# In Our Time Study Guide

## In Our Time by Ernest Hemingway

# Contents

# Plot Summary

Published in 1925, when Hemingway was 26 years old, living in Paris and just beginning his illustrious career, *In Our Time* was arguably the most innovative and groundbreaking book to be published in the United States up until that time. Essentially a book of short stories, it is unique, both in its physical layout and in its artistic content.

The physical layout of the book enabled Hemingway to bring together in one volume the literary gems that he had been nurturing in his mind and writing bit by bit since he had started working for the Kansas City Star in June 1917 immediately after graduating from Oak Park High School in a suburb of Chicago. Not only are his short stories organized in a roughly chronological order in this book, they are woven together in such a way as to give a kind of cohesive order so that the whole effect is that of one unified work--an extraordinary accomplishment for a writer in the early stages of his career.

The first story of *In Our Time*, "On the Quai in Smyrna," is placed before Chapter I, as if it is meant to set the tone for the book or perhaps as if the cruelty and the human suffering portrayed is meant to exemplify the times in which the author and the world are living. The story here is told from the point of view of an American officer serving aboard *The Simpson,* a U.S. cutter present at the evacuation of the Greek forces from Smyrna after their defeat by the Turkish army in 1922. In a brief two-page story, Hemingway captures the horrors of war, yet he renders the small details and the attitudes of those who witnessed the tragedies at the Turkish port.

The memoir of a kitchen corporal proceeding with his drunken battery of men toward the front lines in World War I precedes the Chapter I story, "Indian Camp," in which Nick Adams and his father, a doctor, interrupt a camping trip with Nick's Uncle to attend to an Indian woman who is having a baby. After Nick's father successfully performs a Caesarean section on the woman, his exhilaration at saving her life is destroyed by the shock of discovering that her husband has committed suicide at some time before or during the operation.

The memoir heading up Chapter II, "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," sketches a scene in the evacuation of Greeks from Adrianople, an incident that ties into the Smyrna evacuation described earlier. The short story is told from the viewpoint of Nick Adams. Nick's father has hired Dick Boulton, a Mytis from the Indian Camp, to saw up some logs that have drifted onto his property from the log boom of a logging company. Nick's father loses his temper over Boulton's reference to the logs as "stolen property," and the two men almost come to fisticuffs, after which Boulton leaves. The incident creates a difference of opinion between Nick's father and mother, and Nick finds himself in the position of taking sides, even though he is just a boy.

Chapter III, "The End of Something," portrays a fishing trip taken by Nick and his teen-aged girlfriend, during which they break up, and Nick struggles with his angst over their split. The aftermath of the breakup is addressed in Chapter IV, when Nick is stormbound

with his close friend Bill, and Bill tries to put a positive twist on the breakup and convince Nick that he's better off.

In Chapter V, "The Battler," Nick is "riding the rails" when he gets thrown off a train by the brakeman, who punches him in the face. He takes refuge with a punch-drunk fighter and the fighter's hobo companion, a black man who feeds him and looks after him. The next memoir introducing Chapter VI, "A Very Short Story," is the first to mention Nick being wounded during combat and propped against a church wall. This memoir introduces a story that recounts a love affair between a wounded young man and his nurse, which ends by letter, as in fact did Hemingway's affair with his war nurse, Agnes von Kurowsky.

The memoir preceding Chapter VII, "Soldier's Home," sketches a vignette of a soldier cowering in a trench during a bombardment sweating and praying to Jesus to get him out of this and promising to believe in him, but after the soldier has survived, he tells no one about Jesus. In the subsequent story, a returned soldier named Krebs stays at home, does virtually nothing, except practice his clarinet and play pool. His religious mother forces him to lie to her that he loves her, when in truth he feels he doesn't love anybody. In the end he decides to leave home and get a job in Kansas City. In the memoir immediately following, which introduces Chapter VIII, "The Revolutionist," the narrator relates an incident in which two Kansas City cops see two Hungarians who have just robbed a cigar store. One of the officers shoots and kills both without asking any questions, thinking they are Italians and that no one will care. The following story paints a literary portrait of a Hungarian communist who travels through Italy to Switzerland and is arrested there.

The juxtaposition of memoir and story in Chapter IX, "Mr. and Mrs. Eliot" seems to have no logical connection. However, Hemingway is a writer who broods about life and the things in it. There is a great likelihood that the marriage of memoir and story here is meant to contrast the life-and-death stakes of the bull ring and its inhabitants, both bulls and matadors, with the sterile, effete existence and behavior of puritans who would be artists. The memoir in this case portrays an incident when two of the three bullfighters in an afternoon are both inept and unlucky, and the younger, third matador is left the task of killing five bulls.

It could be argued that this chapter is the one in which Hemingway makes his strongest fictional statement about what it takes to be a "real" literary artist, and he makes this statement by means of what could be considered a cautionary tale. The short story sketches the life of Hubert Elliot, a prissy postgraduate student and poet, who at 25 years of age is saving himself for the woman he will marry, and he does marry--a woman very like himself in moral behavior and life experience.

When they travel abroad to live in France and Hubert fails to impregnate his wife, he imports a friend of hers from the tea shop where she worked. In the end, Hubert sleeps in a separate bedroom, works late on his book of poetry, which he pays to have published, and the two women sleep together. The final sentence of the story says, "Elliot drank white wine and Mrs. Elliot and the girl friend made conversation and they

were all quite happy." The story presents the facts of Hubert's career, but the voice behind the presentation of the facts is ripe with veiled contempt for this arid life and its pretensions of literary achievement.

This chapter is not only a statement about how not to be a real artist, but it is also the pivotal point of the book, inasmuch as it leaves the war and wartime behind and moves on to a post war phase when the narrator is in Europe, drinking in the exciting events of a continent recovering from a world-altering conflict. The writer who narrates has an unabashed obsession with the bull ring and those connected with this deadly "entertainment."

Again in Chapter X, "Cat in the Rain," the chapter page deals with the bull ring and a horse, gored by the bull, that is brought to its feet and tries to move its rider into contact with the bull. The chapter itself is a poignant story about a childless woman at a hotel, who wishes to rescue a stray cat stranded in the rain, but fails, ending up with a calico house cat delivered to her by the manager of the hotel.

On the first page of Chapter XI, "Out of Season," a matador performs ineptly in the ring and is humiliated by the crowd, one of whom cuts off his braided pigtail and swings it around. In the story that follows, a young gentleman and his wife are staying at the hotel, and the husband hires the town drunk to be their guide on a fishing trip. They are the butt of humor as they trek through the town, and it seems as if the wife and husband are out of sorts with each other because the wife will follow only some distance behind the husband, as if she might not even be with him.

The drunken guide insists that she walk with them, the husband stops so she can catch up, and then eventually she decides she won't walk any further and returns to the hotel. When they arrive at the fishing place, the young gentleman and the guide get set to fish and discover that the young husband doesn't have any sinkers, and they are forced to return. When they reach the hotel, the guide asks for money as an advance for the next day, and the young gentleman gives him some money, but says that he probably won't go fishing, anyway.

In Chapter XII, "Cross-Country Snow," Nick Adams and his friend, George, go Alpine skiing, enjoying the beauty and freedom of it and the thrill of speeding through the snowy landscape. At the inn, part-way down the mountain, they stop for a bottle of wine and talk about how the girls in this area don't get married until they are pregnant. Then the talk turns to George's plans to go back to the states and go to college. George asks Nick about his wife, Helen, who is going to have a baby in late summer. The talk turns to whether or not they will ever go skiing again. Maybe they will, and maybe they won't, but when they go outside to collect their skis, they realize with pleasure that they will have this last run home.

Chapter XIII, "My Old Man," changes pace to a new background, the racetrack, told from the viewpoint of a young boy whose father is a jockey. The young boy follows his father along the circuit during the racing season. At first, they race in Italy, but then his father gets involved in something crooked, loses his license, and has to get it back

again when they move to a smaller city in France. His father continues to race until one night, there is an accident on the track and the young boy sees his father take a spill. His father dies, and later when they are taking the body away, the boy overhears some other jockeys talking about how they think the boy's father deserved what he got because of the ..."stuff he's pulled."

Chapter XIV opens with a memoir that echoes against the theme of the previous story. The memoir concerns the death of a matador named Maera, who dies a gruesome death in the bullring. The chapter itself, however, is entitled, "Big Two-Hearted River: Part I" and returns to Nick Adams, after the war, going on a solo trout fishing trip in Northern Michigan and camping out in areas where he used to go before he went overseas. A fire has raged over a great part of the area, leaving devastation reminiscent of the war itself, and Nick has to walk much farther than intended to get past the burn.

Eventually, he finds a place to camp. His trip through the blackened landscape, his connection with the wilderness, and his ability to survive alone in it are all detailed in exquisitely simple prose, the effect of which rests on an accumulation of tiny precise details. This use of detail and its subtle effect on the reader create a sense of reality that goes beyond ordinary storytelling because while the reader is focused on the detail itself, there is an unmistakable impression of a man who is compelled to escape from things in his past that haunt him.

The final chapter, Chapter XV, continues the story of Nick's trek into the wilderness of Northern Michigan. Again, the memoir introducing the chapter continues the theme of violence that has been increasing since the first-chapter memoir about the narrator's being a kitchen corporal on a march with his unit to the front lines, in which violence and death was not even alluded to, except to mention that they were a long way from their destination, the front lines of the war. In this memoir, the subject is the state execution of a Chicago Mafioso, Sam Cardinella, whose fear was so great he had to be carried to the gallows and thereafter tied into a chair on the trap because he couldn't, or wouldn't stand. The ensuing short story, entitled, "Big Two-Hearted River: Part II," stands in sharp contrast to the memoir. Nick's experience is described in obsessive detail, and the details are, for the most part, mundane: how he catches grasshoppers for bait, how he makes coffee and cooks pancakes for himself, how he ties the leader to his fly casting line and attaches the grasshopper for bait, how he searches for a good place to catch the bigger trout, how the trout behave in which type of water at which time of day and year, tow two trout are caught, and how they are prepared for eating.

The final memoir, *L'Envoi*, is tacked onto the end of the book, and concerns a visit to the King of Greece the narrator made as he tended the palace garden, accompanied by his wife because they have been confined to the palace grounds.

# "On the Quai at Smyrna"

## "On the Quai at Smyrna" Summary

This story acts as an introduction or prelude to the book and takes place in 1922 at the port of Smyrna in what is now Turkey. At the time, the Greek army has invaded Turkey but has been repulsed by the Turks. An agreement has been made to let the Greek army and civilian refugees evacuate the city. So while the Greek army is in the process of withdrawing and evacuating the city, thousands of Greek civilian evacuees have massed on the docks in a desperate attempt to escape the city before the Turks take complete control of it.

The unnamed person recounting the incidents that are happening is an American officer serving aboard the U.S. cutter *Simpson*, now in a "stand down" state in the harbor, which means that orders have been given for the *Simpson* not to participate or interfere in any of the action. The officer recounts how the refugees on the "quai" or dock start to scream every night just at midnight. Why they do this, he doesn't know, but the sailors aboard the *Simpson* have adopted the habit of running their searchlight up and down on the evacuees two or three times, and then they stop screaming.

Then the officer tells several incidents he has experienced: having to pretend to punish one of his men by sending him back to the ship because the man was falsely accused of insulting a Turkish officer and being fired upon with blank shells by the Turkish battery near the shore, after which Kemal Attaturk, the Turkish commander, came into town and fired the Turkish officer, who was "getting above himself."

The worst thing, the officer says, is the women with dead babies who won't give them up but would just carry them around for 5 or 6 days. He expresses some admiration and surprise at other women who actually give birth after they got onto the ship. "Surprising how few of them died. You just covered them over with something and let them go to it."

Finally, the officer recounts how the Greek military unloaded their mules, and then broke the front legs of these animals and pushed them off the dock into the shallow water.

## "On the Quai at Smyrna" Analysis

This is an extremely short story, two pages long, but thematically, it possesses qualities that make it appropriate for the introduction to a book that is meant to be a series of experiences connected by subtle thematic threads. The title, *In Our Time,* suggests that the content of the stories will attempt to define an era focused in the present or at least the recent past.

The subject of this chapter is one of embarkation, and it features the predicament of human beings caught up in a time of turmoil and having to go elsewhere, either to escape death or imprisonment or as part of a duty one must fulfill, as in the cases of the

soldiers and sailors present there. Thus, the inherent nature of the story sets the stage for a series of stories which have as their subjects the effects that war has upon the characters portrayed in the individual stories.

The final event, that of the crippling of the pack mules, shocks the reader into a realization of the cruelty that must always attend armed conflict, but somewhat shocking, too, is the attitude of the officer relating the account. He has obviously adopted a callous attitude, perhaps to protect himself from the psychological effects of all the cruel events he has witnessed, and in fact he does say that this is the first time in his life that he has dreamt about things that have happened. His final words drip with irony and sarcasm. He says, "It was all a pleasant business. My word yes a most pleasant business."

# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

The layout of the chapters in the book is that each short story is preceded by a "chapter page" on which the number of the chapter is given, and then a short memoir appears as one or sometimes a few paragraphs in italics on the page.

Memoir--The narrator tells about a time when he was a kitchen corporal moving up to the front at night during the First World War with his unit. The Lieutenant is so drunk he has trouble sticking to the road and keeps riding his horse out into the field. The Lieutenant then rides back and chides the narrator about keeping the fire going in his kitchen even though they are 50 kilometers from the front.

Story--This chapter is entitled "Indian Camp," and relates an incident from the early life of a character named Nick Adams, whose life parallels that of Hemingway.

Nick is on a fishing trip with his father and his Uncle George, but their sojourn has been interrupted by two men who come to get Nick's father, a doctor, and bring him by rowboat to their camp, where they and their families live while the men are working as bark peelers for a logging company. One of their women is in labor that has gone on for 2 days with no result, and she is in a very perilous state.

When they arrive at the camp, they find the woman in a lower wooden bunk. Her husband, in the bunk above her, cut his foot badly with an axe a few days earlier.

The woman is having trouble with a breech birth that will not allow her to deliver the baby naturally. She is in great pain and screams repeatedly. Nick's father, with the assistance of Nick and his Uncle George, uses a jackknife to perform a successful caesarean section on the woman and deliver her baby. Then he sews her up, using fishing line for sutures.

Nick's father is exhilarated at saving her life, and makes a comment that this episode is one for the medical journal. During the operation, Nick's Uncle George has been bitten by the Indian woman while he was holding her down to keep her from moving in her extreme pain. George now leans against the wall looking at his wound, and not only is *un*willing to join in this mood of triumph, but he makes a sarcastic comment, "Oh, you're a great man, all right," he says to Nick's father.

The elated feeling Nick's father is experiencing is destroyed by the shock of discovering that the woman's husband has committed suicide by slitting his own throat with a straight razor and has bled to death on the upper bunk while the operation was being performed. Immediately Nick's father orders Uncle George to take Nick out of the room.

On the way home Nick's father apologizes for having put Nick through such an "awful mess." Nick asks about whether ladies always have a hard time bearing babies, and

whether many men kill themselves, and his father says not very many. Then Nick asks why the man killed himself, and Nick's father replies, "I don't know, Nick. He couldn't stand things, I guess."

Then Nick asks about Uncle George and where he went. Nick's father answers only that George will "turn up," and the reader is left to guess that George probably felt too shaken by the incidents at the Indian Camp to join Nick and his father on the trip home.

It's sunrise, and Nick looks around at the lake, at a bass jumping, making a circle in the water, and he gets a feeling that he will never die.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

Memoir--The memoir that opens this chapter doesn't deal with combat, but it creates the feeling that death is much closer than the narrator thinks mostly because the Lieutenant has gotten drunk, one suspects, because of the fear of what will happen when they reach their destination. The Lieutenant is portrayed as being weak in the face of his fear because he keeps stopping by the narrator's kitchen to pester him about not keeping the fire lit, so that they will not be observed by the enemy, even though they are 50 kilometers from the front. The narrator, in the way he recounts the incident, cannot conceal his feeling that the Lieutenant's weakness is unmanly, perhaps even contemptible.

Story--The author sets, in counterpoint to this almost comic episode, the civilian story about the Indian woman in the painful grip of a breech birth, who is saved from death by Nick's father, only to lose her husband because he could not bear the agony his wife was going through. The themes are life and death, and one can presume that the kitchen corporal in the memoir is the grown-up Nick Adams, who must have been profoundly impressed by being present at a birth and death at the same time, so much so that, as a young child will, he rejects the possibility that he himself will ever die. Now, ironically, that same person must soon face the reality that death *is* a possibility, and he is in the process of forming his attitudes about how fear fits into this real possibility that one may die.

As the book progresses, the reader will be acutely aware of the recurring presence of the central themes introduced in this story--death, the fear of it, and the merit of facing it in a manly way, of not showing cowardice, even though one feels terribly afraid.

# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Memoir--The scene is set in Adrianople, where Greek civilians fill the muddy roads for miles, their belongings loaded on carts carrying everything they own. There seems to be no end to the line of people. The rain comes down, and on one of the carts, a woman is giving birth while a young girl holds a blanket over her and cries, sick with fear, looking at the baby being born.

Story--The short story is entitled, "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." Nick's father has hired a few Indians from the camp to come and cut up some logs that have drifted onto his property from the log boom of a logging company. Among the men who come to work is Dick Boulton, a Mytis, who insists upon calling the logs stolen property, even though they are flotsam that will almost certainly never be reclaimed and are only going to get waterlogged and rot on the doctor's property.

To continue the insult to the doctor, Boulton washes one of the logs off and notes the mark of the scaler's hammer in the end of the log. The doctor snaps at him that he better not saw it up then. Boulton replies "I don't care who you steal from. It's none of my business." After several of these contentious exchanges over Boulton's reference to the logs as "stolen property," Nick's father loses his temper when Boulton keeps referring to him as "Doc," and says he'll knock Boulton's eye teeth down his throat if he calls him "Doc" one more time. Boulton, a big man, who likes to fight, retorts, "Oh no, you won't, Doc." Nick's father turns and walks up the hill to the cottage, and the Indians pack up their gear and leave.

In the house, the doctor goes to his bedroom (he and his wife have separate bedrooms), and loads his shotgun, and then unloads it again, leaving the shells spread on the bed. Nick's mother probes at her husband about what happened with Boulton. Eventually, the doctor tells her that Boulton owes him money and picked a quarrel so he wouldn't have to do the job just to pay the debt. Nick's mother rejects this idea, saying she just doesn't believe that a person would deliberately do such a thing.

When the doctor decides to go for a walk, his wife asks him to tell Nick that she wants to see him. Outside, the doctor runs across Nick, propped up against a tree reading a book. Nick would rather go with his father than go to see his mother, so the doctor takes Nick with him.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Memoir--In the memoir the theme of birth is again presented in the form of a refugee woman on a cart who gives birth while a young girl holds a blanket over her and cries. The theme of birth has now been woven into the stories three times. The other two

times included the instance of women giving birth in the hold of the ship and the birth by caesarean section in the Indian camp.

Story--It is significant to note that, although the major conflict in the chapter occurs between Nick's father and Dick Boulton, the story is entitled, "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." It seems to be obvious that the doctor's interpretation of the events between Dick Boulton and him is accurate. Boulton deliberately taunts the doctor about the ownership of the logs and insists upon saying that the doctor is stealing the logs, which is not the case at all since they are on his property, and the logging company has made no effort to retrieve them. Then when Boulton sees that the doctor is irked at being called "Doc" he continues and even increases the frequency of the word, until the doctor loses his temper, and makes a threat he can't carry out, since Boulton is obviously the bigger and stronger man.

Obviously, Nick's father is upset, and he goes to his bedroom, gets out his shotgun, and then loads and unloads it. What is his intent? To go hunting? Is he contemplating retaliation in some way against Boulton, or is it just that handling the weapon and thinking about its power somehow soothes his humiliation at the hands of Boulton.

It is at this time that the source of the real conflict of the story surfaces--the estrangement of the Doctor from his wife and she from him. The author makes a point of noting that she has a separate bedroom and in that bedroom there is a night table that bears her Bible and certain religious magazines, the emblems of her religious commitment to Christian Science. Since her belief is the antithesis of doctoring, it is obviously not shared by her husband, just as there is no bed that they share.

When she probes at him from the interior of her darkened bedroom, she interrogates him from afar. She does not come into the room and confront him, but she *does* set herself up as self-righteously superior to him when she says, "Remember that he who ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." Their whole verbal combat is peppered with conversational niceties that are not really sincere, as in the constant repetition of the word "Dear," which in this conversation takes on an opposite meaning to the one usually attributed to the word.

This contest between the spouses concludes with an attempt to make Nick the winner's trophy when his mother asks the doctor to tell Nick that she wants him, and the doctor relays the message to Nick. This time, Nick's father "wins" by readily encouraging Nick's natural preference for taking a walk rather than entering the darkened den of his mother and facilitating a minor victory for her over his father.

# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

Memoir--the narrator is with his unit in combat near Mons, France. They are dug in near a garden wall, and when a German soldier, heavily laden with his equipment, tries to climb over the wall, they shoot him. The narrator is close enough to see the expression of surprise on the solder's face as he is hit with the bullet. Then three other German soldiers try to climb over the wall in another place, and they are shot as well. The narrator concludes by saying, "They all came just like that," suggesting that many other attacking German soldiers were shot in the same way.

Story--The story, "The End of Something," that follows the foregoing memoir takes place in Northern Michigan near Charlevoix. Nick Adams is a young man now, and the story begins as Nick and his girlfriend Marjorie are rowing near the shore of the lake, headed for a point where they intend to set night lines for trout. They pass the remnants of a defunct lumber mill that ceased operations when the supply of suitable trees ran out. Marjorie says, "There's our old ruin, Nick," and they talk about whether Nick remembers when the mill was in operation. She comments that it seems like a castle. Nick doesn't reply, but rows on out of sight of the mill.

Marjorie trolls for fish while Nick rows. Along the way, they see trout jumping, and Nick circles the boat, trying to drag the lure past the fish to catch one but without success. When they arrive at the point, they set their night lines, propping the rods up with driftwood, and then set about making a fire. As Nick gathers driftwood for the fire, Marjorie, sensing that he is brooding about something, asks him what's wrong with him, and he answers that he doesn't know.

They light the fire, and then settle themselves on a blanket, and Marjorie starts to unpack a lunch. Nick tells her he's not hungry, but she coaxes him to eat. When Nick mentions there will be a moon coming up, and she says she knows it, he snaps at her that she always knows everything. She tells him not to be "that way," and he persists with his accusation that she always puts on an air as if she knows everything, when in fact he has taught her everything she knows.

Then she blandly tells him to shut up, that the moon is rising, and she prods him to reveal to her what's bothering him. His answer is that "it" isn't fun anymore. She asks him whether or not love is fun, and he says no. She gets up, walks away, and tells him she's taking the boat and that he can walk back around the point. He lies down beside the fire with his face in the blanket and listens to her rowing away. After some time, his friend Bill arrives, asks whether his talk with Marjorie has gone "all right," and whether there was a scene. Nick says no and then tells Bill to go away for a while.

# Chapter 3 Analysis

Memoir--The memoir plainly and simply describes the way that lives are ended cheaply in combat. In fact, the narrator, when describing how the first German soldier is shot, says, 'We waited until he got one leg over [the wall] and then potted him." The use of the word "potted" is reminiscent of target practice or shooting small game or birds. The casual attitude of the narrator toward the death of the enemy soldiers is striking partly because it's unexpected and partly because it seems to be a pose of toughness or deliberate lack of emotional response to death.

In the light of the story that is about to follow, this memoir is extraordinarily apt, since the focus of the reader is directed toward the subject of literal death in the killing of the German soldiers and toward the inner deadness of emotion in the narrator, which prepares the reader for a moment in Nick's life--perhaps the first of such moments--when he feels emotionally dead.

Story - "The End of Something" begins in a rather conventional way, with the description of a setting in which the remnants of the Michigan town of Horton's Bay is detailed. The demise of the once-thriving lumbering business is described in textured detail, telling how the lumber stood stacked in the yard in piles that were transported away, along with the equipment, on schooners whose sails filled as they moved out into the open lake, carrying away everything that once made the town viable. This conventional description is much more than a mere description of background for a story.

The deep essence of the story itself deals with how things end and to a certain extent, why they end. Thus, immediately, the link is made between the end of life described in the opening memoir and the end of life of a town that once thrived. Only then does the story move to the characters of his story as they observe the ruins of the mill on their way past in their rowboat.

Only the "bones," white limestone foundations, of the mill remain, and Marjorie, Nick's girlfriend, makes a comment that is both observant and prophetic. She says, "There's our old ruin." The use of the word "our" is so natural and colloquial in the context of her comment that a reader might not think about it twice, but if one stops ponder it, it's loaded with information and significance.

First, that one word gives us the information that Nick and Marjorie have a relationship that has been going on for a while, at least long enough that they must have passed this way on more than one occasion for them to assume some sort of ownership over what's left of the mill. More important, though, it presages what is to come. Their relationship will, in a sense, "sail away" just as the necessary equipment that gave Horton's Bay its life sailed away years before. Marjorie will take the rowboat after Nick has ended their relationship and will leave him on the shore. Whether or not one ought to extend the metaphor to think of Nick as a ruin, like the mill, is a moot point, but certainly the relationship that Nick and Marjorie had is in ruins, and in the same way that Marjorie took ownership of the mill remains by calling it "our old ruin," both of them will own the memory and the effect of the end of their time together.

Second, the end of the story brings the reader back to the examination of the emotions a human being may have as a result of experiencing the "end of something." The narrator of the memoir is, or pretends to be, dead to any emotion connected with the death of other men, which is fully embodied in his phrase "we potted them." Nick's reaction to the end of his love for Marjorie is a contrasting opposite. When she leaves, he goes back to the blanket by the fire and lies down, covering his face. The suggestion is that he is overcome with emotion and is weeping. When his friend, Bill, arrives and wants to chat about how the breakup went, the reader learns that Nick has revealed earlier to Bill his intent to break with Marjorie. Nick, however, is probably uncomfortable with showing his feelings and fears letting Bill see his inability to hide his emotional state, and he shoos Bill away for a while.

# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

Memoir--the narrator, with his infantry unit, describes a barricade, which he calls "absolutely topping," that they have jammed across a bridge to block the passage of the enemy. The narrator is pleased about their efforts because the barricade is a heavy, old wrought-iron grating that their riflemen can shoot through, but which forces the enemy soldiers to climb up and over. Then he describes how, after "potting" the enemy soldiers for a time from 40 yards away, they were "frightfully put out" about having to fall back.

Story--"The Three-Day Blow," picks up some time after Nick's breakup with Marjorie. The weather is probably too cold to go out in the boat because Nick crosses through an orchard where the fruit has all been picked, and the fall wind blows through the bare trees. Nick visits Bill, who is alone at his cottage, while his father has gone out hunting. The two boys sit in front of the fire, which roars in the fireplace on account of the wind, and drink Irish whiskey while Nick dries his wet shoes. They talk about the smoky taste of the whiskey, baseball, the books they are reading, and how good the writers are. Then they decide to get drunk, but Bill comments that his father only likes him to drink from bottles that are already open. His father says that opening bottles is what makes drunkards. Nick has never thought of it like that. He has always thought that drinking alone makes drunkards. The boys talk about the fact that Bill's dad drinks and that Nick's does not. Nick comments that his dad has missed a lot in life, and Bill comments that *his* dad has had his troubles, so it all evens out.

Nick gets up to put a log on the fire, mostly to prove that he's not drunk and can be practical. Then Bill searches out an open bottle of Scotch and pours more drinks. The conversation turns to fishing, and they drink to that--better than baseball, they agree. Bill ventures the opinion that Nick was wise to break off with Marjorie, because if he hadn't, he'd be back home now trying to earn enough money to get married. Bill points out the fact that Nick would have been marrying Marjorie's bossy mother, but suddenly, Nick feels a rush of emotion at the thought that he has sent Marjorie away and will probably never see her again. He says to Bill, "I don't know why it was. I couldn't help it. Just like when the three-day blows come now and rip all the leaves off the trees."

