

A Farewell to Arms

Background Info

Author Bio

Full Name: Ernest Miller Hemingway

Pen Name: Ernest Hemingway

Date of Birth: July 21, 1899

Place of Birth: Oak Park, Illinois

Date of Death: July 2, 1961

Brief Life Story: Ernest Hemingway grew up outside a suburb of Chicago, spending summers with his family in rural Michigan. After high school, he got a job writing for *The Kansas City Star*, but left after only six months to join the Red Cross Ambulance Corps during World War I, where he was injured and awarded the Silver Medal of Military Valor. Afterward, he lived in Ontario and Chicago, where he met his first wife, Hadley Richardson. In 1921 they moved to Paris, where he began a long friendship with F. Scott Fitzgerald and other ex-patriot American writers of the "lost generation." After the 1926 publication of his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, he divorced Hadley and married Arkansas native Pauline Pfeiffer. The couple moved to Florida, where Hemingway wrote *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), which became a bestseller. Hemingway finally moved to Spain to serve as a war correspondent in the Spanish Civil War, a job which inspired his famous 1939 novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. After its publication, he met his third wife, Martha Gellhorn. Hemingway married his fourth and final wife, Mary Hemingway, in 1946, and the couple spent the next fourteen years living in Cuba. After a final move to Idaho, Hemingway

took his own life in 1961, following in the footsteps of his father who had committed suicide in 1928. Hemingway left behind his wife and three sons.

Key Facts

Full Title: *A Farewell to Arms*

Genre: War Novel

Setting: Italy and Switzerland during World War I, 1916–1918

Climax: Catherine Barkley dies during childbirth.

Antagonist: The military system, including the enemy troops of Austria and Germany, the chaotically organized Italian army, and the ruthless military police.

Point of View: First-person; (Frederic Henry is the narrator.)

Historical and Literary Context

When Written: 1928

Where Written: Piggott, Arkansas

When Published: May–October, 1929

Literary Period: Modernism

Related Literary Works: An oft-cited model for *A Farewell to Arms* is Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), a Civil War novel that also features a protagonist named Henry who deserts from his army. Crane's Henry sees the war as a lost cause, but eventually returns and is redeemed through heroism in battle, something Hemingway did not allow his protagonist to do. *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), by Erich Maria Remarque, is seen as a counterpart to *A Farewell*

to Arms: another anti-war novel set in the trenches of World War I, it was published in German the same year that *A Farewell to Arms* was published in English.

Related Historical Events: World War I (1914–1918) was fought between the great powers of Germany and Austria on one side and Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States on the other. It is estimated to have caused 20 million military and civilian deaths, and astonished people with its unprecedented bloodshed. Italy, the nation whose army Frederic Henry is involved with, joined the war in 1915. The Italians' main strategic goal was to prevent German troops from reinforcing Austrian troops on the eastern front. The most historically significant event depicted in the novel is the Italian retreat that took place following the Battle of Caporetto on October 24, 1917. However, in October 1918 the rejuvenated Italian army mounted an offensive that resulted in the surrender of 300,000 Austrian soldiers, and hastened Austria's defeat in the war.

Extra Credit

Farewell to Hollywood: *A Farewell to Arms* has been adapted for film three times: the 1932 Gary Cooper film was nominated for a Best Picture Academy Award, the 1957 remake starring Rock Hudson got a Best Supporting Actor nomination. A BBC version of the film was also made in 1966.

Autobiographical: Hemingway's injury in World War I resembled that suffered by Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*. Hemingway also had a brief affair with a nurse during his recovery.

Plot Summary

It is World War I, in 1916, and the Italian army is trying to hold off the united forces of Austria and Germany. The narrator, **Lieutenant Frederic Henry**, is an American who has joined the Italian ambulance corps as a volunteer. As the novel opens, Henry is about to take his winter leave. He spends the evening with his fellow officers, who mock the regiment's priest for his celibacy. Then the officers go to the officer's brothel for the night.

