This chapter focuses on three artists: C. R. W. Nevinson (1889–1946); Eric Henri Kennington (1888–1960) and Charles Sargeant Jagger (1885–1934). They were roughly the same age and came from a similar professional middle-class background: Nevinson’s father was the highly regarded journalist, war correspondent and essayist Henry W. Nevinson (1856–1941); Kennington’s father was the portraitist and vice president of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters, Thomas Benjamin Kennington (1856–1916); while Jagger’s father, Enoch (died 1909), was a well-qualified mining engineer who ran a colliery in South Yorkshire.

All three were to have searing experiences of the First World War: Nevinson as a non-combatant ambulance driver and medical orderly in France and Belgium between November 1914 and January 1915, then as a Royal Army Medical Corps private in a London military hospital from June 1915 to January 1916; Kennington as a private in the infantry in northeastern France from c. November 1914 to February 1915; and Jagger as an infantry officer with the Worcester Regiment on Gallipoli in November 1915 and in France from October 1917 to April 1918.

Two of the three became official war artists after illness or injury led to them being invalided out of the army on medical grounds: Nevinson became an official artist in May 1917, after having been discharged from the RAMC in January 1916 (on account of ‘rheumatic fever’ that had affected his heart), while Kennington agreed to work for the Department of Information as an artist in August 1917 after leaving the London Regiment in June 1915, having suffered a bullet wound to the left foot. For his part, Jagger only applied to become an official war artist in July 1918 when a medical board designated him as unfit for front-line combat.
These three artists offer some illuminating contrasts as well as similarities. Nevinson began the war as a Futurist and avowed avant-garde artist. His wartime experiences were partially responsible for his moving in a more stylistically conservative direction. In 1914, Kennington and Jagger were artistic traditionalists; the experience of the war and of being war artists led them to become more formally adventurous after hostilities had ended. All three were confirmed readers, sharing a love of the classics such as Shakespeare and the writing of more recent Russian authors such as Leo Tolstoy and Ivan Turgenev (all three greatly admired the latter’s *Sketches from A Hunter’s Album*). When it came to more recent literature, Nevinson’s tastes were somewhat more catholic, ranging from authors such as Arnold Bennett and Somerset Maugham, to whom he had been introduced by his father, to overtly stylistic Modernists such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot and Richard Aldington. Kennington’s and Jagger’s reading choices were typically the books many junior British officers took to read in the trenches of France and Flanders, by authors such as Jack London and Rudyard Kipling. In 1917, both took volumes by Kipling to France; the exact titles are unknown but it would appear Jagger took *Barrack Room Ballads* (1892 and 1896) while Kennington had the short story collection *Soldiers Three* (1899). In 1918 Kennington unsuccessfully suggested to the Ministry of Information that Kipling should be invited to open his exhibition of official war art, which opened at the Leicester Galleries, London, in June 1918. After Jagger’s untimely death, suffered as a consequence of the two gunshot wounds he had suffered in the war (November 1915 in the left shoulder and April 1918 in the right shoulder – on the latter occasion he had also been exposed to poison gas), his widow declared to a newspaper that her husband had frequently told her he could not have ‘stuck the war’ without the consolation of Kipling’s poetry.

Nevinson and Kennington befriended major writers during the conflict. Nevinson met Osbert Sitwell (1892–1969) in 1916 and the poet Robert Nichols (1893–1944) a year later. Kennington met Nichols in the autumn of 1917 and Robert Graves (1895–1985) in April/May 1918. Graves in turn introduced Kennington to the war poets Siegfried Sassoon and A. P. Herbert. The artist would remain a close friend of both until Kennington’s death in 1960; his friendship with Graves cooled somewhat by the late 1920s (Kennington’s wife, Celandine, could not stand Graves’s opinionated partner Laura Riding), though not before Graves introduced him in 1920 to T. E. Lawrence (1888–1935) and Frederic Manning (1882–1935), both of whom were destined to produce classics of Great War literature, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926) and *The Middle