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## ERNEST HEMINGWAY

**Born:** Oak Park, Illinois  
July 21, 1899

**Died:** Ketchum, Idaho  
July 2, 1961

*Considered a master of terse and direct expression, Hemingway, the 1954 Nobel laureate in literature, had a profound stylistic impact upon most of the major authors who followed him, even though his own output was not huge.*

### BIOGRAPHY

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born into an affluent family in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park, Illinois, on July 21, 1899, the eldest of six children. His father, Clarence Edmond, was a physician. His mother, the former Grace Hall, kept an attractive house at 439 North Oak Park Avenue, her father's dwelling, into which her husband moved and lived until her father's death in 1905. Grace exposed her son Ernest to the arts by taking him to museums in Chicago and by enrolling him in piano lessons. Hemingway, as both son and writer, frequently rebelled against her puritanical values.

As a student at Oak Park High School, from which Hemingway graduated in 1917, he contributed to the school newspaper and other publications. Upon graduation, he realized that he would soon be in some way drawn into World War I. His first job, as a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*, was cut short when, after being rejected for military service because of weak eyesight, he enlisted as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross early in 1918 and was sent to Italy.

On July 8, 1918, Hemingway, who served with some heroism, was wounded by mortar fire at Fossalta di Piave. He was hospitalized for an extended period, and when he returned to the United States, the dashing, dark-haired Hemingway was consid-

ered a conquering hero and was in great demand to speak before civic groups about his war experience. He was lionized for his heroism.

After recuperating at his family's summer home in Michigan, Hemingway became a reporter for the *Toronto Star* and *Star Weekly*, which sent him to Europe as a foreign correspondent in 1921, shortly after his marriage to Hadley Richardson. The two settled in Paris, where they met many of the foremost contributors to Europe's avant-garde artistic scene. Among his Parisian associates Hemingway numbered Sherwood Anderson, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and, perhaps most significant, Gertrude Stein. It was from Stein that he learned the elements of literary style that were later to affect his writing most directly.

Hemingway began to write short stories and, in 1923, published *Three Stories and Ten Poems* in Paris, followed the next year by *In Our Time*, a collection of short stories, which was republished in 1925 in the United States. By then, Hemingway was beginning to move away from reporting and full-time into his career.

In 1926, he published *The Torrents of Spring* and his renowned novel of the so-called lost generation, *The Sun Also Rises*, with Charles Scribner's Sons in New York, which remained his publisher for all but one of his later books. *The Sun Also Rises* established Hemingway's early reputation, although real commercial success evaded him for another two years until *A Farewell to Arms* appeared in 1929. Both books showcase his strength: writing about men who responded to adversity in a way that he

defined as courageous. For Hemingway, courage was showing grace under pressure.

*Men Without Women* appeared in 1927, the year in which Hemingway divorced Hadley and married Pauline Pfeiffer. In 1928, Hemingway decided to return to the United States. He and Pauline used their house in Key West, Florida, as their base until 1939, although their stays there were interrupted by frequent travel, particularly from 1936 to 1938, when Hemingway went to Spain to cover the Spanish Civil War for the North American Newspaper Alliance.

The Key West years were productive ones for Hemingway. He was happy there and began his extensive adventures as a sport fisherman in the Gulf of Mexico. These were much more elaborate excursions than his cherished childhood fishing and hunting trips with his father in northern Michigan. At about this time, Hemingway, who had experienced the running of the bulls at Pamplona, began to develop his lifelong interest in bullfighting. His book on the subject, *Death in the Afternoon*, appeared in 1932, his first to depart from the war theme that had come for many to define his writing. His major concern therein, however, is still grace under pressure.

Ever seeking new adventures, Hemingway took his first African safari in 1933-1934; during these travels he also revisited Spain and France. His *Green Hills of Africa*, published in 1935, resulted from this, his first of many African ventures. Back in Key West after the Spanish Civil War ended in 1938, Hemingway was restless, and in 1939, he bought a house, called Finca Vigia, outside Havana, Cuba, and moved there.

Hemingway's obsession with adventure and with proving his masculinity—clear motivations for many of his more daring adventures—made him difficult to live with; in 1940, Pauline divorced him. In the same year, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was published, and Hemingway married newswoman Martha Gellhorn, several years his senior, whom he regarded subconsciously as a mother figure, as he may have done all his wives. His resentment of his own mother is often said to have manifested itself in his marriages, directed against the women he chose to marry.

