

HOW TO READ (HTR)

The Moral Equivalent of War¹

by William James

The war against war is going to be no holiday excursion or camping party.

The military feelings

are too deeply grounded

to abdicate² their place

among our ideals

until better substitutes are offered

Comment [WU1]: HTR: The title gives you a general idea of the topic. In this case, James is discussing how to have something similar to war (its equivalent) but which is moral (or ethical). His title implies his assumption that war is immoral. All essays make assumptions like this.

Comment [WU2]: HTR: A skillful essayist will usually tell you up front what his point or purpose is. It may not be in the first paragraph or in the first paragraph, but it will be in the introductory remarks. If you know what the writer's point or purpose is, then you will be able to relate the parts (individual statements) to the whole (the essay).

Comment [WU3]: In his first sentence James is stating clearly what is the problem to which he is proposing a solution.

Comment [WU4R3]: HTR: When you know this is a problem/solution essay, that helps you to expect that the ideas will flow in a particular way. The ability to anticipate what will happen is a very important aspect of reading.

Comment [WU5]: HTR: You are confronted with a lengthy and unstructured sentence. What do you do?

Comment [WU6]: HTR: Identify the GRAMMATICAL SUBJECT (who/what is doing something). In a complex sentence, the SUBJECT can appear in the middle or near the end of a sentence, but often you'll find it in the beginning.

Comment [WU7]: HTR: Identify the VERB (what the SUBJECT is doing). There might be many VERBS in a sentence, but you're looking for the one that relates directly to the subject. It usually appear after the subject, but it might not be immediately after it. In this case, it is a VERB PHRASE, a collection of words that work together as a VERB.

Comment [WU8]: HTR: You know you have identified the SUBJECT and VERB because together they create a complete sentence: THE MILITARY FEELINGS...ARE DEEPLY GROUNDED.

Comment [WU9]: HTR: Now you can start to see that the rest of the sentence is elaborating on this preliminary statement. Here James is elaborating on TOO: HOW/WHY IS IT TOO DEEPLY GROUNDED?

Comment [WU10]: HTR: WHERE IS THE PLACE?

Comment [WU11]: HTR: HOW WILL THE CONDITION OF BEING TOO...DEEPLY GROUNDED BE CHANGED?

¹ This essay was originally a speech delivered to students at Stanford University in 1906. It was later published in an essay collection.

² Abdicate- give up or renounce

than the glory and shame

Comment [WU12]: HTR: BETTER THAN WHAT?

that come to nations as well as to individuals

Comment [WU13]: HTR: WHOSE GLORY AND SHAME?

from the ups and downs of politics and the vicissitudes³ of trade.

Comment [WU14]: HTR: WHAT CAUSES THIS GLORY And sHAME?

³ Vicissitudes - changing phases or conditions (ups and downs)