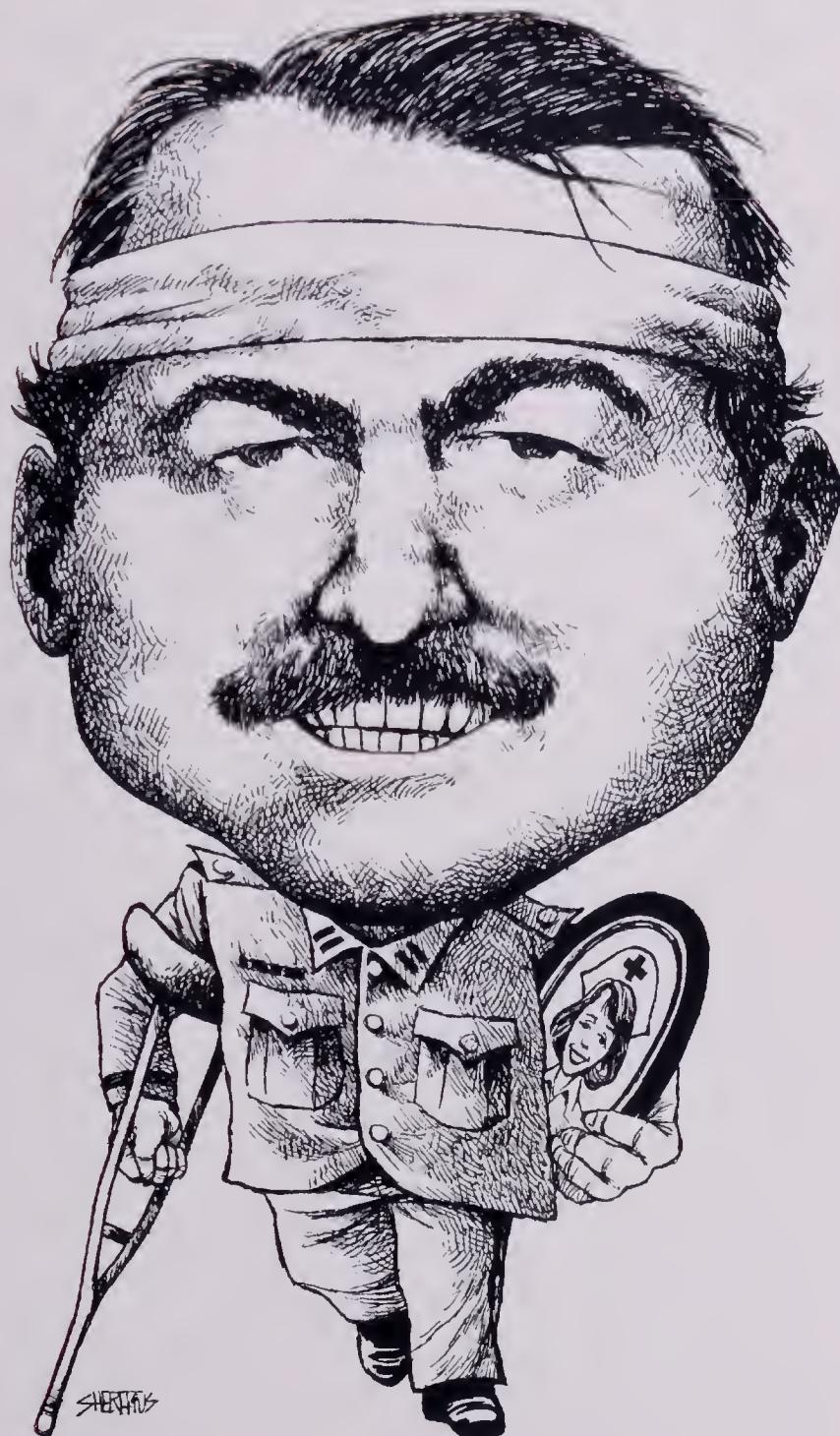


National Endowment for the Arts

TEACHER'S GUIDE



ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S

**A Farewell  
to Arms**





NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS



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The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts—both new and established—bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Endowment is the nation's largest annual funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development.

Arts Midwest connects people throughout the Midwest and the world to meaningful arts opportunities, sharing creativity, knowledge, and understanding across boundaries. Based in Minneapolis, Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest's history spans more than 25 years.

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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Suggested Teaching Schedule .....	2
Lesson One: Biography .....	4
Lesson Two: Culture and History .....	5
Lesson Three: Narrative and Point of View.....	6
Lesson Four: Characters .....	7
Lesson Five: Figurative Language.....	8
Lesson Six: Symbols.....	9
Lesson Seven: Character Development .....	10
Lesson Eight: The Plot Unfolds.....	11
Lesson Nine: Themes of the Novel.....	12
Lesson Ten: What Makes a Great Book? .....	13
Essay Topics .....	14
Capstone Projects .....	15
Handout One: World War I—The Great War.....	16
Handout Two: Modernism .....	17
Handout Three: Hemingway's Writing Style .....	18
Teaching Resources.....	19
NCTE Standards.....	20



A FAREWELL  
TO ARMS



**"I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it....Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates."**

—from *A Farewell to Arms*

# Introduction



Photo by Vance Jacobs

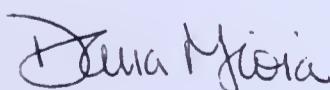
Welcome to the Big Read, a major initiative from the National Endowment for the Arts. Designed to revitalize the role of literary reading in American culture, the Big Read hopes to unite communities through great literature, as well as inspire students to become life-long readers.

This Big Read Teacher's Guide contains ten lessons to lead you through Ernest Hemingway's classic novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. Each lesson has four sections: a thematic focus, discussion activities, writing exercises, and homework assignments. In addition, we have provided capstone projects and suggested essay topics, as well as handouts with more background information about the novel, the historical period, and the author. All lessons dovetail with the state language arts standards required in the fiction genre.

The Big Read teaching materials also include a CD. Packed with interviews, commentaries, and excerpts from the novel, the Big Read CD presents first-hand accounts of why Hemingway's novel remains so compelling eight decades after its initial publication. Some of America's most celebrated writers, scholars, and actors have volunteered their time to make these Big Read CDs exciting additions to the classroom.

Finally, the Big Read Reader's Guide deepens your exploration with interviews, booklists, time lines, and historical information. We hope this guide and syllabus allow you to have fun with your students while introducing them to the work of a great American author.

From the NEA, we wish you an exciting and productive school year.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dana Gioia".

Dana Gioia  
Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts

# Suggested Teaching Schedule

**1**

## Day One

**FOCUS:** Biography

**Activities:** Listen to the Big Read CD. Read Reader's Guide essays. Write a second chapter to the novel.

**Homework:** Chapters I-VII (pp. 1-41).\*

**2**

## Day Two

**FOCUS:** Culture and History

**Activities:** Listen to the Big Read CD. Read Reader's Guide essays and Handouts One and Two. Play "exquisite corpse."

**Homework:** Chapters VIII-XII (pp. 42-78).

**3**

## Day Three

**FOCUS:** Narrative and Point of View

**Activities:** Tell story from the point of view of a secondary character.

**Homework:** Chapters XIII-XVIII (pp. 81-116).

**4**

## Day Four

**FOCUS:** Characters

**Activities:** Explain protagonist and antagonist. Introduce foil.

**Homework:** Chapters XIX-XXIV (pp. 117-159).

**5**

## Day Five

**FOCUS:** Figurative Language

**Activities:** Document figurative language used in first five chapters. Use metaphors in personal description.

**Homework:** Chapters XXV-XXVII (pp. 163-193).

\* Page numbers refer to the 332-page Scribner 2003 edition of *A Farewell to Arms*

# **6**

## **Day Six**

**FOCUS:** Symbols

Activities: Explore the symbol of the snake.

Homework: Chapters XXVIII-XXXII  
(pp. 194-233).

# **7**

## **Day Seven**

**FOCUS:** Character Development

Activities: Explore Henry's beliefs.

Homework: Chapters XXXIII-XXXV  
(pp. 237-263).

# **8**

## **Day Eight**

**FOCUS:** The Plot Unfolds

Activities: Chart a time line of the story.  
Write the opening of a sequel.

Homework: Chapters XXXVI-XXXVII  
(pp. 264-285).

# **9**

## **Day Nine**

**FOCUS:** Themes of the Novel

Activities: Develop an interpretation based on a theme: Hope/Hopelessness or Relationships.

Homework: Chapters XXXVIII-XLI  
(pp. 289-332).

# **10**

## **Day Ten**

**FOCUS:** What Makes a Great Book?

Activities: Explore the qualities of a great novel and the voice of a generation. Examine qualities that make Hemingway's novel successful. Have students review each other's paper outlines or drafts.

Homework: Essay due next class period.

## Lesson One

### FOCUS: Biography

The author's life can inform and expand the reader's understanding of a novel. One practice of examining a literary work, biographical criticism, looks through the lens of an author's experience. In this lesson, explore the author's life to more fully understand the novel.

Ernest Hemingway grew up in Oak Park, Illinois, one of six children. In 1917, the year President Wilson declared war on Germany, Hemingway graduated from high school. Instead of going to college, he became a reporter for a small newspaper. As a journalist, Hemingway learned to write concisely, using active verbs and brief, clear paragraphs. Many young men were entering the military, but Hemingway's vision did not meet military standards. So he applied to the Red Cross as an ambulance driver and, in 1918, found himself in France and then in Italy. *A Farewell to Arms*, published in 1929, draws on the details of his wartime injury, his friendships, and his love affairs.



### Discussion Activities

Listen to the Big Read CD. Students should take notes as they listen. Ask them to present the three most important points they learned from the CD.

Copy and distribute Reader's Guide essays, pp. 2-3, 4-5, 6-7. Divide the class into groups. Assign one essay to each group. After reading and discussing the essays, groups will present what they have learned to the class. Ask students to add creative twists to make their presentations memorable.



### Writing Exercise

Have students read Chapter I (pp. 3-4). Ask students to write a two-page second chapter using this reading. Students can further explore the landscape, or begin to develop the main character. Use this as an opportunity to talk about creative writing.



### Homework

Prepare to read roughly 30 pages per night, so as to complete the novel in ten lessons. Readers first meet a group of soldiers and a priest debating how the narrator should spend his holiday. Why might Hemingway have drawn out this debate at the beginning of the novel? Is the narrator choosing between the soldier's life and a more religious one? Read Chapters I-VII (pp. 1-41).

# 2

## Lesson Two

### FOCUS: Culture and History

Historical and cultural contexts give birth to the dilemmas and themes at the heart of the novel. Studying these contexts and appreciating the intricate details of the time and place assist us in comprehending the motivations of the characters. In this lesson, use cultural and historical contexts to begin to explore the novel.

During the war, artists, writers, poets, philosophers, and musicians gathered in Paris. Hemingway's Europe hosted American expatriates pursuing inventive forms of expression, challenging traditions, and idealistically embracing a new century. Inevitably, these young thinkers would influence one another through friendship, collaboration, or antagonism.

The American poet Ezra Pound, changed Irish writer James Joyce's life by inviting him to come to Paris. Pound, as well as the American writer Gertrude Stein, would also become a mentor to Hemingway. Pound's work, like Hemingway, would be characterized by concise, clear language that rejected ornament.

Extending such minimalism, the Surrealist Movement came to life in Paris. Visual artists such as Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and René Magritte sought to free the human voice, by disposing with ideas crafted, revised, and carefully shaped through reason. In 1924, "The Surrealist Manifesto" claimed that automatic responses may hold more truth than statements filtered through layers of reason and revision. A culture, or the collective unconscious, might be revealed, so they thought, through "automatic responses."



### Discussion Activities

Read and discuss Reader's Guide essay "Hemingway and the Lost Generation." Play the Surrealist game "exquisite corpse." Go to [www.exquisitecorpse.com](http://www.exquisitecorpse.com) to see samples and learn to play.



### Writing Exercise

Henry experiences remorse at neglecting to visit Abruzzi, the priest's hometown. He feels guilty about ignoring the priest's advice. This guilt reflects an internal conflict between following a religious path and following the path where "we did not do the things we wanted to do; we never did such things" (p. 13). Could Hemingway be foreshadowing the outcome of the novel? In which direction might Henry's life unfold? Write a few paragraphs about what you think might happen, based on this fork in the road.



### Homework

Read Chapters VIII-XII (pp. 41-78). How does the main character's point of view emerge in Book One? At this point, is the narrator a hero? Why or why not?

# 3

## Lesson Three

### FOCUS: Narrative and Point of View

The narrator tells the story with a specific perspective informed by his or her beliefs and experiences. The narrator can be a major or minor character within the novel. The narrator weaves her or his point of view, including ignorance and bias, into the telling of the tale. A first-person narrator participates in the events of the novel, using “I.” A distanced narrator (often not a character) does not participate in the events of the story and uses third person (he, she, they) to narrate the story. The distanced narrator can be omniscient, able to read the minds of all characters within the novel. Ultimately, the type of narrator determines the point of view from which the story is told.

American volunteer Frederic Henry tells the story in *A Farewell to Arms*. While Frederic narrates this account, he does not refer to himself until the second chapter of the novel. First, he must orient us to the landscape, the changing seasons, and the shifting war. Similarly, Hemingway waits to reveal Henry’s name until Chapter V, when a nurse bids him goodnight. Note also that this novel takes place before America enters the war. When Henry says, “I believe we should get the war over” (p. 75), he is referring to his comrades and the Italian forces.

### ?? Discussion Activities

In Chapter IX, a heated debate takes place regarding the nature of war, foreshadowing the conflagration that will injure Frederic (p. 50). There are many views reflected in the heated debate: “nothing worse than war,” “defeat is worse [than war],” “war is not won by victory,” “the ruling class caused and runs the war,” and “war is fought for money.” What position, or point of view, does Henry take regarding war? Does this inform how he tells the story? If so, in what way? If not, why not? In addition, why might Hemingway introduce this debate just before men are injured and killed?



### Writing Exercise

Rewrite the novel’s beginning from the point of view of Catherine Barkley, Rinaldi, or the priest. Before writing, decide whether you will write in first-person or third-person narration. If you write in the third person, will the narration be omniscient? Before you begin writing, decide what view of war (see above) informs your character.



### Homework

Have students read Chapters XIII-XVIII (pp. 81-116). This reading concludes with the statement “You’re my religion” (p. 116). What are Catherine Barkley’s and Frederic Henry’s primary motivations? Come to class with a list of their top three motivations.

