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Sommario/riassunto	'I wouldn't have had one of you stay at home though I had a dozen sons. That is, if it is the noble war they all say it is. . . Surely they wouldn't deceive mothers.' -- J.M. Barrie In September 1914, twenty-five of Britain's most distinguished authors met under the chairmanship of C.F.G. Masterman, head of the war propaganda bureau, to discuss how they could assist the Allied effort. They included such prominent figures as H.G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, John Galsworthy, John Masefield,

John Buchan, Edith Wharton and Henry James. In *The Great War of Words* Peter Buitenhuis tells the hitherto unknown story of the secret collaboration between leading writers and the government. He examines the propaganda books and articles they wrote -- and also the work of those opposed to the war, such as G.B. Shaw and Bertrand Russell. The official line was the the 'urbane' French and the 'decent' British had to defend civilization against the savagery of the invading 'Huns'. However, after the war, many writers became deeply embittered about the Allied propaganda machine and their role in it. There was a growing conviction that too many lies had been told and that in propagating Allied myths, they had sacrificed the all-important detachment of the writer. Buitenhuis chronicles both the disillusionment of the former propagandists and the reaction against their elders by younger writers, many of whom had served in the trenches. The consequences for post-war literature were profound: the prestige and power of authorship dwindled significantly, while the old rhetoric based on a widely held consensus collapsed and was replaced by lean, ironic and often understated modes of writing.

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