Auteur: Robert Graves
Eerste uitgave: 1929
Vak: Engels

A General Information
1. Title: Goodbye to all that
   Author: Robert Graves
   Date of first publication: 1929
   No. of pages: 282
2. Author
   Robert Graves was born in 1895 at Wimbledon into a middle-class family. He was son of Alfred Perceval Graves, the Irish writer and Amalia von Ranke. Graves’s childhood was a happy one. He went from school to the First World War, where he became a captain in the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Robert Graves was a respected historian and classical scholar. He was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1961. He wrote mostly historical novels which include: I, Claudius; Claudius the God; Sergeant Lamb of the Ninth, Count Belisarius, Wife to Mr Milton; The Golden fleece,... He wrote his autobiography, Goodbye to All That in 1929. His most discussed books are The White Goddess, which presents a new view of the poetic impulse, and The Nazarene Gospel Restored, a re-examination of primitive Christianity. He has translated Apuleius, Lucan and Suetonius. He was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1961, and made an Honorary Fellow of St John’s College, Oxford, in 1971. He lived in Majorca from 1929 till he dies in December 1985.
3. Setting of the book
   The story takes place from the moment Robert is born, in 1895 till 1929, when he leaves England. The epilogue of the story, which Robert Graves wrote in 1957, consists the years 1929 till 1957.
   The story takes place in England (where Robert is born, where he spent his childhood, his leaves during the war and his life after the war till 1929), in Germany (where he went on vacation), in France (where he serves during the war) and in Egypt (where he lives a few years after the war)
4. Plot
   'Goodbye to all That' is Robert Graves's candid self-portrait of his childhood, his experiences as a young officer in the World War I and the few years after.
5. Characters
   Major character
Robert Graves: He is the major character in the story, the I-figure. He is born in Wimbledon, England and has a pretty educated youth. When the war begins, he decides to serve in the army in France. There he goes through a lot, which affects his character. He becomes very scared and standoffish. He becomes a very well-known poet.

Minor characters
Nancy Nicholson: First the girlfriend of Robert, later his wife. She’s a feminist and a painter, she decorates Robert’s poems. She marries with Robert on the age of 18. They have together 4 children. They divorce in 1929.

Siegfried Sassoon: A friend of Robert during the war. They both love poems. He becomes later a well-known poet, just like Robert. Siegfried had a strong protest against the war, which he showed publicly, but Robert saves him by saying he is suffering from shell-shock and has to go to a hospital.

Dick: A friend of Robert during his school-time at Charterhouse. It’s not only a friend, but Robert has a sort of homo-relationship with him, though it’s not that serious. Dick likes poems, just like Robert does and they have some more interests in common. In the war Dick goes mad and has to go to a hospital.

6. Theme / Themes
The major theme of this book is the First World War, the story takes place during this time, Robert serves in the war and everything turns around the war. But an other theme could be, like the title suggests, that it focuses on Robert’s realization that the English society was something he didn’t want to participate in. It’s a goodbye to illusion as well, the war came and left and nothing is the same again.

B Your personal opinion
1. Which character(s) in the book did you especially like? What qualities that these persons had appealed to you? Explain why! (quote from the book and give page number)
There aren’t really a lot of characters in the book I liked, almost everyone did something that isn’t correct. I remember one man called Baxter who was really brave, he rescued a wounded man at the risk of his life: ‘He jumped quickly over the parapet, then strolled across No Man’s Land, waving a handkerchief; the Germans fired to frighten him, but since he persisted they let him come up close. Baxter continued towards them and, when he got to the Middlesex man, stopped and pointed to show the Germans what he was at. Then he dressed the man’s wounds, gave him a drink of rum and some biscuit that he had with him, and promised to be back again at nightfall. He did come back, with a stretcher-party, and the man eventually recovered.’ Page numbers 137/138.

2. Which character(s) in the book did you especially dislike? What in their behaviour displeased you or angered you? Explain why. (quote from the book and give page numbers)
There are a lot of characters in the book I did really dislike. There are a lot of people who do horrifying things in this book, a lot of people who murder other people or just are very close to beasts. An example of someone I really disliked is a man called ‘The Actor’, who is an officer: ‘We came on The Boy lying on his stretcher, wounded in the lungs and stomach. Jamaica was standing over him in tears, blubbering: ‘Poor old Boy, poor old Boy, he’s going to die; I’m sure he is. He’s the only one who treated me decently.’ The Actor, finding that we could not get by, said to Jamaica: ‘Take that poor sod out of the way, will you? I’ve got to get my company up. Put him into a dug-out or somewhere.’ Jamaica made no answer; he seemed paralysed by the horror of the occasion and kept repeating: ‘Poor old Boy, poor old Boy!’ ‘Look here,’ said The Actor, ‘if you can’t shift him into a dug-out we’ll have to lift him on top of the trench.
He can’t live now, and we’re late getting up.”" Page number 132.

3. Did you find any humour in the book? Describe the part(s) that you made smile or laugh. Give a short example, if possible.

I didn’t find a lot humour in the book, but if there was any humour, it was a raw sort. For example a guy Robert meets in the war, ‘called ‘Dym Bacon’, which was Welsh for ‘there isn’t any bacon’. (He had won the nickname in his recruit days. The son of a Welsh farmer and accustomed to good food, he had complained about his first morning’s breakfast, shouting to the orderly sergeant: ‘Do you call this a bloody breakfast, man? Dym bacon, dym sausages, dym herrings, dym bloody anything! Nothing but bloody bread and jaaam!’)’ Page number 219.

4. What feelings did this book arouse in you? What part(s) made you feel worried, sad, frightened, angry, envious, excited, surprised etc. Copy a sentence or passage of the book that struck you in some way.

This book made me often horrified and sad, especially when the story takes place during the war. There are just so many deaths and it’s all so unnecessary! When you read this book you just can’t imagine how people can do this all to each other. An example is a story an Australian told Robert: ‘Well, the biggest lark I had was at Morlancourt, when we took it the first time. There were a lot of Jerries in a cellar, and I said to ‘em: "Come out, you Camarades!" So out they came, a dozen of ‘em, with their hands up. "Turn out your pockets," I told ‘em. They turned ‘em out. Watches and gold and stuff, all dinkum. Then I said: "Now back to your cellar, you sons of bitches!” For I couldn’t be bothered with ‘em. When they were all safely down I threw half a dozen Mills bombs in after ‘em. I’d got the stuff all right, and we weren't taking prisoners that day.’ Page number 154.

5. What was your favourite part of the book? Why did you especially like this part? Explain.

My favourite part of the book was the beginning of the book, because everything is just so peaceful and calm, the war hasn’t begun yet and there aren’t any death-cases.

6. Write down something you have learnt from the book, or something you have discovered from the book.

I learnt that the first World War was just horrible, of course I knew that already, but it’s even more confronting when you read a true story of someone who dealt with this all. I discovered that everyone can do horrible things, though they are in real very nice persons. When you’re confronting with war, there isn’t anything sure.

7. Choose a piece of music / a song that fits (a passage in) the book. Explain why they fit together.

Include the lyrics / the song.

The song I chose that fits the book is ‘In War’ by Rocksucker. I chose the song because the theme of this song is war, just as the theme of the book. It also consist the question “Why?”, just like in the book.

Rocksucker - In War

As we stand here, waiting for the enemy
We’re in war, ‘cause we want to be free
Trying to ignore, that we’re all gonna die
This useless killing, can someone tell me why?
We are in war
Thousands dead and there will be more
Killing, and getting killed
With dead body’s, the land is filled
The second attack, but we still stand tall
We’re driving them back, but maybe next time we’ll fall
A bloody battlefield, is all I can see
My sword and shield, are only important to me
Now I stand here, killing without thought
Everybody’s dead, with whom I’ve fought
Now blood and guts, lying all around me
The enemy lost, and we are finally free
We won the war
Our freedom, is what we did it for
Thousands have been killed
With dead enemies, the land is filled

