP2026;
- be the work of the entrant without any additional help from staff, which needs to be confirmed by the entrant’s teacher via the online form https://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/mml_apps/community/en/form?id=ogn-classic-2026-teacher by the submission deadline – **12 noon, Wednesday, 9 September 2025**; teachers are also asked to include a statement on how long the entrant has been learning or speaking German.

JUDGING CRITERIA

The judges will consider the quality of intellectual and imaginative engagement with the work evident in the essay while taking account of the quality of understanding, analysis and argument, and – where appropriate – linguistic accuracy of the submission. They will also take account of prior opportunity to study German language and literature. The decision of the judges will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR THE ESSAYS

The former Head Judge of the German Classic Prize provided the following tips to help with essay writing:

- Use the opening paragraph to formulate the problem you are addressing. If the essay turns on a concept (e.g. ‘individualism’), try to define that concept at the beginning.
- Use paragraphs to present separate stages in your argument. Don’t make paragraphs too long, otherwise the reader may get lost.
- Use footnotes only for references, not for further information or observations. If these matter, work them into the text. If they don’t, leave them out altogether.
- Be very sparing with intensifying expressions, e.g. ‘hugely’, ‘greatly’, ‘incredibly’. ‘Very’ or ‘very much’ will usually do.



Here are some more guidelines on quotations, footnotes and bibliography, based on the MHRA Style Guide:

- When you quote from Remarque's novel or another work, you should always give the full details of the edition you are using in a footnote for the first reference or quotation. After that, give the page number in a footnote or in brackets after the quotation.
- When you quote from a work or refer to it, you should always give details of the work in a footnote as it needs to be clear that you are including research that has been done by someone other than yourself (using material by other people without acknowledging it is plagiarism).
- To check how to format your quotes, footnotes and bibliography correctly, see www.mhra.org.uk/style/quick.html.

QUERIES

If you have any questions, please email the Prize Coordinator Marlene Schilling at germanclassic@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk