**Paragraphs:**

**Paragraph 1:**
***Is ‘The Wild East’ an appropriate title of a film on Poland under German occupation?***

In the mid to late 1900s, the American Frontier was identified as the Wild West. The race to conquest of territories paired with the exponential development of states with little law created an explosion of self-reliance and violence in the name of manifest destiny. A similar tale was told in our video of Poland under German occupation. While it wasn’t a race to dominate territory that was already won, it was a hostile takeover in war. Unfortunately for the cowboys of Poland, there was no warning to “draw”. However, a lack of oversight from their dictator led to a free-for-all, no questions asked practice in relocating Poles. This being a process all too similar for the American way of life in conjunction with Native Indians within the Trail of Tears and formation of reservations. A process that Hitler studied and fascinated over as a little boy. The Wild West and Wild East draw parallels in leadership and procedure during their formation and downfall. I believe that it is an appropriate title for an inappropriate time.

**Paragraph 2:
*Few in the Japanese high command shared Admiral Yamamoto’s concern that the attack on Pearl Harbor would be disastrous for the Japanese. What does this say about the mentalities of Japanese commanders?***

Throughout history, the greatest leaders often fail to foresee the downfall of their empires. The Byzantine Empire, the Aztec Empire, the British Empire, the Han Dynasty, and countless others all failed to realize that they had grown content and outdated over decades of triumph. Like these male leaders, the Japanese failed to remember a time before victory bells rang. Going into World War II undefeated, they became confident in their winning pattern and success as a military force. Admiral Yamamato was right to believe that the Japanese had merely ‘awakened a sleeping giant’. Unfortunately for the Japanese, their winning record blinded them to the truth of how the western world had developed. Japanese commanders blindly followed their leaders preferring to honor their status and orders through death rather than being captured or admitting defeat. Their pride in being a true warrior combined with their confidence from prior victory made for a faulty ideology that they would be able to defeat the United States. This was a false hope that led to grave mistakes. Even Hitler was quoted in saying, “now we must win” rooted in the belief that an undefeated nation had now joined his side of the war. Leaders of Japan had the mentality that they would defeat the United States or die a heroic death trying.

**Paragraph 3:
*What was the nature of American women’s grief?***

Within the walls of our classroom, we often step back and encourage each other to picture ourselves in “their time”. In the 1940’s, American woman didn’t work and raise families. They often married the first man they fell in love with, and they rarely had sexual encounters with anyone before their husband. The connection they felt towards their husbands, sons, and fiancés should not be discounted. However, the grief they felt was not what I would have expected. Emotions ranged from loneliness, despair and anger to lust, hope and passion. Many of the letters incorporated their children and the need for a physical relationship again. This grief was one of the most powerful. There was a sheer hope that one day their family would grow and prosper together. At the same time, there was a knowledge and fear that the wife may have to raise and support the family on her own. It appeared that many women didn’t want their men to leave (rightfully so). They were angry at the Germans, the Japanese, and even at our own country, but they didn’t necessarily want to be a part of the action. They grieved both for their loved ones and for themselves. It was a very helpless and lonely time. Writing to someone thousands of miles away and waiting for a reply would be nearly unbearable. Reading the desperation in their writing as the thought dawned on them that something must have happened was extremely difficult. Still, they wrote. That was all they could do from the home front to make sure their men knew they were waiting and praying for them to return.

**Paragraph 4: *Would you have wanted to serve under General Patton’s Command?***

Motivation is said to be a driving factor in winning a war. Motivation for some is fear, and for others it is hope. There are hundreds of motivators that can make someone a better soldier, a more dedicated fighter, and a stronger being in the face of battle. Under General Patton’s command, there were questionable decisions made, orders given, and actions carried out. For me, high moral purpose and genuine compassion are two qualities that make or break a leader. General Patton may have had moments where both were visible, but he was not a morally sound or compassionate man. He is not someone that I would have trusted my life with, and he is not a leader that I would have respected enough to follow into battle. He prepared his men for the realities of war. However, he didn’t have the qualities necessary to build trust and positive motivation within the ranks. He was the most successful General in the battlefield for the US, but those who fought under him were terrified based of his aggressive and threatening motivational tactics. Despite his expertise and record, I would not have wanted to serve under General Patton. He would not have motivated me to fight, but to cower. He would not have earned my trust or devotion, but my anger. After watching the video on General Patton in class, especially the Donkey scene, there is no doubt that I would not have been able to perform successfully under him.