C The Summary
The first part of the book is about the youth of Robert, especially about the schools he went to. First he went to several preparatory schools, but his father thought that he didn’t learn there a lot, so he changed schools pretty often. After all the preparatory schools he went to public school, to Charterhouse. Robert didn’t really liked it there, because he was bullied by some elder boys. But after a few years he liked it more, because he got some friends, like Dick, with whom he falls in love. He also joined a poet-society and he started to box, to do something against the bullying. When he’s finished with Charterhouse, he don’t want to go to university yet, so he decides to serve in the army, the First World War started meanwhile. The second part of the book is about the war. After a few weeks preparation on a depot in England, he wants to go to France. When he arrives there, he can very soon go into the trenches to fight. The first thing he sees there is that a man commits suicide, because he can’t handle it anymore. That’s of course not very encouraging. After some bombardments and heavy fighting, Robert goes to some other trenches and gets wounded there. He goes to England to recover and soon is in the war again. He meets Siegfried Sassoon, who becomes a very good friend of him, especially because he loves poetry as well. After a few months Robert gets wounded again, now more seriously. After some long recovering he finally can go back, but he soon gets wounded again, the last thing he sees in France is a man who commits suicide. The injury is that serious that he can’t go back to the war. He meets Nancy Nicholson, with who he marries. In 1918 the war is officially over.
The third part of the book is about Robert’s life after the war. He lives together with Nancy and they get 4 children. He decides to go to university where he graduates on English literature, especially poetry. Because Nancy is ill, it’s better for them to a country with a warmer climate, so when he can get a job on the university of Cairo, they decide to go to Egypt. After some years working there, they go back to England, but Nancy and Robert get so many argues that they decide to leave each other. Robert decides to leave England, because he can’t live there anymore, he goes to Majorca.

D The Review
A cool farewell to illusion
By the time Graves had written this book, he was 35 and was living with Laura Riding, his literary muse and lover. Yet he does not mention her in the book. Rather he concentrates on the disastrous British school system that he endured as a child and young man, his experiences in WWI, and ends with the downfall of his first marriage to Nancy Nicholson (the mother of his 4 children) and his teaching position in Egypt at the University of Cairo. Nancy was a socialist and feminist and eventually she drove Graves away. This is
so odd considering that Graves was totally sympathetic to matriarchal power structures and devoted much of his writing and poetry to the White Goddess. There is no White Goddess to be found in these pages however, which is so odd considering his fascination with this topic throughout his poetic and literary career. T.E. Lawrence was a friend of Graves and gave Graves the copy write to four chapters of Pillars of Wisdom for publication in the USA. This allowed Graves additional income to support his writing career as well as a large family.

The sections on WWI are the highlights of the book. Robert Graves enlisted at age 19 and became an officer due to his social class. He is seriously wounded and his family is told he is dead but he rises from this condition to regain his health. He meets the poet Siegfried Sassoon during this convalescence. He also meets Dr. WHR Rivers, the famous neurologist, psychologist, and anthropologist. Rivers introduces Graves to the concepts of the relationships between dreams, myths, poems, and creative imagination, an area of interest for Graves all his life. In the passages on WWI, Graves coolly relates a world wide nightmare and catastrophe. His cool wit and irony distance the reader somewhat from the horror and terror. He describes mutilated bodies with a dry factual style. This cool matter of fact chronological presentation is damning in the extreme of the European leadership that lead the world into this bloody stalemate.

For a hot blooded version of WWI I would recommend Dalton Trumbo's Johnny Got his Gun in addition to Grave's cool and analytical matter-of-fact tone. I would also recommend Tuchman's Guns of August for a chronological explanation of the war. I would also recommend Pat Barker's WWI trilogy: Resurrection, Eye in the Door, and The Ghost Road.

Grave's factual clear headed narrative reveals the illogical disaster of WWI that killed one in three of Grave's school mates. Graves relates how upper class officers brought servants to war yet as the war progresses a whole generation of males, both the working class and the aristocracy of England, are killed. WWI shattered the class system of the 18th century and cleared the ground for the modern era.

What is Graves saying "goodbye" to? He is saying goodbye to his youth, his first marriage to an early feminist, to old Europe and its rigid class structure, but most of all to illusion.

Review found on: