

Up Front and Coming Home: Bill Mauldin's America in War and Peace, 1943–1947



Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library

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Up Front and Coming Home: Bill Mauldin's America in War and Peace, 1943–1947

BY RON NASH

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. Through a step-by-step process, students will acquire the skills to use textual and visual evidence and develop critical thinking skills. The content is made possible through the rich resources held at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library and the coordination provided with the Mauldin Family estate and other key organizations that celebrate the contribution of Bill Mauldin to American history.

“The real war,” said Walt Whitman about the Civil War, “will never get in the books.” During World War II, the most authentic view Americans on the home front got of the “real war” came through weekly cartoons by Bill Mauldin and daily dispatches by Ernie Pyle.

Over the course of five days the students will analyze primary sources in the form of political cartoons, a journalistic dispatch, excerpts from Bill Mauldin's books, women's magazine articles, and print advertisements. These documents reflect the tension between optimism and pessimism, confidence and cynicism, realism and idealism evident in the coverage of the war. Students will closely analyze the primary sources in order to not only understand their literal meaning but also infer the more subtle messages. They will use textual and visual evidence to draw conclusions and present arguments as directed in each lesson.

These lesson plans were developed with support from the Pritzker Military Foundation, in recognition of the Pritzker Military Museum & Library. For additional educational resources on Bill Mauldin or other military topics, please contact the Pritzker Military Museum & Library at info@pritzkermilitary.org.

NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS: 5

The materials and number of days can be adjusted for classroom flexibility. You may choose to focus on just the Mauldin cartoons or the Pyle dispatch (for a three-day lesson) or use both sets of documents for a five-day exploration of the topic.

GRADE LEVEL(S): 7–12

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 and RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5: Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.B: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

You may select one or more of the following to use for individual lessons or throughout the unit.

- To what extent does the sardonic humor of Bill Mauldin's cartoons reflect and report on the challenges and hardships of American soldiers during World War II?
- To what extent do the metaphors of "mud," "men," and "monotony" reflect and highlight Bill Mauldin's portrayals of American soldiers during wartime?
- To what extent do Bill Mauldin's cartoons spotlight the struggles of veterans to readjust to and reintegrate into civilian society after World War II?
- To what extent did Bill Mauldin's military experience in World War II affect his personal life and career?
- To what extent did Bill Mauldin's military experience in World War II affect the creation of his postwar cartoons?
- To what extent do Bill Mauldin's postwar cartoons address the problems of racism and the abridgement of civil liberties in the United States after World War II?
- To what extent do Bill Mauldin's postwar cartoons reflect and highlight the great transformation of American society that occurred after World War II?

LESSON 1

OVERVIEW

Students will read a secondary source by historian Todd DePastino to provide context for the life and work of Bill Mauldin or a primary source article about Bill Maulding by Ernie Pyle. They will also examine, analyze, and engage with an array of primary sources (textual and visual) that drill down into the issues raised in Dr. DePastino's essay. The students will demonstrate their comprehension of the subject matter and their analysis and assessment of the primary sources through class discussion and completed activity sheets.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

See "Bill Mauldin and World War II" by Todd DePastino, author of *Bill Mauldin: A Life Up Front*, on page 11 in the student handouts.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

You may select one or more of the following to use for individual lessons or throughout the unit.

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- To what extent do Bill Mauldin's postwar cartoons reflect and highlight the great transformation of American society that occurred after World War II?

MATERIALS

- Optional: Historical Background 1
 - o 1A: "Bill Mauldin and World War II" by Todd DePastino. Todd DePastino is the founding director of the Veterans Breakfast Club. His interest in veterans' stories grew out of his work as a historian. DePastino is the author and editor of seven books, including the award-winning *Bill Mauldin: A Life Up Front*, a biography of the famed WWII cartoonist. He has a PhD in American history from Yale University and has taught at Penn State University and Waynesburg University, where he received the Lucas-Hathaway Award for Teaching Excellence.
 - o 1B: Ernie Pyle, "Bill Mauldin, Top Cartoonist from New Mexico," *El Paso Herald-Post*, January 18, 1944. Courtesy Scripps-Howard Foundation.
 - o Document Analysis (to be used with either option 1A or 1B)

- Men, Mud, and Monotony: Selections from *Up Front* by Bill Mauldin (Holt & Co., 1945), pp. 14–15, 35–36, 45–48.
 - o Summary Organizer 1: “Men”
 - o Summary Organizer 2: “Mud”
 - o Summary Organizer 3: “Monotony”
- Activity Sheets (For the cartoons, you may select either Analyzing the Cartoon or Details, Description, and Decision, or both.)
 - o Analyzing the Cartoon
 - o Details, Description, and Decision
 - o Essay
- World War II Cartoons by Bill Mauldin (You may use all the cartoons or a selection of them.) The images are reproduced with the gracious permission of the Bill Mauldin Estate.
 - o Set I: Men (Dogface)
 - Cartoon 1: “Do retreatin’ blisters hurt as much as advancin’ blisters?” *Stars and Stripes*, November 14, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
 - Cartoon 2: “. . . them wuz his exact words—‘I envy th’ way you dogfaces git first pick o’ wimmin an’ likker in towns.’” *Stars and Stripes*, ca. November 28, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
 - Cartoon 3: “Why ya lookin’ so sad? I got outta it okay.” *Stars and Stripes*, November 25, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
 - Cartoon 4: “Ya don’t git combat pay ’cause ya don’t fight.” *Stars and Stripes*, October 21, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
 - Cartoon 5: “I’ll be damned. Did ya know this can opener fits on th’end of a rifle?” *Stars and Stripes*, January 8, 1945. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
 - Cartoon 6: “That’s th’ trouble—mine’s fulla cigarettes too . . .” *Stars and Stripes*, February 9, 1945. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
 - Cartoon 7: “By God, sir, I tried!” *Stars and Stripes*, February 22, 1945. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
 - Cartoon 8: “You Americans have everything.” *Stars and Stripes*, February 26, 1945. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
 - Cartoon 9: “I got a hangover. Does it show?” *Stars and Stripes*, January 18, 1945. Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.
 - Cartoon 10: “It’s either enemy or off limits.” *Stars and Stripes*, September 27, 1944. Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

o Set 2: Mud

- Cartoon 11: “It ain’t the glammer I’m jealous of—it’s just that they’re within 15 minutes of a bath.” *Daily Oklahoman*, August 1, 1943. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
- Cartoon 12: “What, no hot water?” *Stars and Stripes*, December 11, 1943. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
- Cartoon 13: “Expectin’ rain?” *Stars and Stripes*, October 31, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
- Cartoon 14: “Ya usin’ two blankets or three?” *Stars and Stripes*, February 6, 1945. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
- Cartoon 15: “. . . I’ll never splash mud on a dogface again (999) . . . I’ll never splash mud on a dogface again (1000) . . . NOW will ya help us push?” *Stars and Stripes*, September 23, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
- Cartoon 16: “Me future is settled, Willie. I’m gonna be a perffessor on types o’European soil.” *Stars and Stripes*, October 25, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
- Cartoon 17: “Remember that warm, soft mud last summer?” *Stars and Stripes*, March 3, 1945. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
- Cartoon 18: “Footprints. God, wotta monster.” *Stars and Stripes*, December 7, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
- Cartoon 19: “Aim between th’ eyes, Joe . . . Sometimes they charge when they’re wounded.” *Stars and Stripes*, May 17, 1944. Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.
- Cartoon 20: “Sergeant, go requisition that fire.” *Stars and Stripes*, February 3, 1945. Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

o Set 3: Monotony

- Cartoon 21: “I just ain’t worth a damn in the morning without a hot cup of coffee.” *Stars and Stripes*, December 2, 1943. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
- Cartoon 22: “. . . so Archibald kissed her agin’ an’ gently put her head on th’ pillow.” *Stars and Stripes*, April 7, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
- Cartoon 23: “By th’ way, what wuz them changes you wuz gonna make when you took over last month, sir?” *Stars and Stripes*, November 23, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
- Cartoon 24: “Jeez, Gertie—th’front! Wait’ll we tell th’ magazines what it’s like!” *Stars and Stripes*, December 9, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
- Cartoon 25: “I’m disgusted. I been in th’ infantry two days an’ I ain’t heard a shot.” *Stars and Stripes*, September 26, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

- Cartoon 26: “Th’ socks ain’t dry yet, but we kin take in th’ cigarettes.” *Stars and Stripes*, December 14, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
- Cartoon 27: “It’s plasma. We’re experimentin’ with a new type injection.” *Stars and Stripes*, December 13, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.
- Cartoon 28: “Them’s my unmentionables.” *Stars and Stripes*, January 26, 1945. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.
- Cartoon 29: “I got tired o’ hearin you mugs kick about canned cream in the coffee!” *Star Spangled Banter*, 1941. Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.
- Cartoon 30: “Them infantry guys is chucklin’ like fiends. We blew up a supply train haulin’ overcoats an’ blankets to th’ Krauts.” *Stars and Stripes*, November 24, 1944. Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

PROCEDURE

1. The lesson should be framed with one or more of the Essential Questions to provide a cognitive direction to help focus the students’ critical examination, explanation, and evaluation of the primary sources. Display the question and refer to it periodically throughout the lesson.
2. Optional: You may choose to assign the Historical Background essay by Todd DePastino and/or Ernie Pyle’s “Top Cartoonist from New Mexico,” a dispatch written from Italy in 1944, with the accompanying “Important Phrases” activity sheet, or you may discuss the information in the essay and the dispatch with the class.

The students may read the essay(s) independently at home or as a “shared reading” in class. “Share read” the text with the class by having the students follow along silently while you read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud. This technique will support struggling readers and English language learners (ELL).

3. During the following class period, inform the students that they will be working with three selections from Bill Mauldin’s book *Up Front*. The selections stress the themes of Men, Mud, and Monotony. The students will learn how to do in-depth text analysis for themselves.
4. The first activity will be completed as a whole-class exercise. Hand out Summary Organizer 1, “Men,” and display it in a format large enough for the whole class to see. Share read the text with the class as described above.
5. Explain that the objective is to select Key Words from the text and then use those words to create a summary sentence that demonstrates an understanding of what Bill Mauldin was writing about.
6. Guidelines for Selecting the Key Words: Key Words are especially important to understanding the text. Without them, the selection would not make sense. These words are usually nouns or verbs. Tell the students not to pick “connector” words (*are, is, the, and, so, etc.*). The number of Key Words depends on the length of the original selection. This selection is about 250 words, so you can pick eight to twelve Key Words. The students must know the meaning of the words they select. This will give them practice reasoning out word meanings using context and advancing dictionary skills.
7. Students will now select up to twelve words that they believe are Key Words and underline them on their organizers.

8. Survey the class to find out what they selected as Key Words. You can ask for a show of hands to determine the most popular choices. Using this vote and after some discussion, the class should, with your guidance, decide on the Key Words; for example, *nobility, dignity, combat soldiers* (they may occasionally select short phrases that convey a single idea), *unselfishly, risk, lives, despite, fear, courage, fight, and scared*. Now, no matter which words the students had previously selected, have them write the words agreed upon by the class or chosen by you into the Key Words section of the organizer.
9. Explain that the class will use these Key Words to write a sentence that summarizes what Mauldin was writing about. This should be a whole-class negotiation. For example, “The dignity and nobility of combat soldiers come from their courage to fight and risk their lives unselfishly despite fear and being scared.” You might find that the students decide they do not need some of the Key Words to make the summary more streamlined. This is part of the negotiation process. Copy the final negotiated sentence(s) into the organizer.
10. Tell the students to restate their summary sentence in their own words; they do not have to use Mauldin’s words. Again, this is a class negotiation. For example, “Combat soldiers should be honored for their bravery and risking their lives unselfishly despite being scared.”
11. Wrap-up for the Key Word activity: Discuss vocabulary that the students found confusing or difficult. You could have students use the back of their organizers to make a note of these words and their meanings.
12. Hand out Summary Organizer 2. This contains the second selection from Mauldin’s *Up Front*. Have the class share read the text and follow the process outlined above to select the Key Words. (You may choose to have the students complete the second and third selections in small groups or individually if they are ready or assign them to work on outside of class). They will write a summary sentence that gets at the gist of Mauldin’s reflections on combat using the Key Words, and then restate the summary in their own words.
13. These are possible approaches to the second and third selections:

MUD (186 word)

Key Words (eight to ten): *mud, curse, war, wet, armies, advancing, trench foot, foxholes, pain, swelled, and agonized*

Summary Sentence: “Mud, the curse of war, caused wet foxholes, trench foot with agonized pain, and swelled feet that kept armies from advancing.”

Students’ Own Words: “Mud is the curse of war that kept the army from advancing and gave soldiers painful, swollen feet.”

MONOTONY (263 words)

Key Words (up to twelve): *war, monotony, hurry up and wait, system, endless, marches, bad weather, wet, clothes, homesick, and worst*

Summary Sentence: “The monotony of the ‘hurry-up and wait’ system with endless marches, bad weather, wet clothes, and being homesick are the worst things about war.”

Students’ Own Words: “The worst thing about war is its monotony with endless marches, many instances of rushing and then waiting, bad weather, and being homesick.”

14. The class will now be presented with three sets of Mauldin cartoons focused on the themes Men, Mud, and Monotony with accompanying activity sheets. You may choose to use all or some of the images in each set or divide them among different students, pairs, or small groups, allowing time for students to share their responses and viewpoints with their classmates. You may also create a “Gallery Walk” for this exercise and divide the classroom space into three sections that reflect the three themes.

15. Distribute Set 1 of the Mauldin cartoons with the accompanying activity sheets. Students, whether individually or collaboratively, view and discuss the cartoons and complete either “Analyzing the Cartoon” or “Details, Description, and Decision” for each cartoon. Model the analysis with the class for one or two of the cartoons.
 - “Analyzing the Cartoon”: If you use this activity sheet, make sure to define “irony” for the students and explain how irony is used in one or two cartoons.
 - “Details, Description, and Decision”: If you use this activity sheet, the students can complete all four sections for each cartoon or you may ask them to select one of the first three sections (People, Objects, Action/Activity) that is most relevant to the cartoon they are looking at and answer the wrap-up question in the fourth section.
16. Once the students have completed this activity, facilitate student discussion related to soldiers’ experiences in WWII. This discussion could be framed with one of the Essential Questions.

Follow the same process for Sets 2 (“Mud”) and 3 (“Monotony”) and facilitate student discussion on the three themes of Men, Mud, and Monotony.
17. Lesson Closure and Summary Activity: Students will develop a position or viewpoint, based on the historical evidence from the texts and the cartoons, on one of the questions provided:
 - George S. Patton once remarked, “Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best; it removes all that is base.” How do Bill Mauldin’s cartoons (and Ernie Pyle’s dispatch about Mauldin) confirm or refute Patton’s statement?
 - In August 1944 Ernie Pyle wrote, “For me war has become a flat black depression without highlights, a revulsion of the mind and an exhaustion of the spirit.” How do Bill Mauldin’s cartoons (and Ernie Pyle’s dispatch) confirm or refute this statement?
 - To what extent does the sardonic humor of Bill Mauldin’s cartoons reflect and report on the challenges and hardships of American soldiers during World War II?
 - To what extent do the metaphors of “men,” “mud,” and “monotony” reflect and highlight Bill Mauldin’s portrayals of American soldiers in wartime?

The students will express their viewpoints, orally or in writing (e.g., “Exit Card,” Learning Log, Evaluative Essay, etc.), using the evidence from the texts and cartoons as well as the class discussions to elucidate and support their positions.

Historical Background 1A

Bill Mauldin and World War II

by Todd DePastino

If World War II had gone as planned, Bill Mauldin would have never risen to fame, and his cartoons would have remained, at best, a footnote in the history of a little-valued branch of the Army: the infantry.

As the US Navy and War Departments prepared for war in 1940, the specter of World War I, when millions of foot soldiers died in muddy trenches, haunted their planning. The US Joint Board of military chiefs didn't want a replay of 1914–1918, with its masses of men slogging it out on the ground. War planners promoted air power, mobile armor, and long-range weapons as keys to swift victory. Highly trained elite units, such as Rangers, Airborne, and the Marine Corps, would do the hard ground fighting. The Army infantry—humble footsloggers since time immemorial—would file in after the main action to police ground already taken.

After Pearl Harbor and the US entry into war, the nation's culture industries in Hollywood, on Madison Avenue, and in the Office of War Information trumpeted the dashing sailors, glamorous flyers, and “gung-ho” Marines leading the fight. Even naval construction battalions and merchant seamen got their own movies (*The Fighting Seabees* and *Action in the North Atlantic*). Lowly infantrymen were forgotten, hardly ever depicted, and rarely celebrated. As a service branch, the infantry was the last at the supply trough, receiving cast-offs, hand-me-downs, and low-rated recruits. Even the food was bad. Should the war effort ever sink so low that it depended on the infantry for victory, the Allies would be in trouble.

And that's precisely what happened in the fall of 1943 in Italy, where rifleman Bill Mauldin landed with the 45th Infantry Division. The Allies had judged Italy a good place to test its war strategy against the Axis in advance of the more formidable invasion of Western Europe. But the rugged terrain and terrible weather of the Italian campaign neutralized air power and bogged the men of the 45th Division and hundreds of thousands of others in WWI-trench-like warfare. As in 1914–1918, there was a static line of fortifications, with little offensive movement. The Germans took the high ground and engineered rearguard action that inhibited US progress up the Italian boot and kept grizzled infantrymen—lovingly called “dogfaces”—hunkered in freezing foxholes for weeks, even months, with no relief. Casualties skyrocketed, not only from enemy fire but also from frostbite and trench foot. Ammunition, rations, boots, and socks were scarce. The GIs could do nothing but sit, shivering in frozen mud, as German artillery shook the ground. It was a fiasco.

Sgt. Bill Mauldin saw it all, and it transformed him. Though he looked like a teenager, Mauldin was a grizzled veteran of the infantry himself. He'd joined the Army in 1940, before Pearl Harbor, and had trained with K Company of the 180th Infantry Regiment of the 45th Division. He had worked his way onto the division's newspaper, the *45th Division News*, and had won acclaim for his cartoon feature, “Star-Spangled Banter,” which mined the everyday lives of the division's enlisted men for humor as well as for expressions of outsider pride. Mauldin's artwork grew more refined as training for war accelerated, and his panels were filled with meticulous renderings of the accoutrements of soldiering, reflecting the infantrymen's lives back to them. “If a drawing lacked authenticity,” Bill later explained, “the idea behind it became ineffectual too. This was especially true in the infantry, where a man lived intimately with a few pieces of equipment and resented seeing it depicted inaccurately.”¹

Bill's cartoons made him a star in the 45th Division, but he remained unknown outside of it. That changed in Italy. The weary brows and unrecognizing faces, the blown bodies and wrecked villages Mauldin saw there infused his art. His cartoons darkened and exploded with expressive brushwork. Contours and shadows deepened, adding texture and volume to muddy uniforms, the piles of rubble, and blasted landscapes. The thick-lined, cross-contour drawings of the front gave context to his characters' dour expressions. Sardonic punch lines voiced the infantry's many grievances about the lack of food, clothing, ammunition, reinforcements, and competent battlefield leadership.

Mauldin's fame grew by word-of-mouth along the frontlines of the Italian campaign. Many high-ranking Army officers hated the cartoons, General George S. Patton, Jr., most famously. Mauldin's main dogface characters, Willie and Joe,

1. Bill Mauldin, *The Brass Ring, A Sort of Memoir* (New York: Norton, 1972), p. 108.

were disrespectful of authority, critical of command, and focused on survival, not victory. But a few well-placed generals, such as Lucian Truscott, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., and, eventually, Dwight D. Eisenhower, saw the morale-building value of Mauldin's humor. They backed Mauldin's transfer to the Army newspaper *Stars & Stripes*, which had the largest circulation of any daily in the world. His cartoon, now titled "Up Front," reached American forces almost everywhere.

Though General Patton griped to Mauldin that "the Krauts ought to pin a medal on you for helping them mess up discipline for us," there was good reason for the higher-ups back in Washington, DC, to promote "Up Front." Mauldin's gritty and spirited advocacy of lowly infantrymen coincided with major War Department policy shifts that changed Americans' perceptions of the war. Not only was the War Department now praising, rather than ignoring, the role of the infantry, it was also liberalizing the strict media censorship that had constrained frontline news coverage. Before the Italy invasion, reporters downplayed bad news and virtually erased any hint of combat trauma in the ranks. Now, the Office of War Information worried that this "good news only" policy was making Americans complacent and impatient for quick victory. Mild doses of bad news—suggestions of hardship, even horror—were needed to sober the American people so that their expectations would be more in line with frontline realities. Mauldin's work offered grimness tempered by humor. It was a perfect fit for this turn in wartime publicity.

On January 15, 1944, Ernie Pyle, Scripps-Howard's famous war correspondent and the nation's most-read writer, published a column on Mauldin. Pyle declared him "the finest cartoonist the war had produced . . . And that is not merely because his cartoons are funny, but because they are also terribly grim and real."²

Within weeks of Pyle's endorsement, Mauldin had a syndication offer that would put "Up Front" in hundreds of newspapers back home. Book and movie deals would follow. Mauldin the humble infantryman was on his way to becoming a celebrity and millionaire.

Before the war was over, Bill Mauldin would become the youngest Pulitzer Prize winner in history at age 23. Playing catch-up, the Army rushed to award him the Legion of Merit before he returned home in 1945. "Mauldin's work," the citation stated, "has made him indisputably the best known and most popular American soldier in the theater."

After the war, Mauldin would go on to enjoy a wild and varied career that included writing, film acting, screenwriting, airplane-flying, political campaigning, and, of course, cartooning. He would win a second Pulitzer Prize and become one of the nation's most celebrated political cartoonists. But his first act, the one that made him a hero to the Greatest Generation in World War II, would remain his most enduring and triumphant legacy.

Perhaps more breathtaking than Bill's attack on Army brass was the fact that he got away with it.

Todd DePastino is the founding director of the Veterans Breakfast Club. His interest in veterans' stories grew out of his work as a historian. DePastino is the author and editor of seven books, including the award-winning Bill Mauldin: A Life Up Front, a biography of the famed WWII cartoonist. He has a PhD in American history from Yale University and has taught at Penn State University and Waynesburg University, where he received the Lucas-Hathaway Award for Teaching Excellence.

2. Ernie Pyle, "Top Cartoonist from New Mexico" [Bill Mauldin, Cartoonist], *El Paso Herald-Post*, January 18, 1944.

Historical Background 1B

Bill Mauldin, Top Cartoonist from New Mexico

by Ernie Pyle

Sgt. Bill Mauldin appears to us over here, to be the finest cartoonist the war has produced. And that's not merely because his cartoons are funny, but because they are also terribly grim and real.

Mauldin's cartoons aren't about training-camp life, which you at home are best acquainted with. They are about the men in the line—the tiny percentage of our vast army who are actually up there in that other world doing the dying. His cartoons are about the war.

Mauldin's central cartoon character is a soldier, unshaven, unwashed, unsmiling. He looks more like a hobo than like your son. He looks, in fact, exactly like a doughfoot who has been in the lines for two months. And that isn't pretty.

Mauldin's cartoons in a way, are bitter. His work is so mature that I had pictured him as a man approaching middle age. Yet he is only 22, and he looks even younger. He himself could never have raised the heavy black beard of his cartoon dogface. His whiskers are soft and scant, his nose is upturned good-naturedly, and his eyes have a twinkle.

His maturity comes simply from a native understanding of things, and from being a soldier himself for a long time. He has been in the Army three and a half years.

Bill Mauldin was born in Mountain Park, N. M. He now calls Phoenix home base, but we of New Mexico could claim him without much resistance on his part.

Bill has drawn ever since he was a child. He always drew pictures of the things he wanted to grow up to be, such as cowboys and soldiers, not realizing that what he really wanted to become was a man who draws pictures.

He graduated from high school in Phoenix at 17, took a year at the Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago, and at 18 was in the Army. He did fifty-four days on K.P. duty in his first four months. That fairly cured him of a lifelong worship of uniforms.

Mauldin belongs to the 45th Division. Their record has been a fine one, and their losses have been heavy. Mauldin's typical grim cartoon soldier is really a 45th Division infantryman, and he is one who has truly been through the mill.

Mauldin was detached from straight soldier duty after a year in the infantry, and put to work on the division's weekly paper. His true war cartoons started in Sicily, and have continued on through Italy, gradually gaining recognition.

Capt. Bob Neville, Stars and Stripes editor, shakes his head with a veteran's admiration and says of Mauldin:

“He's got it. Already he's the outstanding cartoonist of the war.”

Mauldin works in a cold, dark little studio in the back of Stars and Stripes' Naples office. He wears silver-rimmed glasses when he works. His eyes used to be good, but he damaged them in his early Army days by drawing for too many hours at night with poor light.

He averages about three days out of 10 at the front, then comes back and draws up a large batch of cartoons. If the weather is good, he sketches a few details at the front. But the weather is usually lousy.

“You don’t need to sketch details anyhow,” he says. “You come back with a picture of misery and cold and [d]anger in your mind and you don’t need any more details than that.”

His cartoon in Stars & Stripes is headed, “Up Front . . . By Mauldin.” The other day some soldier wrote in a nasty letter asking what the hell did Mauldin know about the front.

Stars and Stripes printed the letter. Beneath it, in italics they printed a short editor’s note: “Sergt. Bill Mauldin received the Purple Heart for wounds received while serving in Italy with Pvt. Blank’s own regiment.”

That’s known as telling ’em.

Bill Mauldin is a rather quiet fellow, a little above medium size. He smokes and swears a little, and talks frankly and pleasantly. He is not eccentric in any way.

Even though he’s just a kid, he’s a husband and father. He married in 1942 while in camp in Texas, and his son was born last August 20 while Bill was in Sicily. His wife and child are living in Phoenix now. Bill carries pictures of them in his pocketbook.

Unfortunately for you and Mauldin both, the American public has no opportunity to see his daily drawings. But that isn’t worrying him. He realizes this is his big chance.

After the war he wants to settle again in the Southwest, which he and I love. He wants to go on doing cartoons of these same guys who are now fighting in the Italian hills, except that by then they’ll be in civilian clothes and living as they should be.

Source: Ernie Pyle, “Top Cartoonist from New Mexico,” *El Paso Herald-Post*, January 18, 1944. Courtesy Scripps-Howard Foundation.

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Document Analysis

Name of Author/Essay:

Important Phrases

Which phrases or sentences in this essay are the most informative or important? Choose three and give the reason for your choice.

