

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**A Farewell to Arms**

by Ernest Hemingway

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# A Farewell to Arms

## Notes

In 1954, Ernest Hemingway earned the Nobel Prize for literature, largely because of his unique writing style. To fully appreciate *A Farewell to Arms*, the student must learn to recognize Hemingway's extraordinary stylistic techniques, which include his simplistic writing style, the way he tends to report sensory details, his use of stream of consciousness, and his use of understatements.

Many of the protagonists in Hemingway's novels share similar traits. Critics refer to these characters as "typical Hemingway heroes." A discussion of these characteristics is helpful to the students before they read the novel so they can determine for themselves how well the protagonist in this story fits the profile of a Hemingway hero. Hemingway's heroes have many recognizable traits. These include:

- a general loss of faith in conventional morality; cut off from the traditional values of home and family.
- the ability and desire to do his job well.
- the belief that no matter how much trouble life gives a person, he must never let his suffering show, except for fears, which surface at night.
- a belief that the world is generally a cruel place.
- he demonstrates that men and women can find moments of meaning and happiness despite the cruelty of the world.

# A Farewell to Arms

## Objectives

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

1. discuss the author's writing style and point out examples of:
  - understatements.
  - simple sentences and vocabulary.
  - presentations of sensory details as facts, much like a newspaper reporter.
  - shifts from simple sentences to flowing stream of consciousness sentences, often including phrases with rhythm and repetition.
2. discuss the author's sometimes subtle use of foreshadowing.
3. write a character sketch of Catherine, which considers the question of whether she is a believable character.
4. identify the following minor characters from the story and comment on how the war has or has not corrupted their values:
  - Rinaldi
  - The Priest
  - Helen
  - Count Greffi
  - Simmons
  - The barman
5. point out examples of the author's use of sarcasm.
6. discuss the following traits often ascribed to a Hemingway hero and cite incidents from the story in which Frederic (or other characters) fits this definition. The Hemingway hero:
  - is cut off from the traditional values of home and family, because of a general loss of faith in conventional morality.
  - lacks the ability and desire to do his job well.
  - believes that no matter how much trouble life gives a person, he must never let suffering show, except for those fears which surface at night.
  - believes that the world is generally a cruel place.
  - believes that men and women can find moments of meaning and happiness, despite the cruelty of the world.

# A Farewell to Arms

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. What elements of Hemingway's unique writing style are present in the first paragraph of Chapter XVI?
2. The incident in the hospital with the barber who thinks Frederic is an Austrian is an example of comic relief. Why do you think Hemingway decides to include it at that precise point in the story? Find other examples of comic relief in this book.
3. Find a passage in this story where Hemingway is foreshadowing Catherine's death.
4. Some critics insist that Catherine is a stagnant or flat character, who does not change as the story progresses. State whether or not you agree with their assessment of her character. Cite incidents from the story to support your opinion.
5. Analyze the metaphor of the ants on the burning log found in Chapter XLI. What major theme of the novel does this metaphor help to illustrate?
6. Define a "loss of innocence" novel. In what ways does Frederic's attitude change toward the war help to qualify this story as a "loss of innocence" novel?
7. What nickname does Rinaldi use for Frederic? How does the war corrupt Rinaldi? At the end of the story, do you think Frederic is better off than Rinaldi; is Frederic's life any better? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.
8. If we assume the priest represents the moral teachings of organized religion, what conclusions can the reader make concerning Hemingway's opinions of the following:
  - organized religion's ability to help people maintain their morality in times of war
  - life after death
  - love
9. List the two points in the story where the character Helen appears. How does she feel about Frederic and Catherine?
10. What are Count Greffi's opinions of old age, the war, and religion?
11. In what ways do Simmons and the barman help Frederic escape from the Italian army? Why does Frederic cut the stars off his uniform?
12. Prove that the five books in the novel correspond to the five plot elements: Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action, and Resolution.

# A Farewell to Arms

## BOOK ONE

### Chapter I

#### Vocabulary

**camions** – trucks  
**cholera** – a disease resulting in severe dehydration or even death  
**vineyards** – areas with cultivated grapevines

#### Instructions for Questions 1 – 4:

Each of the following passages from the first chapter illustrates a different element of Hemingway's writing style (simplicity, reporting, stream of consciousness, and understating). Decide which element or elements of style are present in the passage and briefly defend your choice.

Hemingway's style consists of:

**Simplicity** – Sentences and vocabulary that are short and sparse, but deal with important issues.

**Reporting** – Sensory details are presented to the reader as facts, just as a newspaper presents the facts in a story.

**Stream of Consciousness** – changes in style that reflect the changing states of mind of the characters; breaking away from his normal simple sentence structure to include sentences that have both rhythm and repetition to help the reader experience the feelings of the character.

**Understating** – understatements that help the reader understand the atmosphere of war and the feelings of Hemingway's characters.

## Chapter II

### Vocabulary

**atheist** – those who believe in no God  
**baited** – tormented; provoked; teased  
**bawdy houses** – whore houses  
**flask** – a small container used for holding liquor  
**Free Masons** – a charitable and international organization  
**latrines** – community restrooms  
**mess** – a group of soldiers who habitually dine together  
**pidgin** – a mix of two languages that can be used when communicating with non-native and native speakers  
**plateau** – an elevated, level piece of land  
**shelling** – bombarding; firing  
**tannic** – a compound found in wines; Tannic Acid  
**tunic** – a long, plain jacket with a stiff collar  
**vile** – revolting; repulsive

1. Which style of writing does Hemingway use in Chapter 2? How do you know?  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In the beginning of the chapter it is unclear who the speaker is, at what point does it become clear?  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Briefly describe the relationship between the priest and the officers in the bawdy house. What does this relationship suggest to the reader about the impact of the war on human values?  
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5. Lt. Henry invites Rinaldi to join him at the British villa. When Rinaldi declines, why does he say, "I like simpler pleasures"?

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6. At the end of the chapter, Lt. Henry goes to visit Catherine, but she is unavailable. How does he feel about Catherine at this point in the story?

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**Chapter XX**

1. What purpose does the racetrack serve for Catherine and Frederic?

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2. Aside from the crooked betting, what does Catherine dislike about the track?

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3. One of the major themes in this book is the impact the war has on the values of the characters. What does the incident where Catherine and Frederic bet on Light for Me reveal about their values?

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