

Ignorant of the War

World War 1 sparked during the events of “A Society”, and most notably despite the women’s goal of understanding the world none of them had brought attention to the war until it was too late. They didn’t have a chance to meet again, and even then we’re left with just the narrator and Castalia, someone who had broken their vow of not bringing a child into the world until they understood what type of world they were bringing children into. In Andrew Moffit’s “Shooting Total Strangers” he mentions that throughout the short story the women represent a part of the British citizenry that removed the demonization of the other side (Moffit 43). It’s this stance that the women have that shows that their search already had a major flaw throughout the story. They were not looking for villains, and their search showed the ignorance they had for the social aspect of their conundrum. Without this, it focused on simple examples of things that men were better at, places that only men could go. Their search had always centered on this single ideal, ironically it left them without someone looking into actual society, and it would’ve left them far better prepared for the War that had essentially put an end to their Society as a whole. The war comes as the women have mentioned that they only knew of the war because of the chanting that had happened outside of the shop that they had their meetings at. Part of the impact comes from who remains at the end of the short story. As mentioned before, we’re left with the nameless Narrator and Castalia, one who had simply observed and reported everything that the society had and the woman who had been the first to break the ideals of the Society. By having the observer, and the breaker of the cycle come together, Virginia Woolf shows that their search was flawed by having the one the Society considered furthest from their ideals was the one who remained, and passed along their ideals. The war came, and in an instant their ignorance ended their Society, and only someone with a bare idea of what it was, remains to pass it on.