Then Nick says it was his fault and that he probably shouldn't talk about it. Bill agrees and comments that if Nick allows himself to think about it, he might get back into it again--meaning the relationship. This thought lightens Nick's mood because he likes the thought that nothing is finished, nothing ever lost.

They take two shotguns and go outside with the intent of hunting, but realize that with the wind as high as it is, birds will just lie in the grass, so they strike out toward the orchard. Being outside makes Nick feel that the "business" with Marjorie doesn't seem so tragic. It seems as if the wind has blown all that away. They hear the thud of Bill's

dad's shotgun and head out to meet him. On the way, Nick thinks he could still go into town Saturday night. He could still hold in reserve the idea of getting back with Marjorie.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

Memoir--The opening memoir in this chapter is, if anything, *more* detached emotionally from death and killing than the previous one in which the narrator told about shooting German soldiers coming over a garden wall. The situation here is similar--there is a barricade that the enemy soldiers must climb over to advance, but the mood is different, the tone of the narration is different, and the narrator seems to have adopted a self-congratulatory tone about setting up what amounts to a deathtrap for the enemy.

In his description of the barricade, he comments that it was "simply priceless," and the fact that one could shoot through the wrought iron, over which the enemy would have to climb, was "absolutely topping." The memoir ends with a petulant tone as his unit is described as being "frightfully put out" at being forced to pull back and abandon this killing field. Unlike the narrator of the first story in the book "On the Quai at Smyrna," who speaks with sarcasm when he makes comments like, "It was all a pleasant business," the narrator here is *genuinely* delighted about being able to trap the enemy soldiers on the bridge and shoot them down like pigeons in a shooting gallery.

Story--Again, it becomes clear that in this story, "The Three-Day Blow," a sequel to the previous story, the connection between the memoir and the work that follows has been precisely and carefully chosen, not necessarily on the basis of content, but on the basis of tone. Both the memoir and the story have an overall feeling of juvenility, of adolescent attitudes, and of exaggerated poses. The latently boastful tone of the narrator of the memoir matches perfectly with the swaggering attitude of the two youths as they drink too much of the adults' whiskey and air their untried opinions on everything from peat (supposedly the source of the smoky taste of Irish whiskey) to the wisdom of purchases made by the manager of a baseball team, to the "rightness" of Nick's breaking off with Marjorie.

When Nick thinks about what happened and tries to express his thoughts to Bill, he likens his behavior to the storms they call 3-day blows, which are sudden and tumultuous and rip the leaves off the trees. Nick has been disturbed by the fact that he doesn't truly understand what he did. He can't seem to apply any kind of logic to it.

At the culmination of the story, Nick is able to achieve a kind of release from his deep-seated sense of sorrow and loss described in "The End of Something,' only when Bill suggests that it might be possible for Nick to get back into the relationship with Marjorie if he starts thinking about it too much. Nick, rather than taking this as a warning, realizes that he feels better now that he sees that his breakup with Marjorie doesn't have the finality that assumed it had.

# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

Memoir--The narrator describes an event that happened at the end of Greece's war with Turkey. Six cabinet ministers about to be executed were brought out into a courtyard covered with wet dead leaves and placed against the wall of a hospital. One of the ministers has typhoid fever and cannot stand, so he is left to sit in a pool of water, head on his knees until the first volley is fired.

Story--The short story in this chapter is named "The Battler." It takes place at a time when Nick Adams is "riding the rails," hitching rides on trains without paying the fare. A great many out-of-work men made a practice of moving from place to place by rail. Nick has been sucker-punched by a brakeman and knocked down beside the track to prevent him from riding the train. He ends up fingering a black eye and walking the tracks. He catches another train and then gets off and walks some more until he sees a fire burning near the track.

When Nick comes up to the fire, he finds a man sitting by it looking into the flames. They talk a little about the brakeman who hit Nick, and the man says he saw the same brakeman riding past slapping his arms and singing--probably happy about what he had done to Nick. Then Nick gets closer to the man by the fire and sees that the man's face is misshapen, his eyes are slits, his nose is sunken, and one ear is missing entirely. The man rambles on about his prizefighting career, boasting about how he could "take it," and then he tells Nick his name is Ad Francis, a name Nick recognizes.

Ad invites Nick to sit, and says, "I'm not quite right," and then he adds, "I'm crazy." According to his story, Ad was able to beat his opponents because he had such a slow heartbeat, and he insists that Nick take his pulse, which turns out to be 40 beats per minute. Then a black man named Bugs joins them, carrying some food that he proceeds to prepare for cooking.

It seems as if Bugs travels with Ad and looks after the old battler. Bugs offers to share the food with Nick, and he melts grease in a frying pan that he holds over the fire. Bugs asks Nick to cut some bread he has brought, and when Nick gets out his knife, Ad asks him to give it to him. Bugs intervenes and orders Nick not to give the knife to Ad, who sits back and sulks. When the food is ready, Ad ignores the food and starts up a rant at Nick for not letting him have the knife. Ad stands and tries to get Nick to take a slug at him, which Nick refuses to do.

While Ad taunts Nick, Bugs sneaks up behind Ad and hits him with a sap, a leather blackjack, knocking the old fighter out. Bugs carries the man back to the fire, splashes his face with water and leaves him to come to. Nick asks Bugs what drove the man crazy, and Bugs tells a strange story. Ad Francis had been traveling with a woman who purportedly was his sister, and they got written up in all the papers as a brother and

sister act, but then one day they got married, and a lot of unpleasantness ensued until the woman left him. Bugs says that he met Ad in jail, and now he travels around with him because Ad has money that the woman who used to be his sister sends him. Then Bugs sends Nick on his way and wakes Ad Francis up to feed him a cup of coffee and listen to him complain about what an awful headache he has.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Memoir--The memoirs in *In Our Time* that deal with the Turkish-Greek war are the result of Hemingway's acquaintance with the war while working as a foreign correspondent for *The Toronto Star* newspaper. The cabinet ministers referred to in the memoir were executed near Athens on 28 November 1922.

In historical terms, this memoir follows earlier memoirs in the book. According to David Seed, quoted in *The Hemingway Review*, Spring 2000,for the case of the vignette about the execution of the cabinet ministers, Hemingway used two different newspaper accounts as sources for his material, but he added the element of the wet leaves to draw a similarity between them and dead humans. Leaves as symbols of death go all the way back to Homer's Iliad and recur regularly in other literature since then, and especially, as David Seed reports, in a poem by Ezra Pound, whom Hemingway knew personally, and from whom he may have gotten the reference.

Looking back, it should be noted that there is a strong reference to leaves in association with the end of Nick Adams' relationship with his girlfriend in "The Three Day Blow," which can hardly be a coincidence; therefore, one can assume that Hemingway used such references deliberately, as part of his writer's craft.

Story-- "The Battler" departs from the tone of the previous story, "The Three-Day Blow," in the sense that it portrays a more somber, more serious, and in most ways more mature, Nick Adams than the Nick who inhabits "The Three-Day Blow" This is a younger Nick who gets drunk in an adolescent fashion and emerges with a light shrug-it-off attitude toward his former girlfriend. "The Battler" is a return to the type of story seen earlier in the book when Nick was a young boy. Nick again becomes principally an observer of the central story, which tells the tale of man, Ad Francis, who was at one time a sports hero, a man who exhibited a great deal of courage, night after night, and whose face and brain are both scrambled and who is being looked after by a black companion named Bugs.

The story has strong parallels with earlier stories, particularly with "The End of Something." At the center of the story about Ad Francis is a broken relationship between Ad and his wife, who has left him but continues to send him money to live on. Second, the action center of "The Battler" hinges upon one man challenging another to fight. The same kind of action is the pivotal point of "The Doctor and The Doctor's Wife," in which Dick Boulton challenges Nick's father to fight him. Unlike his father, Nick does not exactly back down but is saved from a decision by Bugs.

As broken and battered as Ad is, he still maintains a man's pride and a certain kind of dignity. When he asks to use Nick's knife, and Nick obeys Bugs' admonition not to give Ad the knife, Ad is insulted and reacts in the only way he knows to defend his honor. He challenges Nick to take a swing at him, after which, presumably, although older and smaller, he will use his boxing skills to pummel Nick to suit his pleasure. Even so, with the size, weight, and age advantage that Nick has, the outcome of such an altercation can never be certain. This type of "heroism," if that is what it is, becomes the standard for many of the later Hemingway heroes, men who will fight or struggle for their goals even when the odds are against them.

One of the themes of the story is the question, "What constitutes strength of character?" Hemingway sets up contrasts in the story to challenge the reader to draw conclusions. At the beginning the reader learns about the Brakeman who suckers Nick into thinking he is going to help him in some way, but then when Nick gets close enough, the Brakeman punches him without warning.

Then, later, a parallel occurs when Ad, who would dearly like to clobber Nick, instead invites Nick to take the first swing. In almost anybody's moral universe, the Brakeman's act is seen as cowardly, and Ad's act is seen as a kind of flawed courage. When Bugs knocks Ad out to keep him from fighting and possibly getting hurt or hurting someone else and then cares for him, Hemingway portrays a more nurturing strength of character. Even though Bugs reveals that he's looking after Ad Francis because Ad has a regular income on which they both can travel around and live, this motive is not likely to diminish a reader's respect because Bugs' actions show a surprising respect for Ad, and Bugs later proves the quality of his innate generosity when, as he asks Nick to leave, he gives Nick a sandwich so that Nick won't go hungry.

# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Memoir--Nick has been wounded, shot in the spine, and he is carried to the wall of a church and sits leaning against it. Rinaldi, his friend, is beside him, lying face down. Nick looks ahead and sees a house with the wall fallen away, and two dead Austrians lying in the rubble in the shade of the house. The combat unit is making progress, getting forward in the town. Nick waits for the stretcher bearers who ought to be along soon. He turns and speaks to Rinaldi, who is having trouble breathing. He tells Rindali that the two of them have made a separate peace. Nick says, "Not patriots." Then he turns away, smiling through his sweat and thinks that Rinaldi is a disappointing audience.

Story--This is the first time in the book that a story follows literally from the memoir. "A Very Short Story" picks up Nick in the hospital where he is recovering from his wounds. Again, the fictional story closely parallels Hemingway's life experience of being in a hospital to recover and having an affair with his nurse, Agnes von Kurowsky. Whether or not at the time he wrote *In Our Time*, Hemingway was not ready to delve into this material deeply or whether he simply did not have the time to develop it, the story in this book is indeed a very short story, all of two pages. In time, he will write *A Farewell to Arms*, in which this material is expanded into a full-sized book, with much more detail and different characters, and the book will be a best-seller, so it is interesting to see the seeds of the book here in this account of the hospitalized wounded officer. The story opens with Nick on the roof of the hospital with his nurse Luz in Padua, where he can see over the town and watch the swifts as they fly home.

Luz has stayed on night duty for 3 months so that she can be with him every night. After he is somewhat recuperated and can walk, he sometimes gets up and does her few chores for her so that she can stay in his bed. Before he goes back to the front, he prays with her, and thinks about wanting to get married to her, but there is no time to read the banns and prepare everything for a wedding. She writes him many letters, but he doesn't get to read them until after the armistice. They are mostly about how much she loves him and misses him at night.

When they get together after the armistice, they agree that he will go home and get a job and that she will come and meet him in New York to get married. On the train to Milan, they quarrel, and when it comes time for them to part, the quarrel is not yet over, and he feels sick about leaving her that way. He goes on his journey by boat and she goes to Pordenone to open a hospital. After he is home, she writes to him that she is going to marry the major of the battalion and that she still loves Nick, but it was boy and girl love, and he will get over it and have a great career. Nick does not answer her letter, and the Major doesn't marry her. A short time later, Nick contracts gonorrhea from a sales girl while riding through Lincoln Park in a taxicab.

# Chapter 6 Analysis

Memoir--Nick behaves much as one expects he would, putting on an air of bravado upon being wounded. In spite of his pain, he is able to banter with the nearly dead man beside him who can concentrate only on breathing. Nick smiles and makes an internal wisecrack about Rinaldi being a poor audience. It's almost as if he is treating his own injuries and Rinaldi's with the same detachment that the narrator of previous memoirs exhibited in relationship to the killing of German soldiers.

Story--This chapter is a turning point in the book because the focus of the storytelling now turns toward civilian life, although the impact of the war and its aftermath will not be forgotten, and its effects will linger. In spite of the declaration by Luz that what she and Nick had was "boy and girl love," it is not any such thing for Nick. He is deeply in love for the first time, and the effects of this affair, unlike his youthful relationship with Marjorie, are not likely to pass quickly. This time, not only has the *woman* broken off the affair, but she has diminished its importance by characterizing it the way she has, almost as puppy love. From what the reader already knows about Nick, it can be assumed that later, Nick has been drinking and has reached out for the nearest woman to share a slice of his life. The consequence of this rash behavior is a case of venereal disease, but the significance runs deeper and raises the question of whether or not Nick is punishing himself for falling in love and having his heart broken.

# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Memoir--The narrator tells about an unnamed soldier who cowers in a trench during a heavy bombardment, and throughout it all he prays continually to Jesus to keep him alive and keep him from getting killed. The soldier promises that he will believe in Jesus and tell everyone that Jesus is the only one that matters. Eventually, the shelling moves on down the line, the trench is repaired, and the soldiers go into town, where the soldier who prayed doesn't tell anybody about Jesus, not even the girl he goes upstairs with.

Story--"Soldier's Home" is an account of the type of adjustments to civilian lives that one soldier makes after returning home from the first World War in 1919. His name is Krebs, and he lives in Oklahoma in a small town. When he gets home, most of the other servicemen have already returned and talked about their experiences in the war, so to get any attention at all Krebs has to resort to telling lies about what happened to him. Mostly, they are just little lies, telling other men's exploits as his own or claiming ownership of the sorts of bizarre things that were supposed to have happened but could not be verified, like the tales of women being chained to German machine guns in the Argonne forest. Eventually, telling lies palls on him, and he stops talking about the war at all.

