

A Farewell to Arms Study Guide

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway

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Plot Summary

A Farewell To Arms was first published in 1929 and is widely considered to be one of the most realistic novels dealing with World War I. Ernest Hemingway wrote the novel as a semi-autobiographical response to his own experiences working as a volunteer ambulance driver for the Italian Army. Hemingway's reputation for being a straightforward, non-flowery writer of contemporary literature was secured with the publication of *A Farewell To Arms*, and it is regarded as a classic in 20th century American Literature. Parts of the novel were censored as indecent and although the language is not considered nearly as offensive in modern terms, the censored words are still absent from the most recent editions of the book.

The book follows the journeys of Frederic Henry, beginning in the summer of 1916 near the front of the Italian resistance in World War I. Henry is a volunteer ambulance driver and also an American, a fact that gets him into trouble throughout the novel. From the outset, readers are aware that Henry is well-liked among his peers and has high personal standards when it comes to working hard and protecting the other men in his outfit. He is injured at the battlefield shortly after seeking out food for his colleagues, and though others try to praise him for his bravery, Henry downplays his courage by remarking that he was injured while "eating cheese." Henry does not boast or use his position as a lieutenant to seek out favors or advance his own agenda.

Henry meets Catherine Barkley, a British nurse, while stationed in an Italian village called Gorzia. The two immediately fall for each other and their relationship deepens when Henry is injured and transferred to an American hospital in Milan. Catherine requests a transfer there and nurses him back to health. The two keep their relationship a secret so that Catherine can work the night shift and spend the nights with Henry. They discuss marriage, but Catherine insists that she would rather wait rather than risk being separated from Henry. As Henry begins to recover, Catherine discovers that she is pregnant. Henry must return to duty and the two determine that they will be back together again soon.

After a few days back at the front, Henry joins the rest of the military units in a retreat back from the front. The slow, tedious journey proves dangerous for Henry, who must plunge into a rushing river to escape being shot by the Italian army who are suspicious of his American ties. He finds his way back to Milan in secret, and then onto Stresa to track down Catherine. They reunite and must flee to avoid Henry's arrest by Italian authorities. They travel by rowboat to Switzerland where they spend the winter in safety as Catherine gets closer to having the baby. As Catherine goes into labor it is clear that she is having trouble. She can tell that she is in danger and tells Henry that she meant to write him a letter in case anything bad should happen during the delivery but never got around to writing it. The doctor tells Henry that a Caesarean operation will be necessary to get the baby out and protect Catherine. The baby is still-born and Catherine dies hours later after hemorrhaging several times. Henry walks back to the hotel alone in the rain.



Chapter 1 - 4

Summary

Chapter 1: The book opens in late summer, 1916. An unnamed narrator, who readers later learn is Frederic Henry, begins to speak in the past tense about his experiences working as a medic in World War I. He begins to describe the scenery of Italy, where he lives and works as an ambulance driver. He can see signs of the fighting in the mountains nearby. Troops pass through the area, and the narrator describes what the marching looks like through different seasons. The winter is especially rainy and there is a deadly outbreak of cholera. The narrator points out that 7,000 men in the Italian Army will die from cholera before the end of World War I.

Chapter 2: The narrator and some others move across the river to a different town called Gorizia. There are signs of war in the town and a nearby forest has been annihilated by the fighting. The narrator and his friend are drinking in one of the two houses of prostitution in the town : one for soldiers and the other for officers. They see the unit's priest walk by and the narrator's friend knocks on the window and jokingly invites the priest to join them. Back at the base, the captain gives the priest a hard time and makes several inappropriate jokes about the priest's sexual habits, including masturbation. The narrator decides to take leave of duty since the weather will make it difficult for the army to plan anymore offensive attacks. The priest insists that the narrator visit an area called Abruzzi which is where his family is from. The captain heads to the house of prostitution and the narrator and priest part ways for the night.

Chapter 3: The book moves ahead to the spring, when the narrator returns from his leave of absence. Readers are introduced to his roommate Lieutenant Rinaldi who is a surgeon. Rinaldi is a jovial guy who asks the narrator about his travels abroad. He tells the narrator that he already has his sights set on one of the new women in the village. At the mess hall later, the priest is upset that the narrator did not go visit his family in Abruzzi. The narrator says that he intended to but got busy with other distractions; This explanation seems to satisfy the priest. The captain starts razzing the priest again about women, and accuses him of pacifism in regards to the war. The major tells the captain to stop teasing the priest.

Chapter 4: The next day, the narrator heads over to the medical facilities where he inspects the ambulances. He travels to some of the military posts in the mountains to check on the state of the soldiers. Rinaldi invites the narrator to go with him over to the British hospital and meet the nurse that he likes. When they get to the hospital, the nurse that Rinaldi is attracted to strikes up a conversation with the narrator instead. She wants to know why he works for the Italians if he is American. His only response is that not everything in life has an explanation. Her name is Catherine Barkley and she tells the narrator about her eight-year engagement to a man who was killed at the Battle of Somme the year before. The two join Rinaldi, who is chatting with a Scottish nurse named Helen Ferguson. Rinaldi and Helen are having trouble communicating due to her

thick accent, and the narrator translates the conversation, taking liberties with what is actually being said. When they leave the nurses, Rinaldi admits that Catherine seems to like the narrator more.

Analysis

Ernest Hemingway's unique writing style is established in the first few chapters of the book. The reader is able to spend time getting to know the narrator before the rest of the action in the book begins. Without even a name, the reader can connect to the thoughts and feelings of the narrator in regards to the world around him. Though Hemingway's straightforward style may not seem out of the ordinary to contemporary readers, his stripped down, conversational writing style was unique in 1920s fiction. Avoiding overused and overly descriptive phrases, Hemingway chooses to let the reader paint their own mental picture. Being allowed to meet the narrator and understand his circumstances before an influx of other characters or actions establishes a relationship between the narrator, who is also the protagonist, and the reader. This form of bonding guides the way the novel is read and how the events impact the person reading.

It becomes clear that Catherine Barkley will be integral to the story after Henry takes such an interest in her so quickly. While many of the soldiers try to disguise their fear of the war by drinking and chasing women, Catherine is more transparent. She has already lost someone to the war and is guarded as a result. She does not trust Henry on the grounds that he is an American working for the Italian army, yet she is still intrigued by him.

Vocabulary

cholera, wisteria, tannic, pidgin, tenente, Free Masons, chilblains, gorge, ghastly, rattan, sabre



Chapter 5 - 8

Summary

Chapter 5: The narrator goes to visit Catherine again the next afternoon, but is stopped by the head nurse. She reminds him that Catherine is working, as there is a war going on. The head nurse is suspicious of the narrator because he is American, yet working for the Italian Army. The narrator reflects on the spot where the next offensive battle is planned. There is only one way out, near a bridgehead, but he is hopeful that a road under construction will help the soldiers stay safe. Readers hear the narrator's name, Henry, for the first time when he goes to visit Catherine. Helen is with Catherine when he arrives, and she excuses herself to go write a letter, addressing him as "Mr. Henry." As Catherine and Henry discuss the war, she explains that the nurses have to stay out of sight because the Italians do not like them to be on the front lines. She allows Henry to hold her hand but when he tries to kiss her, she smacks him. She apologizes and then allows Henry to kiss her, although it makes her start to cry. Catherine asks him twice if he is going to be good to her and he shallowly agrees. Henry walks her home and then returns to his room where Rinaldi teases him about being horny.

Chapter 6: Henry returns to the camp after two days of visiting other military posts and goes to visit Catherine. She is upset with him that he did not leave a note saying that he was leaving. They go to the garden to talk and Catherine expresses her fears that Henry does not love her. He repeatedly reassures her that he does love her, though in his mind he knows that he does not. Catherine is still very mistrusting. They kiss good night and Henry heads back to the barracks.

Chapter 7: As Henry drives back from a military post the next day, he spots a soldier who is limping. He speaks to the soldier and learns that he suffered a hernia, but has thrown away his support brace because he does not want to go back to the fighting. The soldier is American and worried that his commanding officers will discover what he's done and make him fight anyway. Henry is sympathetic and advises the soldier to get a minor bump on the head so that he can be admitted to the hospital. The soldier, however, is picked up by the American soldiers. Henry starts to ponder the upcoming offensive tactic, which is scheduled to start in two days. At dinner, Henry gets drunk with his comrades. Rinaldi tries to help Henry sober up with coffee beans before he goes to visit Catherine. When he arrives, it is already very late. Helen tells him that Catherine is not well and that Henry cannot see her. The news makes Henry feel depressed and lonely, a fact that surprises him.

Chapter 8: The next morning, Henry learns of a battle that is supposed to take place that night. Along with three other ambulances, Henry is sent to the front. He stops to see Catherine before heading to the battlefield and tries to assure her that he will not be in any danger. She gives him a St. Anthony medal to help protect him, telling him that she is not Catholic but still thinks the medal could help. The driver of the ambulance shows



Henry that he also wears a Saint Anthony medal and encourages Henry to wear his around his neck.

Analysis

The budding relationship between Catherine and Henry is accelerated on account of the war. Sensing urgency and danger, the two spend a lot of time together and profess their feelings much faster than most would. There is no time to beat around the bush or play “hard-to-get” when life and death seem to hang in the balance at every moment. Henry leaves for two days to help at other military posts and Catherine scolds him for not leaving her a note about his whereabouts. When Henry is called to the battlefield, Catherine gives him her St. Anthony medal meant to protect him from harm. She has just met him but is already worried about him suffering the same fate as her former fiancé.

Readers get a glimpse into Henry’s personality when he picks up an American soldier who is limping. The soldier admits to wanting to be injured just enough to be kept from the fighting. Instead of scolding the soldier, Henry is sympathetic and gives the soldier advice on how to make the non-fatal injury happen. It becomes clear that Henry is concerned at the most personal level for the soldiers fighting and that he will put the well-being of an individual in front of principal or lofty war ideals.

Vocabulary

Platoon, flint, cloistered, edifying, stragglers, feigned, enamel, Bacchus, rendezvous, cypresses, hollow, Carabinieri, bridgehead



Chapter 9 - 12

Summary

Chapter 9: Henry arrives at the battlefield, where he and the other ambulance drivers prepare, both mentally and logistically. The men discuss the futility of war and argue over the best ways to end it, if it ever will end. Henry leaves to go find food for the men, but only tracks down some macaroni noodles and slices of cheese. The battle begins and Henry braves the nearby fighting to get the food to his men. They eat without forks as the artillery outside grows louder. After a loud explosion, Henry finds himself unable to move his legs properly and sees that the driver from his ambulance, Passini, is lying next to him, severely wounded. As Henry is thinking of how to patch up Passini's legs enough to move him to safety, his colleague dies. Two of the other ambulance drivers lift Henry and carry him to the medical area, dropping him a few times along the way. Henry insists that the ambulances be used for others who are more severely wounded and stays behind to be examined by a surgeon. The doctor wraps Henry's legs and head and orders him onto a British ambulance. The soldier on the stretcher above Henry begins to hemorrhage and the blood drips onto Henry. He yells for the ambulance driver to stop and help, but the driver says that they are almost to safety. The bleeding soldier dies before they arrive.

Chapter 10: Back at the field hospital, Rinaldi comes to visit Henry. Rinaldi wants to hear all about Henry's wounding and tells him that he may be awarded a Silver Star if he's done something heroic. Henry insists that he did nothing heroic and that he was injured while eating a piece of cheese. Rinaldi says that the offensive attack was a success. The two have a glass of cognac and Rinaldi says that he will send Catherine to see Henry.

Chapter 11: The priest comes to visit Henry that night and brings him newspapers, mosquito netting, and some liquor. The two discuss God and Henry tries to understand what it is like to love God; he wonders if it is like loving a woman. The priest says that he does not know because he has never loved a woman. The priest talks about how he dislikes the war; when it is over, he hopes to go back to Abruzzi to be near his family. He says priests are respected there and that loving God is nothing to be teased about. The priest leaves and Henry falls asleep thinking about stories the priest has told him about Abruzzi.

Chapter 12: Rinaldi comes to visit Henry again and brings the major along. They tell Henry that he will be shipped off to Milan the next morning to continue his recovery. Rinaldi also tells Henry that Catherine is transferring to Milan because there are too many women on the front. Both Henry and Catherine will be going to a new American hospital that is opening. The men drink liquor together and get increasingly drunk and loud. Henry sets out for the rough, 48-hour journey to Milan the next morning.



Analysis

Henry experiences the atrocity of war firsthand when he is called to the battlefield during an offensive attack. Another ambulance driver is hit by artillery and dies while Henry is trying to find a way to make a tourniquet. Henry is also injured but insists that his injuries are not nearly as bad as the others and refuses to be among the first placed on an ambulance. The gruesomeness of the battle is only enhanced when the soldier placed above Henry in the ambulance has a hemorrhage and the blood drips onto Henry below. Two men die within reach of Henry in a short span of time and there is nothing that he can do to save either one.

The relationship between Henry and Catherine takes an even more serious turn when he is injured. When Catherine learns that he will be shipped to a new hospital in Milan, she requests a transfer there. She wants to be there to care for him and nurse him back to health. It is as if Catherine already considers herself Henry's wife; feeling that she must follow him where he goes and be the one on which he relies. Knowing that Catherine will be at the hospital too gives Henry more optimism about his recovery.

Vocabulary

Bersaglieri, Tchecos, asciutta, voluble, adjutant, Antitetanus, coagulate, cognac, Skoda, tourniquet, valorous, lancet, dago, vermouth, Tiber, grappa, blaspheme, riparto



Chapter 13 - 18

Summary

Book Two, Chapter 13: Henry arrives at the hospital in Milan and finds out that there are no other patients there yet. None of the rooms are ready for patients and Henry insists that the men transporting him put him down in any available bed. The nurse on duty, Miss Walker, is very upset by the development and says that the doctor is out of town. She cannot read Henry's papers because they are in Italian, so he tries to tell her what his injuries are. Henry also meets a younger nurse named Miss Gage who tells him to be nicer to the other nurses and the head nurse, Miss Van Campen. He asks the women repeatedly when the other nurses will be arriving and when the doctor will return.

Chapter 14: Henry wakes up believing that he is at the front, but then he sees the dirty bandages on his legs and remembers that he is in the hospital. Miss Gage comes in and tells him that Miss Barkley has arrived ; she does not like her much. A barber comes to shave Henry and is very rude and will not accept Henry's money. The porter explains afterward that the barber misunderstood and thought that Henry was Austrian. Catherine comes in and Henry professes his love for her. She says that if she is to stay, they will have to be careful and not let the others know about their feelings for each other. She leaves to get back to work and Henry reflects on the circumstances that led him to falling in love with Catherine.

Chapter 15: That afternoon, Henry has X-rays done of his legs. Three doctors come to visit him in his room, but no one seems to know how to help him. They finally agree that Henry will need to wait six months before having an operation. Henry asks for a second opinion. Dr. Valentini, a major in the Italian army, arrives. He is jovial and agrees to have a drink with Henry. Dr. Valentini says that he can operate on his legs the next morning and makes a fuss over Catherine's beauty.

Chapter 16: Catherine volunteers for night duty and lays in bed with Henry. In the morning, she comes in to prepare him for his surgery. She cleans him and gives him an enema. The two discuss their pasts, and Catherine asks Henry how many women he has had sex with, including prostitutes. She wants to know if a prostitute ever tells a customer that she loves him and if Henry has ever said that he loved one back. Henry tells Catherine what she wants to hear, even though he is lying. Catherine tells him that she will say whatever he wants her to say so that he will not want anyone else.

Chapter 17: Following the operation, Henry feels sick. Helen Ferguson has arrived at the Milan hospital and she warns him to be careful in his relationship with Catherine. She tells Henry that Catherine is very tired from working the night shift, suggesting that Henry insist that she take some time off. Helen also says that Henry needs to be careful not to get Catherine pregnant, as that the two of them will fight before they marry. Miss Gage comes in and Henry suggests that Catherine be taken off the night shift for a



while because she is looking tired. Miss Gage implies that she knows about their relationship, but she is Henry's friend and he does not need to pretend with her. Catherine takes three nights off of night duty.

Chapter 18: As Henry recovers, he and Catherine spend time around town, going out to eat and enjoying the scenery. Catherine spends every night with Henry, in between taking care of other patients. Henry suggests that they get married but she resists because she is afraid that they will be separated. He insists that he would feel better if they got married, in case something bad should happen to him or she got pregnant. Catherine refuses, saying that they are already married in her mind and she does not want to risk being moved away from him.

Analysis

The disorganization and confusion of war presents itself when Henry arrives at the Milan hospital and no one is expecting him. The hospital is not ready to take patients and there are no sheets on the beds. Instead of rushing to his aid, the nurses seem ill-equipped to handle Henry and his needs. Even the doctors are unsure of how to proceed in Henry's case, undoubtedly because none have studied specific treatments for the wounds of war that they now encounter. Ironically, the doctor that Henry trusts is the one that wants to cut into him the very next day. Henry trusts him because he is confident and able to make a decision on his own.

Catherine and Henry's discussion of marriage emerges in this section of the book. Although Henry is willing to do the conventional thing and , it is Catherine who believes it to be a bad idea. She wants to be with Henry, and her main concern is that their time together is at risk if they are officially married. She does not care about being his legitimate "wife," as she already feels married to him in her heart. The two reach a marriage-level commitment without signing anything legally and both are satisfied with the arrangement. The war and surrounding circumstances cause Catherine and Henry to forsake tradition and go with what is right for their relationship in the moment.

Vocabulary

domineering, anesthetic, articulation, synovial, felicitations, ether, shrapnel, varnished



Chapter 19 - 24

Summary

Chapter 19: Once Henry is well enough to walk with a cane, Catherine cannot go out with him in town. He spends time going to the horse races and reading newspapers. He meets a couple, the Meyers, who become fond of him. He meets with other officers at a local bar, including one named Ettore, who brags about being wounded three times, so he knows he will be promoted to captain. Back at the hospital, Catherine says that she does not like Ettore because he talks too much and that she hopes that Henry will never get promoted. It begins to rain and Catherine admits that she is scared of the rain because she can see them both dead in it.

Chapter 20: Henry, Catherine, Helen, and another patient from the hospital go to the horse races. They bet on a horse that is favored 35 to 1, but when it wins, they win barely anything because the line changed right before the race started. Mr. and Mrs. Meyers are there and they bet on a horse that Meyers suggests who ends up not paying well either. Catherine and Henry leave the group and spend some time alone, watching races from near the paddocks. Catherine admits that she feels lonely when they are with a lot of other people. Henry says that they can spend some time alone; later, they return to the group.

Chapter 21: Henry meets with his friend Crowell who is being sent to Rome. They discuss the fighting, which is over for the year. Henry gets a letter that says he will be returning to the front after a three-week leave. He tells Catherine, who is on duty, and she says that she will take leave with him. She tells Henry that she is three months pregnant, but not to worry. He says that he is only worried about her. Henry has a drink but she does not drink with him.

Chapter 22: Henry is diagnosed with jaundice and cannot take his leave, as he must be treated. Miss Van Campen sees the porter carrying out empty bottles from Henry's room; she comes in and finds several more. She accuses Henry of drinking himself into jaundice in order to avoid going back to the front. She says that she will be sure he does not get any more leave and returns immediately to the front after the jaundice is cleared up. Henry denies developing jaundice on purpose and begins making obscene comments to prove his point. Miss Van Campen takes the rest of the bottles and leaves to make her report to the doctor. Nothing happens to Henry except that his leave is taken away.

Chapter 23: Henry's time at the hospital is up and he buys a ticket for a midnight train to take him back to the front. He and Catherine spend the evening wandering the streets of Milan and reflecting on their love. They hire a carriage to take them to a hotel, where they get a room for a few hours. They order dinner and promise to write to each other every day. Catherine says that she will make her letters "confusing" so the people who



read it first will not understand what she is saying. They joke about Henry getting injured again, but only in the earlobe or foot.

Chapter 24: Henry and Catherine take the carriage back to the station and say goodbye. It is raining and they are brief in their goodbyes and not overly sentimental. Henry goes to the train car where the porter and a machine-gunner have held a seat for him. The other soldiers on the train are hostile and do not think that Henry should get the seat. He gives it up to another man who claims to have been there for two hours already. Henry sleeps on the floor in the train corridor with his pocketbook safely tucked away as other riders step over him and the train becomes even more crowded.

Analysis

Catherine and Henry's relationship reaches a comfortable, fun place as he continues to recover. They are able to go out on normal dates and act like a couple who are not involved in the war. They soon discover that though they enjoy socializing with others, they prefer each other's company more. When it comes time for Henry to return to the front, he is comforted knowing that he and Catherine will find their way back to each other again.

The alcoholism that Henry demonstrated through the entire book finally gets him into trouble when Miss Van Campen discovers the stash of liquor bottles in his room. She accuses him of deliberately trying to get jaundice to avoid combat and reports it to the doctor. Though Henry has not actually tried to become jaundiced, he takes her accusation of using alcoholism to shirk his duties very seriously. He takes it as a knock to his personal code of ethics and though he knows that Miss Van Campen is wrong, the very implication bothers him.

Vocabulary

galleria, emery, paddocks, convalescent, jaundice, haunches, rucksack, musettes, buttresses, lanyard, ingenious, zabaione



Chapter 25 - 28

Summary

Book 3, Chapter 25: Henry returns to camp to find that it is nearly empty because soldiers are at other posts or have been killed. He meets with the major who gives a very glib description of the activities of the war, telling him that it has been "very bad." It is decided that Henry will relieve another ambulance driver named Gino the next morning. Henry goes to his room and waits for Rinaldi. He tries not to think about Catherine, but cannot help it. Rinaldi returns and wants to see Henry's knee. The two discuss what they have been up to in the past few months. Rinaldi says that he has been working in the operating room and Henry says that he is in love with Catherine, but does not mention the baby on the way. They go to the mess hall to eat and the only people present for the meal are Henry, Rinaldi, and the major. The priest arrives and is very happy to see Henry. Rinaldi gets drunk and belligerent before leaving to go out for the night. The major tells Henry that Rinaldi may have syphilis and that he is trying to treat himself.

Chapter 26: The priest goes back to Henry's room with him and they discuss the possible outcomes of the war. The priest believes that the war will end soon and that both sides may stop the fighting. Henry argues that if the Austrians are winning, they will not stop fighting. The priest is discouraged by Henry's realism but enjoys talking with him and says he is glad that Henry is back. The priest excuses himself and says that he looks forward to talking to Henry when he returns from the post.

Chapter 27: Henry arrives at the Bainsizza early the next morning, where Gino, the other ambulance driver, is happy to be relieved. He echoes the others' sentiments that the war has been very bad and adds that there has not been enough to eat. Gino leaves to return to Gorizia and Henry hears conflicting orders that the post at the Bainsizza is either to retreat or hold the line no matter what. Fighting begins just outside the village and word is that the front to the north has been broken by the Austrians and possibly the Germans. Henry and the other ambulance staff move both the wounded and the equipment back to Gorizia. When they arrive, the town is being evacuated and they see a truck full of prostitutes being moved. Henry and three other ambulance drivers load up the vehicles, take a nap, eat a spaghetti dinner, and then set out for the Pordenone in the rain.

Chapter 28: As Henry and the other drivers join the rest of the retreat, it is slow moving and stops several times. Villagers join the retreat with household goods loaded on wagons and it slows down the process even more. One driver named Aymo picks up two young women who are frightened of the men but accept the ride. Seeing that there is no way to move any faster, Henry finds a side road and the three ambulances make a detour. They come upon a deserted farmhouse where they stop for breakfast and water before continuing on the path.



Analysis

Henry returns to the front to find that not only have his own feelings about the war changed, but also it seems that the entire mentality surrounding the war has been transformed. The major seems sullen and depressed, telling Henry that things have been “going badly.” The once bustling village of Gorzia is nearly deserted as the soldiers, officers, and nurses have been sent out to military posts of defense or killed. The young enthusiastic community that Henry left has become a down-trodden, depressing place.

Even the ever-joyful Rinaldi has changed. He explains that all that he has been doing since Henry left is operating and that when he is not working, he has no desire to do anything else. As Rinaldi becomes more drunk, he becomes vindictive and seems to have lost all of his good humor. He admits that the war has changed him. The revelation that Rinaldi may have syphilis also explains his depression and his erratic, almost “crazy,” behavior. Just as Henry has a new perspective on the war based on his injury and love for Catherine, the other characters in the book have had a change of heart about the meaning of the war based on their personal experiences.

The confusion in communication surrounding the war does not seem to help morale either. In the short time that Henry is at the military post, he receives conflicting information about Austrians and Germans breaking through the Italian line. There also seems to be confusion as to whether the soldiers should move forward, hold position, or retreat. When the retreat is finally ordered, it is disorganized and stagnant: just like the rest of the war .

Vocabulary

salvarsan, mercurial, syphilis, dolce, trajectory, babbitting, tactically, distort, latrine, radiator



Chapter 29 - 32

Summary

Chapter 29: The ambulances continue down the side roads and one gets stuck. Henry orders everyone to help push it free, but two sergeants who had hitched a ride decide to leave instead. Henry tries to order them back to help but they refuse. He takes out his pistol and shoots one, although the other one escapes. Bonello, one of the drivers, takes the pistol and shoots the wounded sergeant twice in the head. They are not able to free the ambulance from the mud, so they leave it behind. The rest of the vehicles get stuck further down the road and the group sets out on foot. Henry gives the two young women some money and tells them to go down towards a nearby village.

Chapter 30: Henry, Bonello, Amyo, and Piani continue to travel on foot to rejoin the retreat. They come to a bridge and are cautious to cross. As they go over, Henry spots several German soldiers crossing a different bridge. He tells the others, who are frightened at the confirmation that the Germans are now part of the war. They cross an open field and Amyo is shot and dies while Henry is trying to save him. Henry determines that it must have been an Italian who shot him out of fear. The other three approach a farmhouse and Bonello flees, telling Piani that he would rather be taken prisoner than killed. Piani and Henry continue on after dark and rejoin the retreat on foot. After crossing a bridge, Henry is pulled out of the group by Italian battle police who are questioning the officers. Three officers are shot after being questioned and Henry jumps into the river to escape his own shooting. The current drags him away and when he surfaces, he cannot hear any shots; the shore is far behind him.

Chapter 31: Henry travels down the river for a while and finally makes it to the shore. He is cold and wet but travels on. He passes without notice near a group of Italian soldiers and walks to a train track. He lays flat on the track, awaiting a coming train and trying to avoid being noticed by guards near the railway. He jumps into a freight car that is full of guns and hides under the canvas, nursing a bump on his head. Henry realizes that he will have to get off the train before it arrives at Mestre because he will certainly be found with the guns. He is very hungry.

Chapter 32: Lying in the freight car, Henry decides that he is through with fighting. He is angry at himself for being unsuccessful in his duties with the retreat, and angry with the Italian army for nearly killing him because of his accent. He thinks about Catherine, Rinaldi, and the priest, and also about his hunger.

Analysis

Any sense of reason surrounding the war begins to spin out of control for Henry in this section of the book. Everything that Henry has stood for up to this point begins to erode as circumstances change his position. His descent into the devastating mentality of war



takes place at first when he shoots his pistol at the two sergeants who decide to leave the stuck ambulance. Throughout the book, Henry has gladly helped other people and seems to be understanding of the way that the war affects the actions of other characters. When Henry sees that the two sergeants plan to repay his kindness by deserting the group, he gets angry and begins shooting. He has no respect for the soldier that is wounded and then killed by his own pistol, stripping him of his overcoat and laying it in the mud to help move the ambulance forward.

Henry continues to lose faith in his comrades and the war when Bonello flees the group, preferring to be taken prisoner rather than to move forward and risk being killed. The final straw comes when Henry is picked from the group by battle police who say that his Italian accent is strange. After all that Henry has contributed to the cause, he cannot fathom the possibility of being shot for such a paranoid, trivial concern. In a symbolic “baptism” into a new life, Henry deserts the Italian army by jumping into a rushing river that carries him away from the retreat and into the next phase of his life.

Vocabulary

anarchist, socialist, differential, cavalry, treachery, hemlock, battalion, embankment, coagulate, grummets, contemptuously, dismal, eddy, vaseline



Chapter 33 - 37

Summary

Book Four, Chapter 33: Henry gets off the train outside of Milan and goes into a coffee shop. The shop owner can tell that Henry is in trouble and offers to let him stay there. Henry declines and the shop owner advises him to take off his uniform. Henry takes a cab to the hospital. He sees the porter and his wife, who tell him that Catherine left for Stresa two days earlier with the other English nurses. He takes a cab to his friend Simmons' house outside of Milan and Simmons offers to clothe him and give him breakfast before Henry sets out for Stresa before leaving Italy.

Chapter 34: In civilian clothing borrowed from Simmons, Henry takes a train to Stresa. He checks into a hotel and has a few martinis at the bar. Henry knows the bartender and the two talk about how the town is devoid of visitors. The bartender finds out where Catherine and Helen are staying and Henry arrives there shortly after. Catherine is thrilled to see Henry, but Helen cries and tells Henry how much she hates him. Catherine and Henry spend the night in his hotel room and he tells her that he has deserted the Italian army. She says that they will simply go somewhere else.

Chapter 35: The next morning, Henry goes fishing with the bartender while Catherine returns to her hotel. The bartender says that he is too old to fight, but that if he does get called up for war, he will flee rather than fight. Catherine returns for lunch and brings Helen. After a few bottles of wine, the three seem to get along well. Catherine and Henry go up to his room to rest and Helen goes back to her hotel. Count Greffi, an elderly man also staying at the hotel, sends a message inviting Henry to play billiards. Henry accepts and Catherine rests in the room in the meantime. Count Greffi beats Henry easily and the two enjoy champagne and a discussion of the war and the Count's longevity. Count Greffi asks Henry to pray for his soul if Henry ever becomes devout.

Chapter 36: In the middle of the night there is a knock on Henry's hotel room door. It is the barman and he tells Henry that he will be arrested in the morning. The barman offers Henry to his rowboat to take to Switzerland and encourages him to leave right away. Henry and Catherine pack their things and tell the hotel porter that they are going for a walk in the rain. They get on the barman's boat and he gives Henry instructions on how to get to Switzerland. The barman refuses money for the boat and tells Henry to send him money for it once he is able. Henry and Catherine push away from the shore in the rain to head towards Switzerland.

Chapter 37: Henry and Catherine row all night, passing different Italian cities in the dark. They arrive in Swiss waters just after daylight and pull the boat ashore. They find a restaurant where they order breakfast. There is a guard waiting at the boat after they eat who arrests them and takes them in for further questioning. Henry tells the officer that he is a sportsman and is in Switzerland to pursue winter sports. He says that Catherine is his cousin. The officer does not believe the story, but after he hears the



amount of money that they have, he allows them passage through the country. They travel to Montreux in a carriage and arrive at a hotel.

Analysis

Something changes inside of Henry after he is nearly killed for speaking Italian with a strange accent. He sees the foolishness of the war and the pointlessness of the contributions he has made. All he cares about is getting back to Catherine and keeping both of them alive. The peaceful setting of Stresa is in sharp contrast to the harsh living conditions he faced at the front. It is almost as if Henry has “died” to his old life and accepted the paradise of the afterlife. Both he and Catherine are satisfied just being together and she swears that she will go with him wherever he wants her to go, even if it means leaving her own job as a nurse in the British army.

Though Henry has deserted the Italian army, the people around him are not judgmental. In fact, many seem to think that he has done a brave thing and try to protect him. This shows the mentality regarding World War I changing among civilians and those in the military from the start to the end. The barman tells Henry that he would run away before being forced to fight in the war and then helps Henry escape when he hears about the plans for Henry’s arrest. The owner of the coffee shop in Milan where Henry first goes after jumping off the train warns him that he should take off his military uniform and his friend Simmons gladly gives him civilian clothing to help with safe passage to Stresa. These friends of Henry’s are concerned for his well-being and willing to put their own necks on the line to help him.

When Henry and Catherine arrive in Switzerland, they do make plans to return to America or England. They are happy to be in a neutral location, isolated, with no ties to the war to pull either back in. They are satisfied just to be together and away from the real problems that face the world at large, which have long overshadowed their relationship. Catherine chooses Montreux for no other reason than that it is the first place that came to mind. This is a good enough reason for Henry as well, who wants nothing more than to just be with Catherine.

Vocabulary

proprietor, masquerader, mahogany, denounce, billiards, stimulant, fallacy, gradations, depreciatingly, quay, trellised, sentry, plume, luge, sacrilegious



Chapter 38 - 41

Summary

Book 5, Chapter 38: Henry and Catherine rent a room in a home in Montreux for the winter. They venture into the wooded areas around the chateau and sometimes into town. Henry reads the newspapers and learns that the war is still going on. They discuss getting married again and Catherine says that they can get married once she is thin again. A snowstorm blows in a few days before Christmas and they walk through the snow to enjoy it. Henry decides that he wants to grow a beard and learn how to ski.

Chapter 39: As the winter goes on, Henry's beard grows in fully. Catherine is pleased with it and says that she will get all of her hair cut off after the baby is born and be a whole new woman for Henry. Though Catherine is very pregnant, she and Henry go for long walks in the snow, stopping to rest when she needs it.

Chapter 40: Henry and Catherine decide to leave the mountains since winter has ended and the baby will be arriving soon. They check into a hotel close to the hospital and begin to set up the room like home. Catherine begins buying items for the baby and Henry starts going to a gym for exercise. They take rides out to the country in a carriage when Catherine feels up to it.

Chapter 41: Catherine goes into labor in the middle of the night and Henry calls for a taxi to take them to the hospital. Her contractions are intense and she uses gas to help control the pain. Catherine keeps sending Henry away because she does not want him to see her in labor. After several hours, the doctor tells Henry that a Caesarean operation is recommended to get the baby out safely. Henry gives the doctor the go-ahead and Catherine is wheeled into the operating room. Henry sees the baby come out of the operating room and feels no fatherly emotions. A nurse tells Henry that the baby is dead, strangled by the umbilical cord. Catherine is in bad shape and the doctor insists that Henry go eat dinner and let her rest. When he returns to the hospital, Catherine has hemorrhaged and is close to death. She continues to bleed out and dies. The doctor offers an apology, but Henry says that there is nothing to say. Henry walks back to his hotel alone in the rain.

