



by Ryan Smithson  
Adapted for the stage  
by William Massolia

Ryan Smithson was a typical 16-year-old high-school student until 9/11. "I'd thought about joining the military the moment I saw the towers fall," he writes in this profoundly moving memoir. Smithson enlisted in the Army Reserve the following year and, a year into the Iraq war, was deployed to an Army engineer unit as a heavy-equipment operator. His poignant, often harrowing account, especially vivid in sensory details, chronicles his experiences in basic training and in Iraq. "Only after we have been completely destroyed can we begin to find ourselves," Smithson writes of basic training, offering an unflinchingly honest portrait of the physical and psychological brutality of that experience. His account of his tour of duty in Iraq is no less compelling. He lucidly recounts the intensity of battle and the pain of losing comrades. For Smithson, the war is a source of personal enlightenment, and this memoir is a remarkable, deeply penetrating read that will compel teens to reflect on their own thoughts about duty, patriotism and sacrifice.

— *Kirkus Starred Review*

## Curriculum Connections

Creative Writing, World and American History, Current Events, Social Studies, Reading, Contemporary Literature and Biography

## Contact Information

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**TEACHERS:** GHOSTS OF WAR is a powerful memoir that will teach young people about the importance of volunteerism in their community and beyond. They will learn to not just think about the way they can change the world, or how they wish it could be, but to be a part of the change they wish to see in the world.