# 4

## Lesson Four

### FOCUS: Characters

The main character in a work of literature is called the “protagonist.” The protagonist often overcomes a weakness or ignorance to achieve a new understanding by the work’s end. A protagonist who acts with great courage may be called a “hero.” A protagonist of dubious tenacity and questionable virtue is an “antihero.” Readers often debate the virtues and motivations of the protagonists in an attempt to understand whether they are heroic. The protagonist’s journey is made more dramatic by challenges presented by characters with different beliefs. A “foil” provokes the protagonist so as to highlight more clearly certain features of the main character. The most important foil, the “antagonist,” opposes the protagonist, barring or complicating his or her success.

We encounter the secondary characters through Henry’s point of view. Hemingway does not profile Henry’s comrades in great detail. As Henry’s lover, Miss Barkley provides the foil for Henry’s character, leading him in unexpected directions: “God knows I had not wanted to fall in love with any one. But God knows I had and I lay on the bed in the room in the hospital in Milan and all sorts of things went through my head but I felt wonderful...” (p. 93).

### ?? Discussion Activities

Divide the class into groups. Assign each group a secondary character, for example: Rinaldi, the priest, Miss Gage, or Miss Ferguson. Ask students to review the chapters they have read, selecting the chapter that best captures this character. Have them present the key attributes of that character, citing quotes from the text. Conclude by discussing moments when these characters draw reactions from Henry. Do these characters deepen our understanding of Henry?



### Writing Exercise

Who is the antagonist in the novel? Does the antagonist require Henry to look at himself in profound new ways? Write a brief essay answering these questions, supporting your argument with quotes from the text.



### Homework

Have students read Chapters XIX-XXIV (pp. 117-159), concluding Book Two. Hemingway alludes to a poem by Andrew Marvell, when Henry recites: “But at my back I always hear, time’s winged chariot hurrying near...” (p. 155). Why does Henry recite this poem at this moment in the novel? Why is “time’s winged chariot hurrying near?”

## Lesson Five

### FOCUS: Figurative Language

Writers often use non-literal language to invite readers to visualize events, view internal conflicts, glimpse social themes, or grasp abstract concepts like beauty, truth, or goodness. An author uses figurative or non-literal language to stretch our imaginations, challenging us to decode the references and meanings bound within images, similes, metaphors, and symbols. Such devices require a reader to participate actively in the novel, as the reader begins to (implicitly or explicitly) interpret non-literal elements of the tale.

While figurative language provides an essential tool for many writers, Hemingway avoided figurative descriptions. Rather than describing through symbols, images, or metaphors, he preferred to imply change of mood, meaning, or direction subtly. As his work developed, dialogue came to serve as Hemingway's principle tool for breaking open a character, a scene, or a theme.



### Discussion Activities

Read Handout Three, "Hemingway's Writing Style." Return to the novel and select a section of dialogue to examine closely. For example, what remains unsaid in Henry's exchange with Catherine on pp. 153-55? Discuss this example with the class. Then, allow students a few minutes to review the novel individually and select some dialogue for discussion. How does the dialogue selected imply meaning beyond the words exchanged?



### Writing Exercise

Have students write a few paragraphs describing an unusual or exotic place they have visited. In their story, the students should use image, simile, and metaphor at least twice. As another option, have students write a dialogue between themselves and their best friend, a parent, or a relative. When they have finished writing the dialogue, discuss how their experience with dialogue relates to Hemingway's techniques used in the novel.



### Homework

Have students read Chapters XXV-XXVII (pp. 163-193). While reading, reflect on symbols of war that you see in media, novels, or the general culture. Do you find these symbols within the novel as well?

# 6

## Lesson Six

### FOCUS: Symbols

Symbols are interpretive keys to the text. The craft of storytelling depends on symbols that present ideas and point toward new meanings. Most frequently, a specific object will be used to reference (or symbolize) a more abstract concept. The repeated appearance of an object suggests a non-literal or figurative meaning attached to the object – above and beyond face value. Symbols are often found in the novel’s title, at the beginning and end of the novel, within a profound action, or captured by the name or personality of a character. The life of a novel is perpetuated by generations of readers interpreting and re-interpreting the main symbols of the novel. By decoding symbols, any reader can reveal a new interpretation of the novel.

Hemingway employs symbols deliberately and selectively. We can find an explanation in Henry’s comment that “abstract words...were obscene beside the concrete names of villages...” (p. 185). Idealized heroic figures, symbols of victory or defeat, rarely appear in this story. As implied in Henry’s quote, in the face of this war, the symbols “were obscene.”

Still the changing seasons may just reflect Henry’s inner development, his developing relationship with Miss Barkley, and the progress of the war. The novel begins in harvest time, when the two lovers meet. They later enjoy a blissful summer in Milan. But the book’s second half is filled with uncertainty and death, accompanied by a deluge of rain and snow during the winter of 1917-18. Catherine says, “I’m afraid of the rain because sometimes I see me dead in it” (p. 126).

