"A good old American gal"

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Rhetorical

The letter begins with Clarence asking how Evelyn is doing, recalling a time they spent together in Louisiana. He goes on to hint that he hasn't received much mail since being stationed in Ireland, and asks if Evelyn received his previous letter. This shows that Clarence cares for Evelyn, and enjoys communicating with her. He then recalls his experience in the local towns, describing nights as being so dark, that you can't tell who you're running into. This may be a technique employed by Clarence to make Evelyn worry, influencing her to write back to him.

Generally, Clarence tends to write in a cheerful mood. He says that most of the boys are happy thanks to there being plenty of cigarettes to go around. On the second page Clarence speaks of a radio that his peers bought. Unfortunately, the radio is 110 volts and the only accessible electricity is 220 volts. He mentions that "by doing some rewiring we got it to work and it sounds swell." This is effective in impressing Evelyn with his handyman skills. He then talks about the popular American music he is able to hear on the English stations, and describes some the foreign stations as sounding "like the devil." He also pokes fun at the how fast the Irish people seem to talk.

Clarence mentions that many of the other men find the Irish girls to be "the stuff," although he doesn't find them "even half way good looking." He would prefer a "good old American gal. Preferably brunette."

This is effective in flattering Evelyn, and suggest that their relationship is a romantic one. If Clarence were to go on about how
attractive he thought Irish women were, Evelyn may be insulted. Soldiers are likely to become lonely and wanting emotional contact with others. Letting her know that he is not becoming involved with any foreign woman is a way of boosting his honor within her eyes. Clarence describes the evenings as being quite nice, but suggests that it's unfortunate he doesn't have anyone to spend them. He also makes a point at explaining that although he didn't have any clothing coupons, he was able to secure some handkerchiefs as a result of his smooth talking. This is a self-testament to his rhetorical skills of persuasion. Rather than keep it for himself, he decides to send them to Evelyn as a souvenir. Quite suave.

Historical

On the first page of Clarence's letter, he mentions that there are plenty of cigarettes for everyone. During World War II, cigarette companies seized a potential business opportunity by providing millions of free cigarettes. These were included in the GI rations, making them commonplace. American soldiers enjoyed cigarettes. They were relaxing in moments before the return to battle. Health risks were not apparent as they are today and many soldiers figured they wouldn't be returning home. What was wrong with enjoying a smoke then?

On the home front, smoking levels rose as well. The war caused a lot of anxiety, which aided the tobacco sales. Cigarettes sometimes became so scarce that lines would form outside of stores that had them in
stock. Connoisseurs would pay excess amounts for the brands they preferred. Often the top brands were the most generous in supplying troops, leaving those at home with the off-brands. In 1942, the American Tobacco Company changed the Lucky Strike packed from green to white due to a dye shortage. With this change came the slogan, "Lucky Strike Green has gone to War." Coinciding with U.S. invasion of North Africa, Lucky Strike sales rose 38 percent. The change in color was also more popular with women. White tended to match their clothes better than green.

The influence of tobacco companies only continued to grow. Once France had been liberated, a series of camps were established, each with the name of a popular brand. These camps included, Lucky Strike, Old Gold, Philip Morris, Twenty Grand, and Chesterfield.

When the war ended and soldiers began to return home, many of those who chose to indulge in tobacco found themselves addicted and unable to kick the habit. The investments of the tobacco companies payed off. Between 1940 and 1945, cigarette smoking rose 75%. Average annual consumption rose as high as 3,500 cigarettes per person. The U.S. government began to be concerned with the increasing number of cigarette butts being thrown around, fearing fires. In August of 1944, Smokey the Bear was born. Initially saying, "Care will prevent 9 out of 10 forest fires," by the year's end the timeless line "Only you can prevent forest fires" had been created.

Clarence also mentions the inclusion of African Americans in the second page of the letter. The "negro" men that fought, did it with they hope that their service would help in ending the discrimination
that they faced. After all, they were fighting in the war for the "four freedoms" of speech, worship, want, and fear. Over 2.5 million African Americans registered for the draft, serving in every branch of the military. Back home, many African Americans did their part by working in war industries and performing other important services. Most continued to struggle with the difficulties of segregation, although some individuals that made valuable contributions to the war effort managed to earn praise for their struggles and sacrifices.

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Prezi

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