With the entry of the United States into World War II, Hemingway again went to Europe as a war correspondent. He participated in the Allied Nor-

mandy invasion, hatched a personal scheme to liberate Paris, and attached himself to the Fourth Infantry Division, somewhat against the will of its officers. When Hemingway returned to Cuba during the war, he became a self-appointed antisubmarine operative, sailing into the ocean on his yacht to spot enemy submarines and disable any he encountered.

The U.S. government was embarrassed by Hemingway's unsolicited help. His literary production declined during this period, and his drinking was out of control. When Martha Gellhorn divorced him in 1944, he quickly married Mary Welsh, who would remain his wife until Hemingway, seeking the same solution to his problems that his father had earlier, committed suicide in 1961.

Hemingway's artistic end seemed imminent in 1950 when his novel *Across the River and into the Trees* was poorly received by critics and the public alike; however, he rallied from that defeat and, in 1952, published one of his most popular works, the novella *The Old Man and the Sea*. About a year after the book was published, Hemingway survived two airplane crashes in Africa. Reported dead, he eventually charged out of the bush with a bottle of whiskey in his hand. In 1954, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature but, because of his injuries, could not attend the awards ceremony. His Nobel citation, even though the prize is for the full body of his literary work, specifically cited *The Old Man and the Sea* as exemplifying that which the award seeks to honor in literature.

When Cuba fell to Fidel Castro in 1959, Hemingway bought his final residence, a house in Ketchum, Idaho. He moved there in 1959, the same year in which he began treatments for depression and various physical ills at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. His despondence over his declining health and over his inability to write as well as he once had led him to end his life on July 2, 1961, by putting a twelve-gauge shotgun into his mouth and pulling the trigger.

#### ANALYSIS

During Hemingway's formative years, his mother tried to civilize her son. His father, when he could take time away from his medical practice to be with his family at its summer home near Petosky, Michigan, exposed Hemingway to such sporting activities as hunting, fishing, and living in the woods.

Hemingway, never a large man, endured an adolescence of viewing the world from the perspective of someone five feet, four inches tall. This early perspective eventually made itself felt in his work.

Beginning to write long before the graphic arts had coined the term “minimalist,” Hemingway was an early minimalist in his writing. He learned part of the minimalist lesson during his years as a newspaper reporter. He learned, also, during that period the importance of close, accurate observation. As anyone who has studied journalism knows, journalistic writing is direct, unencumbered, and accessible. Journalists write short sentences that they incorporate into short paragraphs. Their vocabulary is simple, their syntax not obscure.

During his apprenticeship as a writer, Hemingway was a journalist—but not merely a journalist. He was a journalist living in post-World War I Paris, certainly the preferred gathering place of avant-garde artists and intellectuals of that age. Besides living at the geographical center of European—and therefore, worldwide—intellectual and artistic ferment, Hemingway was a part of an inner circle of challenging artists.

Ezra Pound, newly emerged from his Imagist and vorticist stages in poetry, was working on his *Cantos*, which he began to publish in 1930 and published periodically for the following ten years. Pound was also encouraging and guiding the young T. S. Eliot, who dwelt just across the English Channel in London, as he wrote *The Waste Land* (1922), the poem that came to define modernism in poetry. Ford Madox Ford was turning his efforts to recording in novels and short stories much of what he had experienced in the war. Sherwood Anderson, goaded by Gertrude Stein, was discovering metaphors for the whole of human existence in his close examination of lives of the people whose houses fronted on the main street of his native Winesburg, Ohio.

Around Stein grew a circle of artists bent on redefining art as it was then known. Pablo Picasso had passed from expressionism to impressionism and was emerging as a cubist, accomplishing with paint what others would come to work toward achieving with words. Henri Matisse was rediscovering color and using it in ways and in forms that alarmed the public and set an aesthetic revolution going in the minds of artists. Fortunately for Hemingway, he soon became a favored guest at 27 rue

des Fleures, where the redoubtable Stein lived with Alice B. Toklas, her companion, who talked with the wives while Stein picked the brains of their creative husbands. Such was the intellectual milieu in which Hemingway found himself as a youth not quite twenty-five. He was a reporter, and the pressure of that job assured his fluency in writing. The writing he did on his own was less voluminous than the writing he was paid to do.

Hemingway set for himself the task of writing about a thousand words a day, or about three typed pages. He did not consider his work done, however, until he had revised that thousand words down to about three hundred. His sentences were short. His words were simple. His constructions were uncomplicated, his prose electrified. He assured himself of its electricity by reading what he wrote each day to his wife. When she got goose bumps from what he read her, he knew that he was on target.

