



[A Farewell to Arms](#), by Ernest Hemingway

In A Nutshell

A Farewell to Arms was published in 1929 by Ernest Hemingway, a Nobel Prize-winning American author. This novel is *semi*-autobiographical. Like the protagonist, Hemingway served in the Italian Army as a Red Cross ambulance driver during World War I, got wounded, and spent time in an American Army in Milan, where he met a nurse. But unlike Hemingway, the novel's protagonist starts a love affair with the nurse. Similar to characters in *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway was deeply influenced by his experiences at war. In fact, Hemingway is considered to be part of the "The Lost Generation." The phrase was coined by Gertrude Stein to refer to Modernist artists who felt "lost" after witnessing the horrors of World War I.

Hemingway certainly relied on his own experiences in WWI Italy to write this novel, but he did use other sources as well. Though *A Farewell to Arms* begins in 1916, Hemingway didn't get to Italy until the summer of 1918. The Italian retreat from Caporetto, described in such detail in the novel, began in October 1917. So how did Hemingway describe it so well? The novel is meticulously researched. Hemingway was a journalist and worked for the *Kansas City Star* newspaper when the retreat was on, read details of it, and was extremely concerned over the war in general. (For a discussion of the importance of newspapers to the novel, see "Symbols, Imagery, and Allegory.") It's likely that such concern inspired him to enlist with the Red Cross in the first place.

Visit Shmoop for full coverage of [A Farewell to Arms](#)
Shmoop: [study guides](#) and [teaching resources](#) for [literature](#), [US history](#), and [poetry](#)



Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0

This document may be modified and republished for noncommercial use only.
You must attribute Shmoop and link to <http://www.shmoop.com>.

A Farewell to Arms caused a lot of fuss when its first installment was published by *Scribner's Magazine*. The Boston superintendent of police kept *Scribner's* off newsstands, though not for long. He claimed it was pornography. (Check out "Sex" for more.) Luckily, the ban only boosted sales and gave the novel free publicity. Nowadays, it's hardly considered pornographic and is instead known for its sensitive depiction of the war. The novel is even taught at U.S. military academies.

Visit *Shmoop* for much more analysis:

- [A Farewell to Arms Themes](#)
- [A Farewell to Arms Quotes](#)
- [A Farewell to Arms Summary](#)
- Also: literary devices, characters, trivia, audio, photos, links, and more

Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 How do you feel when Frederic and Aymo kill the soldier during the retreat? Did he have it coming to him, or was the punishment worse than his crime? Other than the fact that he's dead, can we distinguish him from the soldier that got away? If so, how? If not, does this impact how we feel about Frederic and Aymo?
- 2 Would we consider Frederic a more or less reliable narrator if the novel was in the present tense? Or would we feel the same as now? Why?
- 3 What, if anything, made you laugh when you read it? Which characters have the funniest lines? What role, if any, does humor play in the novel?

Visit *Shmoop* for many more [A Farewell to Arms Study Questions](#)

Visit *Shmoop* for full coverage of [A Farewell to Arms](#)
Shmoop: study guides and teaching resources for literature, US history, and poetry



Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 3.0

This document may be modified and republished for noncommercial use only.
You must attribute *Shmoop* and link to <http://www.shmoop.com>.