Chapter 1: The Look of Paris

• What language does Edith Wharton use to describe Paris on the eve of World War I? What is her perspective in this piece?

• How can she tell that war is imminent?

• How do the French react to the news?

• How do they prepare for war?
• How do tourists react to the French government’s command to mobilize?

• How does “martial law” change life in France?
Chapter 2: In Argonne

• What does Wharton mean when she says that war is a “paradox”?

• Who are the éclopés?

• Where does Wharton first see a battle between the French and the Germans?

• What are the “Seventy-fives”?

• How does the Red Cross handle the overflow of troops and wounded?
• How does Wharton’s visit to Verdun differ from her visit to Châlons?

• What does Wharton see between Bar-le-Duc and Vitry-le-François?

• What are some of the war-zone restrictions Wharton encounters? How do they impact her travel?
Edith Wharton: War Correspondent

Chapter 3: In Lorraine and the Vosges

- What are the “gnat, the cuckoo, and the cannon”?

- What does Wharton find in Gerbéviller?

- Where do people take refuge in Pont-à-Mousson?

- What happened at Ménil-sur-Belvitte?
• Give some examples of the simultaneous “beauty” and “ruin” Wharton describes as she travels.

• What do the “Ambulant Artisans” make?

• What does Wharton say about her first visit to the “bowel” of the front-line trenches?
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Chapter 4: In the North

- What is the “river of war”?

- What does Wharton see in the moonlight at Cassel?

- What is the relationship between officers and soldiers in the North?

- Wharton states that “Ypres is majestic in death, poor Nieuport gruesomely comic.” What does she mean?
• What does Wharton encounter in Dunkerque?

• How does “the unbreakable human spirit...reassert itself,” in Wharton’s view?

• Why does Wharton compare a Belgian villa to the Statue of Liberty?
Chapter 5: In Alsace

- What language does Wharton use to describe the Cathedral of Rheims?

- What do the residents of Thann do to entertain themselves during wartime?

- Who are the “Chasseurs Alpins”?

- How do soldiers spend their time in the “trappers’ huts”?

- What are the “four phases” of sound Wharton hears in the cannon fire?
• How have the citizens of Dannemarie adapted to war?

• What does Wharton see at each outpost in the trenches near Lorraine?
Chapter 6: The Tone of France

• What is the “tone of France” leading up to the war?

• How does this change as the war begins?

• What is the attitude of the French fourteen months into the war?

• What does Wharton say are the “proofs” of this national tone?
• What “gifts” help the French “be what they are”?

• Wharton says the French “hate militarism.” Why?

• Why do French women make good war nurses?

• What does Wharton say the French are really fighting for?