

# The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914-1940 (Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Modern Warfare)

Mona L. Siegel



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While French schoolteachers of the late nineteenth century have been widely celebrated for converting 'peasants into Frenchmen', their interwar counterparts have enjoyed little such acclaim. Both contemporary critics and subsequent scholars have condemned French pacifist schoolteachers of the interwar decades for cultivating antipatriotism and facilitating the defeat of 1940. In this 2004 book, Mona L. Siegel challenges such equations of teachers' pacifism with national betrayal. Drawn to pacifist ideals in the aftermath of World War I, schoolteachers sought to 'morally disarm' the nation by purging their classrooms of the militaristic images, symbols, narratives, and values that had led their generation to accept war without question in 1914. At the same time, however, their teaching remained rooted in longstanding patriotic and republican traditions. Siegel argues that interwar schoolteachers ultimately solidified French citizens' patriotic loyalties in an era when economic hardship and political extremism threatened to undermine those very ideals.

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