Phrase 1:

Why is this phrase informative or important?

Phrase 2:

Why is this phrase informative or important?

Phrase 3:

Why is this phrase informative or important?

Summary Organizer 1

“Men”: A Selection from Bill Mauldin’s *Up Front*

Original Text

I don’t make the infantryman look noble, because he couldn’t look noble even if he tried. Still there is a certain nobility and dignity in combat soldiers and medical aid men with dirt in their ears. They are rough and their language gets coarse because they live a life stripped of convention and niceties. Their nobility and dignity come from the way they live unselfishly and risk their lives to help each other. They are normal people who have been put where they are, and whose actions and feelings have been molded by their circumstances. There are gentleman and boors; intelligent ones and stupid ones; talented ones and inefficient ones. But when they are all together and they are fighting, despite their bitching and griping and goldbricking and mortal fear, they are facing cold steel and screaming lead and hard enemies, and they are advancing and beating the hell out of the opposition. . . . Joe and Willie . . . come from . . . the great numbers of men who stay and sweat in the foxholes that give their more courageous brethren claustrophobia. They go on patrol when patrols are called for, and they don’t shirk hazards, because they don’t want to let their buddies down. The army couldn’t get along without them, either. Although it needs men to do the daring deeds, it also needs men who have the quiet courage to stick in their foxholes and fight and kill even though they hate killing and are scared to death while doing it.

Key Words

Summary

In Your Own Words

Summary Organizer 2:

“Mud”: A Selection from Bill Mauldin’s *Up Front*

Original Text

Mud, for one, is a curse which seems to save itself for war. I’m sure Europe never got this muddy during peacetime. I’m equally sure that no mud in the world is so deep or sticky or wet as European mud. It doesn’t even have an honest color like ordinary mud. . . . The worst thing about mud, outside of the fact that it keeps armies from advancing, is that it causes trench foot. There was a lot of it in that first winter in Italy. The doggies found it difficult to keep their feet dry, and they had to stay in wet foxholes for days and weeks at a time. If they couldn’t stand the pain they crawled out of their holes and stumbled and crawled (they couldn’t walk) down the mountains until they reached the aid station. Their shoes were cut off, and their feet swelled like balloons. Sometimes the feet had to be amputated. But most often the men had to make their agonized way back up the mountain and crawl into their holes again because there were no replacements and the line had to be held.

Key Words

Summary

In Your Own Words

Summary Organizer 3:

“Monotony”: A Selection from Bill Mauldin’s *Up Front*

Original Text

Many people who read and speak of battle and noise and excitement and death forget one of the worst things about a war—its monotony. That is the thing that gets everyone—combat soldier and rear echelon alike. The “hurry up and wait” system which seems to prevail in every army (double time to the assembly area and wait two hours for the trucks—drive like hell to the docks and wait two days for the ship—fall out at four in the morning to stand an inspection which doesn’t come off until late afternoon), that’s one of the things that make war tough. The endless marches that carry you on and on and yet never seem to get you anyplace—the automatic drag of one foot as it places itself in front of the other without any prompting from your dulled brain, and the unutterable relief as you sink down for a ten-minute break, spoiled by the knowledge that you’ll have to get up and go again—the never-ending monotony of days and weeks and months and years of bad weather and wet clothes and no mail—all this sends as many men into the psychopathic wards as does battle fatigue. Like fraternity brothers who have had a tough initiation, many of the old-timers over here are ornery enough to kid replacements who begin to feel pretty miserable and homesick after six months. “The first year is the worst,” the old-timers say. “The second year isn’t so bad, and by the time you begin your third year overseas you are almost used to it.” But it ain’t true, brother; it ain’t true.

Key Words

Summary

In Your Own Words

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Analyzing the Cartoon

Cartoon # _____

Give the cartoon your own title:

What is the significance of the central figure(s) or object(s)?

What action is taking place in the cartoon?

What mood or tone is created by the cartoon and what is creating that mood or tone?

What message is the artist giving to the viewer?

How does Mauldin include irony in the text at the bottom of each cartoon? (Irony involves the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning.)

Cartoon # _____

Give the cartoon your own title:

What is the significance of the central figure(s) or object(s)?

What action is taking place in the cartoon?

What mood or tone is created by the cartoon and what is creating that mood or tone?

What message is the artist giving to the viewer?

How does Mauldin include irony in the text at the bottom of each cartoon? (Irony involves the use of words to convey a meaning that is the opposite of its literal meaning.)