Basically, Krebs loafs, sleeps in, ambles to the library, plays his clarinet, and watches the girls. He thinks he would like to have a girl, but he isn't much interested in going to the trouble of courting any of them. He doesn't want to tell any more lies. He thinks that it isn't worth it because it is too much politics and intrigue. Mostly, he wants to live without any consequences. About a month after his return, his mother announces that he can have the car in the evenings, which his father never allowed before the war. The expectation in return is that Krebs will get a job and start driving around with some of the "nice girls" and will try to make something of himself and think of getting married like the other young men that have just returned.

When his mother says to him, "Don't you love your mother, dear boy?" Krebs says precipitously, "I don't love anybody," which makes his mother cry. He tries to tell her that he didn't mean her, but it's no use, and she carries on about how she held him next to her heart when he was a little baby. He begs her to believe him when he says he loves her, and she relents and then asks him to pray with her, but he can't pray, and she prays for him. He still wants his life to be uncomplicated. He will go to Kansas City and get a job, but he won't go and visit his father at his office as his mother asked him to do. He decides instead to watch his favorite sister play indoor baseball.

# Chapter 7 Analysis

Memoir--In the Second World War, and perhaps in the first one, too, there was an oft-quoted saying: "There are no atheists in foxholes." The soldier described in this memoir is horribly frightened at the prospect of death while the bombardment is going on. He prays and prays, and perhaps that is the only way he could stay sane, but when all the artillery shells stop dropping and he is no longer being shot at, he is too ashamed to tell anyone that he was terrified and too embarrassed to talk about Jesus as he had vowed he would do if he were spared. In placing this memoir with the story of Krebs, Hemingway, it appears, wishes to link the soldier and Krebs. Perhaps in the mind of the author, Krebs and the terrified soldier are one and the same. Knowing, or at least surmising, that Krebs *was* the soldier, gives the reader a special insight into the reason that Krebs behaves as he does.

Story--Almost all discharged combat troops suffer through a period of adjustment, which can be excruciating or stupefying, or paralyzing, or maddening, or can merely make the most resilient of them ill at ease for a period of time, not feeling that they really belong to this civilian life that they really don't recognize as being the way it was when they left for the front.

Krebs is no different. He has his special way of dealing with the condition that today is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. For a number of years, people have been trying to kill him. It takes more than a few weeks to get over it. All Krebs wants to do is make his life smooth and uncomplicated, and totally devoid of consequences. When his mother tries to force him to face the (minor, compared to what he faced in war) stress of getting a job and finding a girlfriend, he snaps and blurts out that he doesn't love anyone and then has to face the guilt of having hurt his mother deeply. That makes him decide that he will go away, but for now he will heal for a while by going to watch his sister play a game of indoor baseball.

# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

Memoir--In Kansas City, two cops see a couple of Hungarians who have just robbed a cigar store. One of the officers shoots and kills both without asking any questions, thinking they are Italians and that no one will care about "wops" getting killed. When his partner questions him about how he knew they were wops, he says he can tell them a mile away.

Story--"The Revolutionist" is not so much a story as a character sketch about one unusual Communist traveler at the end of the war, who was making his way through Italy by rail. The man carries a square of oilcloth from party headquarters vouching for the fact that he had been treated very badly by the "whites" in Budapest and asking sympathetic comrades to help him any way they can. He is shy and young, and the railroad men take kindly to him, not only passing him along to the next train and the next crew, but feeding him from behind the counter in the railway eating houses.

He loves Italy. The country is beautiful and he has visited a lot of towns, buying reproductions of paintings by Giotto, Masaccio, and Piero della Fancesca. The narrator of the story, who it seems is connected to the communist movement there, takes the young man on a trip with him to Romagna, and the young man asks about how the movement is going in Italy. Not very well, according to the narrator. The young man has a different view--very optimistic. He believes that Italy is the start of everything for the communist movement. The narrator drops him off at Bologna to board the train to Milano and then on to Aosta to walk over the pass to Switzerland. The narrator writes out some instructions about where to eat in Milano, adding the names of comrades there, but the young man is eager to get going while the weather is still good for hiking through the Alps. Then the narrator comments that his last news of the young man is that he is in a Swiss jail.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

Memoir--This shocking memoir highlights not only the extreme prevalence of racism in America, but also the ignorance about it coupled with arrogance, as in the instance of the police officer, who carries a self-important certainty that he can tell who is a "wop" and who is not.

The folly of that kind of certainty is deftly emphasized by the narrator's technique of introducing the two thieves as Hungarians at the very beginning of the piece before the officer shoots the men down. The unsaid irony of the memoir is that if the officer had known they were Hungarian, he would almost certainly have shot them anyway. Moreover, if he had been told after the fact, one can almost hear him say, "Wops, Hungarians--same difference."

Story--Criticisms of *In Our Time* tend toward the vein of condemning the content on the basis that the vignettes are not really stories and that the parts of the book are disconnected. Certainly, the sorts of connections that are made by Hemingway are not the sorts that readers were used to. As one can readily determine by reading the book, the connections are oblique, metaphorical, elliptical, and stubbornly indirect. Some critics immediately embraced the stylistic innovations that Hemingway was making, and others were more critical, even snide and scornful, of the lack of conventional form.

Hemingway anticipated changes in popular writing that were inevitable. He wrote the tight, plain, blunt prose that was to become the norm of newspapers and magazines for over 50 years into the future. The style that he foresaw and adopted for himself was well ahead of its time, and his practice of directly using the turbulent experience of his own life as the material for fictional characters was to become the norm in both fiction and non-fiction throughout the 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, and well beyond.

It is not at all surprising that a reader might finish this memoir and ensuing story and ask, "What's the point?" The point, one can well argue, is in the contrast between the memoir, and the "story." The treatment of the Hungarian communist revolutionary in Italy and the almost biblically exemplary kindness shown to him there are set in stark contrast to the treatment of the Hungarians in Kansas City, who are shot down because they are thought to be Italians. The whole piece, crafted in two parts, serves to define human behavior and morality truthfully, in about the length of a fable by Aesop, emphasizing the two faces of Good and Evil.

# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Memoir--This short piece embodies all the cruelty, ineptitude, courage, and madness attendant on the blood-sport of bullfighting. It begins with the performances of two less-than-skilled matadors, one who gets booed by the crowd when he gets a horn through his sword hand and cannot continue, and a second bullfighter, who slips and gets gored, leaps up and tries to punch the men who are carrying him away, and then faints. Since the bullfight can have only three matadors, the third fighter, a young man whom the narrator calls the kid, has to kill all the remaining bulls. At the end of this marathon of killing, the matador is so exhausted, he sits down in the sand and vomits while the crowd hoots and throws things down into the ring.

Story--The story, "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," paints a picture of the life of prudish postgraduate student and poet, Hubert Elliot, who at 25 years of age is "saving himself" for the woman he will marry, and does marry--a woman very like himself in moral behavior and life experience whom he has met in a tea shop that he frequents.

Hemingway opens the story with the sentence, "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot tried very hard to have a baby." This sentence epitomizes a certain puritanical approach to sexual relations, the purpose of which, in some quarters, is to procreate, not to please each other. Their wedding night is "disappointing," and Mr. Elliot goes out into the hallway to walk up and down and then returns, somewhat aroused, to the hotel room to find his wife asleep. It should be remembered that editors in the 1920's were often prudish, too, and frowned upon indelicate direct mention of practices like masturbation, which results in puzzlingly oblique descriptions in this story, such as, "Cornelia was asleep. He did not like to waken her and soon everything was quite all right and he slept peacefully."

In addition to trying to have a baby, the Elliots decide to go abroad to live. Mrs. Elliot, who is 40 years old, becomes violently ill on the voyage, and consequently, they don't try very hard to have a baby.

In spite of their efforts on the way to France, Hubert fails to impregnate his wife, and he settles down to writing poems, long poems that his wife Cornelia types. Hubert is very particular about errors and often makes her retype whole pages for the sake of one error. Hubert travels among a crowd of people who are all university educated, some of whom have attended universities in France. Many of those in his circle admire his poetry, and since he and Cornelia haven't yet had a baby, Cornelia prevails upon him to import, as a companion, a friend of hers who worked with her in the tea shop back home.

If early 1900's editors were chary about the mention of self-pleasuring and details of connubial behavior, they were even more antipathetic toward same-sex relationships.

Hemingway manages to complete his portrayal of the life of Hubert Elliot successfully without being explicit.

In the end, Hubert sleeps in a separate bedroom, works late on his book of poetry, which he pays to have published, and the two women sleep together in the big mediaeval bed. The final sentence of the story says "Elliot drank white wine and Mrs. Elliot and girl friend made conversation and they were all quite happy." The story sets out exquisitely chosen details, and deftly traces Hubert's career, such as it is, considering he is paying to be published, but the voice behind the presentation of the facts is ripe with pity and contempt for Hubert and his pretensions of literary achievement.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

Memoir--Hemingway saw his first bullfight in 1923 in Pamplona, Spain. Impressionable and in his early twenties, he had been writing since he was in high school, and as a result had developed his craft to a high degree for a man of his age. This short piece is not only emblematic of his style, but its locale, atmosphere, and sense of life and death is to become the basis of one of his greatest novels, *The Sun Also Rises*. This same material in a great more detail became the notebook for his non-fiction book, *Death in the Afternoon.*

This account of a not necessarily typical day at the bullfights centers on the contrast among the two bullfighters who are inept, careless, stupid, or unlucky, to the young kid, who is left to do their job for them, and who carries on bravely to the very last bull, even though he is almost fainting from the heat and exhaustion.

Story--The short story companion to the foregoing memoir could not be more of an opposite in almost every way, and one could certainly be forgiven for concluding that Hemingway deliberately attached such a "blood and guts" memoir to this particular portrait of the types of writers he scorned during his life. More than that, it could be argued that he intended the reader to think about professionals who are inept pretenders and their merit as compared with the true courageous and dedicated professionals who are not afraid to live life to the fullest and to face its best and worst.

If one imagines a comparison between Hemingway and the Hubert Elliots of the world, then the comparison is a parallel to the comparison of the first two matadors and the kid who finishes off their bulls in addition to his own. Whether or not Hemingway intended such a comparison literally is doubtful. It is more likely that he intended to paint as true a portrait as possible of the Elliots as they were, without comment.

# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Memoir--The material in *In Our Time* is strong stuff for any reader, but this memoir is perhaps the most gruesome and cruel, involving as it does a wounded animal being cruelly treated in the bull ring. A gored horse is forced to its feet, in spite of the fact that some of its intestines have extruded from its abdomen. The picador rides the bleeding wobbling mount forward so he can shake his lance at the bull, but the bull, perhaps confused by the blood and the strangeness of the animal before him, cannot make up his mind to charge.

Story--In "Cat in the Rain" an American couple is staying at an Italian Hotel near the sea. Their room on the second floor also faces a public garden and a war monument, where artists come in the good weather to paint the palms and the bright colors of the hotel. Italians come, too, from far away to admire the monument.

It is raining, and the American wife stands at the window looking down at the green tables below, under which a cat has taken shelter, crouching compactly so as to avoid the drips. The wife tells her husband that she's going to go down and rescue the cat. The husband half-heartedly offers to get it, but she seems to sense that he doesn't really want to, and she tells him, no, she'll get it, so he continues to lie on the bed, reading.

The hotel keeper, an old and very tall man bows to her as she comes down, and she passes a few sentences in Italian with him. She likes him very much, his seriousness, his dignity, his desire to serve her, and she liked his face and his hands. When she pauses at the door, ready to exit, the hotelkeeper sends a maid to her with an umbrella, and the two of them go outside, the maid holding the umbrella. The cat is not under the table any more, and the maid asks the wife if she has lost something. The wife tells her how much she wanted the kitty.

When the hotelkeeper bows to the wife as she passes him on the way back to her room, the wife experiences a momentary feeling of "supreme importance." Back in her hotel room, with her husband, who virtually ignores her, she feels no sense of importance. She asks her husband whether she should let her hair grow, and he says he likes it the way it is. She says she's sick of looking like a boy, and her husband says she looks nice, but she goes on that she wants to be able to pull it back in a bun that she can feel. Her husband's indifference provokes her to blurt out all the small mundane things that she wants: to eat with her own silverware, to brush her hair out in front of a mirror, to have candles, to have it be spring, and to have a kitty and some new clothes. Her husband finally says, "Oh, shut up and get something to read."

At that point someone comes to the door. When she opens it, the maid is there holding a calico cat, not the one in the rain, but a cat, and the maid tells the wife that the Padrone (hotel-keeper) asked her to bring it for the Signora.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

Memoir--This is the second of a cycle of six memoirs about bullfighting, which in their entirety, comprise a story line of their own, but which are disconnected in time from each other. During part of the period that Hemingway was writing this book, he was also staying in Pamplona and studying every aspect of this "sport," if it can be called that. Many people in Hemingway's time considered bullfighting a savage spectacle that should have been outlawed, and in our own age, a great many more people find it a barbarous pursuit that appeals to the basest parts of human nature and ought to be condemned and banned from civilized societies. Notwithstanding these strong attitudes, bullfighting continues to flourish, mainly in Southern France, Spain, and Mexico.

Story--It is probably obvious in this chapter that there is little or no connection between the memoir and the story with which it is paired. It may be coincidence that since Hemingway was involved in watching and writing about the bullfights concurrently with his development of *In Our Time*, his writings about that spectacle came to hand and seemed to be powerful pieces of reportage, suitable to punctuate the stories in the book.

It has often been pointed out that the story "Cat in the Rain" is about the wife's desire to have a baby, and indeed, the story can be read that way. What is more interesting, and surprising, is how a writer with Hemingway's machismo and male swagger can portray a woman and a woman's concerns so sympathetically and vividly. It is all fine and good to play parlor games with symbolism and come up with "cat equals baby," but there are more important issues at the center of the story.

The truth and realism that Hemingway avidly sought throughout his career is alive and thriving in this story. He captures the couple's relationship with startling fidelity. The vital issue at stake is George's indifference to his wife and her importance. Her cataclysmic outburst, when she lists all the things wants, is a cry for attention from her husband and for love or at least for some sign from him that she means something in his life. The relationship is probably doomed and will end in divorce. A kitten will not be enough, and a baby will not be enough to save it. The only thing that will be enough is the kind of respect, loving care, and attention that the hotelkeeper accords her, which makes her feel "supremely important."

# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

Memoir--The crowd in the stands at the bullfight is in an uproar, throwing objects into the ring--bread, cushions, and leather wine bottles. The matador is having a bad day, and the bull keels over from much bad sticking and has be put out of its misery by one of the assistants. Then, some of the people in the stands come into the ring and cut off the matador's cue to show their contempt. Later at the cafy, the matador is there, and he tells the narrator it's not the first time that such a thing has happened, and he confesses that he's not a very good bullfighter.

Story--The central character in this story, "Out of Season," is a young American who remains nameless throughout. He is staying at a hotel in Italy with his young wife, and he hires a local man named Peduzzi to take him on a fishing trip, not knowing that Peduzzi is the town drunk and a sort of inept con artist. When the young gentleman and his wife accompany Peduzzi through the streets, the wife trails behind carrying the disassembled fishing rods, so that the game police will not suspect that the young gentleman intends to go fishing out of season

Peduzzi insists that the wife come up and walk with them rather than behind, which she does, reluctantly. Then, at Peduzzi's urging, they stop for drinks. The wife is morose, and the young gentleman says he's sorry for the way she feels and sorry that he spoke the way he did to her at lunch. She replies that it doesn't make any difference; none of it makes any difference. After a long walk following the half-drunk guide, the young gentleman complains that he wishes they weren't in on this whole thing and that they're probably being followed by the game police because they're fishing out of season.

His wife snaps that, of course, he doesn't have the guts to just go back, and the gentleman retorts "Why don't you go back?" The wife says no, she's going to stay with him because if he goes to jail, they might as well both go. After a while it becomes apparent that they have to walk much farther than they thought, and when the young gentleman urges his wife to go back again, she does. The young gentleman then discovers that he doesn't have any sinkers, so he and the guide turn back, too. At the hotel, Peduzzi wheedles an advance for the next day's fishing trip out of the young American, but then the young gentleman thinks a bit and says that he probably won't go fishing the next day.

## Chapter 11 Analysis

Memoir--The action in the bullring is not often as it is portrayed on the posters where the bull, horns down, charges a bull fighter, who stands, straight and tall, muleta in hand, fearless of the bull's advance. Sometimes the bullfighting is just pathetic and boring for the crowd. Hemingway, although fascinated by the spectacle, paints the truth of it

unflinchingly, as he does here. The revelation that even the matador knows how bad he is, and indeed, he has had his pigtail cut off before by the crowd, portrays the whole business of bullfighting as a shoddy and brutal excuse for entertainment.

Story--Although the guide, Peduzzi, is a scamp, his enthusiasm and even his various ruses aimed at extracting an extra drink out of his American customers provides not only amusement for the reader, but a delightfully vivid portrayal of alcoholic behavior. His light-heartedness serves the story well because it provides a foil to the melancholy of the wife and the cantankerous complaining of her husband.

They are in the midst of shredding their marriage and have no idea of how to repair the damage that has already been done. One of the major themes of Hemingway's work concerns the fragility of relationships, especially marriages, and a dissection of how they are destroyed. This story and the previous story "A Cat in the Rain," both treat marriages in trouble, but there is none of the clichyd yelling and screaming and angst that often accompany stories of this type. No, Hemingway's brilliance as a writer rests on detailing the reality of the small cuts that accumulate and kill warmth, love, and devotion between a man and a woman.

# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

Memoir--Now Hemingway gives the reader the antithesis of the previous memoir, which detailed the behavior of an abject and inept matador. The bullfighter in this memoir is Villalta, a brilliant artist of a bullfighter, who gives the crowd a stunning display of the contest between man and animal.

Story--In the story "Cross-Country Snow," Hemingway returns to his alter-ego Nick Adams on a downhill skiing trip with his friend, George. Much of the story occupies itself with description of the exhilaration of the sport and the pure excitement and joy of speed on the ski hill. Partway down the hill, they stop at an inn and are served by a somewhat taciturn waitress, who is noticeably pregnant. When George comments upon the waitress' lack of cordiality, Nick defends her, saying she doesn't know them, probably thought they were going to tease her, and is dealing with the discomfort of her pregnancy. Then it comes out in the conversation that Nick's wife, Helen, is expecting her first baby later in the summer, and that although George is going back to the U.S. to carry on his education, Nick is going to stay in Europe. As they talk, they begin to realize that this is the last time they will go skiing together, and a mood of sadness descends on them, but then they go outside into the sunshine, and Nick is cheered by the fact that they still have the run down the rest of the mountain.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Memoir--There has probably never been, at least in the English language, such a deft and dazzling display of the writer's craft as this two-paragraph tour de force applied to the spectacle of the bullring. The flourish of Hemingway's writing craft is equal to the subject he describes, full of bravado, precision, and pure applied force. The powerful effect of this vignette is not merely due to a mastery of the power of language, but is due equally to the power of Hemingway's keen observation of events and all the precise detail that quintessentially defines the experience.

Story--The impact of "Cross-Country Snow" relies upon capturing a turning point in the life of the characters and using the literal fact of skiing down the mountain as a metaphor. Hemingway was skilled at building his short stories around material that would possess not only literal fact, but would also provide an oblique metaphor for the abstract meaning and significance of events. The fact of skiing down a mountain is that one is compelled to go forward. One can pause for moments, but sooner or later the essence of the activity is that one will inexorably arrive at the bottom, and the ski run will be over. The characters' sense of fun and love of life are palpable in this story, but the reality of the experience that Nick and George are enjoying is that life is going to go on, and despite their desire to deny it, moments such as the one they are savoring will not occur again.

# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

Memoir--The narrator of this memoir is himself a matador. He tells the story of how he and the famous bull fighter Maera see a young Mexican matador running with the fiesta procession through the street. Maera tells the narrator to bring the young man in from the street. When the narrator catches up to the young man and orders him to come inside because he is already drunk, and he has to fight bulls this day, the young man tells him to go away, that the narrator is not his father. Back at the hotel, the narrator says to Maera that the young man is just an ignorant Mexican savage, and Maera replies, "Yes, and who will kill his bulls after he gets a cogida?" The narrator says that he and Maera will kill them, and Maera grumbles sardonically about having to kill the bulls left over by the others who don't do their job.

Story--This story, "My Old Man," is told by Joe, whose father is a jockey and a good one, except that he has a bad habit of breaking the rules and partaking in crooked schemes like fixing races. Joe follows his father along the circuit during the racing season, and at first they race in Italy. Then, one of his father's schemes goes sour, and he loses his license. They move their place of residence from Italy to France, to Maisons-Lafitte, where Joe has a great time with the other kids in the lake and the forest, while his father waits to get his license back. His father continues to race until one night there is an accident on the track, and Joe sees his father take a spill. His father dies, and later when they are taking the body away, Joe overhears some other jockeys talking about how they think the boy's father deserved what he got because of the "stuff he's pulled." A friend of his father's tells Joe not to listen to them, that his father was a swell guy, but Joe ends up feeling that he has nothing left--neither his father nor the ideal image he had of his father.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

Memoir--As part of the story told by the memoirs themselves, this one continues the thread of the danger that matadors face as a result of other matadors, and foreshadows the impending tragedy that will inevitably happen because of it.

Story--It is not surprising that Hemingway should choose to tell the story of a young boy who must deal with the shock of his father's violent death and whose pride in his father is destroyed when he learns of the less-admirable aspects of the father's character.

In Hemingway's own life, he experienced many difficult disappointments and tragic events in relation to the father he idolized as a young boy. Some of these are fictionally chronicled in the Nick Adams stories, such as "Indian Camp" and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." Hemingway loved the racetrack and used to attend often, so he has a

store of real-life material upon which to base the story, but the more significant element is the examination of the relationship between a boy and his father.

This story and most of the others in the book, *In Our Time*, give the lie to the oft-made accusation that Hemingway's works are merely exercises in male bravado and reckless behavior. Those things exist in his work, but only on the surface. This is the arena that Hemingway uses to examine and probe into relationships between people, and their significance in the "grander scheme" of life.

Many of those who wrote *about* Hemingway's work had agendas of their own. Many of them harbored envious antipathies toward him simply because he was *not* one of them. It seems as if their derision of him stems from the fact that he was not recognizable to them as one who shared their received wisdom, attitudes, class status, or accepted etiquette. Part of the vilification that was heaped upon him he brought upon himself because in his writing, and his behavior, he wore, like a badge of honor, his contempt for all that his detractors held dear.

The accuracy of Hemingway's portrayal of his characters, the profound depiction of human beings struggling to reach out to each other, and the affection he bears for them in spite of their, sometimes deep, flaws is what elevates Hemingway's work above that of most writers, and certainly above the merit of his critics.

In December 1928, while Ernest was living in Key West and writing *A Farewell to Arms*, his often stormy relationship with his father came to an end. The elder Hemingway, Clarence, died of a self-administered pistol shot to the head.

# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

Memoir--Maera, the bullfighter featured in the previous memoir in Chapter 13 lies wounded on the sand of the arena. The bull tries to gore him and sometimes only bumps him, but ultimately, it drives its horn through Maera's body and into the sand. Some of the assistants and attendants chase the bull away, and others speed Maera on a stretcher to the infirmary, but before the doctor can get to him, he dies.

Story - "Big Two-Hearted River: Part I" is a story about redemption and healing although it never mentions either of those two things. Nick Adams returns from the war, damaged by the things he has seen and experienced. He is damaged physically and psychologically, and this is his way of healing himself, by going out into the wilderness alone and living simply with no consequences, as Krebs wants to do in "Soldier's Home."

Nick Adams, carrying a heavy bundle of canvas, bedding, and other gear, debarks from the train at what is left of the town of Seney. A fire has burned through the area, taking with it the 13 saloons and the Mansion House hotel. By the river, Nick watches the trout holding themselves straight in the current for a long time. Burdened by his heavy pack, Nick walks through the burnt-out countryside, and when he sits down to rest, he notices that the grasshoppers who crawl on his leg are all black, having turned that way from living in the burned-over land.

Noticing everything as he walks and not thinking much about anything else, he carries his pack along the river, sees the trout feeding, and finds a place to pitch his shelter. The only thing he thinks about outside of the present moment is a story about a friend named Hopkins, whose oil well came in while he was with Nick and Bill. Every tiny detail of preparing the shelter and making camp and cooking and eating and getting ready to sleep is described in the most specific detail until, finally, Nick is ready to sleep.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

Memoir--Now the consequences that were foreshadowed in previous memoirs have arrived. Maera's time has come, and he dies a bloody death in the ring. The unusual description of his dying could have been written only by someone who has nearly died. Perhaps it is a topic that Hemingway could not have avoided. It makes sense to imagine that he might have felt compelled to say, in effect, I have been there and this is what it is like.

Story--Hemingway is on record as having described his method of writing as being the process of writing everything down and then going through a methodical process of leaving things out until the writing came to be like an iceberg, with the 10 percent you

see being there only because of the 90 percent you can't see. His theory is that "anything you know, you can eliminate, and it will only strengthen your iceberg."

There is so much that is not apparent above the surface in "Big Two-Hearted River: Part I." There is no mention of the war or the fact that Nick was wounded. There is careful detailing of the burned-out town and the blackened country by the river, which Nick walks through and leaves behind. Symbols abound, but the issue of symbolism and metaphor is a thorny one, fraught with all kinds of traps like the question of what the author intended or did not intend.

To say that Hemingway draws a parallel between the war that Nick has left behind, and the burnt landscape he leaves behind, is to say too much. To say that there is no link between the two things is to admit too little. Perhaps it is enough to say that the familiar landscape Nick once knew is now charred ruins. From there, it is not a great leap for the reader to imagine the feelings Nick has about those ruins. That is all below the surface. If it is the writer's job to evoke feeling in the reader, or if feelings experienced by the reader are the inevitable consequences of good writing, then something of merit has been achieved by the description at the beginning of the story.

If someone read the previous stories featuring Nick, it would seem unusual that he does not once think anything about the war. Why is he so obsessive about every little detail? Is it perhaps that if he forces his mind to focus only on what is in front of his eyes, of what he is doing, and on what he will do? If he is able to admire what he is doing and will do--he will not think about the war and what it did to him and how he feels about it? Perhaps the story is really a powerful struggle by Nick to compel himself to become, and remain, sane.

# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

Memoir--This memoir, a departure from the topics of most of the other memoirs that deal with the war or the bullring, nevertheless continues a thematic thread that weaves consistently through the fabric of the book--the essence of fear and the way human beings deal with it. The subject is the hanging of a Chicago criminal, Sam Cardinella, whose fear was so great he had to be carried to the gallows and thereafter had to be tied into a chair on the trap so that he could be executed.

Story--"Big Two-Hearted River: Part II," continues Nick's fishing trip, beginning when he gets up in the morning and ending as the day ends and Nick has caught two trout. Nick's experience is described in obsessive detail, and the details are, for the most part, mundane, including how he catches grasshoppers for bait, how he makes coffee and cooks pancakes for himself, how he ties the leader to his fly casting line and attaches the grasshopper for bait, how he searches for a good place to catch the bigger trout, how the trout behave in which water at which time of day and year, and how two trout are caught and prepared for eating. Then at the end, Nick's thoughts are about the swamp into which the river leads, how he does not like to go there, and how he is happy to leave it to another day.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

Memoir--The language of this piece has much in common with a good magazine or newspaper report on the subject of an execution, but added to the reporting is a sense of a moral compass reading out the direction of events. Narrowing the information about Sam Cardinella to the facts of the execution allows the author to emphasize behavior that is emblematic of a killer and a criminal--the cowardly way in which Cardinella meets his death.

Story--The description of the homely details of finding a place to cast, of baiting and setting the line, of catching the fish, of cleaning them and preparing to go back to camp reads almost like a beatitude to the blessedness of being able to apply the outdoor skills Nick learned as a small boy camping with his father. The return to a safe, pleasant place is present in every movement, every detail. The story itself could read and reread as a healing mantra that would soothe and renew the soul.