Analysis

In the final section of the book, the story takes a tragic turn. Although Henry and Catherine have been able to survive the dangers of war, Catherine and their unborn baby lose their lives in childbirth. As Henry sits, worrying about his wife while she is in labor, he realizes that one can only evade death for so long. He concludes that, one way or another, death finds every one. Just like the war, which Henry has come to realize is a pointless loss of life, he sees Catherine's battle and loss to childbirth as hollow and without reason.



The idyllic lifestyle that Henry and Catherine enjoy in Switzerland is described in the chapters prior to her death and it makes the loss even more poignant to readers. Henry has forsaken everything in his life – his occupation, the Italian army, and even communication with his family in America – to live just for Catherine. He even has disdain for the baby because it killed its mother. Henry cares only for Catherine; his entire life revolves around spending time with her. The book ends before readers see what Henry will do next, but it can be inferred that Henry will feel completely lost without her.

Although most of the book deals with World War I and its effects on the life of all the book's characters, it shifts toward the end to focus solely on the relationship between Catherine and Henry. In the neutral territory of Switzerland, the couple is free from political or patriotic ties and can just be themselves. This is a comment by the author that human relationships, specifically love, transcend borders, battles, and politics. The importance of human interaction far outweighs the lofty things that brings nations to war. The relationship between Catherine and Henry demonstrates this.

Vocabulary

gonorrhoea, chalet, matronly, chamois, hobnailed, torrent, ungainly, protracted, brioche, Caesarean, forceps, Inquisition, gratuitously



Characters

Frederic Henry

Frederic Henry is the protagonist of the story. Readers do not know his first name until Chapter 5 and hear his last name in Chapter 13. He is an American but serves as a volunteer ambulance driver for the Italian army during World War I. Ernest Hemingway based the character of Frederic Henry on his own experiences during the war. Henry is the first of Hemingway's trademark "Code Heroes" – characters who live by their own code of conduct and do heroic things in the process. Though Henry does not always follow the rules or live strictly by the military code, he is respected by his peers, commanders, and the unit priest for his personal ethics and respect for other people.

Not much is described about the physical characteristics of Henry; his thoughts and personality are emphasized instead. Henry is typical in many ways, making him a sympathetic protagonist. When Catherine makes absurd statements, Henry goes along with them in order to make her happy, which is common for people in love. He also longs for camaraderie and will have a drink with anyone who asks. While Henry is loyal to his fellow soldiers and the civilians he encounters, he seems to understand that there are no black and white answers, either in war or in life. Average readers can see some of their own traits in Henry, but also some that are admirable outside of their own comfort zone.

Catherine Barkley

Catherine is a British nurse who serves in the unit where Frederic Henry is stationed. She is tall and blonde with gray eyes. Henry is immediately attracted to her and the two begin a whirlwind romance, accented by the struggles and drama of the surrounding war. Catherine tells him about the death of her fiancé a year earlier, and their eight-year engagement. As a result of her loss, Catherine is extremely guarded, questioning Henry's true feelings for her. She tries to be the "perfect" girlfriend and later, the perfect wife. Even when she is struggling during childbirth, Catherine is apologetic, not wanting to appear weak or as a burden to Henry.

Catherine has been both praised and criticized for the type of woman that she represents. On one hand, she is a strong woman who rejects convention if it does not suit her individual needs. On the other hand, she is quick to leave behind her own life and follow Henry, even if it means putting her own life at risk in the process. Catherine seems obsessed with pleasing Henry, often appearing to feel self-conscious and not "good enough" for her husband. In any case, Catherine provides a passionate outlook that contrasts the stark, often sterile backdrop of the war.



Lieutenant Rinaldi

Lieutenant Rinaldi is a surgeon in Henry's unit and also his roommate. He is a smooth talking, jovial ladies' man who introduces Henry to Catherine. After a series of devastating battles, Rinaldi loses some of his spunk and admits that the war is beginning to depress him. Henry hears from his major that Rinaldi may be suffering from syphilis; the stress and effects of the disease cause erratic behavior.

Helen Ferguson

Helen Ferguson is a Scottish nurse who works alongside Catherine. She is gruff and does not like Henry. She scolds him for getting Catherine pregnant and cries when she thinks of the shame of their unconventional relationship. Helen's intentions are good, however, and she provides a conservative contrast to the free-spirited Catherine.

The Captain

The captain is never named and is first introduced when he is making dirty jokes to the unit's priest. He is loud-mouthed and obnoxious, but keeps the members of the unit laughing. The fact that he is never named gives him a universal appeal and World War I veterans could see some of their own peers, or themselves, in the character of the captain.

The Major

The major is Henry's friend and they often drink together. The major treats Henry like a peer rather than his subordinate. When Henry returns to the front after his recovery in Milan, the major is feeling very disheartened, telling Henry that things in the war are not going well. The low morale of the major is an indication to Henry that the entire unit is in a very low place.

The Priest

The priest is a part of the unit where Henry serves. He is young and often talks of his hometown and family. At the beginning of the book, he is easily embarrassed by the way that the officers make fun of him, but by the end he has grown accustomed to it and laughs along. The priest and Henry have several philosophical discussions, forming a friendship, despite the fact that Henry is not religious.

Miss Van Campen

Miss Van Campen is the head nurse of the Milan hospital. She does not like Henry. She finds several empty alcohol bottles in Henry's armoire and accuses him of drinking



himself to a jaundiced state so he doesn't have to return to the front. She makes a report to the doctor and tries to have Henry court-martialed.

Miss Gage

Miss Gage is a young nurse at the hospital in Milan who insists that she is Henry's friend. She tries to hide his drinking from the other nurses, especially the head nurse Miss Van Campen. She appears to be jealous of Henry's relationship with Catherine, often mentioning that she does not like Catherine.

Mrs. Walker

Miss Walker is an older nurse at the hospital in Milan who is flustered when Henry arrives. She is very emotional and Henry is scolded by other nurses for not being more sensitive to Miss Walker and her feelings.

Dr. Valentini

Dr. Valentini is an Army major; a jovial surgeon with a mustache. He agrees to operate on Henry's legs and accepts a drink when it is offered. Henry trusts Valentini because he is an officer and had no qualms about having a drink with his patient.

Ettore Moretti

Ettore is a 23-year-old hero in the war who Catherine says is boring because he talks about himself too much. Henry describes Ettore as "a legitimate hero who bored everyone he met." Ettore is wounded in combat three times and brags about his medals.

Crowell

Crowell is an Italian soldier who is very down to earth about the war. He does not brag about being injured or the battles in which he has fought. He talks war strategy with Henry and is very critical of Italy's involvement in the war efforts. Henry says that there is a "great contrast between his world pessimism and personal cheeriness."

