

Regeneration

(published in 1991)

by Pat Barker

Approved for use in Grade 12 AP Literature and Composition

Summary of the Work: <i>Regeneration</i> is a war novel that examines the experiences of British soldiers during WWI. British poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen are two notable historical figures whose lives and poetry, written at the Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh, Scotland, are retold. The historical novel draws extensively from first-person narratives and from the research and notes of psychiatrist W.H.R. Rivers, who pioneered some of the earliest treatments for post-traumatic stress disorder.	Rationale: <i>Regeneration</i> is a novel that provides students with multiple critical lenses to explore literature. As a work of historical fiction, it draws on the devastating realities of WWI and the ways in which the British war poets drew from that reality in order to craft their responses to the war. This historical criticism is a particularly useful lens for students as it demands an awareness of both the fictional and nonfictional aspects of the text. Additionally, the novel explores key foundational aspects of early Freudian and psychoanalytical theories that influenced not only the treatments of soldiers at the time, but also literary critical theory. Finally, the novel's use of intertextuality provides students with the opportunity to do close readings of the process of poetry writing in the historical context of the novel.
Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays: The novel was a Booker Prize nominee and was described by <i>The New York Times Book Review</i> as one of the four best novels of the year in its year of publication. This is the first book of the trilogy. The third book, <i>The Ghost Road</i>, won the Booker Prize in 1995.	Noted Distinction: Booker Prize nominee Readability: Sparse prose; complex storylines with embedded poetry Learning Resource Guidelines: This text aligns with AP learning objectives
Notes on the Text: The novel is praised for its historical accuracy. The narrative follows Dr. Rivers, a psychologist and neurologist in 1917, who pioneered experiments on nerve regeneration for patients suffering from shell shock. The novel recreates the atmosphere and experiences that inspired some of the most powerful and moving war poetry to come out of Britain.	Connection to the Curriculum: Pat Barker's novels, particularly those in the <i>Regeneration Trilogy</i>, are frequently used as texts in Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition. Her works explore war, trauma, and the human condition, making them relevant for AP studies.

Additional Connections: