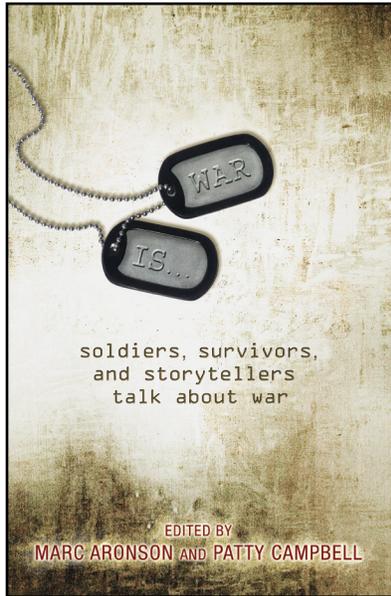


## CANDLEWICK PRESS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

# WAR IS . . .

soldiers, survivors,  
and storytellers  
talk about war



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EDITED BY **MARC ARONSON** AND **PATTY CAMPBELL**

**Marc Aronson thinks war is inevitable. Patty Campbell thinks war is cruel, deceptive, and wrong. But both agree on one thing: that teens need to hear the truthful voices of those who have experienced war firsthand.**

The result is *War Is . . .* a dynamic selection of essays, memoirs, letters, and young adult fiction from nearly twenty contributors, both contemporary and historical.

For young adults, teachers, parents, and other readers who would like to discuss this book, the editors have come up with a few questions to help begin or extend the conversation.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you think about war, do you think of the ancient battles of Greece and Rome, the American Revolutionary War, World Wars I and II, or more current wars? Have you considered the differences between what soldiers faced in years gone by and what soldiers face today? Do you wish you knew more about war? Do you wish you knew less?
2. Bill Bigelow's essay "The Recruitment Minefield" describes the aggressive and often deceptive tactics used by military recruiters in high schools. Have you or someone you know been the target of such "salesmanship"? In your opinion, why does the government find it necessary to work so hard at enticing young people to enlist?
3. Bigelow explains that the "opt out" form is one way parents can protect their children from aggressive recruitment tactics. What might be some other ways parents could control recruitment practices in the schools? Or would it be unpatriotic to interfere?
4. America is at war, and you face the decision of whether to serve in the military. What do you know about what fighting a war actually involves?
5. Have you ever talked with a soldier who served in a war? Do you know anyone who served in a war? If you answered "no" to one or both of these questions, does this bother you?
6. If you have in fact talked with a soldier who served in a war, what did you learn about what it's like to be in combat? Were there things the soldier did not want to talk about? Why? Did you feel that the soldier was trying to protect you from something? What? Did you feel the soldier was trying to protect himself or herself from something? What?
7. Why do you think some people serve in war? Why do you think some people choose not to serve?
8. What do those who do not serve owe to those who do? What do those who serve need from those who don't?

9. If America fights a war that you, your parents, and your friends do not believe in, are those who enlist wrong? If war damages them — physically or mentally — who should help them heal? Or, is any damage simply their own fault for fighting?
10. In the interview titled “Thou Shalt Not Kill,” Chaplain Lyn Brown says that many of the young soldiers he counsels had no idea that in the army they would be required to take the life of other people and to face death themselves. What are some of the popular ideas about war that would keep them from realizing this?
11. If America fights a war that you, your parents, and your friends believe in, should you enlist even though you are agreeing to kill other people and put your life at risk?
12. *War Is . . .* Contributors Lee Kelley and David Bellavia, who served in Iraq, say that the current war is different from any others, and the women who are interviewed by Helen Benedict agree. One way the war in Iraq is clearly different is that more women are serving and are exposed to combat. The editors of *War Is . . .* have differing views about the role of women in supporting war. Patty Campbell feels that war is a male-initiated endeavor, and Marc Aronson feels that women have traditionally contributed to war by training their sons to hate the “enemy.” In your experience, are one or the other or both of these positions true? Give examples from life and from literature to support your answer. How do you think the existence of women soldiers influences this debate?
13. In Mark Twain’s “The War Prayer,” the author contends that soldiers are not allowed to realize that the men they are fighting have families, loves, hopes, and fears just as they do. Depersonalizing the enemy is a first step in waging war, and this process is often signaled by the derogatory names given the opponents. In World War II the Germans and Japanese were called “Heinies” and “Japs.” What are some “enemy names” in more recent wars? Could it be possible that one of the first signs of a coming war is the appearance of such divisive language?
14. David Bellavia claims that in Iraq — unlike what Mark Twain describes in his prayer — Americans are more likely to recognize the humanity of their enemy, in part because American actions are filmed and shown on Arab TV, and any overt bias would have immediate negative repercussions. Another way the war in Iraq is different from previous wars is that soldiers are not allowed to drink alcohol, because doing so would offend devout Muslims in Iraq. How do you think these factors influence the feelings and behavior of soldiers there?
15. As Lee Kelley’s blog shows, soldiers in Iraq can be in touch with people at home instantly, a situation that is unlike that of other wars. And yet what Lee Kelley and David Bellavia write about is very similar to what writers have described about war in the past, including correspondent Ernie Pyle during World War II. What do you think? Is the war in Iraq different? Is this what future wars will be like?
16. What do all wars have in common? Would it be easier to serve knowing that you could e-mail home every night, or would that make it harder? Would it be easier to serve knowing that your enemy is similar to you, or would that make it harder? What is the future of war in a world where we are in ever-closer contact?
17. In the pair of introductions that begin this book, Marc Aronson maintains that war is inevitable while Patty Campbell asserts that we can and must overcome our tendency to try to resolve disputes through warfare. Based on your reading of the pieces in this anthology, which of these positions do you favor, and what are some of the factors that weigh into your decision?

## War Is . . . Editors



**Marc Aronson** is the author of many award-winning nonfiction books for young people, including *Race: A History Beyond Black and White*. He lives in New Jersey.

**Patty Campbell** is the author of many books of and about teen literature, including *Robert Cormier: Daring to Disturb the Universe*. She lives in southern California.

