

Analyzing Primary Sources

"Never Have I Crossed the Trail of Any as Beloved"

Some of the most moving reporting of World War II came from foreign correspondent Ernie Pyle. Pyle did not write about generals and diplomats but about ordinary people showing courage under fire. This selection from Pyle's book *Brave Men* describes the death of one man in Italy in 1943. Pyle himself was killed in the Pacific in 1945 in the battle for Okinawa.

In this war I have known a lot of officers who were loved and respected by the soldiers under them. But never have I crossed the trail of any man as beloved as Captain Henry T. Waskow, of Belton, Texas.

Captain Waskow was a company commander in the Thirty-sixth Division. He had led his company since long before it left the States. He was very young, only in his middle twenties, but he carried in him a sincerity and a gentleness that made people want to be guided by him.

"After my father, he came next," a sergeant told me.

"He always looked after us," a soldier said. "He'd go to bat for us every time."

"I've never known him to do anything unfair," another said.

I was at the foot of the mule trail the night they brought Captain Waskow down. The moon was nearly full, and you could see far up the trail, and even partway across the valley below.

I don't know who that first one was. You feel small in the presence of dead men, and you don't ask silly questions.

They slid him down from the mule, and stood him on his feet for a moment. Then they laid him on the ground in the shadow of the stone wall alongside the road. We left him there beside the road, that first one, and we all went back into the cowshed and sat on water cans or lay on the straw, waiting for the next batch of mules.

Then a soldier came into the cowshed and said there were some more bodies outside. We went out into the road. Four mules stood there in the moonlight, in the road where the trail came down off the mountain. The soldiers who led them stood there waiting.

"This one is Captain Waskow," one of them said quietly.

Two men unlashed his body from the mule and lifted it off and laid it in the shadow beside the stone wall. Other men took the other bodies off.

The unburdened mules moved off to their olive grove. The men in the road seemed reluctant to leave. They stood around, and gradually I could sense them moving, one by one, close to Captain Waskow's body. Not so much to look, I think, as to say something in finality to him and to themselves. I stood close by and I could hear.

A man came. I think he was an officer. It was hard to tell officers from men in the dim light, for everybody was bearded and grimy. The man looked down into the dead captain's face and then spoke directly to him, as though he were alive, "I'm sorry, old man."

Then a soldier came and stood beside the officer and bent over, and he too spoke to his dead captain, not in a whisper but awfully tenderly, and he said, "I sure am sorry, sir."

Then the first man squatted down, and he reached down and took the captain's hand, and he sat there for a full five minutes holding the dead hand in his own and looking intently into the dead face. And he never uttered a sound all the time he sat there.

Finally he put the hand down. He reached over and gently straightened the points of the captain's shirt collar, and then he sort of rearranged the tattered edges of the uniform around the wound, and then he got up and walked away down the road in the moonlight, all alone.

Adapted from Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1944). ©1943, 1944 by Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance. ©1944 by Ernie Pyle. ©1971, 1972 by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. Reprinted by permission of Harry Holt & Co.

Document Analysis

S.O.A.P.S.Tone

| | Ideas to Think About |
|-----------------|--|
| Speaker | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Is there someone identified as the speaker?▪ Is the speaker the same as the author?▪ What inferences can you make about this person?▪ E.g. What class does he/she come from? What political party? What gender? |
| Occasion | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What local, regional and/or global events prompted the author to create this piece?▪ What events led to its publication or development?▪ What is the historical context? |
| Audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Is the audience for the document identified?▪ If not, who was the likely or intended audience for this piece? For whom was the document created? Was there an unintended audience?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What assumptions can you make about the audience in terms of social class, political affiliations, gender, race/ethnicity, occupation or relationships to foci of power?▪ Does the speaker use language that is specific for a unique audience (SLANG)?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Why is the speaker using this type of language? What is the mode of delivery?○ Are there any words or phrases that seem unusual or different (JARGON)?▪ Does the speaker evoke God? Nation? Liberty? History? Hell? Science? Human Nature? If so, to what purpose is this language used? |
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the speaker trying to achieve through the document?▪ In what ways does he/she convey their message?▪ How is the speaker trying to spark a reaction in the audience?▪ What is the argument or logic behind the document?▪ What is the speaker and/or author's purpose? |
| Subject | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the document's content and subject (i.e. what is it saying)?▪ How has the subject been selected and presented by the author? |
| Tone | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the author's tone?▪ What is the author's mood and how is it conveyed? For what purpose?▪ How is the document supposed to make the reader/viewer feel?▪ What are the potential biases in the document?▪ What is the author's point of view? |
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