In Nick's final thoughts about going into the swamp and how he doesn't want to go there but feels that there are plenty of days ahead when he will be able to go there, one can detect an echo of Krebs's thoughts in "Soldier's Home," when Krebs expressed his deep desire for making things uncomplicated and for having things "go smoothly." One gets the feeling that being alone in the woods by the river and being able to do simple things

he knows how to do well, has healed Nick to the extent that he's readying himself to take on things in life that are less easy to do.

Memoir--The final memoir in the book has a name title, rather than a chapter number, and is called, suitably, "*L'envoi*." The word *l'envoi* originated in old French poetry and referred to a final verse that was detached from the main body of the poem and served the purpose of presenting the moral of the poem or of dedicating the poem to a specific person. In later days, it evolved to mean a summing up or a conclusion.

Hemingway's purpose in using this brief memoir to conclude the book is opaque at best, but it may be said that this type of obliqueness is a trademark of his short stories or even that he invented the oblique approach to meaning that occurs predominantly in modern short stories. In this case, the memoir recounts a visit to the King of Greece, in his garden, after the revolution when the King is confined to the palace grounds. The dominant feelings of the memoir are relief that the wars and revolutions are over and the yearning to reminisce and express opinions about the conduct of the wars and revolutions.

# Characters

## Nick Adams

One of the benefits of publishing a book like *In Our Time* is that the stories and memoirs that center around Nick Adams create a continuing character who imparts to the book some of the merits of a full-length novel. Oneis able to follow the stories like snapshots in an album taken over a period of years and make the leaps from one story to another and connect the stories in one's own imagination. Nick begins as an innocent young boy accompanying his father to the Indian Camp, where the events begin to alter his idealistic view of his father and prod him into thinking about things like birth and death, what they mean and how they relate to each other.

The next glimpse the reader gets of Nick is as an adolescent, going through a painful breakup with his girlfriend, Marjorie, and not really understanding why he is breaking up with her. Then, when he spends a day drinking whiskey with his buddy, Bill, and talking about Marjorie and the breakup, he takes a step toward maturity by realizing that the breakup is part of the cycle of life and is metaphorically akin to the sudden winds that blow for 3 days and tear the leaves off the trees. It is in this story that the reader gets a glimpse of Nick's growing abilities to describe the puzzles and mysteries of life--the first stirrings of his talent as a writer.

Through the stories and the memoirs, the reader follows his progress going to war as a youth, being wounded, recovering, and falling in love with his nurse, who jilts him later. The last two stories in the book leave a haunting sense of Nick's need for nature and the outdoors as healer of his energy and mental balance. The casual reader, unfortunately, may not realize that they are "out of order" in the sense that they happen shortly after his return from the war, and if the book were strictly chronological, would have been placed after "Soldier's Home." The final glimpse of Nick, as a named character, occurs in "Cross-Country Snow," when the reader learns that he has married a woman named Helen, who is expecting a baby and that both of them will probably stay in Europe.

## Henry Adams

Although Dr. Adams, Nick's father, appears in only two of the stories in person, his persona is also present under a different name in "Soldier's Home," where he is not a doctor but a real estate agent. The clue to the character's "real" identity is that he does not let his son drive his car. The reason he gives is that a real estate agent needs his car to show properties, which could happen at any time. It may occur to the attentive reader that a doctor is also one who needs to have access to his car at all times, in case of a patient emergency.

The portrayal of Henry Adams is rounded out in the two early stories in the book, "Indian Camp," and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." The most appealing characteristic of Henry Adams as a father is that he is loving and caring with his son, and he treats his son's childish questions with thoughtfulness and concern and takes pains to teach him about life. The most unappealing characteristic is his overweening display of conceit over the success of his operation to save the life of the baby and mother at the Indian Camp.

These qualities are at the two poles of positive and negative. Somewhere in between is his clinical attitude toward the pregnant Indian woman who is in the agony of childbirth. Nick, moved by her suffering, asks whether his father can't give her something, and his father replies that he doesn't have any anesthetic and that he doesn't hear the woman's screams because her screams are not important to him. This is either evidence of a crass lack of empathy with the woman or an expression that crystallizes the reality of the moment--that the only important thing is saving the mother's and baby's lives. If a doctor allows himself to hear her screams, he may jeopardize his ability to do the best for his patient.

## Marjorie

Nick's adolescent girlfriend, although a minor character in the book, leaves an impression. She maintains her cheerfulness throughout most of the story in spite of the gloomy mood that has overtaken Nick. She possesses good intuitive sense about Nick and realizes that something serious is bothering him. She loves to share the sport of fishing with Nick, which at first would seem to indicate that she is a good match for him. When the tension between them rises to its climax, Nick snaps at her for "knowing everything," and makes what seems like an uncalled-for comment that he has taught her everything she knows. When he eventually tells her that their relationship is over by saying that nothing in it is fun any more and answering no to her question, "Isn't love any fun?" she displays a great deal of dignity and strength by accepting what he says and proudly walking away. The reader's sympathy rests solely with her until the last moment when Nick goes back to the fire and buries his face in the blanket in anguish over having to break it off.

## Bill

Bill, Nick's confidant, and boyhood best friend, is portrayed in the two stories, "The End of Something,' and "The Three-Day Blow.' At the end of the former story, Bill arrives at the campfire to find Nick lying prone, his face buried in the blanket. Bill starts to quiz Nick about the breakup, not realizing that Nick needs to be left alone, until Nick is forced to tell him to "go away for a while." In the latter story in the book, Nick visits Bill, who is sitting in his vacation cottage alone while his father is out hunting. The two boys get into Bill's Father's stash of liquor and proceed to get drunk. Bill tries to help Nick over his gloominess about the breakup by pointing up how bad it would have been for Nick to carry on with Marjorie and marry her, along with her family.

## Dick Boulton

Dick is a Mytis whom Nick's father has hired to cut up some logs that have drifted onto his property. Dick is big, strong, querulous and sly, and deliberately provokes a verbal battle with Nick's father, to the point at which Henry Adams loses his temper and threatens to beat up on Dick. He is forced to retreat to the house, his dignity in tatters, when Dick seems to be eager to engage in a fistfight. Later, the reader learns that Dick deliberately provoked Henry to avoid having to do the work because he owes Henry money.

## Ad Francis

A once-famous boxer, Ad is riding the rails traveling from place to place, when Nick Adams, having been thrown off a train by the Brakeman, comes upon Ad sitting by his fire. They talk in a friendly way until Ad's companion, a black man, arrives with food.

Inadvertently, and innocently, Nick insults Ad by not lending him his knife, and Ad tries to provoke Nick into a fight. The black man, who knocks Ad out with a blackjack, prevents the fight.

## Luz

Luz is the fictional portrayal of Agnes von Kurowsky, who was Hemingway's nurse in Italy following his war injury. She is portrayed more tellingly through her letter that breaks off her engagement to Nick, rather than through the events that happen at the hospital, when the two of them fall in love and promise each other they will marry. She seems to have made the sensible choice, but Nick's hurt and anger when he receives her letter are inconsolable.

## Krebs

Clues outside the text (that is, in facts taken from Hemingway's life) point to the fact that Krebs was modeled upon the author, and the post-war behavior of Krebs was taken from incidents in the author's life. It may be that Hemingway changed the location of Krebs's home and other details (like Krebs's father being a real estate broker instead of a doctor) so that the unsympathetic portrait of the mother would be less likely to be attributed as a portrait of his own mother. The portrayal of Krebs as a soldier suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder is surprisingly akin to the pattern of behavior that is found in the returning soldiers of today.

## George's Wife ("Cat in the Rain")

Referred to only as the American wife, or the American girl, the wife in this story yearns for someone or something to love that will love her back. Virtually ignored by her husband, she is struck by the respect and attention accorded to her by the hotel keeper, who bows to her and sends the maid to hold an umbrella over her when she goes outside to look for a cat that has taken shelter from the rain under a green table. One of Hemingway's most sympathetic characters, she forces the reader to sympathize with her cry for attention from her husband, when she says, "And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes." When he responds to this plea, he insensitively tells her to shut up and find something to read, invoking a palpable sense that the relationship will not last long.

## Joe ("My Old Man")

Joe is a young boy who has a great time traveling around the horse-racing circuits in Italy with his father, whom he idolizes, until they are forced to move to France because of some of his father's crooked dealings. In the story "My Old Man," Joe loses his father, and his ideal image of his father in a tragic racetrack accident.

## Hubert Elliot

Mr. Elliot, as the author refers to him, is Hemingway's satirical portrait of one of the many strait-laced academic writers who have not really lived life and cannot write anything and get it published unless they pay someone to publish it.

## Cornelia Elliot

Cornelia is a 40-year-old spinster who marries Hubert, types his poetry, and tries to have a baby with him but soon reverts to her preference for a female bed companion.

## Peduzzi

The picaresque town drunk, who wheedles money and drinks out of a young American gentleman stopping at the hotel with his wife is Peduzzi.

## Maera

Maera is a real-life bullfighter, whose name Hemingway appropriated for a partly fictionalized character in two of the memoirs dealing with the bull ring in Pamplona.

# Objects/Places

## The Quai at Smyrna

The dock at the city of Smyrna in Turkey where the Greeks evacuated troops and civilians in 1922 is called the quai.

## The Indian Camp

The Indian camp is the temporary settlement in the bush where Nick Adams' father takes him when he performs an emergency operation on an Indian woman.

## The Logs

The logs belonging to a lumber company have been beached on Nick Adams' father's property. They are the subject of a dispute between Henry Adams and Dick Boulton, the Mytis worker who owes Henry money.

## The Mill

Nick and his girlfriend Marjorie row past the deserted ruins of this logging and lumbering operation on their fishing outing.

## The Barricade

The wrought-iron grating erected on a bridge through which the soldiers shoot the attacking German infantry is called the barricade.

## The Orchard

The apple orchard is at Bill's place, and Nick walks and notices the fallen leaves here in "The Three-Day Blow."

## The Letter

When Nick returns to America after falling in love with his nurse, Luz, she sends him a letter ending their relationship, saying it was only "boy and girl love."

## The Big Mediaeval Bed

This is the bed in which Mrs. Elliot and her girlfriend sleep after Mr. and Mrs. Elliot stop trying to have a baby.

## The Green Table

In "Cat in the Rain," the American wife looks down from her window and sees a cat that has taken shelter under a green table. She goes down to rescue the cat but can't find it.

## The Puntillo

This knife is the one with which the Matador's assistant kills the downed bull in the Chapter XI memoir.

## The Fishing Rods

These unjointed rods are what the wife carries as she walks behind the young gentleman and Peduzzi in "Out of Season" so that her husband will not be suspected of fishing out of season.

## Gilford

Gilford is the horse that Joe's father is riding when he is killed in the story "My Old Man."

## Seney

Seney is the town destroyed by fire where Nick gets dropped off to begin his fishing trip after the war.

## The Swamp

The swamp is the area where Nick thinks of fishing, which tends to be symbolic of the difficulties of life that Nick will need to face in the future.

# Social Sensitivity

Pervasive concerns of In Our Time include the following: societal and personal effects of war and violence, necessary confrontations with death, with questions of mortality and immortality, and the complexity of human relationships in families (especially among fathers, mothers, and sons) and in marriage or the relationships of couples. More than half of the stories in this closely-connected story-cycle (or experimental novel — please see "Techniques") deal with the experience of Nick Adams, portraying key moments from childhood to maturity, following him as he grows up, feels acutely the tension in his parents' relationship, breaks up with his girlfriend, leaves home, goes off to war and is badly wounded, and finally returns home.

In Our Time also participates deeply in the primary social concern shared by many major literary works which appeared in the aftermath of World War I: to wit, the sense that Western Civilization was morally and spiritually bankrupt, and that the war itself was the most striking evidence of that bankruptcy. T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922), for example, was the most influential work of this period and was a major influence on In Our Time. Eliot's profound depiction of the Waste Land and the imperative quest to rediscover values to live by (compassion, order, and self-discipline paramount among these values), to struggle with the moral and spiritual chaos of the Waste Land and find a way out, find some peace, is directly echoed in the struggle and quest of Nick Adams (who is also a symbolic Fisher King-figure). Hemingway's title is taken from the familiar litany in the Book of Common Prayer: "Give peace in our time, O Lord." The title and its source provide perhaps — at first — an ironic resonance, for there seems to be no peace anywhere in the tension-ridden and war-ravaged world of Nick Adams; at last, however, he does find peace by the Big Two-Hearted River, "in his home where he had made it." In Our Time, then, deals powerfully with issues and concerns central to the 1920s, to the time of Nick Adams as to our time, and to all times. Nick's wounds, physical and psychological, and his quest for peace are as pertinent and urgent for the 1990s as they were for the 1920s.

# Techniques

The form of In Our Time defies precise description, and critics have long expressed divergent views: Is this just a collection of short stories? Or is it a more or less tightly woven story-cycle?

Or is it really an experimental novel whose form reflects the typical technical and stylistic concerns of the high tide of modernism in the 1920s? It would seem that the latter view — even if the debate is unlikely to be resolved to the satisfaction of all readers — holds the greatest promise for deeper understanding of the form, style, and techniques of In Our Time.

The problem of defining the book's form is somewhat exacerbated by the fact that certain stories — or, in the modernist view, chapters of this experimental novel -— have been extracted from their context and so frequently anthologized that they seem to stand alone and have acquired reputations as great short stories; for example, "Indian Camp" and "Big Two-Hearted River." However, while these may to some degree work as short stories, it is clear that our engagement with them is much richer when they are viewed in the contexts of the complete In Our Time. Consider what the reader brings to "Big Two-Hearted River" if he or she has followed Nick's process of growing up, of being wounded in the war, and so on — matters that the reader of the story alone would know nothing about. Clearly, without the novelistic contexts of Nick's bildungsroman, the depth or understanding of each and every story or chapter of In Our Time is radically diminished. This is the most telling argument for the work's unity, and for its status as a modernist experimental novel.

