

History Lesson

BY JEANNETTE C. ARMSTRONG

START UP

In a small group, brainstorm what you know about what happened to the Aboriginal peoples who were living in North America when Christopher Columbus arrived.

ALLUSION

An allusion is a brief reference to a person, place, or event in history or literature. An allusion draws on associations to provide layers of meaning without detailed descriptions and explanations.

What is the difference between "shooting buffalo" and "shooting each other"?

Out of the belly of Christopher's ship
a mob bursts
Running in all directions
Pulling furs off animals
Shooting buffalo
Shooting each other
left and right

Father mean well
waves his makeshift wand
forgives saucer-eyed Indians

Red coated knights
gallop across the prairie
to get their men
and to build a new world

Pioneers and traders
bring gifts
Smallpox, Seagrams
and Rice Krispies

Civilization has reached
the promised land.
Between the snap crackle pop
of smoke stacks
and multicoloured rivers

Why are these "gifts" somewhat suspicious?

Note the irony of the Biblical allusion to "the promised land."

swelling with flower powered zee
are farmers sowing skulls and bones
and miners
pulling from gaping holes
green paper faces
of smiling English lady

The colossi
in which they trust
while burying
breathing forests and fields
beneath concrete and steel
stand shaking fists
whole civilizations
ten generations at a blow.

Somewhere among the remains
of skinless animals
is the termination
to a long journey
and unholy search
for the power
glimpsed in a garden
forever closed
forever lost.

zee: toilet paper

colossi: person or thing of immense size or power

Why is the contrast between "forests and fields" and "concrete and steel" powerful? How does this contrast reinforce the poet's message?

Think of the associations that this allusion to the Garden of Eden has for the reader.

⊕ ZOOM IN

- In a small group, read this poem aloud several times to understand its theme. As you're reading, visualize the scenes the poet describes and examine her use of imagery carefully.
- Individually, write a paragraph explaining the ways in which the images reinforce the theme.
- In your paragraph, evaluate how successfully the poem conveys the "history lesson" of the title.
- "History Lesson" isn't a traditional poem about war. With a partner, discuss how this poem relates to the question of whether freedom from war is a dream or a possibility.
- Using lines from the poem and your own ideas, argue what you think the message of the poem is about war.
- Compare your ideas with another group's.

⊖ ZOOM OUT

- This poem talks about colonialism and the exploitation of Aboriginal peoples in North America by European settlers. One of the factors that first brought the two groups together was trade. With a partner, choose one group of Aboriginal peoples and research the impact of trade with the Europeans on their lives.
- What did the Aboriginal peoples and the Europeans gain and lose in this process?
- Present your findings in a PowerPoint presentation.
- In a small group, research an example of a hostile invasion that resulted in a violent war in the contemporary world.
- What were the causes of the invasion?
- Are the results equally devastating for the invaded as for the invaders?
- How can such invasions be prevented?
- Write a short essay titled "A World Without War — possible" or "A World Without War — impossible." Give reasons to support your stand.

THE WARS

BY TIMOTHY FINDLEY

START UP

How do you think a soldier under attack feels? How would this feeling change if the soldier were also responsible for a battalion of his or her colleagues? Share your thoughts in a small group.



1 p.m.

Robert slowly tilted his head to one side. He had lain completely still for three hours. The back of his neck was numb. He slid his hand up under his cheek. The glove made it feel like a stranger's hand. His hair was frozen into points that hung down over his eyes.

"Bates?"

There was no answer.

"Bates?" A little louder.

"Yes sir?" Somewhere to his left.

"I'm going to roll over now. Onto my back. I don't want anybody else to move."

"Yes sir."

Robert eased himself onto his side. So far — so good. There wasn't a sound. Then he rolled over with his arms stuck out over his head. He looked like a child about to make "an angel" in the snow. The handkerchief was frozen to his left glove. Looking back, he could see it was off down his arm in another country. A bird sang, something like a white-throated sparrow: one long note descending; three that wavered. This was the bird that had sung before. He waited for it to sing again. It didn't. Robert tried to focus every inch on the rim within his range. The bird had

Note the stark, white images the author uses here and in the following paragraphs.

made him extremely nervous. *Rob the Ranger* always whistled like a white-throat if he saw an **Indian** moving in the woods. And the Indians hooted like owls and howled and barked and yipped like wolves. Robbers could *meow* like cats. Anyone in hiding was an imitation animal.

Once he'd rolled over, Robert was the only brown figure in the landscape. That could only mean one thing. He was alive. All the others, playing dead, were covered with snow. Robert thought: well — no one's shot at me yet. Surely if anyone's watching they'd have killed me by now.

Snow was still falling. It filled his lashes and turned them white. He could taste it on his lips. He could feel a single flake on the tip of his nose. He sat up resting on his elbows, sweeping his arms to his sides and his right hand into contact with the **Webley**.

He lifted his gaze to the rim.

Nothing.

He angled his head to the left.

The bird sang.

Robert froze.

There was a German soldier with a pair of binoculars staring right at him.

Robert stared back — unmoving.

