

Advanced Placement in  
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

**A Farewell to Arms**

by Ernest Hemingway

written by Frank Hering

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# A Farewell to Arms

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to

1. examine the function of a first-person-protagonist narrator.
2. explain the function of scenes that echo each other (“echo-scenes”).
3. analyze the use of foil characters.
4. discuss the novel in relation to historical and literary-historical contexts.
5. examine Hemingway’s view of war, including such issues as camaraderie, loyalty, medals, disillusionment, injury and death.
6. examine the issue of gender roles in the development of characters and their relationships.
7. identify, examine, and discuss the use of imagery and figurative language (simile, metaphor, and symbolism).
8. examine the author’s use of tone, diction, voice, and perspective in the narration and in the dialogue.
9. examine the use of Modernist and Imagist techniques in the text.
10. answer multiple-choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement Exam in English Literature and Composition exam.
11. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement Exam in English Literature and Composition exam.

## Introductory Lecture

### WORLD WAR I:

*A Farewell to Arms* is narrated by Frederic Henry, an American ambulance driver in the Italian army during World War I, what contemporaries called the “Great War.” Lasting from 1914 to 1918, this war was shockingly different from those that had come before it. Never before had so many countries taken up arms at the same time. Never before had the fighting been so gruesome. During these battles, the world saw the first use of chemical weapons, the first mass bombardment of civilians from the sky, and the twentieth century’s first genocide (the Turkish ethnic cleansing of over one million Armenians). The two sides pitted against each other were the Allies (mainly Russia, France, and Britain) and the Central Powers (chiefly Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey). Italy joined the Allies in 1915, and the U.S. joined by declaring war on Germany in 1917. Each side believed the war would be over in less than a year, but by Christmas of 1914, these countries had created something else that was new: a total war-producing stalemate. Trenches, filled with millions of soldiers, soon stretched along the War’s Western Front, which ran from the Swiss Alps to the English Channel. The War lasted for 1,500 days before an official Armistice was declared on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918. By then, eight to nine million people had died on the battlefield.

When Frederic first meets Catherine, in Chapter IV of the novel, she is carrying a rattan riding crop that had belonged to her fiancé, who died at the Battle of the Somme in 1916. Catherine reveals that his death and the manner in which he died shattered the optimistic expectations, Victorian morals, and rationalist thinking she was raised to believe in. Many soldiers went through a similar loss, and the year 1916 certainly gave them good reason to do so. In this year, some of the most appalling battles were fought. After nine months of fighting at the Battle of Verdun, 300,000 Germans and French had been killed and over 750,000 had been injured. At the Battle of the Somme, 20,000 were killed, and over 40,000 injured on the first day alone. By the end of this battle, British and French losses numbered nearly three-quarters of a million men. In neither the Battle of Verdun nor the Battle of the Somme had the original positions appreciably changed.

# A Farewell to Arms

## Chapter I

1. What effect does Hemingway achieve by opening his novel with such unclear references and pronoun use?

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2. Hemingway begins his novel *in medias res*, in the middle of things. Why is this a particularly modernist way of opening the book?

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3. How does the imagery change in the second half of the first paragraph? Why?

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**Chapter X**

1. Describe the relationship between Rinaldi and Frederic. How does their banter contribute to the characterization of each?

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**Chapter XX**

1. How does the characterization of Crowell Rodgers contribute to the overall meaning of the novel?

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**Chapter XXX**

1. What is Frederic’s attitude toward the war in this chapter? How does his attitude here help us to better understand the development of his character?

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2. How does the scene at the edge of the Tagliamento River conclude the development we’ve seen Frederic go through in the last few chapters?

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**Chapter XXXV**

1. How does the character of Count Greffi contribute to the importance of divertissement in the novel?

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2. Compare the success of Greffi's use of divertissements to the success of Frederic's use in this chapter.

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**Chapter XL**

1. What might the diction in the first paragraph foreshadow?

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2. How might the spilling of the whiskey contribute meaning to Frederic's feelings about this relationship?

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3. What might Frederic's comments about boxing suggest about his character and his feeling about the relationship with Catherine?

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