Hemingway was a consciously masculine writer. His protagonists, with the possible exception of Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*, were men engaged in extreme external conflicts. The forms these took included the solitary conflict of Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* as he tried to beach his fish after a three-day struggle; that of the bullfighter in *Death in the Afternoon*; the adventurers in *The Green Hills of Africa*; his autobiographical character, Frederic Henry, in *A Farewell to Arms*; or Robert Jordan, who fought along with the Spanish loyalists in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

In nearly everything he wrote, Hemingway depicted courage as he defined the word: grace under pressure. He was fearful lest he not be considered courageous himself, and he rankled when William Faulkner, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature four years before Hemingway received it in 1954, was quoted in an interview as suggesting that Hemingway was lacking in courage—an astute observation on Faulkner’s part.

Hemingway learned much about literary style, especially about depicting human speech authentically, from Stein. He, in turn, became a stylistic model for such modern writers as James Jones, Nelson Algren, and Norman Mailer. Perhaps no other twentieth century American author has been the spiritual progenitor to as many notable literary offspring.

Whereas Faulkner examined his native Mississippi microscopically in his work, Hemingway

bolted from the environment in which he had grown up. His major work explores foreign cultures in one way or another. If his cast of characters is American, as it often is, these characters live out their roles in foreign, usually hostile, environments. Moving people away from all that is most familiar to them heightens the pressure under which they must perform, and that is clearly a part of Hemingway's technique. Even Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*, although he is adrift in his fishing skiff in the waters off his native land, finds himself alone in a huge, hostile environment.

*The Old Man and the Sea* is, however, different from most of the others. In it, Hemingway is more mellow than in any of his earlier work. He is still tough, but the old man survives, and although the sharks that close in on his boat strip the flesh from his prized catch, he has the satisfaction of having prevailed in the struggle. It is this book that tipped the balance in favor of Hemingway's winning the Nobel Prize. His earlier work had not been affirmative enough to reflect the Nobel Foundation's guidelines. *The Old Man and the Sea*, although it does not retreat from Hemingway's basic themes, ends on a note of subdued triumph.

## THE SUN ALSO RISES

**First published:** 1926

**Type of work:** Novel

*In post-World War I Europe, a group of expatriates wanders about the Basque country, trying to find meaning in life.*

Hemingway's characters in *The Sun Also Rises* are much like the people with whom he came into daily contact in Paris in the early 1920's. A large group of expatriates, labeled by Stein "the lost generation," lived by their wits, by what jobs they could find, or by handouts from home. So it is with the characters in Hemingway's novel.

The story revolves around two Americans—Jake Barnes, a newspaperman whose war injury has made him impotent, and Robert Cohn, who boxed well enough at Princeton University that he became the university's middleweight boxing champ. Cohn, the son of a wealthy Jewish family, married

when he left college and lived combatively with his wife until she left him for someone else. Then he drifted to California and salved his postmarital wounds by founding an avant-garde review and settling in with Frances Clyne as his mistress.

Cohn and Frances are living in Paris when Jake first meets him, shortly after the armistice. Cohn has come to Paris to work on his first novel. He has a social life that includes his writing but that compartmentalizes his two other principal activities, boxing and tennis. Cohn's groups of friends do not spill over onto one another. His boxing friends are his boxing friends. They know neither his tennis friends nor his friends who read and write. Cohn's life is neatly arranged.

Jake is in love with a British war widow, Lady Brett Ashley, but his impotence makes marriage unthinkable for them. Jake sublimates by listening to his friends complain while he sits in bars drinking enormously. When this life begins to wear on him, Jake escapes to the Pyrenees and luxuriates in trout fishing in the fast-moving streams of the Basque country, or he goes to Spain for the bullfights, of which he is an aficionado.

One dismal night, Jake takes a prostitute to the Café Napolitain for a drink and conversation. They go on to have dinner at a restaurant on the Left Bank, where they happen upon Robert Cohn and Frances, as well as some of Jake's other friends. In the course of the evening, Lady Brett comes in, trailing young swains behind her. It is soon evident that Robert Cohn is much taken by her. Lady Brett rebuffs Robert, refusing to join him for dinner, saying that she has a date with Jake. She and Jake leave together. They avoid any mention of Jake's emasculating injury, but it is clearly on both of their minds, setting up the tension necessary to the story.

Cohn later asks Jake questions about Lady Brett. He also, conveniently, sends Frances to England, against her will. Jake's friend Bill Gorton is about to arrive by steamship from the States. Robert Cohn and Lady Brett go off to San Sebastian in the Basque country after Brett convinces Robert that he needs a change.