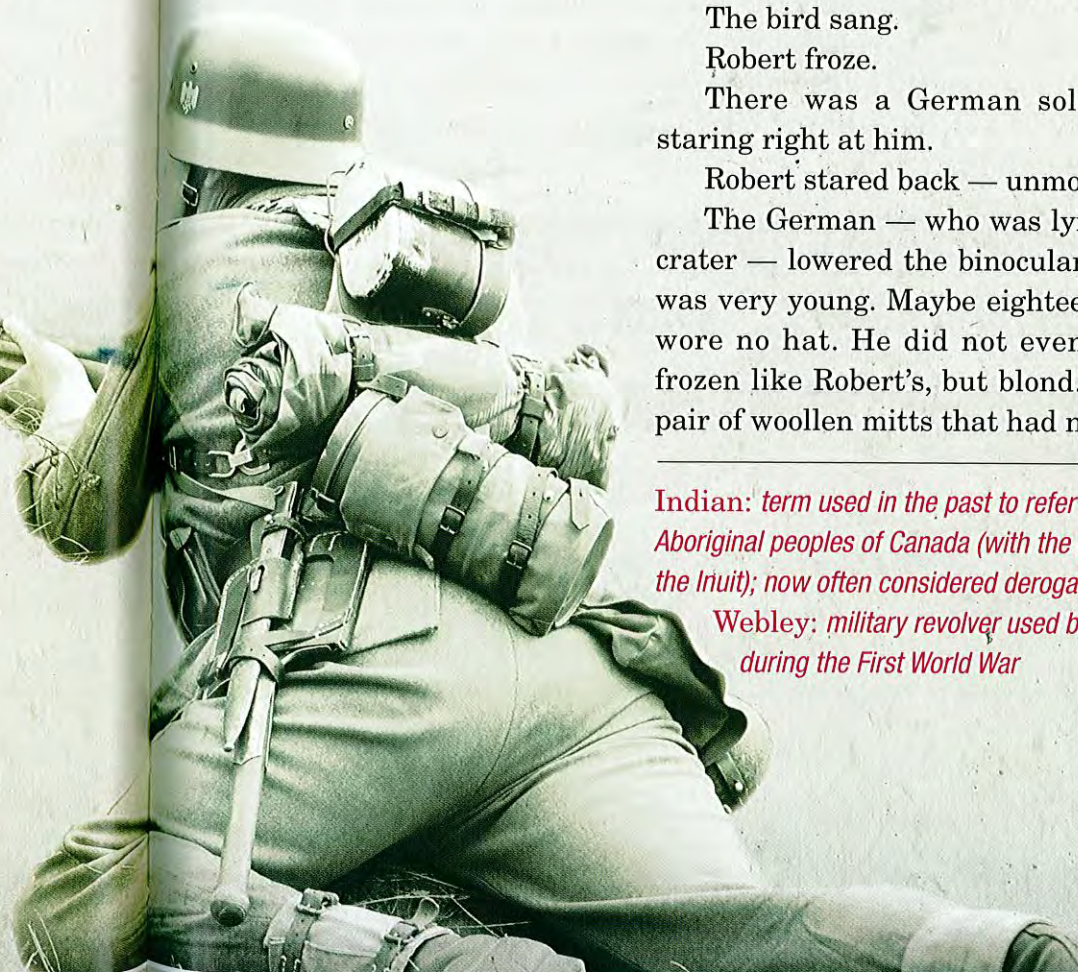
The German — who was lying down at the very edge of the crater — lowered the binoculars. Robert could see his eyes. He was very young. Maybe eighteen. He was not an officer and he wore no hat. He did not even wear a helmet. His hair was frozen like Robert's, but blond. He wore a pair of woollen mitts that had no fingers.

Indian: term used in the past to refer to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada (with the exception of the Inuit); now often considered derogatory

Webley: military revolver used by the British during the First World War

Note how the short paragraphs increase the pace of the story and add dramatic tension.

Why is the German soldier described in this way?



Robert could see him so clearly he could see him swallow, as if he was nervous.

Bates said: "Sir?"

Robert tried to speak without moving his lips. "Don't move," he said. "There's somebody there."

Bates did not reply but Robert heard one of the other men cursing in the mud. "Be quiet," he said and, as he said it, he saw in front of them the dreadful phenomenon that could give them all away. His breath. He muttered: "Don't anybody raise his head. Keep on breathing into the ground."

All this time, Robert had not moved. All this time, the German had watched him. Robert thought: there has to be a reason.

He sat up.

Nothing happened.

The German went on staring at Robert — not even using the binoculars. He seemed to be waiting for Robert to take the **initiative**.

Robert thought: he isn't armed. That's what it is. He isn't armed. He hasn't caught us — we've caught him. He's afraid to move.

Very slowly, Robert drew the Webley and held it in such a way that the German could not help but see it. He didn't want to point it at him yet. He waited to see what reaction the gun itself would get. The German raised his binoculars. Then he lowered them — but that was all.

Robert didn't take his eyes off the German for a second and the German didn't take his eyes off Bates.

Robert said: "Bates? Don't be afraid. There's only one and I don't think he has a gun. Try rolling over and see what happens. I've got him covered."

