**The Appearance of a Battlefield**

*James McConnell was an American pilot who had volunteered to fight in the First World War and was flying with the French Escadrille Lafayette. The following excerpt describes his view of the destroyed landscape below him as he flew over the 1916 battlefield of Verdun. McConnell was killed in March 1917 when he was shot down.*

 “Immediately east and north of Verdun there lies a broad, brown band ... Peaceful fields and farms and villages adorned that landscape a few months ago - when there was no Battle of Verdun. Now there is only that sinister brown belt, a strip of murdered Nature. it seems to belong to another world. Every sign of humanity has been swept away. The woods and roads have vanished like chalk wiped from a blackboard; of the villages nothing remains but gray smears where stone walls have tumbled together... On the brown band the indentations are so closely interlocked that they blend into a confused mass of troubled earth. Of the trenches only broken, half-obliterated links are visible.”

**The Poem „In Flanders Fields“**

*„In Flanders Fields“ was written by the Canadian army physician and poet John McCrae. He wrote it in early May 1915 in his medical aid station near Essex farm, 2 km to the north of the centre of Ypres. The poem was published on 8 December 1915. John McCrae died on 28 January 1918, while in charge of the Canadian General Hospital in Boulogne.*

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow

Between the crosses, row on row,

That mark our place; and in the sky

The larks, still bravely singing, fly

Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

Loved, and were loved, and now we lie

In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:

To you from failing hands we throw

The torch; be yours to hold it high.

If you break faith with us who die

We shall not sleep, though poppies grow

In Flanders Fields

 Source 1: Quoted from James McConnell, *Flying for France*, New York, 1916. http://www.greatwar.co.uk/article/remembrance-poppy.htm

Source 2: http://www.inflandersfields.be/en/the-in-flanders-fields-poem