

Lösungsvorschlag “Is it sweet to die for one's country? War and *Gran Torino*”

I. Einstieg: Read the quote by the famous Roman poet Horace.

Mögliche Schülerantworten:

1. Describe in your own words what the poet probably intended to communicate.
 - there can be some value in dying
 - pride in one's country, patriotism
 - defence/ protection of your country
 - it is worth trying to defend your country even if the situation looks bad
 - we do not need to find deeper reasons for killing people
 - it is about the question of what is important in life: *patria* as home (country), people you love, a spiritual connection
 - advertisement/ recruiting soldiers for a country's cause
 - judgement: anyone who does not fight does not deserve any honour
2. Speculate on reasons why the poet might have thought about war as a positive concept.
 - motivation to fight, quote takes away the soldiers' fear of dying
 - to honour/ glorify the fallen, a dedication to victims
 - consolation for those who have lost a beloved person
 - justification of fighting: a person's death is worth something higher; the end justifies the means
 - the quote is not only about war, it is about a cultural attitude/ an ideology
 - depending on the context, a nation could bring freedom/ democracy/ civilisation to another nation

II. James Blunt's “No Bravery”

Mögliche Schülerantworten:

Listen to the song and describe its mood.

- emotional
- transports feelings of hopelessness, sadness, misery
- the powerful chords of the piano underline the negative feelings
- catching pictures emphasise the painful impressions

Worksheet

Task 1:

- > Listen to the song and fill in the missing lyrics.

There are **children** standing here.

Arms outstretched into the sky.

Tears drying on their **face**.

He has been here.

Brothers lie in shallow **graves**.

Fathers lost without a trace.

A nation **blind** to their disgrace

Since he's been here.

Chorus

And I see no bravery.

No bravery in your eyes anymore.

Only **sadness**.

And I see no bravery.

No bravery in your eyes anymore

Only **sadness**.

Only **sadness**.

There are **children** standing here.

Arms outstretched into the sky.

But no one asks the question **why**

He has been here.

Old men **kneel** to accept their fate.

Wives and daughters cut and raped.

A generation drenched in **hate**.

Yes, he has been here.

Houses **burnt** beyond repair.

The smell of **death** is in the air.

A woman weeping in despair says

He has been here.

Tracer lighting up the sky.

It's another families' turn to die.

A **child** afraid to even cry out says

He has been here.

Chorus



Task 2:

- > Describe the realities of war and their consequences according to the song. Fill in the table.

Realities of war	Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • weeping people • blindness towards others' feelings • sadness • despair • burnt houses, destruction • rape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • death • loss of brothers and fathers, family members • danger for everyone • disgrace, shame • loss of bravery • sadness; anxiety, fear • hate

Task 3 – Partner work:

- > Think of more realities and consequences of war not mentioned in the song and write a new stanza about them.

Realities of war	Consequence
<p>In the field and on the home front:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • combat • experiences of death • attacks with conventional and NBC¹ weapons • theft, looting • murder • spread of diseases • sleep deprivation • women: medical service • child soldiers • women working in men's jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helplessness • guilt • humiliation • physical pain, illness or harms • casualties, veterans • destruction of houses, homes • homelessness • hunger and thirst • broken economy • new political and economic priorities: investment in warfare technologies • emotional distress, psychological suffering, e.g. nightmares, sleeplessness, PTSD² • vicious circle of hate: private revenge; political retaliation • flight; refugees, asylum seekers • world-wide fear of a war

1 nuclear, biological and chemical weapons

2 post-traumatic stress disorder

Our new stanza:

There are people shattered everywhere.
 Their eyes not only covered in shame
 But who is really there to blame?
 After he had been here.

Only hunger, thirst and pain.
 We are all lost, nothing is to gain.
 Children and elderly in fear.
 Yet, he has been here.

Task 4:

- > Compare the ideas of the quote by Horace and James Blunt's "No Bravery" with the notion of war in Gran Torino.

Positive aspects	Negative aspects
<p>Walt Kowalski as a Korean War veteran:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pride, patriotism (see: flag, home and garden, behaviour) • possession of guns • knowledge of how to handle guns and when to use them • fearlessness • power to react in difficult situations • ability to make reasonable decisions • discipline, routine; control → feeling of safety • honoured citizen (see: medals; acceptance by barber and foreman) <p>The Hmong as former US allies during the Vietnam War:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong family bonds/ growing together of the ethnic group because of a common enemy (see: language, food, clothes) • keeping up traditions to remember and honour one's culture • new home in the USA • no official political or religious persecution 	<p>Walt Kowalski as a Korean War veteran:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a murderer → haunted • behaviour is shaped by experiences (see: incident with gang members trespassing on his grounds) • prejudices against other cultures • emotional isolation, unhappiness • criticism of religion/ existence of a higher moral authority/ seems to have lost his faith • high expectations of others (see: difficult relationship to his family) <p>The Hmong as former US allies during the Vietnam War:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in home countries: persecution, disrespect • betrayal by the US: no honour; no introduction to US society • an ethnic minority • exclusion from American society/ marginalisation; racism • cultural problems • economic despair
<p>⇒ war in Horace's quote and James Blunt's song as two sides of the same coin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> x geographically, emotionally and physically torn people x problem of coping x ambiguity of belonging: development of one's sense of belonging <p>⇒ belonging as a process</p>	