



# The Glorification of War: A Debate on Willa Cather's *One of Ours*

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Date

# Introduction

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- ❖ Claude Wheeler
  - ❖ “Storms in his head”
  - ❖ “Didn't find this kind of life worth ... getting up every morning”

CLASSIC REPRINT SERIES

# ONE OF OURS

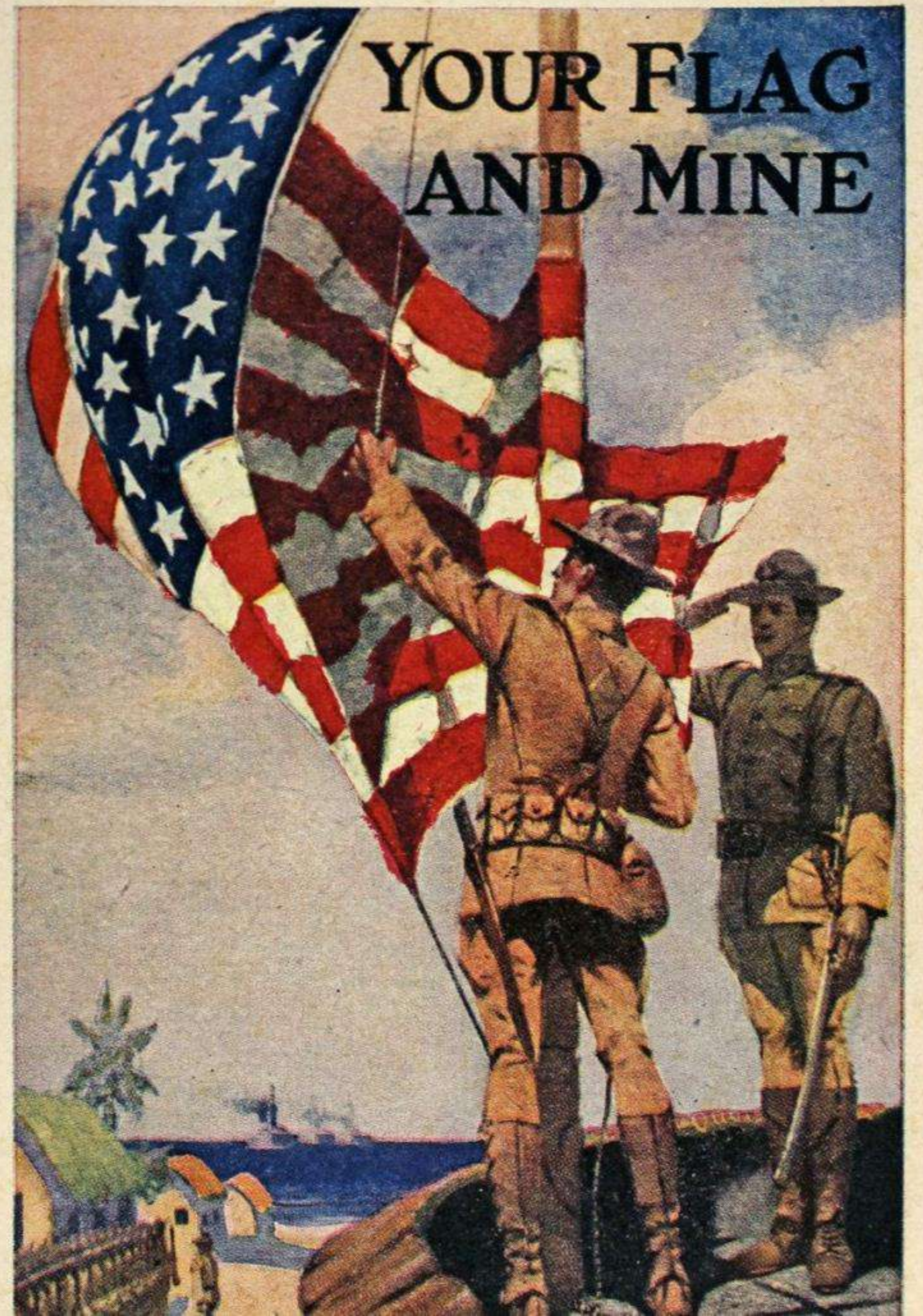
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by  
Willa Cather

# Historical Context

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- ❖ The Great War
  - ❖ The "war to end all wars"
  - ❖ 116,516 American Deaths
  - ❖ G.P.. Cather





“One of Ours falls back upon the stereotypes of war rhetoric, the picture of clean-cut American boys marching to save the world.”

