Start with a Chat:

a) I really like the story at this point. It seems to be less about the conflict of WWI and more of the main character's enlightenment to how evil war truely is. Now that he is off of leave, he seems to be more aware of his enemies' humanity, as well as how the war doesn't really benefit any of the people involved, but instead puts more money and power in the hands of those who already have money and power.

b) I love his discussions with his friends, and how they have shifted from being more about the death and struggle of war and have become more philosophic.

c) I'm not sure about Kantorek's transformation. At the beginning of the book, he was posed as one of the villains that got Paul and his friends involved in WWI. However, once Paul goes on break, he sees Kantorek being bossed about by one of his former students (one of Paul's friends). I feel like this massive fall from grace takes Kantorek out his role in the book. However, this might be used later to put him in a different role.`

Part of My Book I'd Like to Discuss with my Book Club:

We discussed how the book seems to swing even further between blunt and deep. The tone of the deep discussion has shifted more from the horrors of war to the causes of it and who benefits from it. We also mentioned how Paul changed throughout his leave and how he relates to the enemy more.

Future Planning:

a) I was correct in that more from the group would die. Haie has died from shrapnel to the chest.

b) My prediction that more would die was correct, but I guessed the wrong name. Kat is still alive, but Haie has died.

c) Right now, Paul is caught in no-mans land during an attack. He seems to have lost his way and is hidden in a shell hole. I predict that the Germans will overtake the attack and will save Paul. However, I think that there may be heavy losses during the counterattack.

You Can Quote Me on That:

1) “He does not speak of his mother or his brothers and sisters. He says nothing; all that lies behind him; he is entirely alone now with his little life of nineteen years, and cries because it leaves him. This is the most disturbing and hardest parting that I have seen, although it was pretty bad too with Tiedjen, who called for his mother – a big bear of a fellow who, with wild eyes full of terror, held off the doctor from his bed with a dagger until he collapsed.”

*I found this quote very important as it showed how a dying soldier viewed the war. This is also the first time that Paul becomes very reflective in the book.*

2) “the root of the matter lies somewhere. For instance, if you train a dog to eat potatoes and then afterwards put a piece of meat in front of him, he’ll snap at it, it’s his nature. And if you give a man a little bit of authority he behaves just the same way, he snaps at it too. The things are precisely the same. In himself man is essentially a best, only he butters it over like a slice of bread with a little decorum. The army is based on that; one man must always have power over the other. The mischief is merely that each one has much too much power. A non-com. Can torment a private, a lieutenant a non-com., A captain a lieutenant, until he goes mad… Let a man be whatever you like in peacetime, what occupation is there in which he can behave like that without getting a crack on the nose? He can only do that in the army. It goes to the heads of them all, you see. And the more insignificant a man has been in civil life the worse it takes him.”

*This quote from Kat was very powerful, as it shows how the temptation of power causes leaders in the army to be cruel to their “subjects”.*

3) “At the sound of the first droning of the shells we rush back, in one part of our being, a thousand years. By the animal instinct that is awakened us we are led and protected. It is not conscious; it is far quicker, much more sure, less fallible, than consciousness.”

*This quote shows how combatants change when put in an extremely stressful situation. Instead of reacting to the stress normally, they switch into an animalistic mode, where their only goal is to survive.*

4) “I lean against the wall and grip my helmet and rifle. I hold them as tight as I can, but I cannot take another step, the staircase fades before my eyes, I support myself with the butt of my rifle against my feet and clench my teeth fiercely, but I cannot speak a word, my sister’s call has made me powerless, I can do nothing, I struggle to make myself laugh, to speak, but no word comes, and so I stand on the steps, miserable, helpless, paralyzed, and against my will the tears run down my cheeks.”

*This shows Paul’s inability to function in normal society during his leave due to PTSD. Sadly, in WWI, it had not been considered a disease, and instead people suffering from it were labelled “Shell Shocked” and were expected to function.*

5) “Comrade, I did not want to kill you. If you jumped in here again, I would not do it, if you would be sensible too. But you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response. It was that abstraction I stabbed. But now, for the first time, I see you are a man like me.”

*This is very important as it displays Paul’s realization that his enemies are nearly the same as him.*