Mr. and Mrs. Meyers

The Meyers' are an American couple living in Italy who spends a lot of time at the races. Mr. Meyers gets inside information on the horse races that he does not share with his wife. Mrs. Meyers talks constantly and delivers newspapers and other trinkets to "her boys" recovering at the hospital in Milan.



Gino

Gino is an ambulance driver whom Henry relieves when he arrives back at the front. Gino is very negative about the outcome of the war and says that the lack of food is damaging to the morale of the outfit.

Amyo

Amyo is an ambulance driver who is beside Henry during the retreat. He is shot by Italians who mistake him for a German and dies as Henry is trying to treat his wounds.

Bonello

Bonello is an ambulance driver on the retreat with Henry. He shows his violent nature when he takes pleasure in shooting another Italian sergeant twice in the head. He flees the group when he believes that they will be killed.

Piani

Piani is an ambulance driver who is with Henry on the retreat. He is the only remaining one after Amyo is killed and Bonello flees. Henry says that he likes Piani and that he is a "good boy."

Count Greffi

Count Greffi is 94 years old and a friend of Henry's in Stresa. He is known for throwing birthday parties that are the social event of Milan. As Henry and Count Greffi play billiards, they discuss the war and life. Henry admires Count Greffi and looks up to him. Count Greffi asks for Henry to pray for his soul if Henry ever becomes pious.

Emilio

Emilio is a bartender in Stresa who is a friend to Henry. The two go fishing together after Henry has fled the army. Emilio wakes Henry in the middle of the night to warn him that he will be arrested the next morning. He gives Henry and Catherine his rowboat and clear instructions on how to make it to Switzerland safely.

Ralph Simmons

Ralph Simmons is Henry's friend; an American opera student living in Italy. Ralph gives Henry civilian clothing to wear when he escapes Milan by train.



Objects/Places

Gorizia

Gorizia is an Italian village where Henry spends time in 1916 – 1917. He describes it as being a nice village that had not been destroyed too much since the enemy still wanted to be able to come visit it once the war had ended. Henry meets Catherine in Gorizia.

Pavla

Pavla is the place where Henry goes to help provide medical care for the wounded during an offensive attack. He is wounded there and watches a fellow ambulance driver die beside him.

Milan

Henry is sent to the American hospital in Milan after he is wounded. Catherine is transferred there and the two spend time at restaurants and other social spots in town. Their relationship is able to flourish in the major city that is set far away from the battlefield.

Stresa

Stresa is an Italian town where Henry goes to find Catherine after he has fled the army. It is much smaller than Milan and Henry is noticed by people in the town. He and Catherine must flee it by rowboat in the middle of the night to avoid being arrested.

Switzerland

Henry and Catherine flee to Switzerland to avoid arrest because it is a neutral country. They visit several cities while they are there and settle for the winter in the mountains of Montreux, They are able to live a quiet existence away from the pressures of the war. The author describes the scenery and weather in detail. Catherine has her baby in a Swiss hospital and ultimately dies there.

The Hospital

The hospital in Lausanne, Switzerland is where Catherine goes to have the baby. It is a quiet hospital and very dreary inside. Catherine dies there following the birth of her stillborn baby.



St. Anthony medal

Catherine gives Henry her St. Anthony medal before he goes to the battlefield in Pavla. She says that she is not religious but thinks that the medal will still bring good luck. Saint Anthony is an Italian saint, and the patron saint of lost or stolen things.

Ambulances

In the novel, ambulances play an important role in caring for the sick and wounded. Henry is an ambulance driver, just as Hemingway was in World War I. Henry is upset with himself when he is forced to leave three ambulances behind during the retreat.

Newspapers

Henry reads newspapers from around the world and gets much of his information about the war's progress from this reading. While he is recovering in Milan, he asks the porter daily to go out and fetch papers for him; he also enjoys reading them during his time in Switzerland.

Alcohol

Alcohol plays a prominent role in the social lives of the characters in the book. Even the priest drinks an occasional glass of wine with the men in the unit. Alcohol seems to calm nerves and it is an escape for characters from the harsh realities of the war. When Henry develops jaundice, one of the nurses accuses him of using his alcoholism to develop the condition so that he will not have to return to the front.

Rowboat

In order to escape Italy safely, Henry and Catherine leave on a rowboat in the middle of the night. The small, vulnerable craft leads them to freedom in Switzerland after about eight hours of rowing.

Ants

While Henry is in despair over Catherine's failing health at the hospital, he remembers throwing a log onto a fire that was covered with ants. The ants scrambled to get away from the flame and he regarded them with no sympathy, deciding instead to let them all burn rather than remove the log to allow some to escape.



Themes

The Reality of War

The book takes a realistic look at the mentality of war, specifically the mentality surrounding the circumstances of World War I on the European front. Since Ernest Hemingway was actually part of the action in World War I, he was able to paint an accurate description of the people, places, and actions common to the war. The character of Rinaldi is a compilation of Italian men that Hemingway knew, and Catherine represents the role women played functionally in the war. Hemingway could have based his book on a fictional war and used fictional locations but he knew that real-life provided a more poignant backdrop.

There is a drastic change in the morale of the military personnel in Gorizia from the beginning of the book to when Henry returns from his stay in Milan. At the start, young men and women are vibrant and enthusiastic about the war. They enjoy the social aspect of the military base and do not fully comprehend the real reason that they are stationed there. After a difficult few months, Henry returns to a demure, toned-down Gorizia where nearly all of the military personnel have been dispersed to posts on the front and many have been wounded or died. The initial glamor has worn off and the realistic impact of war has settled in.

Love and Romance

Heightened by the emotional stress of being at war, the characters distract themselves with romance. Rinaldi, who sees firsthand the atrocities of war in his position as a surgeon, is obsessed with beautiful women and constantly keeps himself busy in pursuit of them. After gushing that he wants to marry the beautiful Miss Barkley, Rinaldi quickly concedes her to Henry. True love is not Rinaldi's main goal. He simply wants a distraction from his job and the realities of war around him. His pursuit of this empty love leads him to contract syphilis, but he is not completely deterred from the distractions women provide, and that he has come to rely on.

The love that blossoms between Henry and Catherine has more depth but is still rushed on account of the war. Catherine has already been traumatized by the loss of her fiancé to battle and she has a strong feeling of urgency when it comes to Henry. She realizes that time could be short, so she does not waste much of it in regards to Henry. Catherine declares her love for him after only a few days and follows him to Milan after his injury. She is also able to make the split-second decision to leave her life behind in order to travel with Henry to Switzerland. Some readers may read this as a demonstration of true love, yet her actions may have been much different if the war were not looming. The intensity of the relationship between Henry and Catherine is heightened because of the war.



Transformation of Self

Time and time again, the characters experience changes in personality as a result of their surrounding circumstances. Henry is the most obvious example. As the protagonist, readers are beside him and experience the changes as he does. The turning point in Henry's attitude occurs when he flees the battle police by diving into a rushing river. His decision to desert the army is confirmed as he makes the conscious decision to stay away, hiding out on a freight car which takes him to Milan. Henry decides that his own personal ethics are superior to the backward principles of the war. From that moment on, he lives his life for himself and for Catherine with no regard for his former allegiance as a lieutenant.

