**Spartacus Educational Classroom Activity**

# Käthe Kollwitz: A German Artist and the First World War

# (Questions & Answers)

http://spartacus-educational.com/EXAManswerFWW4.htm

Question 1: Read source 1. Describe Käthe Kollwitz's attitude towards the war?

Answer 1: Käthe Kollwitz had great doubts about the wisdom of the war but understood that German propaganda had made it difficult for her two sons to resist the need to join the German Army.

Question 2: What does Käthe Kollwitz mean when she says in source 3 that "I intend to try to be faithful"?

Answer 2: Peter Kollwitz showed his love of his country by joining the German Army. His main objective was to defend Germany from Allied forces. Käthe Kollwitz, however, has now become a pacifist and intends to use her art against war. In her words to "look at the young people and be faithful to them." She explains to her dead son that she will "love my country in my own way as you loved it in your way".

Question 3: Study sources 2, 4 and 7. How do these works of art explain her feelings towards the war? You might find it helpful to read source 6.

Answer 3: Käthe Kollwitz attempts to show the misery that war brings to women. Source 2 is a drawing of a pregnant woman who has just discovered that her soldier husband has just been killed in the war. Source 4 is about the pain of being a widow or orphan as a result of the war. Source 7 shows the moment when a woman discovers that her husband has been "killed in action".

Question 4: Read source 5. Why does she disagree with Richard Dehmel view on how to "save Germany's honor"?

Answer 4: In October 1918 it was clear to most people that Germany was on the verge of defeat. Richard Dehmel had called for "all fit men to volunteer" to "save Germany's honor". Käthe Kollwitz points that "we have had four years of daily bloodletting" and that war should be brought to an end to avoid further deaths. In her "opinion such a loss would be worse and more irreplaceable for Germany than the loss of whole provinces".

Question 5: In 1926 Käthe Kollwitz visited the cemetery where her son Peter was buried. Why did she prefer the German cemeteries to the British and Belgian cemeteries?

Answer 5: Käthe Kollwitz claimed that the "British and Belgian cemeteries seem brighter, in a certain sense more cheerful and cosy, more familiar than the German cemeteries. I prefer the German ones. The war was not a pleasant affair; it isn't seemly to prettify with flowers the mass deaths of all these young men. A war cemetery ought to be somber." Kollwitz art attempted to tell the truth about war. She wanted the cemeteries to do the same.