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Essay

Choose one of the following four prompts and use evidence from Bill Mauldin's cartoons (and, if you read it, Ernie Pyle's article about Mauldin) to support your response to the prompt:

1. George S. Patton once remarked, "Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best; it removes all that is base." How do Bill Mauldin's cartoons (and Ernie Pyle's dispatch about Mauldin) confirm or refute Patton's statement?
2. In August 1944 Ernie Pyle wrote, "For me war has become a flat black depression without highlights, a revulsion of the mind and an exhaustion of the spirit." How do Bill Mauldin's cartoons (and Ernie Pyle's dispatch) confirm or refute this statement?
3. To what extent does the sardonic humor of Bill Mauldin's cartoons reflect and report on the challenges and hardships of American soldiers during World War II?
4. To what extent do the metaphors of "men," "mud," and "monotony" reflect and highlight Bill Mauldin's portrayals of American soldiers in wartime?

(Attach additional pages if necessary.)

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 1



“Do retreatin’ blisters hurt as much as advancin’ blisters?”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), November 14, 1944 - 509. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944).
Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 2



“... them wuz his exact words— ‘I envy th’ way you dogfaces
git first pick o’ wimmin an’ likker in towns.’”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), November 26, 27 or 28, 1944 - 509. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944).

Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 3



“Why ya lookin’ so sad? I got outta it okay.”

Stars and Stripes (Mediterranean edition), November 25, 1944 - 517. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944).
Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 4



"Ya don't git combat pay 'cause ya don't fight."

*Stars and Stripes (Mediterranean edition), October 21, 1944. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944).
Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.*

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 5



"I'll be damned. Did ya know this can opener fits
on th' end of a rifle?"

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), January 8, 1945 - 545. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945).
Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 6



“That’s th’ trouble—mine’s fulla cigarettes, too . . .”

*Stars and Stripes (Mediterranean edition), February 9, 1945 - 559. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945).
Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.*

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 7



"By God, sir, I tried!"

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), February 22, 1945 - 566.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 8



“You Americans have everything.”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*) February 26, 1945 - 567.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 9



Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

Set 1: Men (Dogface)

Cartoon 10



Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 11



"It ain't the glammer I'm jealous of— it's just that they're within 15 minutes of a bath."

Daily Oklahoman, August 1, 1943 - 275.

Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 12



“What, no hot water?”

*Stars and Stripes (Mediterranean edition), December 1, 1943 - 315.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.*

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 13



“Expectin’ rain?”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), October 31, 1944 - 497.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 14



"Ya usin' two blankets or three?"

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), February 6, 1945 - 558.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 15



“...I'll never splash mud on a dogface again (999) ... I'll never splash mud on a dogface again (1,000) ... NOW will ya help us push?”

Stars and Stripes (Mediterranean edition), September 25, 1944 - 478.

Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 16



“Me future is settled, Willie. I’m gonna be a perffessor
on types o’ European soil.”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), October 25, 1944 - 494.

Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 17



“Remember that warm, soft mud last summer?”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), March 3, 1945 - 570. Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1945).
Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 18



“Footprints. God, wotta monster.”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), December 7, 1944.

Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 19



Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

Set 2: Mud

Cartoon 20



Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 21



"I just ain't worth a damn in the morning without a hot cup of coffee."

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), December 2, 1943 - 313.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1943). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 22



“...so Archibald kissed her agin’ an’ gently put her head on th’ pillow. She gazed at him wit’ half shut eyes—tremblin’ hard—continued next week.”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), April 7, 1944 - 379.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 23



“By th’ way, what wuz them changes you wuz gonna make when you took over last month, sir?”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), November 23, 1944 - 515.

Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 24



“Jeez, Gertie—th’ front! Wait’ll we tell th’ magazines what it’s like!”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), December 9, 1944 - 526.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 25



"I'm disgusted. I been in th' infantry two days an' I ain't heard a shot."

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), September 26, 1944 - 480.

Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 26



“Th’ socks ain’t dry yet, but we kin take in th’ cigarettes.”

Stars and Stripes (Mediterranean edition), December 14, 1944 - 529.

Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 27



“It’s plasma. We’re experimentin’ with a new type injection.”

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), December 13, 1944.
Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 28



"Them's my unmentionables."

Stars and Stripes (*Mediterranean edition*), January 26, 1945 - 553.

Copyright by Bill Mauldin (1944). Courtesy of Bill Mauldin Estate LLC. Image courtesy of the 45th Infantry Division Museum.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 29



"I GOT TIRED O' HEARIN' YOU MUGS KICK ABOUT CANNED CREAM IN THE COFFEE!"

Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.

Set 3: Monotony

Cartoon 30



Courtesy of Pritzker Military Museum & Library.