*–Stanley Cooperman, p.30 World War I and the American Novel*



# A Divided Reception

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- ❖ Initial positive reviews followed by critical reassessment
- ❖ Stanley Cooperman's criticism of the second
  - ❖ Jingoism
  - ❖ The central debate: Does the novel romanticize or critique war?

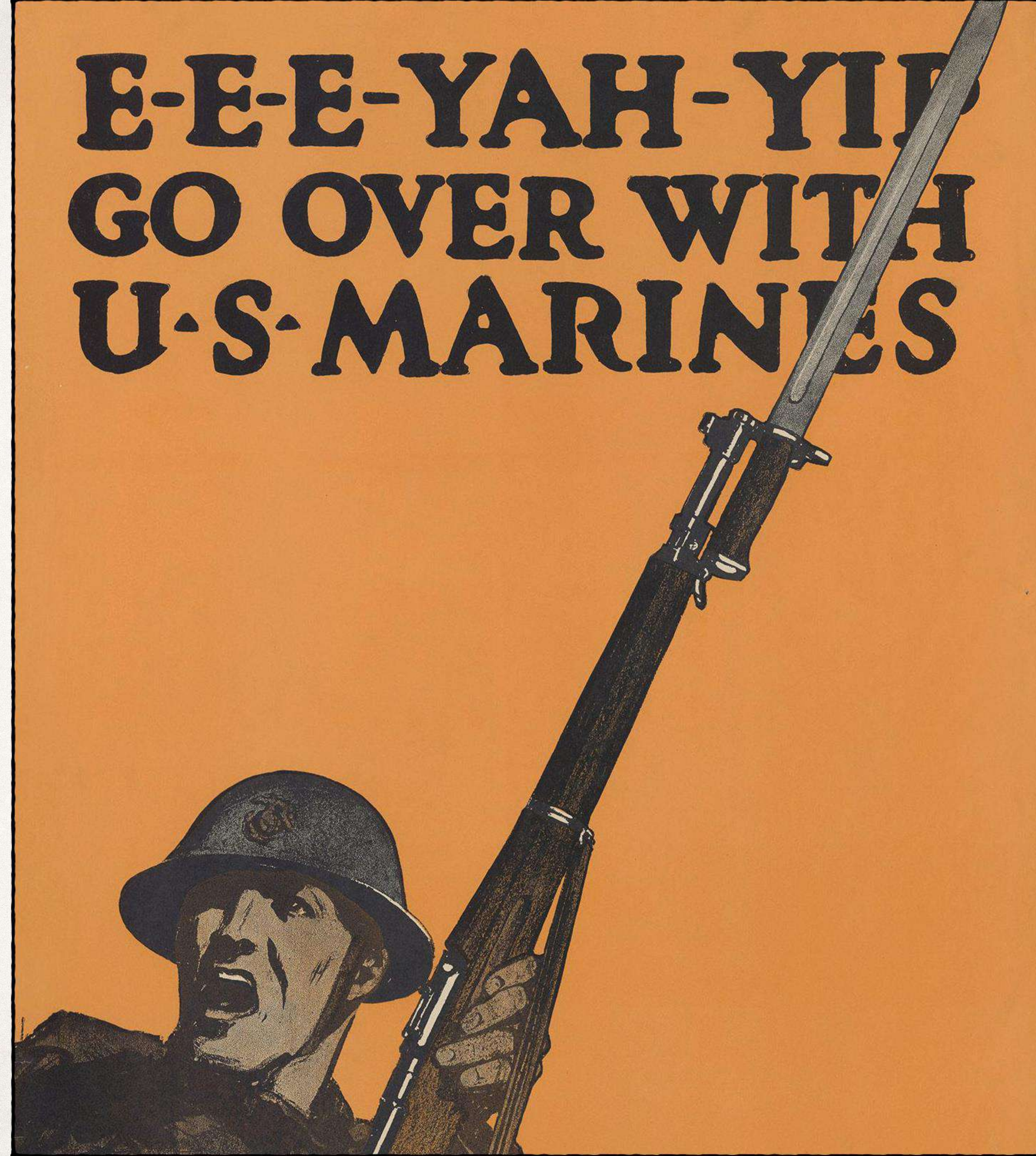
## WORLD WAR I and the AMERICAN NOVEL

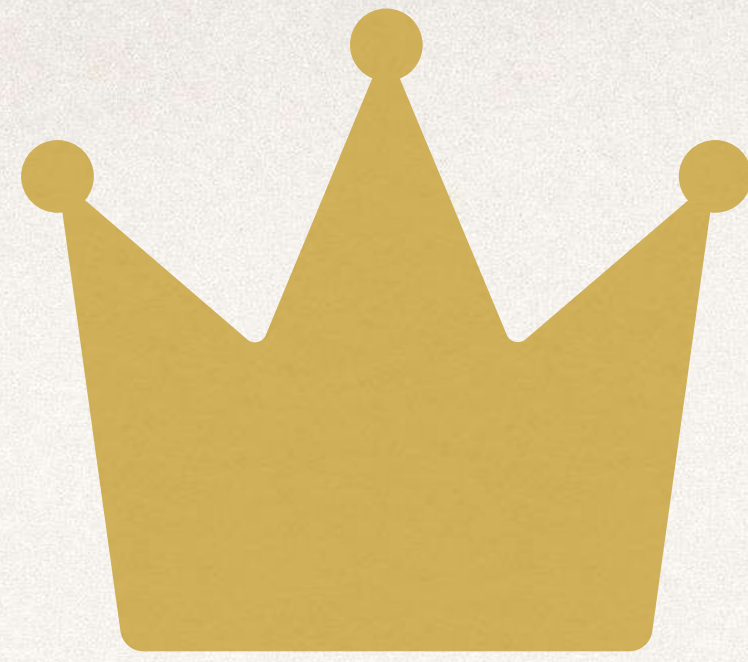
BY STANLEY COOPERMAN

# Affirmative Argument

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- ❖ “I never knew there was anything worth living for, till this war came on. Before that, the world seemed like a business proposition” (Cather 223).
- ❖ “The blood dripped down his coat, but he felt no weakness. He felt only one thing; that he commanded wonderful men” (Cather 276).





“That line of faces below; Hicks, Jones, Fuller, Anderson, Oscar.... Their eyes never left him. With these men he could do anything. They were mortal, but they were unconquerable.”

*–Willa Cather, p. 277, One of Ours*

“As he looked out and saw the grey landscape through the gently falling snow, he could not help thinking how much better it would be if people could go to sleep like the fields; could be blanketed down under the snow, to wake with their hurts healed and their defeats forgotten.”

*–Willa Cather, p. 231, One of Ours*

# Negative Argument

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- ❖ “Life began for me when I ceased to admire and began to remember” (Cather).
- ❖ “You'll admit it's a costly way of providing adventure for the young” (Cather 223).
- ❖ “One by one the heroes of that war, the men of dazzling soldiership, leave prematurely the world they have come back to” (Cather 302).



# Conclusion:

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- ❖ Quick show of hands!
- ❖ My perspective



Thank You!

Any Questions?

# Works Cited

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Cather, Willa. *One of Ours*. A.A. Knopf, 1922

TROUT, STEVEN. "Willa Cather's *One of Ours* and the Iconography of Remembrance."  
Willa Cather Studies, <https://cather.unl.edu/scholarship/catherstudies/4/cs004.trout>.