When Henry returns from leave, his roommate **Rinaldi** introduces him to two English nurses, **Catherine Barkley** and **Helen Ferguson**, and although Rinaldi had been interested in Catherine, the immediate chemistry between her and Henry is obvious. On their first meeting, she tells him the sad story of her fiancé who was killed in the war, whose **riding crop** she still carries. As their flirting deepens in the following days, Henry is able to coax kisses from her, and she asks him to say he loves her before acknowledging that this is only a game.

Soon, Henry goes to the first major battle in which he has taken part. He is innocently eating macaroni and cheese with the other ambulance drivers when a mortar shell crashes through his bunker, killing a driver and injuring Henry's leg.

Henry is taken to an American hospital in Milan for treatment. When he arrives, he discovers the hospital is badly managed and the doctors are incompetent. Fortunately one doctor, **Valentini**, is able to remove the shrapnel from Henry's leg. While Henry is recuperating, Catherine Barkley is transferred to the hospital and when Henry sees her again, he realizes he loves her. She begins to sneak into his room at night and they conduct a love affair all summer. But Henry eventually has to return to the front. Before he leaves, Catherine tells him she is pregnant with his child.

Henry returns to Gorizia and is plunged into battle. The Austrian and German armies have broken through the Italian lines, and a massive retreat from the front begins. Since the main road is blocked with so many vehicles, Henry and his ambulance drivers try to cut across the countryside. They become stuck in the mud, and two sergeants they have picked up try to flee rather than help. Henry shoots at them, hitting one. Another ambulance driver, **Bonello**, executes the sergeant with a bullet to the head. When they reach the Tagliamento River, there is a cordon of Italian military police who, out of paranoia and misguided patriotism, are shooting their own officers for

having retreated. Henry escapes by diving into the river. He makes his way back to Milan, having decided that he will no longer fight for the Italian army or participate in the war.

Henry learns that Catherine is in the Italian town of Stresa, a resort town near the Swiss border. He goes there, and he and Catherine reunite. Soon, Henry learns from a friendly bartender that the military police are coming to arrest him for desertion. He and Catherine escape across Lake Maggiore to Switzerland, where they successfully pass for tourists and receive visas to stay.

In Switzerland, Henry and Catherine live outside the quiet ski town of Montreux, waiting for Catherine's baby to arrive and utterly content with each other's company. They go on holiday to the nearby town of Lausanne to be closer to the hospital. When Catherine's contractions begin, Henry takes her to the hospital. As the day progresses, it is clear that Catherine's labor is becoming increasingly complicated and dangerous. The doctors try to give her a Caesarian operation, but the baby is stillborn and Catherine eventually dies of multiple hemorrhages. Henry, now alone, walks back to his hotel in the **rain**.

Characters

Lieutenant Frederic Henry – An American who volunteers for the Italian ambulance corps before the United States joins the war. Various Italian characters also refer to him as "Tenente" (Lieutenant) or "Federico" (Frederic). Henry is a classic Hemingway hero in that he is a stoic who does his duty without complaint. Yet Henry also undergoes tremendous development through the course of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, he has never experienced true loss, believes that war is dreadful but necessary, has a lust for adventure, drinking, and women, and sees **Catherine** as just another diversion. As the stakes of the war intensify, however, he becomes deeply pessimistic about the war and realizes that his love for Catherine is the only thing he is willing to commit himself to.

Catherine Barkley – An English nurse in Italy, she bears the spiritual scars of having lost her fiancé in the Battle of the Somme. When she meets **Henry**, she is ready to throw herself into a new relationship in order to escape the loss of the old one, enlisting Henry to pretend that they are deeply in love almost as soon as they meet. Emotionally damaged, she can never bring herself to marry Henry, but wants to be with him in an idealized union apart from the rest of the world. Through the constant understatements and deprecating humor in her dialogue, even at moments of extreme danger such as the labor that goes wrong, she reveals herself to be a stoic match for Henry, the female side of the Hemingway hero, who does much and says little.

Rinaldi – A skilled surgeon, ladies' man, and **Henry's** best friend in the Italian Army. His boastful rambunctious banter provides a counterpoint to Henry's reserved stoicism.

Helen Ferguson – An English nurse's aide and close friend to **Catherine**. As Catherine and **Henry's** love affair becomes more consuming, Helen becomes concerned for her friend's emotional well-being. Though she is confident and competent, Helen is also lonely.