Bates rolled over.

The German shifted his gaze — saw that Bates had moved and then looked back at Robert. He nodded. It was astounding. He nodded!

Robert did not quite understand at first and then the German lifted his head as much as to say: *get up*.

initiative: first move

"Get up," Robert said to Bates. "Stand right up. He isn't going to shoot."

Bates had been watching the German too. He stood up. "Now what?" he said.

"Go to the top," said Robert. "Go the way we came. Just go. But go slowly. Don't alarm him."

Bates went around behind Robert — out of his sight lines — but Robert could hear him scrambling and **squelching** through the mud and then the sound of falling debris as he clambered up the face of the crater. Robert didn't take his eyes off the German for a second and the German didn't take his eyes off Bates. The tilt of his head was like a mirror. It showed Bates's progress all the way to the top. And when Bates had arrived and was safe — the German looked back down at Robert — smiling.

Robert stood up. He waved acknowledgement. Whatever his reasons — the German obviously intended them all to go free.

"I want everyone of you to go and join Bates," Robert said.

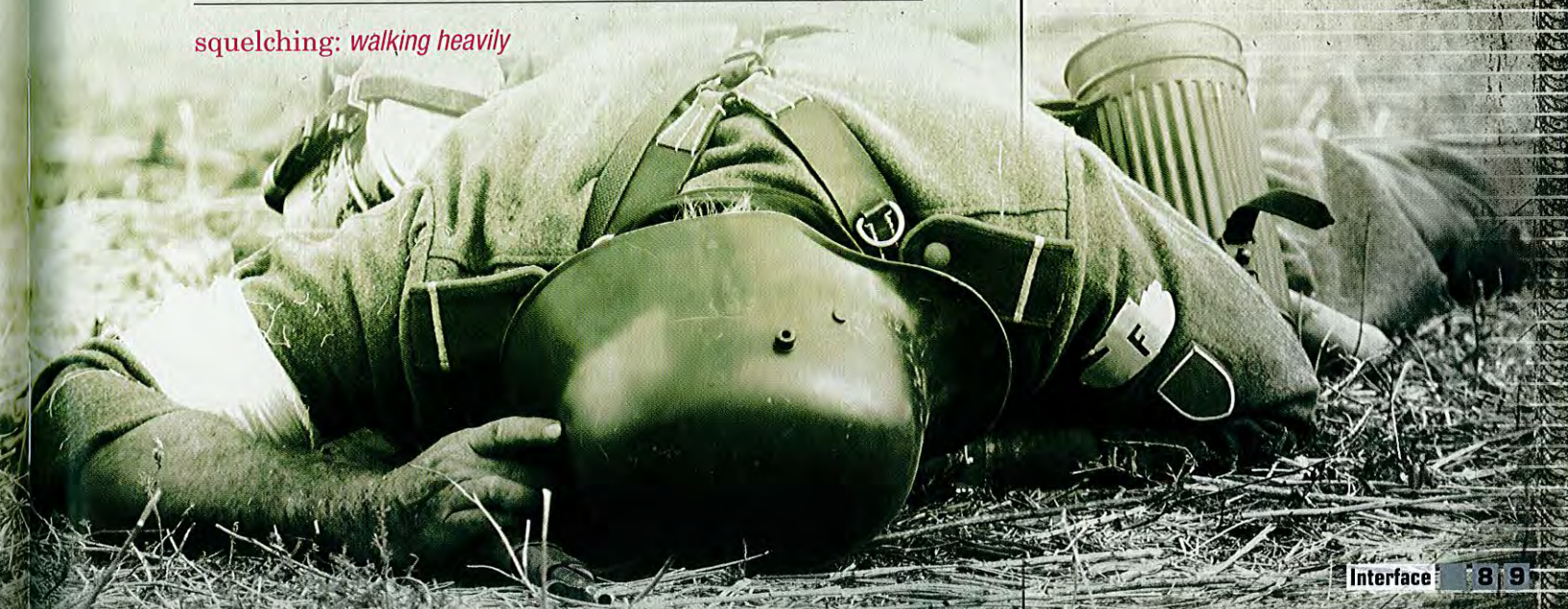
"Don't stop and don't look back. Go as far as you can with your hands in the air, so he'll know you're not armed. Maybe he's crazy — but he isn't going to kill us."

