

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway (Published 1929)

Approved for use in Advanced Placement Communication Arts III and Communication Arts III

Summary

A Farewell to Arms is the story of Lieutenant Henry, an American ambulance driver on the Italian war front, and his love for an English nurse, Catherine Barkley. The two lovers are caught in the grasp of war fighting to maintain a sense of purpose in a world of chaos and despair. Hemingway's depiction of the German attack on Caporetto vividly captures the soldiers, tired, hungry, and demoralized. Additionally, *A Farewell to Arms* demonstrates so perfectly Hemingway's code hero through many of its characters—the ability to show grace under pressure and the doggedness of the human spirit.

Connection to the Curriculum

A Farewell to Arms is arguably one of the best novels to emerge from World War I. It is an ideal novel for teaching the concept of Modernism, a literary movement that rejected literary conventions of the nineteenth century, characterized by its opposition to conventional morality, taste, traditions, and economic values. The novel explores the concepts of identity, individualism, patriotism, and war, while employing stylistic techniques to achieve Hemingway's purpose. The concept of identity begs the question of where an individual fits in a postwar society. In the historical context, people were questioning their leaders and institutions that seemed to have directly led to a large loss of life and economic instability. Hemingway questions how man can possibly cause such destruction and human suffering and how man can survive his own devastation. Individualism also ties to this theme of identity, in that all of the characters, through disillusionment with society, fall back on themselves to avoid losing touch with reality. Each person thus rejects the callings of tradition, society, or institution in favor of examining the truth within him or herself, reflecting the attitudes of existentialists during the early twentieth century. Additionally, Hemingway's style proves to be equally complex and worthy of study, as he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. His terse prose requires the reader to make inferences and construct meaning beyond the words on the page. This novel provides opportunities to explore how a writer uses syntax and diction to create meaning and enhance his purpose. He uses understatement to follow a description of the fatigue and sickness that had struck the Italian army, underscoring his disgust and horror of the conditions that soldiers endured; he employs stream-of-consciousness to reinforce the drunken stupor that Henry finds himself in to numb the pain associated with war; and his use of dialogue forces the reader to be influenced by the speech of the characters to explore his or her own thoughts on the subject. This novel provides numerous opportunities for students to write comparisons and contrasts between the Roaring Twenties, when the novel was written, and World War I, in which the novel is set. Students are also afforded opportunities to analyze Hemingway's prose and employ his techniques in their own writing.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.2- The students read fluently. 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

Writing: 3.1- The students use writing as a tool for learning throughout the curriculum. 3.3- The students use ideas that are well developed, clear, and interesting.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.2 .1- The student adjusts reading rate to support comprehension when reading narrative, expository, technical, and persuasive texts.

1.4.3- The student uses prior knowledge, content, and text type features to make, revise, and confirm predictions.

1.4.4- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading the text.

1.4.5- The student uses information from the text to make inferences and draw conclusions.

1.4.6- The student analyzes and evaluates how authors use text structures to help achieve their purposes.

1.4.7- The student compares and contrasts varying aspects (characters' traits and motives, ideas, themes, cause-effect relationships, viewpoints, use of literary devices) in one or more appropriate-level texts.

1.4.11- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author's style (word choice, sentence structure) and use of literary devices (foreshadowing, flashback, irony, symbolism, tone, mood, satire, imagery, point of view, allusion, overstatement, paradox) work together to achieve his or her purpose for writing text.

Literature:

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of character (protagonist, antagonist, round, flat, static, dynamic) and analyzes the development of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and their influence on characters and events in the story of literary text.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices (foreshadowing, flashback, irony, figurative language, imagery, symbolism, satire, allusion, paradox, dialogue, point of view, overstatement) in a text.

Writing:

3.1.1- The student uses the writing process in various formats such as journal entries, research reports, speeches, business letters, scripts, essays, lab reports, critical analysis of current events, and reaction papers in all content areas.

3.3.4- The student provides relevant details that focus the reader's attention on important information.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)
The novel portrays war in a realistic, detached manner. This includes some violence and mild profanity as Hemingway recounts specific battle situations. In addition, the main character engages in a relationship out of wedlock with one of the nurses. Hemingway does not glamorize war; in fact, he suggests that war has become a disgusting habit, questions the notion of patriotism being equated with war, and ultimately suggests that the two are most definitely not linked.

AP Connections

This novel provides a framework for study of syntax and diction and requires critical thinking and inference skills. Close reading of the text provides insight into the rhetorical strategies (understatement, syntax, diction, tone, imagery, symbolism, detail) that are evident in the novel.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon