

A Farewell to Arms: Structure, Characters, And Significance

Ernest Miller Hemingway, who was born on July 21, 1899, and passed away on July 2, 1961, was regarded as one of the greatest novelists of all time. Hemingway drew inspiration for his book *A Farewell to Arms* from real-life events he encountered while serving in World War I. Being the son of a physician named Clarence Edmond Hemingway and a gifted but unsuccessful vocalist named Grace Hall Hemingway (Young), Hemingway hailed from a very accomplished family.

Hemingway had a variety of interests as a youth, including playing musical instruments, hunting, fishing, and participating in high school sports, but he eventually came across literature and fell in love with it (McGovern). He excelled in writing because it was his strongest subject in school. This is one of the things that Hemingway took into consideration before choosing to work for *The Star*, a newspaper in Kansas City, Missouri, after graduating from high school. There, Hemingway honed his writing technique. Hemingway attempted to enlist in the military after quickly recognizing that all the other eligible males in his neighborhood were departing for the ongoing war in Europe. Unfortunately, a vision problem prevented him from being accepted into the battle. Hemingway continued his military career as an ambulance driver for the American Field Service instead, following Theodore Brumback's counsel, a fellow newspaper reporter. In "*Hemingway's Short Stories*," Ernest Hemingway details his experiences throughout the war, including becoming hurt at the Austro-Italian front and falling in love with the nurse who was tending to him. In order to write *A Farewell to Arms*, one of Hemingway's most well-known books, these wartime experiences were modified and merged. For his captivating writing styles and captivating subject matter, Ernest Hemingway would go on to receive numerous honors, including the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954 and the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for fiction (Young). Throughout his life, Hemingway demonstrated that he was extremely accomplished and well-rounded. He had a profound effect on both readers and authors, and even after his passing, he continued to inspire people through books.

Form, Structure, and Plot

There are a total of forty-one chapters in the five books that make up the text. Three hundred thirty-two pages make up the book. By utilizing a variety of strategies, Ernest Hemingway imitates a particular writing style. The actual plot is understandable and quite straightforward. *A Farewell to Arms* mostly chronicles the story of a volunteer ambulance driver who falls in love with a war nurse while the war is still going on, with a few minor detours into side ideas or feelings. Tragically, the relationship came to an end when Catherine died from problems during delivery, leaving the main character, Frederic Henry, feeling alone in the world. The overall timeframe for the text is between 1914 and 1918, which means that at least four years passed during the course of the novel (Bracken). The narrative is presented in the past tense and narrates Lieutenant Frederic Henry's flashbacks from his time serving as an ambulance driver for the Italian army in World War I. The first paragraph of the book makes it clear that the events are already past; Henry is only recounting them in order of when they happened. We occupied a home in a community with a view of the mountains over a river and a plain in the late summer of that year, according to Hemingway (Hemingway 3). As one reads the book in depth, the plot develops. Hemingway is also recognized for incorporating the idea of a stream of consciousness—where a person's inner thoughts are always flowing—into his or her writings. "-Then there was a boom that started out white and then red and continued on and on in a rushing wind, followed by a flash as when a blast furnace door is swung open. I tried to breathe, but it was impossible for me to do so. Instead, I felt my body rushing out into the wind as I tried to exhale. I quickly exited, all of myself, and I realized that I had been mistaken in thinking that I had just passed away and that I was dead. I floated after that, but instead of continuing, I felt myself slip back. I took a breath, and then I was back. I attempted to move, but I was unable to (Hemingway 54). Given that neither Henry nor the readers are fully aware of what is happening at the time of the incident, this quote illustrates Henry's current thinking and frenzied mental state. Hemingway's book is strengthened by this element since it gives the characters' feelings and thoughts more depth. Also, well renowned foreshadowing in his books is Ernest Hemingway. Henry was asking for Catherine's safety as she lay dying after giving birth. "Keep her from dying. Oh, God, don't let her perish. If you won't let her pass away, I'll do anything for you. Dear God, please, please, please don't let her pass away. You abducted the child, but you shouldn't let her perish. You're going to be okay, Cat. You're OK"

(Hemingway 330). Henry's fervent prayers to keep Catherine alive portend a sad outcome rather than the happy conclusion he hopes will come from the complications. This is just another aspect of Hemingway's writing that makes it stronger. Frederic Henry is eager to participate in the action whenever he can at the beginning of the book. Henry discusses how slowly the war was moving along while also mentioning some of the locations he saw while on leave when the fighting was over. It is evident at the outset of the text that Henry is unfamiliar with many of the events taking place. He goes a little too close to the action and suffers serious injuries as a result. In the course of the war, Henry meets and falls in love with Catherine Barkley, a war nurse, and the two continue to keep in touch. The narrative starts off sounding like a typical romantic comedy, and the meetings are very predictable. The narrative starts to get a little less predictable toward the finish. Henry learns to accept war's inevitable casualties and grows significantly as a result of his experiences. He and Catherine are expecting a child, but pregnancy difficulties cause them to lose both the baby and Catherine. Henry loses his feeling of responsibility in addition to a number of other things. He decides to leave the Italian army, demonstrating the profound impact real love has on a person. The reader would never have guessed at the outset that such a zealous lad, ready to take on the world, would decide to forego something as significant as his responsibility (Bracken). He loses a lot of his patriotism after such a heartbreaking defeat. The book ends with a straightforward, honest look at life, leaving the reader with the impression that, if true love can change someone's perspective on duty, it can move mountains. Hemingway deliberately does this to support his subject of love and conflict.