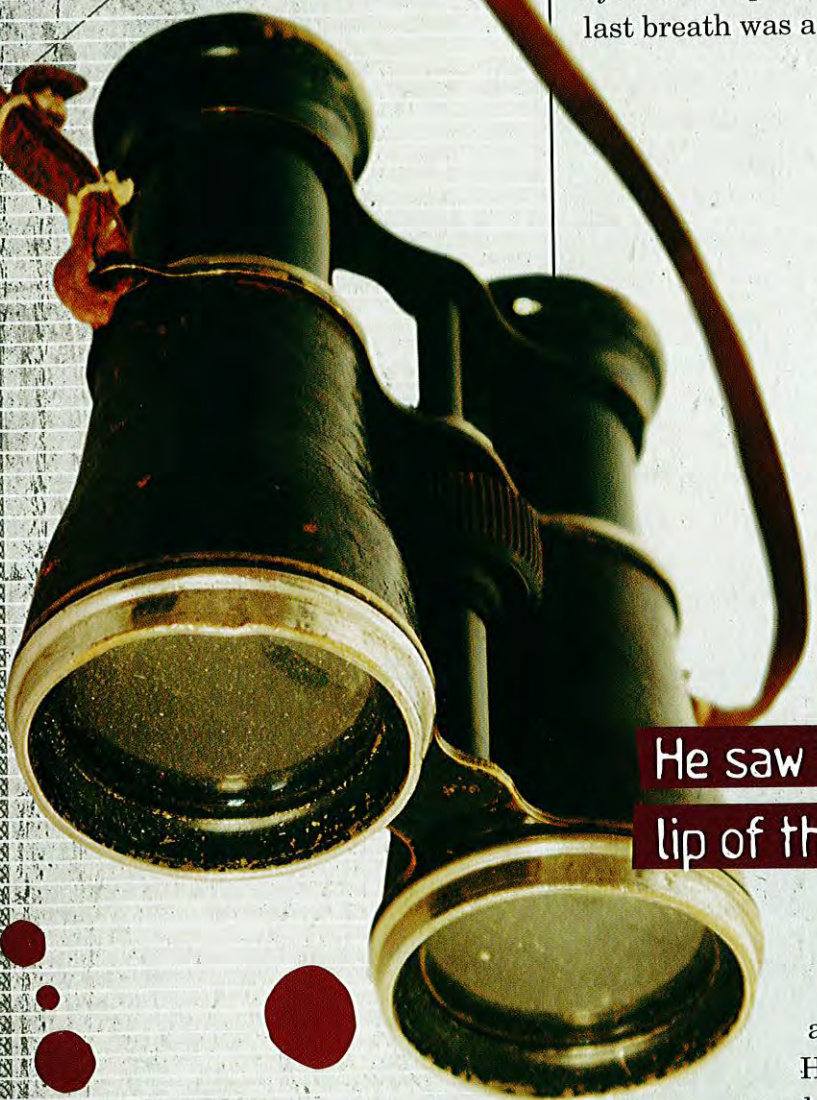
One by one, four of the men began to stumble to the Lewis gun. "Get up," Robert said to the fifth, who he thought must have fallen asleep. When the man did not respond, Robert went across to him and turned him over with the toe of his boot. It was the man who had wept and become hysterical. Dead. His eyes wide and staring. He had strangled on his shirt tail.

squelching: walking heavily

What might the reason be?

Why is this an effective simile?





Robert rolled him back, face down in the mud, and went to the man with the broken legs. All this while the German was watching him but Robert felt entirely safe. He crouched by the water's edge and was amazed to see it was solid. In the three hours they had lain there it had got that cold. This man was also dead. Probably of shock. Robert could not see his eyes. The vapour inside the gas mask had frozen. The man's last breath was a sheet of ice.

It was now Robert's turn to climb.

He would have to turn his back on the German.

Well. There was no other way.

He began.

It was the sort of climb you have in dreams. Every step forward, he slid back two. He almost dropped the gun. His knees were in agony. Harris's scarf got caught on the Lewis gun and Robert had to tear it away. He kept falling forward, sliding in the snow. Once he looked up and could see Bates waiting — watching the German. The others could not be seen. They were over the lip and safe in the trench. Robert had about six feet to go.

He saw the German reaching over the lip of the crater. Something exploded.

All of a sudden, Bates shouted: "Sir."

What happened next was all so jumbled and fast that Robert was never to sort it out. He fell. He turned. He saw the German reaching over the lip of the crater. Something exploded. The German gave a startled cry and was suddenly dead, with his arms dangling down.

The shot that had killed him rang around and around the crater like a marble in a bowl. Robert thought it would never stop. He scrambled for the brink only in order to escape it and Bates had to pull him over the edge, falling back with Robert on top of him. The warmth of Bates's body was a shock

What effect do you think the author was trying to create with this simple description?

and the two men lay in one another's arms for almost a minute before Robert moved. He couldn't breathe. He couldn't speak. He could barely see. He sat with his head between his knees. He didn't even know the gun was still in his hand until he reached with it to wipe the mud from his face. It smelt of heat and oil. He turned around and crawled to the edge of the crater. He could barely see. He sat with his head between his knees. He wanted to know what had happened and why the German had so suddenly moved against him after letting all the others escape.

He raised his field glasses and the first thing he saw was their **counterpart** lying in the mud about a foot from the young man's hand. Binoculars. He had only been reaching for his binoculars.

Robert sagged against the ground. It was even worse than that. Lying beside the German was a modified Mauser rifle of the kind used by snipers. He could have killed them all. Surely that had been his intention. But he'd relented. Why?

The bird sang.

One long note descending: three that wavered on the brink of sadness.

That was why.

It sang and sang and sang, till Robert rose and walked away. The sound of it would haunt him to the day he died. 🌈

counterpart: *equivalent; equal*

How must Robert feel here?

How is pathos created by this ending? Why does the reader sympathize with Robert?