**Paragraph(s) 5:
*Sledge calls war a ‘self-defeating’, ‘organized madness’, and a ‘waste’. What do you think he means?***

Sledge’s internal fight is constant before and during wartime. His need to have courage and to perform bravely often overshadows his training and his confidence, because of the pressure that he adds to his plate. As a marine he expects a great deal of himself, and is often upset for being nervous, tired, dirty, afraid, or terrified. The stress that the soldiers put upon themselves is often as big of a battle as the physical one that they’re facing. When it comes to war being a ‘self-defeating’ act, I think it is undoubtedly true that many men trap themselves in their minds with horrifying memories, actions, and regrets. Anyone who comes out of a war unbroken to some mental capacity, did not enter that war whole.

When Sledge discusses the physical, emotional, and mental affects of bomb shellings, I really started to get the emotional gravity that comes with war. The movies are the closest thing that I’ve been to a battle field, and I don’t think I’ve seen an actor play out the role in an intense shelling scene with the visualization that I was able to picture through Sledge’s writing. To pray for a half hour that the Japanese didn’t pin down your exact location while your friends were helplessly being killed, is something that I can’t, and don’t want to, imagine. The stress and emotional tear that soldiers face makes it astounding to me that men can even come home to live a semi-normal life after war.

Organized madness is sometimes what I refer to my life as. There are things that need to get done throughout the day. The largest, most time consuming tasks usually come first. Less important and quicker agenda items are saved for last, generally speaking. However, I often times get side tracked, have more tasks pop up, or get swamped by something that I wasn’t expecting which delays the productivity of my day. When it comes to war, I think that there is a parallel to this. The companies all have set objectives, and are all fighting to win a piece of land or to destroy a gun. There is the structure of war- the objectives. But there is always going to be a pillbox, a hidden Japanese soldier, a night raid, a shelling, a sniper, etc. waiting to hold the objective up. This is the madness. Running through an air field to get to the next meeting point leads to high casualties, but it is ‘necessary’ in completing the objective.

As for the term ‘waste’, it really hits home for me to read Sledge use this word. I used it for the first time in our classroom discussing the Soviet Union’s way of treating soldiers against Germany. I believe that it is the best description of war. A waste. There are many quotes that I’ve grown fonder of as I learn more of wars and history. They are listed below this paragraph. There is no reason for war. There is no reason for this senseless death. There has to be ways to agree to disagree when it comes to politics without the death of so many millions of people. I think the true issue lies in politics and foreign policy. Religion and history will always impact decisions and motives, but moving into the future, looking back at the past, I think it is time that the world sees how wasteful it is to declare war based on differences. Lives are too precious to be thrown away for another man’s opinion.

Quotes:

“Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight and die.”
― Herbert Hoover

“It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets.”
― Voltaire

“There are causes worth dying for, but none worth killing for.”
― Albert Camus

“Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime.”
― Ernest Hemingway

“Listen up - there's no war that will end all wars.”
― Haruki Murakami

“All war is a symptom of man's failure as a thinking animal.”
― John Steinbeck

“The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”
― Sun Tzu

“War does not determine who is right - only who is left.”
― Bertrand Russell

“Dad, how do soldiers killing each other solve the world's problems?”
― Bill Watterson

**Paragraph 6:
*Are you proud of Sledge?***

It is my belief that pride comes in many forms and differs for every person. As I stated in class, I am proud of Sledge for his ability to remember, write, and tell of his time fighting in the war. He didn’t give a biased account. Sledge wrote of the true incidents, how people actually behaved, and what become of men who fought in the Pacific. I am not proud of Sledge’s actions as a soldier. However, I walk a very tight line of where I believe the blame should be placed. Is it truly Sledge’s fault that he became what the others around him were already? Sledge was much better off in mental and emotional control than many of his comrades. He held a morale compass longer and harder than many in his regiment. He questioned what was right and wrong, and he worked hard to keep his sanity in an insane place and time. He slipped every now and again, but who wouldn’t in such extreme conditions. I’m proud that men sacrifice their lives to give and keep freedom. They say that this freedom comes at a high cost. I don’t believe that death and murder should be the cost of what is right. So am I proud of Sledge? In many ways, yes, I am proud. In some ways, no, I am not proud. I don’t believe there is a perfect soldier (or marine). The idea of one is, in fact, imperfect, but I will always be proud of the men and women who serve and have served for our protection. It is a commitment and sacrifice that I wouldn’t be able to do.