### ?? Discussion Activities

Rinaldi says, “I am the snake. I am the snake of reason.” Henry responds, “You’re getting it mixed. The apple was reason” (p. 170). Rinaldi has “no sacred subjects” and notes that he has no married friends, presumably because he can seduce any woman through reason. Finally he admits, “We are born with all we have and we never learn. We never get anything new. We all start complete” (p. 171). These biblical symbols draw us back into questions of religion. Could Rinaldi provide a symbol of the atheist or a world without religion? Discuss with the class.



### Writing Exercise

Using the Discussion Activity, have students write a brief essay on either (1) how Rinaldi might symbolize a particular point of view, or (2) how Hemingway portrays religion in the novel. Please cite references in the text to support your argument.



### Homework

Have students read Chapters XXVIII-XXXII (pp. 194-233). How might Henry’s character (and challenges) reflect the era? Is Henry himself a symbol of the “Lost Generation?” In what way might he fail to represent the Lost Generation?

## Lesson Seven

### FOCUS: Character Development

Novels trace the development of characters that encounter a series of challenges. Most characters contain a complex balance of virtues and vices. Internal and external forces require characters to question themselves, overcome fears, or reconsider dreams. The protagonist undergoes profound change. A close study of character development maps the evolution of motivation, personality, and belief in each character. Still, the tension between a character's strengths and weaknesses keeps the reader guessing about what might happen next, affecting the drama and the plot.

Early in the novel the priest tells us, “It is never hopeless. But sometimes I cannot hope. I try always to hope, but sometimes I cannot” (p. 71). While the priest may have no hope at the moment, he does have faith that something will happen to resolve the war. In Book Three, Henry’s knee has recovered and he returns to the front. He notes changes in his friends. As the priest says, “Many people have realized the war this summer. Officers whom I thought could never realize it realize it now” (p. 178). Henry and the priest contemplate the hopelessness of the war. Will the war end with no victors, or continue on with no obvious victor? Henry explains to the priest, “It is in defeat that we are Christian...We are all gentler now because we are beaten” (p. 178).



### Discussion Activities

In this section, Henry implies that he “believes in nothing.” Is this view the result of his war experience? Compare Henry’s actions and comments in Book One to those in Book Three to determine whether this view has evolved. If this view hasn’t evolved from life-experience, is Rinaldi correct when he says, “We all start complete?” Is Hemingway giving us a novel based on Rinaldi’s philosophy?

To further explore this activity, you might present students with the theories of existential philosophy to determine whether Henry may be an existentialist.



### Writing Exercise

After shooting a sergeant, being captured, and fleeing, Henry finds solace in memories and remembering (p. 231). Have students choose one character aside from Henry and write a brief essay on how that character finds solace from the war. Has his or her source of solace changed during the novel?



### Homework

Have students read Chapters XXXIII-XXXV (pp. 237-263). Students should come to class ready to present the two most important turning points in the novel. In this section, we find that Henry makes “a separate peace.” What does he mean by this?

# 8

## Lesson Eight

### FOCUS: The Plot Unfolds

The author artfully builds a plot structure to create expectations, increase suspense, and inform character development. The timing of events, from beginning, to middle, to end, can make a novel predictable or riveting. A plot, propelled by a crisis, will reach a climax, and close with a resolution (sometimes called *dénouement*). Foreshadowing and flashbacks allow the author to defy time while telling the story. A successful author will keep a reader entranced by clever pacing built within the tale, sometimes confounding a simple plot by telling stories within stories.

Some turning points in the novel include Henry's first meeting with Catherine, the serious wound he suffers at the front, Catherine's unplanned pregnancy, Henry's escape from execution, and Emilio's intercession that allows the couple to escape to Switzerland.

### ?? Discussion Activities

Use the homework assignment from the last lesson to have students present the most important turning points in the novel. Ask them to refer to key passages. Use this information for the next activity.

In small groups, have students map a time line that depicts the development of the story and the building of drama. This time line should include the most significant turning points, but also examine lesser events that build tension. As students develop their time lines, they should define the beginning, middle, and end of the novel. Groups should present their time lines to the class. You might also divide the thirty-six chapters among students, with each student contributing part of the time line. Could one delete any chapters and still tell a good story?



### Writing Exercise

Ask students to imagine a sequel to *A Farewell to Arms* and have them outline it. What would the beginning, middle, and end of the sequel look like? Then write the opening paragraphs to the sequel, imagining a beginning that plunges the reader into the story. Students should come up with a provocative first sentence.



### Homework

Have students read Chapters XXXVI-XXXVII (pp. 264-285). They should come to class ready to discuss the meaning of the novel. What sort of statement does Hemingway make by telling this story, and by crafting the story in sparse language with frequent dialogue?

## Lesson Nine

### FOCUS: Themes of the Novel

Profound questions raised by the story allow the character (and the reader) to explore the meaning of human life, and extract themes. Themes investigate topics explored for centuries by philosophers, politicians, scientists, historians, and theologians. Classic themes include intellectual freedom versus censorship, personal moral code in relation to political justice, and spiritual faith versus rational commitments. A novel can shed light on these age-old debates, by creating new situations to challenge and explore human nature.



### Discussion Activities and Writing Exercise



Use the following questions to stimulate discussion or provide writing exercises in order to interpret the novel. Using historical references to support ideas, explore the statements *A Farewell to Arms* makes about the following:

**Hope/Hopelessness:** Hemingway writes, “Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates” (p. 185). Henry, in a moment of reflection, explains: “If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them” (p. 249).

1. In the first passage, what is Hemingway saying about abstract words?
2. Do the concrete facts of life provide more hope than abstractions?
3. Using several references from the novel, how might hope be a complex state of mind, rather a simple promise of brighter days?
4. Or, as indicated on p. 249, should Henry relinquish any hope in order to survive in the world?

**Relationships:** Does the novel depict love and friendship? Or are these merely mechanisms to deal with the loss of hope? For example, Rinaldi tells Henry, “You are my best friend and my war brother” (p. 171). Henry describes his relationship with Catherine, “We could feel alone together...but we were never lonely and never afraid when we were together” (p. 248).

1. What kind of friendship exists between Rinaldi and Henry? In what passages do we find proof (or disproof) of this friendship?
2. What kind of love exists between Catherine and Henry? Try to prove that they do not love one another. How might you develop and support this argument by citing passages from the text?
3. Using your arguments about friendship and love, explain whether these relationships supply Henry with hope or serve only as an escape from dealing with the hopelessness of his situation.



### Homework

Have students finish reading the novel, Chapters XXXVIII-XLI (pp. 289-332). Ask them to begin their essays, using “Essay Topics” at the end of this guide. Outlines are due for the next class.

# 10

## Lesson Ten

### FOCUS:

## What Makes a Great Book?

Novels illustrate the connections between individuals and questions of humanity. Great stories articulate and explore the mysteries of our daily lives, while painting those conflicts in the larger picture of human struggle. Readers forge bonds with the story as the writer's voice, style, and sense of poetry enchant the plot, characters, and themes. By creating opportunities for learning, imagining, and reflecting, a great novel is a work of art that affects many generations of readers, changing lives, challenging assumptions, and breaking new ground.



### Discussion Activities

Ask students to make a list of the characteristics of a great book. Put these on the board. What elevates a novel to greatness? Then ask them to discuss, within groups, other books they know that include some of the same characteristics. Do any of these books remind them of *A Farewell to Arms*? Is this a “great” novel? Make sure you clearly define what you mean by “great.”

A great writer can be the voice of a generation. What kind of voice does Hemingway provide through Henry? What does this voice tell us about the concerns and dreams of Hemingway’s generation? How does this voice represent the era of the Lost Generation?

Divide students into groups and have each group determine the primary theme of the novel. Have spokespeople from each group explain the group’s decision, supporting the group’s conclusions by referencing the text. Compare and contrast differences of opinion that might emerge within the class.



### Writing Exercise

If you were the voice of your generation, what would be your most important message? Why might you choose to convey this in a novel rather than a speech or an essay? What story would you tell to get your point across?

Have students work on their essays in class. Be available to assist with outlines, drafts, and arguments. Have each student partner with another to edit outlines and/or rough drafts. Provide students with the characteristics of a well-written essay.



### Homework

Students should begin working on their essays. See “Essay Topics” at the end of this guide. For additional questions, see the Reader’s Guide “Discussion Questions” (pp. 14-15). Turn in outlines and/or rough drafts for the next class.

# Essay Topics

The discussion activities and writing exercises in this guide provide you with possible essay topics, as do the Discussion Questions in the Reader's Guide. Advanced students can come up with their own essay topics, as long as they are specific and compelling. Other ideas for essays are provided here.

For essays, students should organize their ideas around a thesis about the novel. This statement or thesis should be focused, with clear reasons supporting its conclusion. The thesis and supporting reasons should be backed by references to the text.

1. Hemingway reveals almost nothing about the background of Frederic Henry or the other characters. How does the elimination of character history contribute to Hemingway's crafting of the novel? Instead of biographical histories, how does Hemingway provide us with insight into character development? In other words, what devices substitute for personal histories? Has Hemingway used these devices successfully?
2. "Perhaps wars weren't won anymore," Henry muses. "Maybe they went on forever. Maybe it was another Hundred Years' War" (p. 118). The tactics and strategy of war have changed since Hemingway wrote *A Farewell to Arms*. Research the facts of World War I in Italy, military technology, and strategy. Write a historical essay on how actual events have been depicted in the novel. How does Hemingway's tale follow or diverge from the actual events of the war? How might this affect an interpretation of the novel?
3. Henry tells us of Ettore, an Italian-American who had received numerous medals, "He was a legitimate hero who bored every one he met" (p. 124). What concept of heroism does Hemingway present through Henry and others? Could Catherine be considered a hero? What kind of hero? Or, does Hemingway depict Henry as an anti-hero? Cite passages to support your argument.
4. Catherine tells Frederic, "You're my religion. You're all I've got" (p. 116). Henry implies that he has no religion. The priest advocates religion under very difficult conditions and admits that he is hopeless. Returning to our lessons, use one of the following (culture and history, characters/character development, figurative language, plot, or themes) to provide a portrait of religion in the novel. Is Hemingway making a statement about the relation of religious belief to the war? Support your argument with quotes from the text.