Modernist works typically employ techniques of understatement, omission of crucial facts and connections, elimination of explanatory linkage between segments or episodes, strategies of ironic juxtaposition and allusion. All of these techniques require the reader to participate actively, to do much of the work of figuring out the linkages between narrative movements, and all of these techniques are pervasive in In Our Time. Consider carefully Hemingway's well-known "iceberg theory," his assertion that good prose must have "the dignity of movement of an iceberg," which, as Hemingway insisted, "is due to only one-eighth of it being above water." Consider, too, that this notion that most of the meaning should be submerged dictates the techniques of implication and indirection in In Our Time. In "Out of Season," for example, Hemingway tries out an extreme instance of what he called his "theory of omission" whereby the writer may leave out the most important facts of the story deliberately, in order to make readers feel more than is understood. In the case of "Out of Season," Hemingway later observed, the central omitted fact is that Peduzzi commits suicide after the young gentleman dismisses him. (Critics have also argued that the deliberate "omission" is centered on the subject of abortion, which would explain the tension between the man and the woman as well as the deepest resonance of the story's title.)

Another modernist technique widely employed is the strategy of allusion or key unexplained references to matters that the reader must have or gain some knowledge

about in order to apprehend the patterns of meaning. In "The Revolutionist," for example, there are allusions to four painters: Giotto, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca, and Mantegna. The protagonist, a naive and idealistic young revolutionist, likes the other painters but does not like Mantegna. The narrator mentions Mantegna three times in this one-page story; he even notes that he "spoke to him [the revolutionist] about the Mantegnas in Milano," i.e., about specific Mantegna paintings. Thus, given the modernist strategy of allusion, the reader must know or learn something about Mantegna, and should know something about the specific Mantegnas in Milano. When the reader knows that Mantegna was fascinated by the new Renaissance sciences of perspective and anatomy, that he was given to radical experimentation in painting, then the first level of the allusion is grasped; and when the reader knows that the most famous Mantegna — which is found in Milano — is the "Dead Christ," an austere, tragic work which employs dramatic foreshortening to bring the viewer close to the brutal realism of the dead body of Christ, then the deepest level of the allusion — the deeply submerged layer of the "iceberg" — may be grasped. In this brief story, then, through three allusions to Mantegna, Hemingway makes his oblique commentary on the young idealist's belief that the revolution will fix everything, put an end to suffering, an end to the human need for some kind of spiritual redemption.

# Themes

## Themes

Death, most often violent death, is omnipresent in In Our Time. The major theme centers on the ways in which death is interwoven with life, and the necessity of confrontation with the fact of death. In "Indian Camp," the story which presents Nick's earliest existential collision at a crucial intersection of life and death, young Nick accompanies his doctor-father when he is summoned for an emergency delivery of a baby at the Indian camp. Under difficult and primitive conditions, Nick's father successfully delivers the baby.

Simultaneous with the birth, the ostensible father of the baby commits suicide. This action is followed by a compellingly rendered dialogue between father and son, as they leave the Indian camp. Nick asks a telling sequence of questions, among them: "Why did he kill himself, Daddy?" and "Do many men kill themselves, Daddy?" and "Do many women?" His father's answers are vague, evasive perhaps; but it is the questioning that reverberates as the central theme. Nick's final question — "Is dying hard, Daddy?" — receives this reply: "No, I think it's pretty easy, Nick. It all depends." The most remarkable thing about this famous dialogue is the conclusion. Having witnessed a violent death, having discussed death with his father, Nick feels "quite sure that he would never die."

Whether this conclusion represents a failed epiphany for young Nick, a mere romantic and uncomprehending reaction to the tragedy he has witnessed, or a young boy's natural sense of immortality, or conditional immortality (as long as he is securely protected by his father) is one of the much-debated cruxes of In Our Time.

In any case, death, often juxtaposed with birth (see also, for example, "On the Quai at Smyrna" and the italicized vignette or interchapter, "Chapter II," which follows "Indian Camp"), and the manner of dealing with death constitute the principal reiterated theme throughout In Our Time. All sixteen vignettes, directly or indirectly, evoke death or the imminent threat of death.

In the vignette entitled "Chapter VI," the brief but telling image presents Nick, wounded in the war, sitting "against the wall of the church" (a symbolic location), pronouncing his famous words to his wounded friend: "You and me we've made a separate peace." The bullfight interchapters, "Chapter IX" through "Chapter XIV," provide a key to understanding, at the deepest level, Hemingway's thematic concern with the inextricableness of life and death. In Death in the Afternoon (1932), speaking of the period when he wrote In Our Time, Hemingway observed: "The only place where you could see life and death, i.e., violent death now that the wars were over, was in the bullring and I wanted very much to go to Spain where I could study it." Hemingway says that he was trying to learn to write, "commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death." So he studied

bullfighting carefully. Clearly, In Our Time is a careful study of death and violence, and through the formalized, ritualized life-death drama of the bullring, Hemingway intended to project some sense, not just of values necessary for survival, but a spiritual sense of what he called "ecstasy . . . as profound as any religious ecstasy," a redeeming sense of an "ordered, formal, passionate . . . disregard of death" (see especially Chapter 18 of Death in the Afternoon). It is this sense of having dealt with death, of finally having some answers to the questions young Nick asked his father in "Indian Camp," that is the foundation of the peace that the older, wiser, wounded, and healed Nick feels deeply at the conclusion of In Our Time, by the Big Two-Hearted River — "there, in the good place" — in the "home," the spiritual space and place that he has made, cleared from the two-hearted tangle of light and dark, good and evil, youth and age, life and death.

Another important recurrent theme or set of themes throughout In Our Time treats the complexity of relationships, in families, in marriage and romantic relationships, and in the interactions of friends. "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," for example, examines the tensions in the relationship of Nick's father and mother, as felt by Nick as a young boy; in effect, Nick sides with, or chooses, his father. Ten of the twelve titled stories which follow "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" deal with complex relationships between couples, parents and children, and friends. "The End of Something" shows Nick abruptly breaking off his teenage romance with Marge, for reasons that he does not understand; two chapters later, "A Very Short Story" shows Luz breaking off her wartime engagement with Nick, for similarly vague reasons. The sequence of stories often referred to as "the marriage group" — "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," "Cat in the Rain," "Out of Season," and "Cross-Country Snow" — provide variations on the theme of marriage, ranging from the pathetic sterility of the Elliots and their menage a trois, to the troubled and tense relationships of the couples in "Cat in the Rain" and "Out of Season," to Nick's complicated sense of the end of postadolescent freedom and his feelings as a soon-tobe father in "Cross-Country Snow."

Other stories play additional variations on the father-son and family relation-ship themes, most notably "Soldier's Home" and "My Old Man."

Complex male friendships are the focus in "The Three-Day Blow" and "The Battler." Overall, this thematic strategy involves different approaches to and aspects of the intricacy of relationships which, as the book progresses, gathers great force through implicit connection, through juxtapositions without explanatory linkage, through echoes and reverberations that lead the reader ever more deeply into the mystery of human relationships.

## Family

Four of the 16 short stories in the book deal with family relationships between and among parents and their son, "Indian Camp," "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "Soldier's Home," and 'My Old Man." Hemingway's view of family is an extremely personal one, drawn directly from his experiences with his own parents. If there is a universal theme running through the four stories that deal with families, it is that parents

have both positive and negative influences upon a child, and it is up to the child to deal with those influences and benefit from them or, at least, survive them.

In "Indian Camp," Nick's Father is portrayed as a hero figure, idolized by his young son, eager to teach the son about life, and always prepared to answer the boy's questions in a methodical and honest way. An outsider might be critical of Dr. Adams' decision to include his young son as a member of the operating team, but perhaps we can put the decision down to necessity and consider that the boy is old enough to learn about these things. Near the end of the story, however, Dr. Adams adopts an almost boastful pose, and the reader realizes that the doctor may have been showing off in front of his son. The "idol" is then revealed to be flawed and weak in some ways. The same sort of flawed parent who is loved and idolized by a son is portrayed in "My Old Man," at the end of which the son's respect for the father he loved is totally destroyed by the gossipers whom the son overhears talking about his father's unethical conduct.

The mother figures in the stories come off as cold and domineering--likely a fictional portrayal of Hemingway's own mother, whom he disliked intensely. In "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," Nick's mother is portrayed as distant and patronizing in her relations with the Doctor, and in the later story, "Soldier's Home," the effect of such a mother upon her grown son causes him to leave home, which seems to suggest that sometimes the only way that a son can deal with an unbearable relationship with a parent is to escape.

## Courage and Fear

In Hemingway's one-page memoirs in the book, the hero is almost always a man, and the dominant theme centers on the way men face their fears. The situation that elicits courage or fear in the characters in these one-page chapters is either war or the bullfight arena, with the notable exception of the piece about the execution of Sam Cardinella in Chapter XV. The very nature of war is to impose constant fear in the combatants, because, at least for those in the front lines, death is always imminent. How men respond to the condition of combat is a central theme, whether it be the detached attitude of shooting enemy troops as they come over a wall or a partly hysterical elation at having erected a wrought-iron trap or Nick Adams' whimsical attitude toward his wounded companion Rinaldi. In the bullring, the presence of fear in the matador is depicted as being pathetic, heroic, or tragic or sometimes a blend of the three.

Courage or cowardice in the face of fear is a theme that will emerge repeatedly in Hemingway's later work, particularly in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *Death in the Afternoon.* It is ironic, though, that the short stories of *In Our Time*, with the possible exception of "The Battler," do not deal with this theme at all. Most of the stories portray inner anguish, as in "A Very Short Story," or "The Cat in the Rain" or "The Death of Something." Three of the stories, 'Soldier's Home," and the two parts of "Big Two-Hearted River," round out the theme of courage and fear by portraying characters in the

aftermath of having been courageous in the face of fear and having suffered profound physical or psychological damage.

## Man and woman

Despite his reputation as the "most male" of male writers, one of Hemingway's significant themes in this book focuses on the nature of relationships that can exist between a man and a woman. In no less than seven of the stories, it is a central theme: "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "The End of Something," "The Three Day Blow," "A Very Short Story," "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," "Cat in the Rain," and "Out of Season."

One of the stories, "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," displays Hemingway's contempt for puritanical morals and the arid lives that seem to be the necessary result of such beliefs. It seems to be a cautionary tale, as well as dissection of the folly of those who pretend to have writing talent. The second story that fits into the same mold is "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," in which the author meticulously sketches a portrait of a lifeless relationship in which husband and wife occupy separate bedrooms and carry on conversations from separate parts of the house, without ever seeing each other face to face. In these two pieces, the unifying theme appears to be that a relationship between a man and a woman can appear on the outside to be a functioning union, but can be hollow inside.

Two stories "A Very Short Story," and "The End of Something," portray the breakup of relationships, one in which the woman breaks it off, and one in which the man, or youth (Nick Adams) ends it. The nature of breakups, and the difficulty of maintaining a thriving relationship between man and woman, has provided the fuel for thousands of literary and dramatic works, but it seems as if the fascination with such themes is endless.

Hemingway's genius in dealing with these shopworn themes is proven by his skill in portraying lovers suffering from their loss. In the case of Nick Adams, Hemingway is no less than brilliant in his ability to depict the healing of an adolescent youth after a breakup in "The Three-Day Blow." "Cat in the Rain" and "Out of Season" show his sharply honed skill at dissecting mature relationships in the throes of decline. What is poignant and insightful about these stories is their depiction of the protagonist's struggle to maintain the man-woman bond but seeming to be doomed to fail at it.

Whereas Hemingway's depiction of Nick Adams' mother and Harold Krebs's mother is a scathing portrait of cold, selfish women, his portrayal of the wife in "Cat in the Rain," and "Out of Season" is sensitive and uncannily sympathetic. Both women struggle against their unhappiness, but each story leaves behind a heartbreaking image of the struggle. "Cat in the Rain" leaves the reader with the picture of the wife's outburst about all the mundane little material things that she wants when the reader already understands that what she needs is love, consideration, and caring gestures from her husband, which it appears that she will never get. In "Out of Season," the reader finds it hard to escape the image of the wife following far behind her husband carrying his disassembled fishing

rods so that the game authorities will not suspect that he is going fishing out of season. It is an ignominy that not even the drunken guide Peduzzi can tolerate.

# Style

## Points of View

On occasion, as in Chapter V, in the memoir about the cabinet ministers who were shot standing against the wall of a hospital, the point of view is unknown, and in fact in this case, Hemingway was not present at this event but wrote about it a few months after it actually happened using two newspaper reports as sources. The feel of the piece, nevertheless, with its precise description of carefully selected details, tends to make the reader assume that the writer was present at the event. The prevalent point of view, however, in the memoirs is that of a first-person narrator, either in the "I" or "we" persona. It is likely that in most cases, the narrator is Hemingway himself, but on occasion, he "replaces" himself with Nick Adams in the memoir, and the piece is narrated in the typical novelistic omniscient point of view.

On one other occasion, in Chapter XIII, the memoir is narrated in the first person by a bullfighter, a friend of Maera, who was a real bullfighter, and whose name, at least, Hemingway appropriated in the memoir in Chapter XIV about a bullfighter who is gored to death, first published in 1923. The real-life Maera did not die until 1924, and he did not die in the ring but of tuberculosis. One might say that Hemingway was exercising poetic license in this case.

There are 16 memoirs in the book. Five of them are written in the anonymous first person, eleven are written in the third person omniscient point of view. These omniscient pieces deal with events related either to the war between Greece and Turkey, World War I, or the bullfights. The Chapter VI memoir is the only one that uses the character Nick Adams as the third-person viewpoint character. Since Nick is probably the unnamed soldier in the accompanying short story, it may be that Hemingway used the third person to distance himself from the material, which is drawn from his experience of being wounded and falling in love with his nurse, who later broke off with him by letter after they had made plans to get married.

"On the Quai in Smyrna" is narrated in a sort of "as-told-to" first person, framed by the opening line, "The strange thing was, he said, how they screamed every night at midnight." Then the author immediately switches into the first person of the "he" that is mentioned with the line, "I do not know why they screamed at that time." Then the narrative continues in the first person of the "he" who turns out to be an officer on the American cutter standing in the harbor.