Point of View

The transition from first to second person narration throughout Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* is one of the book's standout aspects. In a significant portion of the book, Hemingway writes in the first person point of view as Lieutenant Frederic Henry, the protagonist and narrator, remembers his time as an American ambulance driver serving in the Italian army during World War I. Because Lieutenant Henry narrates past events, this book is regarded as being written in the past tense. This viewpoint gradually becomes familiar to readers before changing about halfway through the novel. Chapter 32 of book three

introduces the second person perspective. Hemingway uses the pronoun "you" in place of the pronoun "I". "You were no longer in it. You were no longer required to do anything (Hemingway 232). The use of different pronouns makes it apparent that the point of view has changed and that the narrator is now thinking aloud. Changes in narration or points of view are crucial since they can completely change the reading experience for a reader. Because Ernest Hemingway can switch between points of view with ease, his writing is always precise and succinct.

Character

Throughout the course of the novel, *A Farewell to Arms* introduces a wide range of unique personalities. It is made up of a wide range of characteristics that are complicated, dynamic, static, flat, or spherical. Without including Catherine and Henry, there are about thirty minor characters in the book, and the most of them can be characterized as flat or static because they do not alter much. Due to their contributions of counsel and caution to the main characters, the minor characters are nevertheless crucial to their character development. Some of the supporting characters, like the priest, came off as flat because of how kind he was to Henry and how patient he was throughout the book. The priest always seemed trustworthy and sincere to Henry, therefore he felt that he could be trusted. Due to her static nature, Catherine Barkley was a static figure in the book due to her excessive caution and anxiety. She was naturally always worried, so she had to keep hearing that he loved her. Helen Ferguson, Catherine's acquaintance, was one of the novel's more nuanced characters. Ferguson showed Catherine a lot of kindness and concern. Ferguson, on the other hand, was harder and lacked compassion with Henry because she was concerned that he would hurt her friend. Helen Ferguson exhibited a wide range of characteristics. Lieutenant Frederic Henry, Hemingway's protagonist, underwent significant character development. Because of how frequently his personality changes, Henry might be considered a dynamic character. Henry's age isn't stated, but it can be assumed that he is in his twenties because he qualifies to join the military and recovers quickly from injuries, all of which suggest that he is a young man. Hemingway did not provide a detailed description of Henry's appearance, so the readers must make their own assumptions about it. Henry's

qualities can be summed up as bravery, selflessness, and love. Henry's demeanor has changed, and now he is more sentimental and emotional as opposed to drinking. He never lost his modesty.

Diction

Henry's outlook on life changed when he made the decision to spend more time with Catherine rather than continuing to enjoy the action and independence that the war brought. After meeting Catherine, Henry experiences a lot of ups and downs during the course of the book since she piques his emotional side. Henry reminds the readers that it's not always a decision to be alone. When Henry finally met Catherine, he understood all the wonderful emotions he had been deprived of, such as love, stability, and warmth. We were aware that the baby was getting close and called (311)

With the words he uses, Ernest Hemingway is able to bring his writing to life. His latest book is highly unique because it combines several different dictions. Depending on who is speaking, it may sound formal one minute and informal the next. For instance, Henry's teammate driver Passini is hurt in the middle of the action and he begins yelling ferociously. Mama Mia, Mama Mia! "Dio te salve, Maria!" Hemingway 55. Because it is local and casual, this speech is regarded as colloquial. As soon as one begins reading the next paragraph, in which Frederic tries to save his friend but realizes it is futile, it is evident that the diction has changed. He was already dead, so there was no need to try to construct a tourniquet, I realized as I unwound the puttee (Hemingway 55). This remark differs from the preceding one in that it lacks colloquialism and makes use of a larger vocabulary, indicating a more official diction. The way Henry speaks when discussing the army vs when he is alone with Catherine is another significant difference in diction. Henry employs incredibly precise and descriptive words when explaining things that have to do with the army. Hemingway writes, "Over the two beds hung my Austrian sniper's rifle, with its blued octagon barrel and the lovely dark walnut, cheek fitted schuetzen stock" (11). There is a noticeable difference between this speech and the one where he is speaking to Catherine. Go to sleep, sweetheart, and I'll love you no matter what (Hemingway 126). I'll love you in the rain, in the snow, in the hail, and- what else is there? In this context, the language is significantly more intimate and sentimental overall. To