Other characters change too. The major is great example of a person who transforms in a short amount of time. Readers are not there to see the exact circumstances that turn the major from a jovial superior to a downtrodden man; all they get is a comparison between the "old" major that is introduced before Henry is wounded and the "new" major that is present when Henry returns. The war has broken his spirit and his resolve is weakened as a result of the bad circumstances of the fighting. The priest is another good example of transformation, in some ways, changing for the better. Although the priest is also discouraged by the war, he learns how to adjust to teasing from the members of the unit and not be embarrassed. The priest becomes a stronger individual over the course of the book, while many other characters like Rinaldi and Bonello actually lose strength.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written from the third-person point of view of Frederic Henry. Readers get an inside look into the thoughts of Henry as he struggles to make sense of the war and experiences passionate love for Catherine. Oftentimes Henry works through a problem in his head and readers share that journey through the text. Henry is not without fault and often admits in his mind when he is lying or afraid.

The thoughts and personalities of the other characters are described through Henry's eyes but his observations seem sound and perceptive. Sometimes Henry's opinion is reflected in the conversations of the others which give his opinions more clout. For example, when he wonders if Catherine is crazy and she later admits that she was a "little crazy" when they first met. Since Henry is not a native of Italy or Switzerland, his observations about the scenery and people are from an outsider's perspective, which is helpful for readers who may not be familiar with the areas he describes.

Setting

The book is set in several locations throughout Italy and Switzerland. The first setting of significance is the Italian village Gorizia. It is here that Henry first meets Catherine and readers are introduced to many of the important characters in the book. Other Italian places that provide the background for important scenes are Milan, Stresa, and Pavla.

Switzerland is the setting for the final chapters of the book. In contrast to Italy, Switzerland is not at all effected by the war that is tearing through the rest of Europe. Not only is it a different country, but Switzerland might as well be a completely different planet. Henry and Catherine are able to relax and just be together during their time there. Even though the tragic death of Catherine and the baby takes

Language and Meaning

The book is written in contemporary language and the style is considered extremely conversational in comparison to other fiction produced in the 1920s. Ernest Hemingway's straightforward manner of writing allows readers to shape their own opinions about characters, events, and relationships in the book. Some of the phrases and descriptions would be considered "cliché" by modern standards, but that is simply because Ernest Hemingway made so many of them popular with this book.

There has been controversy in the years since the book's publication over censorship. The original editions of the book removed words like "shit," "fuck," and "cock sucker," replacing them instead with a simple dash. Hemingway was adamantly against this censorship as he felt it changed the meaning of some important scenes in the book.

Although such profanity is not considered obscene by contemporary standards, later editions of the book have not put the words back. The missing words remain a unique characteristic of the book and a talking point for each new generation that reads it.

Structure

The book is structured in five separate books, or scenes, with a total of 41 chapters. The first and second books are the longest and the fifth book consists of only one chapter. Ernest Hemingway did not attempt to make the books equal in length but sorted them by subject and theme instead. As the protagonist enters a new phase of the adventure, a new book begins.

The main plot of the book may appear to be about the World War I, but it is actually about the whirlwind romance of Catherine and Henry. The war is a subplot, along with the other subplots that play a smaller role. Having such strong subplots accent the real focus on Henry and Catherine.

Quotes

Well, I knew I would not be killed. Not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me. (Chapter 7)

The drops fell very slowly, as they fall from an icicle after the sun has gone. (Chapter 9)

If anyone were going to die they put a screen around the bed so you could not see them die, but only the shoes and puttees of doctors and men nurses showed under the bottom of the screen and sometimes at the end there would be whispering. (Chapter 12)

I said that was doubtful. Turkey, I said, was our national bird but the joke translated so badly and they were so puzzled and suspicious that I said yes, we would probably declare war on Turkey. (Chapter 12)

I have noticed that doctors who fail in the practice of medicine have a tendency to seek one another's company and aid in consultation. A doctor who cannot take out your appendix properly will recommend to you a doctor who will be unable to remove your tonsils with success. These were three such doctors. (Chapter 15)

When I saw her I was in love with her. Everything turned over inside of me. (Chapter 14)

He said we were all cooked but we were all right as long as we did not know it. We were all cooked. The thing was not to recognize it. The last country to realize they were cooked would win the war. (Chapter 21)

The brave dies perhaps two thousand deaths if he's intelligent. He simply doesn't mention them. (Chapter 21)

The word Germans was something to be frightened of. We did not want to have anything to do with the German. (Chapter 27)

There was no war here. Then I realized it was over for me. But I didn't have the feeling that it was really over. I had the feeling of a boy who thinks of what is happening at a certain hour at the schoolhouse from which he has played truant. (Chapter 34)

The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry. (Chapter 34)

That is the great fallacy; the wisdom of old men. They do not grow wise. They grow careful. (Chapter 35)

Good whiskey was very pleasant. It was one of the pleasant parts of life. (Chapter 40)



Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

Who is Frederic Henry? How do readers learn about his first name? His last name? Why does Henry fight with the Italians, even though he is an American? Are there any physical descriptions given of Henry in the book? If so, what are they? How is Henry injured? What does he tell Rinaldi he was doing when he was wounded? Do you believe that Henry is an alcoholic? Why or why not? Why does Henry desert the army? Explain why Henry becomes so fed up with the war.

Topic 2

Who is Catherine Barkley? What happened to her former fiancé? Why do you believe that Catherine falls in love with Henry so quickly? Do you agree with Catherine's decision to essentially become a fugitive with Henry? How does Catherine feel about her pregnancy? When does she say that she will cut her hair? Describe the way that Henry feels about Catherine. When Henry sees the baby, what does he say the infant tried to do? Where do Catherine and Henry reside in the winter months before the baby is born?

Topic 3

Describe Rinaldi. What disease does Rinaldi believe he has contracted? Describe the relationship between Rinaldi and Henry. Where is the priest from? Why does Henry like the priest? What do Henry and the priest discuss when Henry returns from Milan? Describe the personality of the captain. How does the attitude of the major change from the first book to the third? Who is Bonello? Why do you think he would rather be a prisoner of war than risk being killed? What city does the army retreat to?

Topic 4

Explain the role that alcohol plays in the book. What types of alcohol are mentioned specifically? What illness does Henry develop because of his drinking? Why does the nurse Miss Van Campen think that Henry developed the disease on purpose? Do you think that alcohol was helpful or harmful to the characters in the book? Why or why not? Explain the difference in the mentality of alcohol use between European nations, like Italy, and the United States.



Topic 5

What years was Italy involved in World War I? When did the Americans become involved? Briefly describe the outcome of World War I. How did the outcome of World War I affect World War II? Miscommunication played a role in the book – how has that communication improved since World War I? In what ways is communication still an issue during times of war? Based on the book, how did Ernest Hemingway view war? Why do you think he wrote the book?