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<p style="text-align: center;">Grade 12 University Sample Research Essay</p>

The Face of a Hero

Heroism is a quality that is universally celebrated, but is commonly thought to be an inborn rarity. However, this is a misconception as “we are all born with [the] tremendous capacity to be anything, and we get shaped by our circumstances” (Zimbrado). Often, society hears about the heroic actions of individuals through their experiences in warfare. The unavoidable conflict, that is war, thrusts soldiers into unthinkable situations where they are bent until their breaking points. Ultimately, those who survive are commended with great honours. The traditional war hero is one who is said to be a strong leader, self disciplined, adaptable to change, loyal to their country, and adventurous (Payne).

In the highly appraised novel *The Wars*, written by Timothy Findley, the journey of Robert Ross, a youth in the Great War, unfolds. This time period held two contrasting ideas of what it meant for one to fight in the war to end all wars. Stuart Ross, Robert’s younger brother, regards war as a glamorized front where everyone who fights is a hero. However, there are persons like Clive d’Orsey, a soldier in the war, who recognize the severity of warfare and the consequences that it brings. Moreover, Robert crosses path with the notable war hero Eugene Taffler. He is the archetype of the soldier hero. However, he holds great demons within himself that are unknown to the public eye that contradict his supposed heroism. Finally Robert, although despised by many for his

actions in the war, is an unlikely hero through his demonstrations of selflessness and the ability to stay true to his own beliefs. Therefore, in *The Wars*, Findley shatters the conventional idea of the glorious and publicly popular war hero, replacing it with his own concept that a hero is one who acts beyond military responsibility.

When the war breaks out in beginning of the twentieth century many individuals are eager to participate, as they believe it will lead them onto a smooth and easy path to heroism. In the novel, Findley reaffirms this viewpoint when he describes photographs that are taken after the battle of Ypres: “Everyone is waving either at the soldiers or the cameras. More and more people want to be seen. More and more people want to be remembered. Hundreds-thousands crowd into frame” (Findley 8). People do not realize the brutality of the circumstances that will greet them on the battlefield. They only care about the praise and materialistic riches that will surely follow after their military service. The honour that an individual receives after serving in the war will not only adhere to them but also to their families. They will be held in high regard and any loss that they may have suffered as a result of the battle will supposedly not have been in vain. This excitement is illustrated when Stuart Ross receives word that his brother, Robert, is missing in action: “his brother’s apparent death was strangely exhilarating news in itself...the thought of going to school and saying: ‘Robert is dead. He’ll prob’ly get the ‘Victoria Cross’- this was marvelous to contemplate” (Findley 185). Stuart Ross assumes like many others, that war will grant an individual a free pass to praise and most importantly, a hero status. Stuart demonstrates his egotistical personality as he neither cares nor wants to find out what events his brother is engaged in that mold him into

becoming a hero. He only desires the award that will go with his family name, just as many others do.

On the contrary, there are individuals who are able to recognize the Great War as a grim matter where less than few positive things emerge. This perspective is evident in the novel when Juliet d'Orsey speaks with her brother, Clive, about the violence of war: "I doubt we'll ever be forgiven. All I hope is-they'll remember we were human beings" (Findley 162). Clive is solemn in addressing the fact that every human has the capacity to do terrible things, especially in the vicious landscape of war. However, in addition to mankind's wickedness "we also possess an inner hero [and] if stirred to action, that inner hero is capable of performing tremendous goodness for others" (Zimbrado). The desolation of war is not all in vain as all soldiers possess a capacity to fight past the temptation to succumb to violence. However, this is solely dependent on the individual and the power of their subconscious mind. Most often, a soldier is robust and valiant in the time of war. As a result, no one questions his internal state; but Clive however, recognizes the fact that a soldier is more than just a weapon, he too possesses a conscience and emotions. The reality is, not everyone who goes to war has a strong will. Those who do not possess this quality tend to surrender to the brutality of war, which results in them never truly becoming a hero.

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