The Priest – A military clergyman from a peasant community in northern Italy. He endures endless jibes from the soldiers about his celibacy, but with good humor. He and **Henry** have several conversations about manhood, religion, and values.

The Major – Another officer serving in the town of Gorizia, he delights in taunting the **priest**, who he thinks is pathetic for not sleeping with women.

Count Greffi – A 94-year-old former diplomat, he is a father figure to **Henry**. He beats Henry at billiards and engages him in a philosophical conversation about love and war.

Dr. Valentini – A capable, boisterous doctor who operates on **Henry's** leg, providing a contrast with the timid trio of doctors who wanted to wait six months before operating.

Ettore Moretti – A decorated Italian-American war hero whom **Henry** finds tedious.

The American Soldier – A fellow American serving in the Italian army who purposely tries to magnify the severity of a hernia he has in order to get out of combat.

Gordini, Passini, Manera, and Gavuzzi – Ambulance drivers under **Henry's** command.

Mrs. Walker – An overly anxious nurse at the hospital in Milan where **Henry** is taken to recuperate from his injury.

Miss Gage – A young nurse at the hospital in Milan who is fond of **Henry**.

Miss Van Campen – The head nurse of the hospital. She and **Henry** dislike each other.

The Porter – An underling at the hospital. He works for tips.

The Barber – Hired by the **Porter** to shave **Henry**, he nearly ends up cutting Henry's throat because he thinks Henry is an Austrian.

Crowell Rodgers – A young American soldier who has injured himself while trying to remove the cap of a trench mortar shell to keep as a souvenir.

Mr. Meyers – A shady fixer of horse races in Milan.

Gino – A patriotic Italian youth.

Bonello – A bloodthirsty ambulance driver who finishes off a man that **Henry** has shot, and then jokes about it.

Aymo – An ambulance driver who is killed by friendly fire from

the panicked Italian rear guard during a disastrous retreat.

Piani – Another ambulance driver.

The Sergeants – Given a lift by **Bonello** during the Italian retreat, they refuse to help when the vehicles become stuck. **Henry** and Bonello shoot one of them.

The Lieutenant-Colonel – A dignified officer who is executed by military police, in front of **Henry**, for some imagined treachery or cowardice during the retreat.

The Proprietor – A man who serves **Henry** wine and then offers to let Henry, clearly a fugitive at that time, hide in his house.

Ralph Simmons – An American opera singer, Simmons helps Henry after Henry deserts from the Italian army.

Emilio – The bartender at the hotel in Stresa where **Henry** is reunited with **Catherine**. He helps Henry and Catherine escape the military police.

Mr. and Mrs. Guttingen – The kind proprietors of the chalet where **Henry** and **Catherine** live in Switzerland.

Themes

In LitCharts, each theme gets its own corresponding color, which you can use to track where the themes occur in the work. There are two ways to track themes:

- Refer to the color-coded bars next to each plot point throughout the *Summary and Analysis* sections.
- Use the *ThemeTracker* section to get a quick overview of where the themes appear throughout the entire work.

War

A Farewell to Arms takes place in Italy during World War I, and the lives of all the characters are marked by the war. Most of the characters, from **Henry** and **Catherine** down to the soldiers and shop owners whom Henry meets, are humanists who echo Hemingway's view that war is a senseless waste of life. The few characters that support the war are presented as zealots to be either feared, as in the case of the military police, or pitied, such as the young Italian patriot **Gino**. To Henry, the war is, at first, a necessary evil from which he distracts himself through drinking and sex. By the end of the novel, his experiences of the war have convinced him that it is a fundamentally unjust atrocity, which he seeks to escape at all costs with Catherine.

Love and Loss

Much is made throughout the novel of **Henry's** aversion to falling in love. Yet in spite of his natural cynicism about love, he falls for **Catherine**. At the other end of the spectrum, Catherine craves love to an unstable degree, to the exclusion of everything else in the world. But their relationship is always surrounded by loss: the loss of Catherine's former lover to war before the novel begins, and the foreshadowing of the loss Henry will have to live with at the novel's end, when Catherine

dies in childbirth. In fact, the incredible intensity of Henry and Catherine's relationship seems almost dependent on the loss surrounding them. Without the specter of loss threatening them from every side, Henry and Catherine would not have had to fight so hard to be together.

Reality vs. Fantasy

Throughout *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway shows how the harsh truths of reality always infiltrate and corrupt the distracting fantasies that characters create to make themselves feel better. In terms of war, Hemingway shows how ideals such as glory and honor quickly fade when one is confronted with the stark or absurd realities of battle—for instance, when **Henry** is maimed by a mortar shell while eating macaroni and cheese.

Many characters create escapist fantasies to make the war around them easier to bear. **Catherine** pretends that she and Henry are deeply in love to escape the pain of her fiancé's death in battle. Henry's fellow officers celebrate America's entry into the war by drinking in a hospital that is being cleared out to make room for casualties. Most tragically, Henry and Catherine retreat from the world to live an idealized private life in the mountains of Switzerland, only to have the specter of reality return when Catherine and her baby die during childbirth.

Self vs. Duty

Henry is an ambulance driver and **Catherine** is a nurse, so each of them has a responsibility to others during wartime. However, as Henry's love for Catherine deepens and Henry begins to see that the war is unjust, he begins to adopt a philosophy of "every man for himself." When the Italian Army fractures during its retreat and the military police Henry because he is an officer, Henry makes a final break from the army and throws off his responsibilities. Following the **priest's** advice

to find something he can commit to, for the second half of the novel Henry's chief and only concern is for Catherine. Even after escaping the war, neither of them wants the responsibility of having a child. By turning away from the world and trying to seek their own happiness, Henry and Catherine find more meaning in their relationship than in any other obligation.

Manhood

Henry is a classic Hemingway man: a stoic man of action with a personal code of honor who also enjoys the pleasures of life. For instance, the three doctors who fail to treat Henry's leg are the antithesis of Hemingway men. Besides being timid and unsure, they fail the test of manhood by refusing to drink with Henry when he offers.

While Henry has many attributes of a Hemingway man at the start of the novel, he nonetheless evolves over the course of the novel. He gives up the macho posturing and womanizing of his fellow officers in favor of a life of commitment to **Catherine**. He also asserts his individualism by refusing to participate in what he sees as a corrupt and pointless war.

Religion

A saying that came out of the trenches, or foxholes, of World War I was, "There are no atheists in foxholes." **Henry**, who sees the world as a bitter realist, does not love God. However, he is not above turning to religion in times of crisis, as can be seen in the St. Anthony medallion he puts under his shirt before going into battle or his moving, desperate prayer when Catherine is dying. While Henry never becomes a conventionally religious man, he does follow the advice of the **priest** and **Count Greffi**, who in separate conversations outline a sort of humanist theology for Henry: he should commit with religious devotion to the person he loves, who is Catherine. Even this personal form of religion, however, fails Henry in the end.

Symbols

Symbols are shown in **red** text whenever they appear in the *Plot Summary* and *Summary and Analysis* sections of this LitChart.

Rain

Rain is a recurring symbol of death in *A Farewell to Arms*. From the first chapter, when rain is associated with the cholera that kills 7,000 soldiers, to the last sentence, where it is raining outside the hospital where **Catherine** has died, the reader is reminded that during wartime, tragedy can fall as randomly and unstoppable as rain. Whenever **Henry** makes a significant nighttime transition from one place to another—the night that he leaves Milan to return to the front, the night of the large-scale Italian retreat, and the night that he and Catherine row across the lake from Italy to Switzerland—it is pouring rain.

The presence of the rain shows that no matter how hard Henry tries to escape death, he can never outrun it.

Riding Crop

When **Henry** first meets **Catherine**, she is carrying the **riding crop** that belonged to her fiancé, who was killed in the Battle of the Somme. The war represents Catherine's inability to let her fiancé go. His sudden unfair death in war informs her view, shared with Henry, that the world is a cruel place that eventually crushes and kills people who have real courage.