Jake decides to take his visitor to Spain for trout fishing and to see the running of the bulls and the bullfights at Pamplona. The plot thickens when Brett's former fiancé, Michael Campbell, arrives in Paris from Britain. He and Brett have arranged to meet Jake and Bill in Pamplona for the bull-

fighters. This leaves Robert Cohn in San Sebastian by himself. Never one to fade quietly into the background, Cohn joins the party in Bayonne. Then they all are to meet in Pamplona for the bullfight. When Bill and Jake get to Bayonne, Cohn is waiting for them.

They continue to Pamplona, and the next morning Bill and Jake take the bus to Burgette, riding on top of it, sharing their wine with the Basque peasants who ride with them. This is one of the most colorful and memorable scenes in the book, one in which Hemingway captures and depicts local color with such an astounding veracity that many people, having read *The Sun Also Rises*, have gone to the Basque country to try to relive some of what Hemingway depicted in it, including this bus ride.

The three men finally get to Pamplona, where Mike and Brett are staying. It is apparent that Robert Cohn is not welcome, and Mike Campbell does little to disguise his annoyance. Finally, however, the festivities are sufficient to distract their attention from their rivalry. The bullfight is magnificent. The torero, Pedro Romero, is brilliant, and Lady Brett, never one to linger long over any one man, falls in love with him even before she meets him. Soon after she meets him, she takes him to her room.

Jake and Bill, meanwhile, are drinking heavily. Jake tells the drunken Cohn that Brett has gone off with the torero, and Cohn strikes his two companions, knocking them both to the floor. He soon apologizes and breaks down in tears. He is totally confused by Brett and decides to leave for Paris the next day. He is not to depart without having his satisfaction, however, so he bursts in upon Brett and her new conquest. He beats Romero badly but not enough to keep him from performing magnificently in the next day's bullfight. The party disperses, and Jake lands in San Sebastian alone. Brett sends him a telegram asking that he come to her in Madrid, where she also is alone and without any money. She has decided to go back to Mike because they have similar backgrounds. She and Jake ride around Madrid in a taxi, while Brett fantasizes about how good it could have been for the two of them had Jake not been injured in the war.

Hemingway has depicted the pointless, purposeless wandering of the lost generation. He has captured their ennui and their dislocatedness. In a way, Robert Cohn's striking out at people is the

manifestation of what Jake might be doing over his anger at having been wounded in the way he was. Jake, however, has accepted the inevitable and has learned to live with what he cannot change.

## “NOW I LAY ME”

**First published:** 1927 (collected in *The Nick Adams Stories*, 1972)

**Type of work:** Short story

*Wounded soldier Nick Adams convalesces in Italy.*

This early story in a sequence that features Nick Adams as the protagonist takes place in northern Italy during World War I. Nick Adams, like Hemingway, has been wounded and is convalescing at the hospital in Milan. Among the problems he encounters is his inability to sleep. He engages in all sorts of ploys to overcome this condition, but nothing he does helps him sleep. In his restless, wakeful state at night, Nick tosses and turns, mulling over many of life's profoundest questions. He has been face-to-face with death. He gave up his youth in that moment when his life might have ended on a battlefield in an alien land. He is not sure that his sanity is fully intact.

The last third of the story is given over to commonplace dialogue, to a conversation Nick has with John, another wounded soldier who is convalescing. As the two talk, one is reminded of the banality of the dialogue in Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* (1909), a book in which Stein sought to capture the cadences of the actual speech of working-class women. Such speech, when faithfully recorded, can be repetitious, tedious, and boring, as is much of the dialogue in this story.

This is not a weakness, however. Hemingway uses this technique to capture the tedium, the commonplaceness of life, which, aside from those rare moments of heroic action that elicit outstanding individual performance, is a pretty flat affair.

In their conversation, John is trying to persuade Nick to marry. Nick's reflections throughout the story, however, make it clear that Nick has many questions to be answered before marriage is a viable prospect for him. He and John live on two vastly

different planes, and what John suggests for Nick is what would work in John's world rather than in Nick's.

This story, in part, is about the inability of human beings to communicate effectively with one another. Background, upbringing, personal predilections—all of these stand between what is being communicated and what is being received. On one level, a large part of Hemingway's writing is concerned with this problem, and it is reflection on it that kept Hemingway writing, that kept him ever trying to find the way to connect the perceptions of two people into a single, unified, mutually agreed-upon message.

## A FAREWELL TO ARMS

**First published:** 1929

**Type of work:** Novel

*A young, injured ambulance driver falls in love with a nurse in Italy during World War I.*

Frederic Henry, the protagonist in *A Farewell to Arms*, is a young American in Italy serving, as Hemingway did, as an ambulance driver during World War I. He meets Catherine Barkley, newly arrived with a group of British nurses who are to set up a hospital near the front. Frederic likes Catherine, whom he visits as often as he can between ambulance trips to evacuate the wounded.

Catherine, who has recently lost her fiancé in combat, is vulnerable. Probably she feels more emotion for Frederic than he feels for her. He is about to leave for the front, where an assault is being mounted. She gives him a Saint Anthony medal, but it does not assure him the protection she hopes it will. A mortar shell explodes above Frederic's dugout, and he is wounded, much as Hemingway himself had been. He is evacuated to a hospital in Milan.

Frederic is not the perfect patient. He keeps wine under his bed and drinks as much of it as he can get away with. By the time Catherine comes to the hospital to see him, it is he who is vulnerable, and he finds that he is in love with her. She stays with him through the surgery that his wounds necessitate; he has a happy recuperation, which

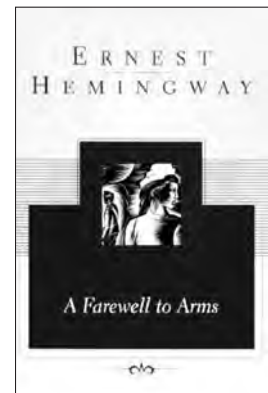
Catherine nurses him through. They find restaurants that are off Milan's beaten path and take carriage rides into the surrounding countryside. Catherine often comes to Frederic's hospital room at night. He already knows that she is pregnant from a hotel-room encounter before he left for the front.

Frederic recovers quickly, and by October, a few months after he was first injured, he is ready to go on convalescent leave with Catherine in tow. His plans are scuttled, however, when he develops jaundice, a condition the head nurse blames on his surreptitious drinking, accusing him of doing this to avoid further service at the front. When Frederic returns to his post, his unit is ordered to take its ambulances and equipment south to the Po Valley. The Allies, hard pressed by Austrian shelling and by the knowledge that German reinforcements are joining the Austrians, are pessimistic and disheartened. Hemingway shows the unglorious aspects of war in realistic detail.

Hard-pressed by the enemy, the Americans retreat, Frederic driving an ambulance south along roads cluttered with evacuees. Rain is falling, and the whole plain along which the retreat is driving becomes a quagmire. Frederic, with two Italian sergeants he has picked

up, begins to drive across open country, hoping to reach Udine at the Austrian border by that route. When his ambulance becomes stuck in the mud, Frederic tries to get the Italians to help him extricate it, but they want to flee. Frederic shoots one of them, wounding him. An Italian corpsman finishes the sergeant off, putting a bullet into his head; life is cheap when people are under this sort of pressure.

When Frederic and his friends set out on foot for Udine, they see German motorcycles ahead of them. Chaos reigns as officers pull off their insignias and people try to flee in every direction. Those whom the Germans capture are given kangaroo trials and are summarily executed. Frederic is detained, and his fate seems sealed. Under cover of night, however, he escapes and jumps into a river,



where he holds onto a log. He crosses the plain on foot until he can hop a freight train for Milan, where he tries to find Catherine. Learning that the contingent of British nurses has been sent to Stresa, he makes his way there, now dressed in civilian clothing. He and Catherine reunite. Learning that the authorities plan to arrest him for desertion, Frederic borrows a rowboat, and he and Catherine use it to row all night to neutral Switzerland, where they are arrested but soon released, their passports in order and Frederic's pockets bulging with money.

They wait out the fall in Montreux in the Swiss mountains, living happily in a small inn as Catherine's pregnancy advances. Their situation is idyllic. When it is finally time for Catherine to deliver the baby, she has a difficult time. The child is stillborn. Frederic, exhausted, goes out to get them something to eat; when he returns, he learns that Catherine has suffered a hemorrhage. He rushes to her and stays at her side, but she dies. He walks back to his hotel room in the rain.

In this novel, Hemingway has written a tragic love story, but beyond that he has written an anti-war book, one that shows the irrationality of the kind of fighting into which Frederic was drawn. The glamour and heroism of war tarnish quickly in the face of the realities that Frederic encounters in combat. That the enemy would annihilate him is not shocking; however, it is Frederic himself who is brutalized by the war. He shoots an ally who will not do his bidding.

The love story around which the book revolves has been compared with that of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1595-1596), to which it bears the affinity of having an unhappy outcome that results not from any weakness within the characters themselves but from circumstances over which they have no control. They are pawns in a large chess game that they neither understand nor can control.

## "A CLEAN WELL-LIGHTED PLACE"

**First published:** 1933 (collected in *The Complete Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 1987)

**Type of work:** Short story

*The setting of this restrained story is central to the meaning.*

One of Hemingway's most frequently read and anthologized short stories is "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," an amazing tour de force in that it is largely a story of setting rather than character or action. Only five pages long, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" takes place late at night in a small Spanish restaurant. The only customer, an old man, has attempted suicide a week earlier.

The two waiters, a young one and an older one, talk about the customer. The young waiter wants to close the place and put the old man out. The older waiter thinks they should not, but the young waiter prevails. The older waiter reflects on the difference between a well-lighted establishment such as his and a dark, smoky bodega, and in doing so touches on many of life's deeper mysteries.

In the most dramatic incident in this restrained story, the old waiter recites the Lord's Prayer, but in doing so, he substitutes the Spanish word *nada* (nothingness) for all the significant nouns and verbs in the prayer. In writing this passage, Hemingway captured much of the nihilistic sentiment that was abroad in the 1920's and 1930's and that T. S. Eliot had reflected earlier in *The Waste Land* (1922) and two years after that in his story "The Hollow Men." Hemingway's story does not really move toward anything, but its directionlessness, reminiscent of the directionlessness of the lost generation as reflected in *The Sun Also Rises*, is perhaps a human condition.

"A Clean Well-Lighted Place" is another minimalist piece of writing that moves toward essentialism. It has the same sort of careful control of theme, style, character, and setting that Hemingway later achieved so successfully in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

## “THE SNOWS OF KILIMANJARO”

**First published:** 1936 (collected in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro, and Other Stories*, 1961)

**Type of work:** Short story

*A writer, dying in Africa, waits for a rescue plane.*

Reminiscent of Ambrose Bierce’s “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (1891), “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” tells of a writer, Harry, who faces almost immediate death in Africa from gangrene. A rescue plane is to fly in and rescue him, but his prognosis is grave. In the story, the great, white, hovering plane arrives, sparkling in the bright sun.

The fact is that the plane does not arrive. What the reader is told is Harry’s final dream. His wife, Helen, comes into the bedroom and finds him dead. The story is important in the Hemingway canon because, like *A Farewell to Arms* and others of his works, it contrasts the mountain (purity) to the plain (corruption). Harry spends the last afternoon of his life quarreling with his wife. Like the protagonist in Henry James’s “The Middle Years,” written in 1882, Harry bemoans the fact that he has wasted his talent. Harry, the supreme egoist, is morally bankrupt. The gangrene in his rotting leg is no worse than the spiritual gangrene that has rotted his soul.

In his prefatory paragraph, Hemingway describes and situates Kenya’s Mount Kilimanjaro—at 19,710 feet the highest mountain in Africa. He reveals that close to its summit is the desiccated,

frozen carcass of a leopard, whose presence at that altitude is a mystery. In sharp contrast to the pure, cold mountaintop and noble leopard are the overheated plain below and the hyena that emits almost human cries at the moment of Harry’s death, awakening Helen, who finds her husband dead.



Hemingway places Harry on an acme artistically but shows him being devoured by those for whom he writes—or, perhaps, like the hyena in Hemingway’s *The Green Hills of Africa*, he is self-devouring. Certainly like Belmonte, the bullfighter in *The Sun Also Rises*, he is exceptionally talented but appalled by his audience, represented in the story by Helen and by the hyena, both of whom weep at Harry’s death. The sustained metaphor of the mountain-top/leopard and the plain/hyena presents the sharp, controlled contrasts that make “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” one of Hemingway’s most artistically successful stories.

## FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

**First published:** 1940

**Type of work:** Novel

*This novel depicts three days in the life of an American teacher helping the Spanish Loyalists in their fight against the Fascists.*

In this novel, Hemingway clearly demonstrates what the title, taken from a John Donne poem, promises. The essence of the poem from which the title is drawn is that when anyone dies, all humankind is involved—everyone dies a little. Hemingway, himself a correspondent in Spain during its civil war, uses his novel to show that a small skirmish confined to a single nation affects the entire world and cannot be dismissed as something local.

Robert Jordan, the protagonist, is an American teacher who is in Spain to fight alongside the Loyalists. The book chronicles three crucial days in his life and in the lives of the Loyalists he is there to help. Jordan’s mission is to destroy a bridge that is a vital link for the Fascists. He has had considerable demolition experience in the past, but this is the most intricate job he has undertaken. It must be timed precisely, and to orchestrate the demolition, he must enlist the aid of a band of Loyalist guerrillas, working through their leader, Pablo.