🔍 ZOOM IN

- Design the cover for a DVD of a film based on *The Wars*. Decide on the text and images you would include, and write a blurb for the back of the DVD cover.
 - Share your cover in a small group.
- Make up a "found poem" from the information in this excerpt. For your poem, choose language, symbols, and descriptions that show Robert's emotions. Your goal is to communicate the essence of what you think the author, Timothy Findley, intended to express about war in this scene from his novel.
 - Share your poem with a partner.

🔍 ZOOM OUT

- In a small group, research the conflicts going on in the world today.
 - On a map of the world, mark the areas where the conflicts are occurring.
 - Make up a fact card outlining each conflict, including the location, the main issues, the number of people involved, the length, and so on.
 - Present your fact card to your class.
- Working with a partner, choose a current or historical war.
 - Write a letter home in the voice of a soldier involved in this war. You may have to do some research in order to add authentic details. Focus on conveying the soldier's point of view about the conflict and his or her participation in it, and what he or she thinks should be done to resolve the conflict.
 - Share your letter in a small group.

START UP

Aung San Suu Kyi, the 1991 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts to bring democracy to Burma (Myanmar), once said, "To the best of my knowledge, no war was ever started by women. But it is women and children who have always suffered most in situations of conflict." With a partner, discuss your opinion of her statement.

One Family's Experience of War

BY HÉLÈNE CAUX

Peshawar, the capital of North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan, is located next to Afghanistan. It is on the front line of Pakistan's war against militants.

Peshawar, Pakistan, 15 June 2009 — Some days ago, I went to a hospital in Peshawar to meet people from North-West Frontier Province's Swat district who had been injured and who subsequently lost their homes. Their stories do not make the headlines, unlike the number of displaced or the number of combatants killed. But they are part of our human story.

I had not clearly pictured in my mind what I would see when I went to the hospital. I expected amputations and fractures. Instead, I saw bodies completely burned, open wounds, children's faces that had lost their **pigmentation**, a baby's burned feet. I heard the crying of women and children in pain.

pigmentation: colour of skin

Sapla* is a young mother from Balogram in the Swat Valley whose family used to raise dairy cattle and other livestock. The 25-year-old is in a hospital room with her three surviving children. Her back and breasts are cracked with severe burns. She has open wounds on her legs and arms and her face is bruised. A 16-year-old sister-in-law speaks to herself in one corner, incoherent with pain.

Breathing deeply, Sapla recalled what happened. "It was dusk. We were nine people in a room, reciting prayers. My husband and my father were milking the cows outside in the field. My mother-in-law was with me in the room, she was making bread. A first bomb landed in front of the house. Very soon after, a second and third bomb hit the room where we were."

Sapla told me she was confused. "The room was dark. I could not see anything at first. My clothes caught fire. I was like a ball of fire. The roof collapsed. I just wanted to get out. People from the village came right away to help us. They wrapped me up in cloths. I could feel my skin burning. It was unbearable."

'I could cope with the pain ... if only my daughter were alive.'

The family did a head count and realized the worst. "My three-year-old daughter, Salma*; my mother-in-law, Johara*; and my brother-in-law, Mohamat*, were dead. I could cope with the pain," Sapla said, sobbing, "if only my daughter were alive."

Sapla showed me her three surviving children. They had all been burned and lost skin pigmentation. "My youngest son, Juma*, is two years old. His feet have been burned," the mother said as her boy cried. Seven-month-old Zaima* also wailed as Sapla's sister tried to breastfeed her with unfamiliar milk. Pashmina, a seven-year-old daughter, looked on at her family, lost in thought.

WOUNDED VETERANS, WOUNDED FAMILIES

People who care for Canada's disabled veterans often face overwhelming demands and financial pressures, according to a study prepared for Veterans Affairs Canada.

The study by the University of Alberta's human ecology department indicates the families of Canadian soldiers released from active duty with severe disabilities suffer long-term financial burdens, as well as a high rate of emotional stress and health issues.

The study, titled "Wounded Veterans, Wounded Families," was based on phone interviews in the fall of 2007 with 142 wounded soldiers and 115 of their caregivers. It was aimed at evaluating the experiences of family members and friends who support those with service-related disabilities.

START UP

With a partner, discuss what you think some of the challenges might be for veterans and their families when the soldiers return seriously wounded from serving in the military.

Sapla spent the whole night after the bombing in severe pain. The family could not be evacuated right away to a hospital as there was a curfew and it was too dangerous to move around. They stayed at a neighbour's house, waiting for help. Eventually soldiers allowed them to use a private car to take the wounded to a hospital in Peshawar. "We arrived at the hospital the next day at 11:00 p.m.," recalled Sapla, 24 hours after the bomb destroyed her home.

When I visited, Sapla was listening as her mother recited the Koran. Displaced families like hers are a challenge for UNHCR. Isabelle Rivolet is a senior UNHCR protection officer in Peshawar. "The immediate response lies in proper medical care," she said of the wounded and displaced. "But their needs, as well as their families', have also to be placed in a context of displacement."

Meanwhile, Sapla does not blame anyone for what happened to her, but admitted that she needs time to heal. "It was just God's will that we had to go through this," she said. "I don't feel angry, but I don't want to go back to Swat now. I need to feel better. And also there is no electricity, no water, and no health structures in place." Still, she conceded, "It is too hot here in Peshawar. In Swat, it is much cooler."

* Names changed for protection reasons

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

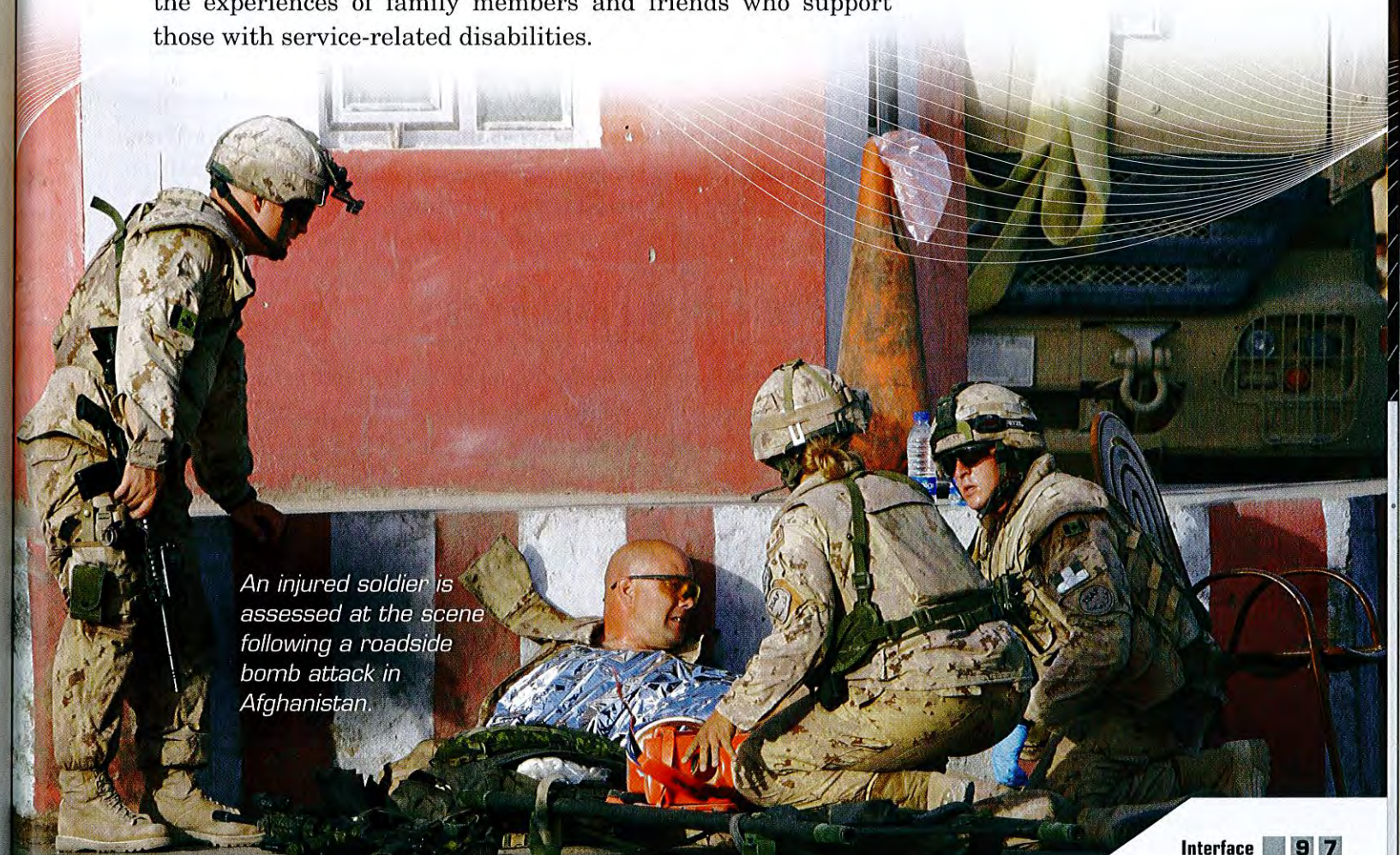
Imagine the family's agony during the 24 hours before they could be evacuated.

⊕ ZOOM IN

- Reports are often factual accounts. "One Family's Experience of War," however, is very personal. With a partner, discuss whether the style of this report with its focus on one family's story is more powerful than a listing of statistics and events.
- Explain which you prefer.
- Give reasons for your opinion.
- If Sapla were to advocate for help for her situation, what might she say?
- With a partner, role-play an interview with Sapla and a UNHCR counsellor. In your role play, Sapla should describe her situation as a result of the bomb blast, and request the assistance that she needs to rebuild her life and her family's life.

⊖ ZOOM OUT

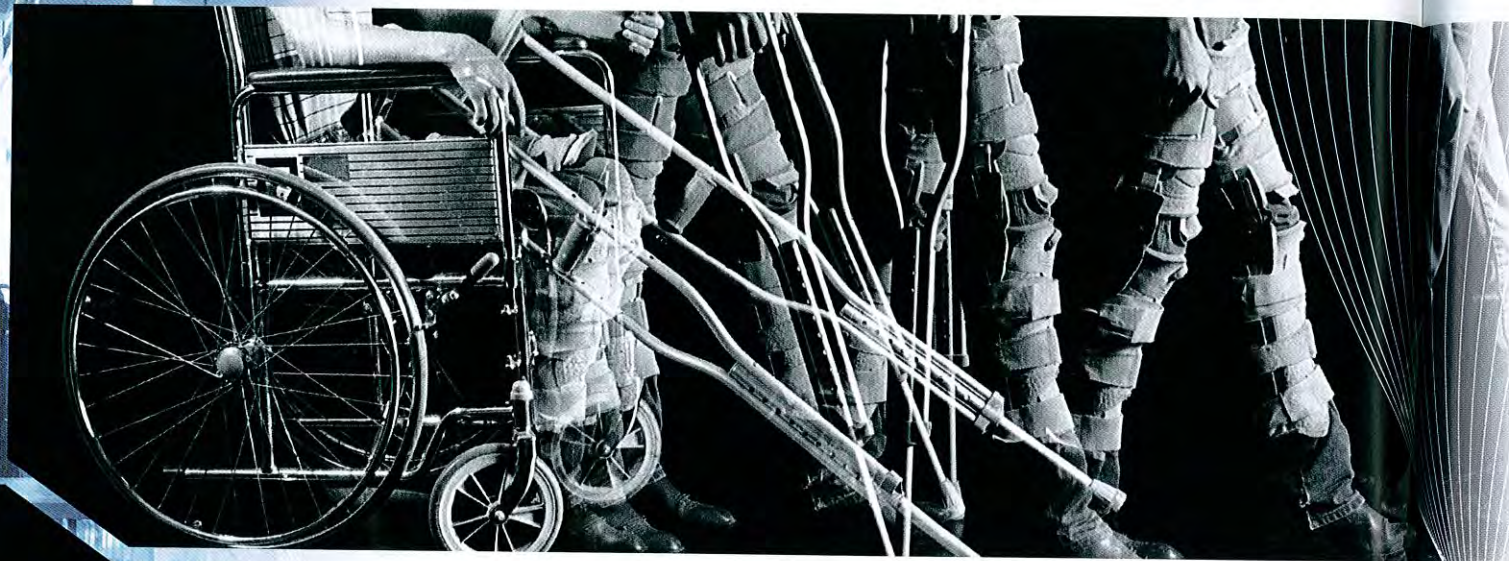
- Write a report to your government in the voice of a UNHCR official advocating for increased assistance for those displaced from their homes because of war.
- Share your report with a partner.
- Advocacy is an important element in UNHCR activities. With a partner, choose a location in the world where there is an ongoing conflict. Research online to find out more about the people who are affected by this war.
- Write a speech to give at a human rights assembly at your school to draw attention to their situation and raise awareness of the responsibility of human beings to help others.



An injured soldier is assessed at the scene following a roadside bomb attack in Afghanistan.

Almost 40 percent of spouses had been providing support to their disabled partners for between 10 and 19 years, while another 24 percent had been providing support for more than 20 years, according to the study. Some 55 percent of caregiver respondents reported spending five or more hours every day helping the veteran.

More than 40 percent reported they were earning less money and experiencing financial hardship, while several spouses spoke of the high toll that taking care of their loved one exacted on their own health, as well as the strain on their relationships with other family members.



“Everything is affected because I have to do things for him that he can’t do for himself, so everything that I would do otherwise is decreased,” the study quoted one respondent as saying. “It is more draining on emotions than the physical. The financial cost alone is tremendous. The non-financial cost, you can’t count it.”

‘A WHOLE NEW PHENOMENON’

“The biggest problem is the ... loyalties divided between caring for your family and bringing in a wage. Who suffers the most? The kids suffered,” another respondent said.

The study’s authors say the problem is growing as more Canadian military families are forced to care for loved ones who have suffered long-term, **debilitating** injuries during the Afghanistan mission.

“These young veterans present a whole new phenomenon,” said Norah Keating, co-author of the study. “Now we’ve got disabilities happening so much earlier in life. Families have to cope for 20 or more years.”

debilitating: *disabling; weakening*

The soldiers surveyed were between 25 and 65. They were suffering full **impairment** to most of their bodies and were often battling emotional, psychiatric, and psychological conditions.

Several respondents also noted the specific difficulties facing younger veterans with high levels of disability who did not expect to be dealing with problems that they associated with later life.

DIFFICULT FOR CAREGIVERS

Many said they felt that groups like the Canadian Legion and Veterans Affairs were designed for the needs of aging veterans of the Second World War and the Korean War.

The Canadian military takes good care of veterans, Keating said, but the system of having benefits flow through the disabled soldier often makes it difficult for the caregivers.

The study recommends compensation and benefits flow directly to caregivers, that the focus be on the family’s needs as well as those of the veteran, and that the department help with caregiving so a spouse can work outside the home.

Veterans Affairs said it is already acting on the report.

“We are contacting all Canadian Forces veterans who are seriously disabled, and their families, to ensure they have all the supports possible from Veteran Affairs Canada and other sources,” said spokeswoman Heather MacDonald.

“Our department is increasingly aware of the impact of veterans’ injuries on caregivers and we have ... many initiatives to help meet the changing needs of our younger veterans and their families.”

impairment: *injury; damage*

Consider why younger veterans would face different challenges from older veterans.

As you read on, think about what the “non-financial cost” might be.

⊕ ZOOM IN

- With a partner, reread this article and summarize the major findings of the “Wounded Veterans, Wounded Families” study.
 - Role-play these findings as a brief interview for a newscast.
 - Present your role play to another group.
- Taking the points that you’ve selected above, write an email to the government’s Veterans Affairs department offering support for their initiatives and advocating for increased assistance.
 - Refer specifically to this article in your email.
 - Compare your email with a partner’s.

⊖ ZOOM OUT

- With a partner, research the help that is available in your community for wounded war veterans. As part of your research, find out the role that young volunteers could play in offering support and assistance.
 - Using this information, write a speech urging young people to get involved in supporting young veterans and their families.
 - Deliver your speech to your class.

Kingdom of NIGHT

BY ELIE WIESEL

This Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech was delivered by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel in Oslo, Norway, on 10 December 1986. Elie Wiesel was fifteen years old when he and his family were deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz, a German concentration camp in Poland. His mother and younger sister died; he and his father were transferred to Buchenwald, Germany, a different concentration camp, where his father died shortly before liberation in April 1945. Wiesel was recognized by the Nobel committee for his work in the cause of peace. He has dedicated his life to “bearing witness” so that people will never forget what happened to the Jews in the Holocaust.



It is with a profound sense of humility that I accept the honour — the highest there is — that you have chosen to bestow upon me. I know your choice transcends my person.

Do I have the right to represent the multitudes who have perished? Do I have the right to accept this great honour on their behalf? I do not. No one may speak for the dead, no one may interpret their mutilated dreams and visions. And yet, I sense their presence. I always do — and at this moment more than ever. The presence of my parents, that of my little sister. The presence of my teachers, my friends, my companions ...

This honour belongs to all the survivors and their children and, through us, to the Jewish people with whose destiny I have always identified.

I remember: it happened yesterday, or eternities ago. A young Jewish boy discovered the Kingdom of Night. I remember his bewilderment, I remember his anguish. It all happened so fast. The ghetto. The deportation. The sealed cattle car. The fiery altar upon which the history of our people and the future of mankind

And then I explain to him how naïve we were, that the world did know and remained silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must — at that moment — become the centre of the universe. ...

Human rights are being violated on every continent. More people are oppressed than free. How can one not be sensitive to their plight? Human suffering anywhere concerns men and women everywhere. ... Violence is not the answer. Terrorism is the most dangerous of answers. ... The refugees and their misery. The children and their fear. The uprooted and their hopelessness. Something must be done about their situation. ... And action is the only remedy to indifference, the most **insidious** danger of all. ...

There is so much to be done, there is so much that can be done. One person — a Raoul Wallenberg, an Albert Schweitzer, a Martin Luther King, Jr. — one person of **integrity**, can make a difference, a difference of life and death. As long as one **dissident** is in prison, our freedom will not be true. As long as one child is hungry, our life will be filled with anguish and shame. What all these victims need above all is to know that they are not alone; that we are not forgetting them, that when their voices are stifled we shall lend them ours, that while their freedom depends on ours, the quality of our freedom depends on theirs. ...

insidious: *dangerous; threatening*

integrity: *uprightness; honour*

dissident: *person who challenges the government*

Why does Wiesel say that indifference, or not caring, is the worst danger?

Elie Wiesel

🔌 START UP

With a partner, look quickly at the posters on these two pages. Explain which poster immediately draws your attention. Why?

🌀 In the quest for peace, rallies and protests are a dramatic way to get people's attention and to raise awareness. But harnessing the power of the media through thought-provoking images and posters can be just as effective. 🌀

THE ART OF ANTI-WAR

7th ANNUAL VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
FOR PEACE



MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION [MAWO]

Designers: Ali Yerevani and Shakeel Lochan
both from Vancouver, Canada



Designer: Marty Neumeier, California, United States



Designer: Nico Hofmann, Nuremberg, Germany

PEACE
BEGINS WITH U

Designer: Glenn Sakamoto, California, United States

⊕ ZOOM IN

- With a partner, look carefully at all four anti-war posters.
- Explain the purpose and the audience for which each was created.
- Identify and explain the overt and implied messages conveyed in each poster.
- Evaluate how effectively these posters communicate their messages and whether they achieve their intended purpose.
- Discuss your ideas with another group of students.

⊖ ZOOM OUT

- In a small group, decide upon a media text that you could create that would achieve the same purpose as these anti-war posters. As an alternative, you may create a media text to show support for Canadian troops involved in conflicts outside of the country.
- You may choose to create a poster, web page, TV clip, PSA, etc.
- Present your media text to another group. In your presentation, explain the techniques that you used to communicate your meaning.