Class Assignment in Expository Writing
Based on Soldiers of Peace by Paul K. Chappell

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For use in lower division college classes in English Composition

Goals: To write an expository essay
Assignment: Writing to inform
Prompt: After reading the beginning of “The Star of Struggle,” consider the importance of knowing Chappell’s background with trauma as well as his view of time. Explain to the reader what Chappell hopes to accomplish in the beginning of this chapter.
Homework: Read and annotate the first few pages of the chapter (pp. 35 – 39).
Instructions: TBD by the teacher

Quote Bank for Discussion:

1. Chappell begins this chapter with a discussion on “humanity’s relationship with time,” and recalls his own view of time as an enemy. Chappell says, “Because of the trauma I experienced during my childhood, I began to feel that time was an enemy” (35). Discuss his experiences as well as our personal views of time.

2. Interestingly, he “gained new insights about time from an unlikely source of wisdom: video games” (35). Consider what he shares about video games.

3. Chappell says, “To gain literacy in our shared humanity, we must understand how time affects the human condition” (36). This is an important moment to make certain that students understand the idea of the human condition, which refers to what all human beings have in common regardless of race, religion, nationality, gender, and culture. Discuss why we must understand time.

4. Chappell later states: “Time does not listen to the cries of humanity. Time feels no remorse. Time never relents, always flowing forward, not caring about those it tramples along the way” (36). He sees this as the “definition of ruthlessness” (36). Discuss time in this manner. Do we agree?

5. Chappell follows with the idea of prophecy and how “every culture in history has been fascinated with the stars and created stories about the night sky” as well as “fascinated with prophecy and created predictions about the future” (37). Begin to dialogue the direction in which Chappell is taking the readers. Why does this matter? Why is it relevant?
6. Using his experience in Iraq as a starting point, with “life and death” close calls, Chappell says that “two aspects of reality make prophecy appealing to cultures. The first is that human beings are not perfect, but prone to making all of kinds of mistakes. The second is that time cannot flow backward,” calling it “a painful combination for humanity” (37). What does he mean by this? Consider its relevance to the human condition.

7. Instead of seeing the ruthlessness of time as a negative, Chappell claims that he is “able to recognize and feel deeply connected to the vulnerability and fragility of life,” making him “motivated to be kind and gentle in all the ways time cannot” (38). Given the state of heightened violence in our society, consider why others do not become more kind and gentle. What might it take for others to have this perspective?

8. Chappell then discusses the opposite view, that some believe “that time heals all wounds” (38). But he argues that time does not do this “by itself” (38). What does he mean by this statement?

9. In a clear message, Chappell says, “By using time to wage peace, we can heal the root causes of violence, trauma, and injustice on a personal, national, and global level” and never be apathetic in hoping for change (39). This is the time to start a dialogue on the importance of root causes. Have the students consider what they see as root causes of the issues Chappell discusses. Connect this to the human condition as well.

10. Reminding us of his West Point lessons, Chappell poignantly states, “Time allows human greatness to unfold, because time is the blank canvas where the masterpieces of human existence can be painted” (39). Discuss what he means by this.