Pablo is not dependable, although his wife, Pilar, is. Pablo drinks too much and is weak. Pilar is outspoken, vulgar, direct, and dependable. Jordan knows he can depend upon her, but he is less sure of her husband. Jordan needs to concentrate on

how the bridge is constructed so that he can plan his demolition as effectively as possible. He is holed up in a cave with Pablo and Pilar, along with members of their band. Among those in the cave is Maria, a young girl who has been ravaged by the Fascists, who have humiliated her every way they could. Jordan, hearing of this, is so morally indignant that killing the enemy becomes in his mind a moral act.

Another inhabitant of the cave is Anselmo, an old man who can be depended upon to do what he is told, even if it means killing, to which he is basically opposed. Jordan likes the guerrillas; he respects their stand against Fascist oppression. He understands their motives, which are less ideological than his, and he sympathizes with their lot. During Jordan's first night in the guerrilla camp, Maria makes her way into his sleeping bag, and they have a night of blissful sex. He promises Maria that he will marry her someday, although he fears what lies ahead. He deplores his fear because he realizes that fear weakens anyone who is out to accomplish a dangerous mission.

On the night before his intricate mission is to be carried out, Jordan discovers that Pablo has defected, stealing Jordan's explosives and detonators. The next day, a repentant Pablo returns but without the detonators. Jordan knows that the bridge must now be blown up with hand grenades, a much more dangerous and much less effective way to accomplish the destruction of this vital link.

Jordan has little choice but to forgive Pablo, because he needs him. He devises an alternate plan for the demolition, one that must be orchestrated precisely. His work is to begin when Loyalist forces begin bombing the Fascist stronghold. Anselmo, who hates to kill, must kill the sentry so that the Loyalists can position themselves to explode their grenades.

All goes as planned, but in the melee Anselmo is struck by flying metal and killed. Jordan, realizing that had they been able to use detonators Anselmo would be alive, has to restrain his urge to kill Pablo. His emotions are high, but so are the stakes in the game he is playing, so he must control himself. He still needs Pablo.

In order to escape, Jordan and his party must cross a road that is within firing range of the Fascists: Those who cross will be fully exposed. The first pair to cross the road will probably escape, be-

cause the enemy will not yet have been alerted, but after the first crossing, the others will be in grave danger. Ironically, Jordan must send Pablo first, because Pablo knows the road. He insists that Maria go with Pablo when they leave. The two make the crossing without incident. Then Jordan sends Pilar and two other guerrillas who have been involved in the mission after them. They succeed in reaching safety. Only Jordan remains to make the run to safety. He rides his horse onto the road, and gunfire rings out. The horse, injured gravely, falls and crushes Jordan's leg. The others steal out and pull him to safety, but it is apparent that he is too badly injured to travel.

Maria wants to stay with Jordan, but he will not hear of this. He talks with her, saying that while she is alive, a bit of him will live, suggesting possibly that she is carrying his child. Finally, the guerrillas and Maria must leave. Jordan is left alone with his submachine gun. He reflects on why he is in this situation, convincing himself that what he has done was right and necessary. His faith in the common people remains undiminished as a Fascist officer, who essentially holds Jordan's death warrant, approaches.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* was, at that point in his career, Hemingway's most articulate statement of what he thought people must do under pressure. It is significant that Robert Jordan fights in a conflict to which he has no real obligation—he is neither Spanish nor an impoverished peasant; that is the essence of what the title means. In Hemingway's view, no human can overlook the plight of other human beings, and people find their highest nobility in defending the ideals in which they believe.

## THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

**First published:** 1952

**Type of work:** Novella

*An old fisherman, down on his luck, hooks the largest marlin ever caught in the waters he fishes.*

*The Old Man and the Sea* is in many ways Hemingway's most controlled piece of writing. Short and direct, it is the story of Santiago, who essentially

is alone throughout the story. Manolin, the boy who usually assists him, has been ordered by his father not to work with the old man after Santiago goes for forty days without a catch. Manolin still comes to see the old man, but he no longer sails with him.

The story opens on the eighty-fourth day since Santiago has caught anything. He survives on the food that Manolin buys him from the money he steals or begs from tourists. Manolin also makes sure that Santiago has bait. As they eat their meager repast, Santiago and Manolin reminisce about happier days, remembering good catches and Joe DiMaggio and other pleasant things from their past.

That night, Santiago dreams of tigers rather than of his wife, now some time dead. He wakes to set out for his eighty-fifth day of fruitless fishing. Fishing is all he knows, so he has no choice. The details of the morning and of the sea are flawlessly presented. Hemingway transports his readers to Santiago's small boat. Through Santiago's eyes they see the man-of-war birds flying over a school of dolphin leaping in the aim to snag flying fishes. They are moving faster than Santiago can go, so there is no hope that he will change his luck by catching a dolphin.

As the morning wears on, Santiago hooks one small fish. He is encouraged by this tiny triumph, taking it as a sign that his luck might be changing. His baited line is deep below the surface, a full hundred fathoms down. He waits. The sun beats down hotly upon him as it inches toward its zenith. Then, around noon, something takes the bait. Santiago knows from the feel of the line that he has hooked a big fish.

Rather than coming to the surface, the hooked fish tows Santiago's boat in a northwesterly direction, continuing this action into the night. Santiago braces himself for a night of struggle, drawing the line across his shoulder. He eats small pieces of the raw tuna he had caught earlier. At a sudden jerk on the line, Santiago's right hand is gashed across the palm. His fingers cramp. He waits for the sun to warm him.

The next morning, Santiago sees his marlin for the first time. It leaps in the air, and Santiago knows the dimensions of the contest in which he is engaged. He has never seen a larger fish. As the day wears on and the sun beats down, Santiago is hard-

pressed to stay awake. He hallucinates, recalling ways in which he has shown his strength in the past. He husbands his water supply carefully, not knowing how long he will be at sea.

Before sunset, he hooks a small dolphin and two flying fish that will sustain him for a while. When night falls, he sleeps fitfully, the lines secured around him. The marlin has a spurt of action and pulls the line through Santiago's hands, again lacerating them—giving him his stigmata, if one wishes to pursue a Christian interpretation, as some critics have. As the night wears on, the marlin tires. By midmorning, Santiago is able to draw the fish to the skiff and secure it to the side. He fantasizes about his triumphant return to the Havana harbor, dreaming of having made his fortune by catching this fabulous fish. It is then that the mako sharks begin circling, lunging in to tear flesh from the noble marlin. Santiago is no match for them.

By the time Santiago gets to the harbor long after sunset, little is left of his catch. He disembarks, seeing that only the backbone and tail of the marlin remain. He carries his mast and sails on his shoulders, stumbling in exhaustion as he goes, reminiscent of Christ carrying his cross to Calvary. Other fishermen surround the skiff the next day, marveling at the eighteen-foot length of Santiago's catch, even though all its flesh has been torn off. Unfeeling tourists going into a restaurant see the remains and wonder what they are, having no idea of their meaning. Santiago sleeps much of the day away, dreaming of lions.

In many ways, *The Old Man and the Sea* marks the culmination of Hemingway's creative endeavors. The book, reflecting Hemingway's consistent use of everyday language and avoidance of abstraction, is at once realistic and impressionistic. Although it is filled with symbolism, the symbols are neither heavy-handed nor artificial. Over and above these strengths, Hemingway in this novella is in greater control of the unities of time, place, and character than he is in any of the other works except *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. His small cast of participants—essentially Santiago and Manolin, with very little even of the latter—allows him to explore deeply the recesses of a person's inner being, with no distraction from other human influences.

Obviously influenced significantly by Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), Hemingway's small classic makes its impact in quite a different way.

## *Ernest Hemingway*

Hemingway, as has been noted earlier, might be called a minimalist. In calling him that, however, one should probably qualify the statement further to indicate that in his minimalism, Hemingway becomes an essentialist. He is in search of essences, much as the ancient Greek philosophers were. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, he gets in touch with the quintessence of human existence. Santiago, a humble fisherman, is a genuine hero, responding with grace to the pressures upon him and emerging victorious in ways that few protagonists in modern literature have.

## **SUMMARY**

Like many writers, Ernest Hemingway was a man of many contradictions and of a very convoluted nature. A master stylist, he identified with common people and captured them in their speech patterns, faithfully depicted in his pages. His personal and political philosophy have much to do with proving oneself. Life to Hemingway was a battle to be fought valiantly, as Santiago fought the marlin in *The Old Man and the Sea*. Perhaps for Hemingway there are no victors, only people who display grace under pressure.

*R. Baird Shuman*

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#### DISCUSSION TOPICS

- What do the stories in Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time* owe to experiences of his boyhood life, including the influence of his physician father?
- What is the essence of Hemingway's famous style?
- Does this style owe more to Hemingway's journalistic training or to his early friendships with writers such as Gertrude Stein and Sherwood Anderson?
- With reference to the lost generation characters in works such as *The Sun Also Rises*, is the point that they were lost themselves or that they had lost certain basic values?
- The title *For Whom the Bell Tolls* comes from a meditation by John Donne. How does the plot of this novel reflect Donne's conviction about human connectedness?
- How does Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* exemplify Hemingway's definition of courage?
- What instances of Spanish cultural influences are found in Hemingway's fiction?