assist readers, visualize the action-packed passages they are reading, the author frequently draws on imagery. Then there was a flash, similar to when a blast furnace door is opened, and a roar that started out white and then red before continuing on and on in a rushing wind (Hemingway 54). The reader gets the impression that the action is happening right in front of their eyes thanks to the images. This book's language reveals both social position and geographic location. Regional diction is clear in a conversation among numerous men who can sing. One of the men remarks, "You're just a wop from Frisco" (Hemingway 120). According to Merriam-Webster, the term "wop" is "used as an insulting and contemptuous term for a person of Italian birth or descent." The diction indicates that the talk is taking place among Italians or perhaps even in Italy. The phrase being used to denigrate one of the vocalists while highlighting his decency also alludes to socioeconomic standing. Hemingway's writing is anything but simple. His usage of the metaphor's "rain" (126) and "dialogue" (48)

Characters' dialogues make up a large portion of the narrative. Hemingway uses a fairly succinct structure for his dialogue. The dialogue ranges in length from a half page to a full page and is made up of numerous brief lines. Frederic Henry frequently narrates for extended stretches, which causes his narrative dialogue to drudge on. This is very different from character to character dialogue, which often consists of brief, information-packed lines. The tension between the characters is occasionally visible through the use of exclamation and repetition. Since the narrator has no one to quarrel with, the dialogue in the narrative voice is calmer. Catherine and Henry have a conversation that may be found in book five, chapter 41, while Catherine is drawing her last breaths:

"You're all right, Cat [...] You're going to be all right."

"'I'm going to die [...] I hate it.' I took her hand"

"Do you want me to get a priest or anyone to come and see you?"

"'Just you,' she said [...] 'I'm not afraid. I just hate it.' [...] 'You won't do our things with another girl, or say the same things, will you?'"

"Never"

"I want you to have girls though."

"I don't want them"

"['...'] Don't worry, darling,' Catherine said. 'I'm not a bit afraid. It's just a dirty trick."

"You dear, brave sweet." (Hemingway 330-331)

The reader can analyze some of the characters, tone, and a portion of the story's theme using this paragraph. In this paragraph, the idea of love requiring bravery is quite clear because both Henry and Catherine had to show courage for one another. Both Catherine and Henry had to part ways. This gives the material as a whole a very gloomy and sorrowful tone. In the face of difficulty, both characters display bravery. The following line is from Book One, Chapter 9, and it describes how Frederic Henry is being treated after suffering serious injuries:

"Are you hit badly?"

"In the legs."

"It's not serious, I hope. Will you have a cigarette? [...] They tell me you've lost two drivers."

"Yes. One killed and the fellow that brought you."

"What rotten luck. Would you like us to take the cars?"

"That's what I wanted to ask you."

"We'd [...] return them to the villa. 206, aren't you?"

"Yes."

“It’s a charming place. I’ve seen you about. They tell me you’re American.”
(Hemingway 57)

The formality of the phrase used in this passage suggests that Henry is conversing with an Englishman. The doctor may be from England based on his use of words like "rotten" and the formatting of his queries. Based on the way this English doctor is speaking to Henry, it appears like he is quite courteous. Because of how patient he is demonstrated in this section, Henry's character is also made clear. Henry is still quietly responding to the doctor's inquiries despite the fact that his leg was just blasted off, not making a big deal out of it. Patience is just one of many admirable qualities about Frederic Henry's character, as readers will discover later. The concept and tone are also influenced by this paragraph. Henry's bravery and selflessness are demonstrated in this exchange since he took sure to check on his other drivers before getting help. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to respond to the doctor's inquiry regarding the condition of Henry's drivers. This line establishes a mood of sadness and tragedy not only because Henry has recently lost two of his drivers but also because the state of his own wounds is worrying. Tone and theme indication have gotten considerably easier with the aid of diction.

Significance of Title

How readers interpret a piece of literature can be greatly influenced by a book's title. *A Farewell to Arms* has been read in many different ways by readers. First of all, the term "arms" has numerous meanings because it is a homonym. The word "arms" can refer to either firearms or the upper limbs of a person. This allows for a wide range of possible title interpretations. For instance, some claim that Hemingway adapted the title from George Peele's poem "A Farewell to Arms" from the sixteenth century, in which a knight informs Queen Elizabeth I that his advanced age disqualifies him from bearing arms for her—or, to put it another way—from engaging in combat on her behalf (Bracken). Others claim that Henry's departure from the Italian army is what the title alludes to. The title conveys Henry saying farewell to the fight and the guns in the sense that "arms" refers to armament. Last but not least, some readers interpret the title to signify that

Henry is only saying farewell to Catherine as she leaves the present world and enters the next (Bracken).