



United States Marine Corps
Professional Reading Program

First to Fight Part V Discussion Guide

1. Identify the author's mission (task and purpose) in writing this section?

The author's purpose in *The Brothers* is to describe and explain the almost indescribable commitment and honor Marines possess for their fellow Marines, and ultimately the Marine Corps. Regardless of their civilian beginnings, all enlisted Marines have the common experience of recruit training. In the case of officers, the common experience is The Basic School. Lieutenant General (LtGen) Krulak writes of the uniqueness and elitism that result from such a shared experience, and how it is central to the Marine Corps. He quotes Commandant John A. Lejeune's "Relations between Officers and Enlisted Marines" and the heavy responsibility all leaders have to their Marines.

Throughout Part V, he touches on various positions of leadership, specifically those officer and enlisted leaders charged with the care, welfare, training, and discipline of Marines/recruits. While each position is extremely valuable, "...a *solid chain of command, with appropriate responsibility at every level, is essential.*" (p. 170)

LtGen Krulak notes the importance of this bond, or brotherhood, as it sets us (Marines) apart from any other service. As in previous chapters, the author inspires the reader to remember and preserve these elements that are central and unique to our Corps.

2. What part of the book was the most effective in accomplishing the author's mission? What part of the book was least effective?

LtGen Krulak illustrates his points with both positives and negatives from the anecdotal remembrances of influential drill instructors to the Ribbon Creek tragedy. The positive remembrances are effective. They should be. It is what one would expect from a book about the Marine Corps.

While the stories of brutality or flawed judgment are not necessarily stories that make one proud, they are even more effective. The point of the author noting such incidents is to remind us that we are all responsible for our Marine's welfare and training. Each unit's chain of command has many levels that must work together to accomplish its overall mission. Whether the mission is making civilians into Marines or accomplishing a combat mission. For example, in order to prevent another Ribbon Creek incident, it is necessary to learn what the command could have done to prevent it, rather than to simply place blame with one overzealous drill instructor.





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We may all possess, on some level, an elitist attitude that there is no service better, or unit more disciplined than our own. However, we cannot become unaware or disengaged from the reality of what our Marines and sailors are living. To do so would be a detriment to the unit and the Corps.

3. What does the author assume to be true in order to accomplish his mission? Does the author validate these assumptions in the book?

LtGen Krulak assumes that there is a special cohesiveness amongst Marines that is different from any other service. He describes an elite brotherhood that is the result of the Corps' smaller numbers and an unwritten belief that therefore it is more selective of its members. The author does validate these assumptions as existing in the hearts and minds of Marines. However, he challenges the reader to live up to such high ideals through performance. Specifically, he directs each of us to perform any and all tasks required of us as leaders of Marines and notes how our myriad responsibilities of teacher, father and mentor of Marines is what truly sets us apart from other services. Therefore, these roles must be preserved and nurtured now and in the future for the sake of the Marines and the Corps.

4. The part of the book that is most relevant to what I/we do is :)

LtGen Krulak writes about the responsibility of leadership at all levels. As Marine Corps officers, we all have a position to fill in the chain of command. We are all *"responsible for the physical, mental and moral welfare, as well as the discipline and military training of the young men [and women]...who are serving the nation in the Corps."* (p.157) The training and preparation of the whole Marine is necessary to ensure he or she will be ready to serve at any time and place. I have found myself performing all sorts of tasks, outside the required counseling, training and discipline of Marines ensuring they are prepared. These tasks at times seemed more like social work, financial planning, marital counseling, or conflict resolution. Each time, however, I found myself simply doing what was required in order to meet the responsibilities Gen Lejeune so eloquently quantified in the 1921 Marine Corps Manual.





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5. Identify the author's specific and implied conclusions.

The author simply states, "...that the Marine is the Corps and the Corps is the Marine." (p.174) No individual is more important than the unit, as the unit will not succeed without preserving the value of the individual Marines it is comprised of. The implication is that we must be vigilant. We must do our part as Marines to preserve the values so central and unique to our service. "This spirit is too fine a thing to be allowed to die. It must be fostered and kept alive and made the moving force in all Marine Corps organizations." (p. 157)

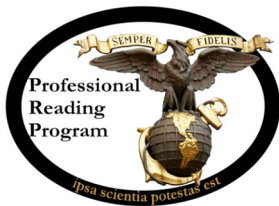
6.a. With respect to the author's conclusions (either specified or implied), I/we accept or agree with the following:

I agree with the author that the unique nature of the Marine Corps must be preserved through the continued fostering of paternal leadership as quantified by Gen Lejeune. The invaluable and unquestioned loyalty that exists among Marines does set us apart from other services and with good reason. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all of us to perform our duties and responsibilities as required, as officers, noncommissioned officers and individual Marines. The whole is only as strong as the sum of its parts. It is through performance of such responsibilities that we ensure the continued camaraderie and brotherhood that has existed in our Corps for much of its history.

6.b. With respect to the author's conclusions (either specified or implied), I/we do not agree with the following:

A potentially dangerous downside to such unquestioned loyalty that LtGen Krulak only briefly touches on is the possible abuses or crimes that may arise. He notes some Marines felt an obligation to defend or remain loyal to a drill instructor despite suffering brutality at their hands. Blind loyalty is not the desired end state of Marine recruit training. Perhaps the author could have spent a little more time on this point, as it is such an important thing to consider.





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In the most extreme scenario, a combat situation, such attitudes can prove disastrous. Currently, there appears to be a real challenge on the battlefield that tests our Marines' loyalty. Marines have said that they would rather be "judged by 12 than carried by 6." And, that they would have no problem torturing someone if it would help save the life of their fellow Marine. That is a dangerous attitude that can come about through an overabundance of loyalty and a real ethical dilemma for all involved. Such a detrimental side effect must be addressed more directly with Marines through their training and decision-making development.

Ethical decision-making cannot be an assumed by-product of recruit or officer training. The leaders who assume the role of teacher/father/mentor are also responsible to *"train and cultivate the bodies, the minds and the spirit of our men"* (p.157) Exhibiting and instilling a sense of right and wrong is an essential part of this process. We cannot allow loyalty to each other to override ethical or acceptable standards of behavior, nor can a commander allow a climate that fosters such thoughts amongst our Marines. Such attitudes risk irreparable damage to any given mission, our Corps, and our nation in the international and global environment.

7.a. This book made a favorable impression on me and it will change the way I approach:

Rather than changing how I approach my responsibilities, I think it reinforced my opinions. As a result, I will continue to approach my responsibilities as an officer of Marines with great care and discretion.

7.b. This book made an unfavorable impression on me for the following reasons:

N/A

Submitted by: A-M Theriot