# Capstone Projects

Teachers may consider the ways in which these activities may be linked to other Big Read community events. Most of these projects could be shared at a local library, a student assembly, or a bookstore.

1. Public presentations: Explore creative writing skills through the following exercises: (1) write a short story without depicting the main character's personal history, (2) write a short story using only dialogue, or (3) write a short story using few adjectives and no figurative language. Revise this work and share the results at a student assembly or a meeting at a local bookstore.
2. Parents' Night: Ask students to write a letter from Frederic Henry to his parents after the novel ends, describing what he thinks of the war. The letter should reflect what he has learned about war during the previous two years. Students should use their imaginations, but also references to the novel. Have them read the letters aloud.
3. Photo gallery/docent exercise: Ask students to find different photographs, paintings, or images of Hemingway and/or the novel in books, magazines, or on the Web. Describe what the image tells us about Hemingway or the novel. Students should discuss the image and point to details that explain why they chose it. Collaborate with a local gallery or library. To vary the exercise have students create their own images, writing a statement to explain how the compositions relate to the novel..
4. Arrange students in groups of four and have them stage a scene from the novel. Students can use dialogue from the book, but are welcome to invent their own, making sure to stay in character. Have students act out the scene at a local library or bookstore. After each scene, have the students explain their choices.
5. Explore the historical period of the First World War and the 1920s by creating posters that provide in-depth information on what was happening in the following artistic areas: music and jazz, theater, visual arts, photography, and dance. Display these posters in the school or classroom. This would create an opportunity for examining propaganda related to World War I.

## World War I—The Great War

World War I (1914-1918) is known by many names: the Great War, “the war of illusions,” “the war to end all wars.” When the shooting finally ended, an estimated 10 million people were dead and 20 million were wounded. It was the war that introduced the deadly arsenal of modern weaponry to soldier and civilian alike.

The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary triggered the war in June of 1914. But the real causes of the conflict go deeper. A brand of aggressive nationalism had taken root across all Europe. Germany, France, and England had become imperial powers with economic rivalries around the globe. The interlocking royal families of Europe created far-flung political alliances and pledged to take sides in case of conflict. Add to this the coming revolutionary struggle in Russia, and all the pieces were in place for a catastrophe.

A four-year conflict followed. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire (mostly today's Turkey) fought against the Allies, led by France, England, Russia, Italy and, eventually, America. The bulk of the war pitted adversaries along the Western front in a brutal standoff known as trench warfare. The Italian and Eastern fronts, though bloody, were secondary to the decisive battles consumed the heart of France and Belgium until whole landscapes were devoid of life.

After the Great War, combat would never be the same. The trenches were only one aspect of a conflict that saw the deployment of revolutionary and murderous new technology. The machine gun, the airplane, the armored tank, submarines, and poison gas were used in warfare, most of them for the first time—an arsenal that would dominate military strategy and planning for the century to come.

Though almost all the great battles were fought in Europe—the Marne, the Somme, Verdun, Ypres, Tannenberg—the Great War was a global conflict. Turkey, where the bloody battle of Gallipoli was waged, was a close ally of Germany. Australia and New Zealand entered on the side of the Allies. The United States did not join the Allies until 1917, but played a key role in stopping the final German offensive and bringing the war to an end in November of 1918.

The Great War might have been aptly named had the combatants heeded its warning. But the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, burdening Germany with enormous reparations, was partly responsible for setting in motion the rise of German fascism and the Nazi party. Before the memory of the first great war had dimmed, an even greater threat was on the horizon.

## Modernism

Modernism was a movement that revolted against the literature, music, art, and architecture of Western culture. A group of visionaries emerging at the turn of the 20th century targeted the classical and romantic strains of European tradition as static and passé. Depressed by the militarism and chaos of the Great War, Modernist finally questioned fundamental values such as progress and enlightenment, which had long defined the Western tradition.

Modernism emerged in the visual arts as early as the 1860s, with Édouard Manet. Further developments in the natural and social sciences encouraged a new group of Europeans around the turn of the century. The art of this early modernism was abstract, innovative, and often utopian. The decades to follow saw a proliferation of bold new artists and movements, each challenging those that had come before: Futurism (Boccioni), Dada (Duchamp), Cubism (Braque, Picasso), and Expressionism (Kandinsky).

Literary modernism flourished during the years between the world wars — effectively, the movement's second generation. Modernist technique in poetry and fiction relied on such devices as shifting perspective, stream-of-

consciousness narration, non-linear structure, and symbolic fragmentation. In the hands of James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner, the great legacy of the Enlightenment and 19th-century realism crumpled beneath the force of a sustained literary revolt.

The struggle for the artistic soul of the West reached out to the built environment as well. International School architects like Le Corbusier and Mies van de Rohe stressed simplicity, transparency, glass, steel, and concrete—an affront to the tradition that extended from systematic Classical temples through intricate Gothic cathedrals and Baroque palaces to the overcrowded urban jungle. The industrial neighborhoods of the West soon heralded the new vision of architects who subscribed to the dictum that “form follows function.”

In the music of Stravinsky, the mythmaking of Joyce, or the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, Modernism stamped the 20th century with an indelible mark. Fueled by innovations in the sciences, Modernism critiqued Western tradition until, by mid-century, it had itself become a part of that tradition.

## Hemingway's Writing Style

Ernest Hemingway's writing is among the most recognizable and influential prose of the twentieth century. Many critics believe his style was influenced by his days as a cub reporter for the *Kansas City Star*, where he had to rely on short sentences and energetic English.

Hemingway's technique is uncomplicated, with plain grammar and easily accessible language. His hallmark is a clean style that eschews adjectives and uses short, rhythmic sentences that concentrate on action rather than reflection. Though his writing is often thought of as "simple," this generalization could not be further from the truth.

He was an obsessive reviser. His work is the result of a careful process of selecting only those elements essential to the story and pruning everything else away. He kept his prose direct and unadorned, employing a technique he termed the "iceberg principle." In *Death in the Afternoon* he wrote, "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of the iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water."

Hemingway is also considered a master of dialogue. The conversations between his characters demonstrate not only communication but also its limits. The way Hemingway's characters speak is

sometimes more important than what they say, because what they choose to say (or leave unsaid) illuminates sources of inner conflict. Sometimes characters say only what they think another character will want to hear. In short, Hemingway captures the complexity of human interaction through subtlety and implication as well as direct discourse.

The writers of Hemingway's generation are often termed "modernists." Disillusioned by the large number of casualties in World War I, they turned away from the 19th-century, Victorian notions of morality and propriety and toward a more existential worldview. Many of the era's most talented writers congregated in Paris. Ezra Pound, considered one of the most significant poets of the Modernist movement, also promoted Hemingway's early work, as did F. Scott Fitzgerald, who wrote to his editor, Maxwell Perkins, on Hemingway's behalf.

The powerful impact of Hemingway's writing on other authors continues to this day. Writers as diverse as Bret Easton Ellis, Chuck Palahniuk, Elmore Leonard, and Hunter S. Thompson have credited him with contributing to their styles. Direct, personal writing full of rich imagery was Hemingway's goal. Nearly fifty years after his death, his distinctive prose is still recognizable by its economy and controlled understatement.

# Teaching Resources

## Books

- Baker, Carlos. *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969.
- Monteiro, George, Ed. *Critical Essays on Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms*. New York: G. K. Hall, 1994.
- Reynolds, Michael S. *The Young Hemingway*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
- Reynolds, Michael S. *Hemingway: The Paris Years*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989.
- Reynolds, Michael S. *Hemingway: The American Homecoming*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992.
- Reynolds, Michael S. *Hemingway: The 1930s*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1997.
- Reynolds, Michael S. *Hemingway: The Final Years*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999.
- Sandison, David. *Ernest Hemingway: An Illustrated Biography*. Illinois: Chicago Review Press, 1999.
- Voss, Frederick. *Picturing Hemingway: A Writer in His Time*. New Haven, CT: Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, in association with Yale University Press, 1999.

## Web sites

- [www.lostgeneration.com](http://www.lostgeneration.com)  
Hemingway Resource Center. A site devoted to Hemingway, including a biography, bibliography, auction center for "Papa" paraphernalia, message boards, and an audio portion of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech.
- [www.timelesshemingway.com](http://www.timelesshemingway.com)  
This site has unusual photos, an extensive FAQ section, a quote finder, and contemporary reviews of Hemingway works.
- [www.hemingwaysociety.org](http://www.hemingwaysociety.org)  
This is the site of the Hemingway Society, the alternate name for the Ernest Hemingway Foundation, founded in 1965 by Hemingway's widow, Mary. With the University of Idaho, the Society publishes the *Hemingway Review*, sponsors conferences on the author, awards research fellowships, and oversees the publication of Hemingway's letters.

# NCTE Standards

## National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards\*

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

\* This guide was developed with NCTE Standards and State Language Arts Standards in mind. Use these standards to guide and develop your application of the curriculum.



**"If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water."**

—ERNEST HEMINGWAY

**“All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you; the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was.”**

—ERNEST HEMINGWAY

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FOR THE ARTS



*The Big Read is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. The NEA presents The Big Read in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in cooperation with Arts Midwest. The Big Read brings together partners across the country to encourage reading for pleasure and enlightenment.*

**A great nation deserves great art.**

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