THEMATIC ESSAY MODEL

Cold Hell

"War is at best barbarism"¦its glory is all moonshine. It is only those who have never fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation. War is hell." --William T. Sherman

During the American Civil War, General William Tecumseh Sherman ordered his army to both defeat Confederate troops in battle and to demolish Southern land while marching to Atlanta, Georgia. Sherman realized that only such barbaric desolation could end the terrible war by severely weakening the Confederacy. Similarly, Joseph Heller's Catch 22 suggests that war itself, along with its advocates, weakens and destroys all aspects of human life. Leaving cities and military camps in shambles, World War II destabilizes civilization and its morals. Likewise, this bitter struggle hinders people's relationships with their loved ones. Constantly conquering the individual, war engenders madness and paranoia in hopeless soldiers. As people try to escape from the horrific scenes surrounding them, they find little remaining of the world they once knew. Enveloping a community with its atrocities and coldness, war erodes the society's humanity. "After surviving centuries of turmoil, Rome, once called "the Eternal City," lies in ruins after countless Allied bombings and invasions. When military police impose martial law on Rome, Yossarian, an apprehensive Allied bombardier, flies to the city to protect a prostitute's kid sister. Unfortunately, when he arrives at her apartment. Yossarian finds neither her nor her roommates but only shattered furniture. Their elderly landlady explains that the police "came with their clubs and chased [the girls] away. They would not even let them take their coats. The poor things. They chased them away into the cold" (417). The military police harbor no compassion for the civilians and only serve to further ruin the already defeated inhabitants. As the war ravages their city and the soldiers' callousness dominates, the civilians' helplessly watch their lives and community shatter like their furniture. However, while the soldiers devastate Rome, their own camp falls apart as well. The squadron's commanders, each obsessed with attaining a promotion, send their forces on dangerous missions in order to receive admiration and respect if their men triumph. When one of Yossarian's fellow officers, Snowden, horribly dies during one of these missions, Yossarian refuses to wear clothes. When the squadron's doctor, Doc Daneeka, asks him why he walks around naked, Yossarian replies, "I don't want to wear a uniform anymore" (270). To Yossarian, the uniform symbolizes the army and its unscrupulous commanders, who put their promotions before others' lives. Disgusted by the absurdities pervading throughout the camp, Yossarian does anything to escape the army and the deadly war that wears away his squadron' s common sense. While the army bombs the cities, the war itself ravages the citizens' morality to provoke the society's collapse.

Conclusion:

As war's trials and tribulations constantly assail the people both directly and indirectly involved, all manifestations of life disintegrate. Civilization as a whole fails when its citizens, surrounded by the never-ending bloodshed and mayhem, abandon their morality, thereby adding to the chaos. When war removes loved ones, their relationships cease, and their beloveds become despondent, lonely wrecks. Furthermore, the individual people themselves lose their will to live once they believe that the war and its horrors are inescapable. From a single man to an entire society, war relentlessly tears through all that holds life together. Anyone who upholds the war

seems a callous barbarian, oblivious to the devastation and destruction that so many others face. With unethical commanders and merciless carnage, the soldiers regard the brutal war as an unsympathetic, cold hell.