There are 16 short stories in the book, and only two of them are written from a true first person viewpoint, "The Revolutionist," and "My Old Man." Eight of the short stories (half of them) are identified as "Nick Adams" stories and are told from the omniscient point of view.

## Setting

It is interesting to note that while Hemingway's reputation is as a man of action and adventure, six of the 16 stories are set primarily in one room or in an indoor location. These six stories deal almost exclusively with the nature of relationships between two people and, as far as external action is concerned, are mainly static. There are characters looking out hotel room windows, sitting in front of the fire, sitting on a bed talking to someone else in another room, and discussing a problem at the kitchen table. The only life-and-death dramatic event portrayed takes place in "Indian Camp" when Doctor Adams operates on the Indian woman.

In "Cross-Country Snow," not one of the "mainly interior" six stories, robust sporting action is exquisitely portrayed, but the *real* action in the story is the profound regret the two friends struggle with when they chat at the inn and come to a realization that they will probably not ever ski together again in their lives.

The crisis and climax of "The End of Something" is mainly set at the campfire that Nick and Marjorie have made after they have rowed to the point. The climax of the story is developed out of the setting and the symbolism of the ruined mill that they pass on the way. There is minimal dialogue and minimal action even though the setting is outdoors, but the pain experienced by the two young people who are breaking up is nonetheless dramatic and real. The fact that the story requires close reading because of its tangential exposition contributes to the emotional impact when it dawns on the reader that Nick is crying and has to hide his face so that his friend will not see him.

The most powerful setting in terms of significance to its story is "Big Two-Hearted River." The wilderness of the river and the surrounding landscape is not only Nick's healer and shaman, but his challenger, acting to test him to see whether he still has the fortitude to do the little things, employ skills he learned a long time ago before he went to war. Trekking for miles to get to his campsite has provided the escape he desperately needs. The clue to this are two small sentences, *His mind was starting to work. He knew he could choke it because he was tired enough.* He's relieved from the pain of thinking about what he's been through, and as long as he keeps his mind on what he needs to do in the wilderness, he'll be all right.

## Language and Meaning

Hemingway is renowned for the economy of his description and the leanness of his prose. The blunt rhythms and the deliberate repetitions have been both praised and mocked. Nevertheless, his influence on the evolution of English literary style cannot be denied. His is a style for the modern age, when flourish and ornamentation of writing will not stand. Dickens will not rise again, reincarnated in some writer of the 21st century. That time is done.

Hemingway does, however, have the ability to render a scene without being stingy in his description. Consider this passage:

*...you could see Villalta snarl at the bull and curse him, and when the bull charged he swung back firmly like an oak when the wind hits it, his legs tight together, the muleta trailing and the sword following the curve behind. Then he cursed the bull, flopped the muleta at him and swung back from the charge his feet firm, the muleta curving and at each swing the crowd roaring.*

Or this one:

*As the shadow of the kingfisher moved up the stream, a big trout shot upstream in a long angle, only his shadow marking the angle, then lost his shadow as he came through the surface of the water, caught the sun, and then, as he went back into the stream under the surface, his shadow seemed to float down the stream with the current, unresisting, to his post under the bridge where he tightened facing up into the current.*

*Nick's heart tightened as the trout moved. He felt all the old feeling.*

The style that is the life and breath of Hemingway's writing does not always give up its meaning easily. Very often, to appreciate the work to the fullest, one must know things that are not in the text. To appreciate the second passage above, in which Nick Adams watches the trout, one must know that Nick has been at war, that his character is damaged both physically and psychologically, and that he is desperate not to think or talk about it or even to let it into his mind for a moment. He needs to be all tight angles; he has to face the current and not stray into dark places where he cannot survive.

Notwithstanding the meanings that need to be unlocked, there are many things in Hemingway's language that are obvious, such as the repetition of the word "tightened" in two different contexts above. At first it seems infelicitous, a mistake perhaps, and then it hits with a rush and the connection between Nick and the trout is made. One may not immediately understand its logic or be able to dissect it, but one feels it in the bones.

## Structure

A significant part of the uniqueness of this work is the nature of the connectives among the stories. Each chapter-heading page contains an italicized memoir that rarely runs for more than a paragraph and often leaves much white space on the page. Many of these literary snapshots embody a moment or an incident in the life of an unidentified narrator, who a knowledgeable reader would readily presume to be Hemingway since the incidents in the chapter heading memoirs hew close to circumstances in Hemingway's life.

The only departure from the format of writing about actual incidents in the first person occurs in the Chapter VI memoir, wherein the writer tells of the leg injury that Hemingway suffered when he was an ambulance driver for the Italian Red Cross. In this case he relates the story of the injury as having happened to Nick Adams, a transparently autobiographical character who appears in a number of Hemingway's works.

The structure of *In Our Time* is partly dictated by the author's necessities during the period in which he was preparing the book. He is in his mid-twenties, eager, even desperate, to publish a book. His writing on hand is varied or disconnected, depending upon one's point of view, lacking any kind of conventional structure that could turn into a book soon.

How does the young writer address this literary dilemma? He creates an idea for an *un*conventional book. He realizes that he has stories, plus pieces of wonderful writing, which run to one page or less in length. He will take his short stories and meld them into a piece punctuated by the memoirs or sketches he has already written.

Like pioneering and innovation of all kinds, the scheme does not work completely, but it has a kind of rustic, earthy energy, and youthful clarity of vision. In many cases, Hemingway succeeds in creating a counterpoint or comment by placing this short story with that particular memoir. In other cases the relationship between the memoir and the story merely stands as a sort of chronological marker, perhaps signaling what interest or new landscape the author happened to be living in at the time of the story. In some cases, it must be admitted, the placement of the chapters and memoirs is purely random. In any case, it is extraordinary that a work written over 80 years ago should have such a contemporary feel to it in spite of its origins in the history of its time.

# Quotes

The Greeks were nice chaps too. When they evacuated they had all their baggage animals they couldn't take off with them so they just broke their forelegs and dumped them into the shallow water. All those mules with their forelegs broken pushed over into the shallow water. It was all a pleasant business. My word yes a most pleasant business. "On the Quai at Smyrna." P. 12

"No. I haven't any anaesthetic," his father said. "But her screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are not important." Chapter I, p.16

In the early morning on the lake sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing, he felt quite sure that he would never die. Chapter I, p.18

"Remember, that he who ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city," said his wife. She was a Christian Scientist. Her Bible, her copy of *Science and Health* and her *Quarterly* were on a table beside her bed in the darkened room. Chapter II, pp. 25-26

"There's our old ruin, Nick," Marjorie said.

Nick, rowing, looked at the white stone in the green trees.

"There it is," he said.

"Can you remember when it was a mill?" Marjorie asked.

"I can just remember," Nick said.

"It seems more like a castle," Marjorie said. Chapter III, p. 32

"All of a sudden everything was over," Nick said. "I don't know why it was. I couldn't help it. Just like when the three day blows come now and rip all the leaves off the trees." Chapter IV, p. 47

*They shot the six cabinet ministers at half-past six in the morning against the wall of a hospital. There were pools of water in the courtyard. There were wet dead leaves on the paving of the courtyard. It rained hard. All the shutters of the hospital were nailed shut.* Chapter V, p.51

*Nick sat against the wall of the church where they had dragged him to be clear of machine-gun fire in the street. Both legs stuck our awkwardly. He had been hit in the spine.* Chapter VI, p.63

She loved him as always, but she realized now that it was only a boy and girl love. She hoped he would have a great career, and believed in him absolutely. She knew it was for the best. Chapter VI, p. 66

"And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes."

"Oh, shut up and get something to read," George said. Chapter X, p. 94

"We'll go all right," George said.

"We've got to," Nick agreed.

"I wish we could make a promise about it," George said.

Nick stood up. He buckled his wind jacket tight. He leaned over George and picked up the two ski poles from against the wall. He stuck one of the ski poles into the floor.

"There isn't any good in promising," he said. Chapter XII, p. 112

Nick drank the coffee, the coffee according to Hopkins. The coffee was bitter. Nick laughed. It made a good ending to the story. His mind was beginning to work. He knew he could choke it because he was tired enough. He spilled the coffee out of the pot and shook the grounds loose into the fire. Chapter XIV, p.142.

# Adaptations

The only significant film based on In Our Time is Brian Edgar's short film (thirteen minutes) of "Indian Camp," which closely follows the text of the story and faithfully but creatively translates fiction into film. It had its world premiere at the International Hemingway Conference in June 1990 and has since been shown at major film festivals and used extensively in classrooms.

# Key Questions

Although it is unique in form and style, In Our Time deals with a familiar subject of universal and timeless rele vance: a young person growing up, embarking on a quest for meaning and peace in a tension-ridden and war-ravaged world. Discussions might usefully begin with comparison of other works which follow the same pattern and, more specifically, move to other works which appeared in the 1920s and reflect similar or disparate reactions to World War I (e.g., John Dos Passos, Three Soldiers, 1921; e. e. cummings, The Enormous Room, 1922). Hemingway's sense of disillusionment with the war, and the ensuing sense of a "lost generation" that pervades the 1920s (even though Hemingway disavowed the fashionable "lost generation" notion), might also be compared to the experience of the Vietnam generation. In classrooms, for example, students who are Vietnam veterans or relatives of veterans often comment on how Krebs (in "Soldier's Home") experiences precisely the same sense of alienation that is familiar to Vietnam veterans.

1. Why and how does Nick feel immortal after witnessing a violent death in "Indian Camp"? Isn't this an unusual, unexpected conclusion?

2. Is the central character of "On the Quai at Smyrna" callow, hardened, insensitive to the suffering around him? Consider carefully his attitude, and the exact tonality of his voice.

(You may wish to take into account the fact that this story was added to the second edition as a kind of "introduction" by Hemingway to help explain what follows.)

3. Discuss Ad and Bugs as anti-exemplar and exemplar in "The Battler."

What symbolic roles do they play?

How do they figure in Nick Adams's growth?

4. In "Indian Camp," why does the man commit suicide? What is Uncle George's role in the story? Why does he give out cigars?

5. Is there any evidence in In Our Time that Nick has decided to be a writer? See "On Writing," the deleted conclusion of "Big Two-Hearted River," in which Nick discusses his determination to become a writer. Do you think this conclusion should have been deleted or included?

6. Why does Nick break up with Marge? What is Bill's role in the process? Does Nick agree with Bill when he says, in effect, that Marge is not good enough for him?

7. Discuss Hemingway's handling of dialogue. Notice how often he writes dialogue tags such as "Nick said nothing." What is the effect of such pointed silence?

8. Consider the relevance of the bullfight vignettes to the larger action of In Our Time. How may the bullfight be related to the lessons Nick learns as he grows up?

9. Why is "Big Two-Hearted River" divided into Parts I and II? What effect does this have on the narrative?

10. Discuss the ways in which each vignette relates to the titled story before or after it.

11. Read T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land and discuss its influence on In Our Time. For example, what is the significance of Nick as a Fisher King-figure?

# Topics for Discussion

Referring to the text of "Indian Camp," discuss the meaning of Nick's father's comment "her screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are not important." To what extent does the doctor's attitude contribute to the tragedy that occurs (the husband's suicide).

Discuss how Nick's father's behavior after the operation on the pregnant woman is inappropriate and comment upon what his behavior reveals about his character.

In "The Doctor and the Doctor's wife" Nick's father reports his version of the dispute with Dick Boulton to Nick's mother, who asserts that she really doesn't think that any one would really do a thing like that intentionally. Analyze the conversation between Boulton and the Doctor and give examples to illustrate whether or not Boulton was acting deliberately, and suggest reasons why Nick's mother would choose to contradict the doctor's version of the events.

Discuss the importance of the symbolism of the ruined mill in "The End of Something." Make particular reference to the clues the writer has embedded in the story that suggest that so far as Nick is concerned, the relationship is already over, and comment upon Nick's outburst in which he says that Marjorie always "knows everything." To what extent is his objection to this perceived behavior of hers at fault for their breakup.

Referring to "The Three-Day Blow," compare Hemingway's use of the symbolism of leaves in this story to his use of leaves in the memoir in Chapter V.

In the "The Three-Day Blow" choose examples that illustrate Nick and Bill's immaturity, and compare them to examples that illustrate how in some ways they show maturity.

The story "The Battler" explores two distinctly opposite aspects of human beings, their tendency to be cruel and their tendency to be caring. Using examples from the story discuss how Hemingway develops this theme but does not literally refer to either of those tendencies. Try to illustrate how the author's technique is oblique rather than direct.

Assume that Nick Adams is the character whose story is being told only by the memoirs in Chapters III, IV, VI, and VII, and track the progress of his war experience. In which of the stories in the book does the result of his experiences surface? Describe the nature of the connection between what happened to him in the war, and how these things explain his behavior after he returns.

# Literary Precedents

Since the very identity of In Our Time is bound up with the fact of its startling freshness, its originality, both in terms of technique and subject matter, there are few literary precedents.

In the most general terms, of course, there have been very many bildungsroman novels that deal with a young man growing up and going off to experience the horror of war. But if the reader seeks more specific literary models the closest precedents may be found in James Joyce's Dubliners (1914), an intensely modernist and highly wrought story- cycle, and in Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio (1919), a storycycle or loosely structured bildungsroman. Hemingway knew and was influenced by both of these writers, both of these works.

# Related Titles

The Nick Adams Stories (1972) is the most complete compilation of stories in which Nick figures importantly. The collection includes the specifically Nick-centered stories of In Our Time as well as sixteen additional Nick Adams pieces. Although this collection has been criticized for its faulty editing and misleading chronological rearrangement of the Nick stories, it is useful to have such pieces as "Three Shots" (which is closely related to "Indian Camp") and "On Writing" (which is closely related to "Big TwoHearted River"). In fact, "Three Shots" and "On Writing" were cut by Hemingway from the original manuscript version of "Indian Camp" and "Big TwoHearted River." "On Writing" is important for what it tells us about Nick's decision to become a writer; more generally, it is one of Hemingway's most valuable statements on the art of writing. To have an overall sense of the Nick Adams chronicle, the reader should know the material in The Nick Adams Stories (much of which also appears in The Complete Short Stories).

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