Officers' Stars


The **stars** that military officers wear on their sleeves in *A Farewell to Arms* represent competence and duty. When **Dr. Valen-**

tini agrees to operate on **Henry's** leg in Chapter 15, Henry is comforted not only by Valentini's brash confidence but also by the stars on his sleeve that mark him as a major. When Henry deserts and cuts off the stars from his sleeve to disguise himself, he throws away his former identity and responsibilities.

Hair and Beards

Catherine's hair, and Henry's **beard** (grown in Book 5), symbolize Catherine and Henry's temporary insulation from the world. Early in their relationship, Henry loves to remove Catherine's hairpins so her hair surrounds him, like being "inside a tent or behind a falls," both images of shelter and protection. When Henry and Catherine are living an isolated life in Switzerland, Henry's beard grows longer, an implied layer of defense.

Summary and Analysis

The color-coded bars in *Summary and Analysis* make it easy to track the themes through the work. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the *Themes* section. For instance, a bar of  indicates that all six themes apply to that part of the summary.

Book 1, Chapter 1

The narrator, **Lieutenant Frederick Henry**, an American medic volunteering in the Italian army during World War I, observes conditions where he is stationed near the front. Soldiers often march down the road carrying heavy burdens toward the fighting, while officers speed by in motor cars—any car going particularly fast is probably carrying the King of Italy, out to monitor the fighting. The start of winter brings steady rain, resulting in a cholera epidemic in which “only” 7,000 soldiers die.

The speeding cars imply that the roads are dangerous. Rain is associated with death throughout the novel. Henry's use of the word “only” to describe 7,000 dead shows his stoicism and his need to escape the horrors of war by making light of them. It also communicates just how horrible World War I is. If 7,000 dead can be called “only,” then how many total must have died?



Book 1, Chapter 2

Lieutenant Henry's unit moves to the town of Gorizia, which the Italian army has captured from the Austrians as part of a string of victories. The front line of the fighting is a mile away, in the mountains, and Gorizia is a peaceful place with cafés and warehouses for the soldiers.

Even though the war is still going on nearby, the relative calm of Gorizia allows Henry and the other soldiers to forget about the fighting and enjoy the pleasures of life.



One night in the mess hall, **Henry** sits with a group of fellow officers who are taunting the unit's **priest** for being celibate. Henry, meanwhile, is about to go on winter leave from the army. The officers think he should visit big cities like Rome and Naples, while the priest tells him to visit the quiet countryside of Abruzzi. Henry is silent during the conversation, which ends when the officers leave for the local warehouse.

The officers think that not going to warehouses, as they do, makes the priest less of a man. They distrust the religious conviction that allows him to remain celibate even in a stressful time of war. Henry's silence indicates that he has not yet decided which side of this argument he is on.



Book 1, Chapter 3

Henry returns to Gorizia in the spring, after his leave is over. He greets his friend and roommate, **Lieutenant Rinaldi**, who wants to know all about Henry's adventures throughout Italy, including who he slept with. Rinaldi then informs Henry that a number of beautiful English nurses have arrived in Gorizia. Henry loans him fifty lire (Italian money) so that Rinaldi can impress one of them: **Catherine Barkley**.

The brotherly affection between Henry and Rinaldi is more important to them than any individual woman. In their world, friendship between soldiers is lasting, but women are only to be romanced and bragged about later. Love isn't even on their radar.



At dinner, the **priest** is hurt that **Henry** did not visit the priest's family in Abruzzi. Henry, who is drunk, thinks about what it would have been like to go hunting in cold Abruzzi, and contrasts this with his memory of what it was like to go from city to city and sleep with a different woman every night.

Henry is considering two alternate ways of being a man: going off on your own to engage with nature, or enjoying women and sex.



Book 1, Chapter 4

Henry is awoken by the “nuisance” of an Austrian gun battery firing in the distance. He goes to the garage where ambulances are being repaired and chats casually with a mechanic about the gun battery and about the day-to-day operations of fixing machines.

Henry reacts to enemy fire with manly understatement, calling it a “nuisance.” At the same time, it is possible to interpret Henry's making light of the war as an effort to escape its horrors.



That afternoon, **Rinaldi** invites **Henry** to accompany him to the British hospital to meet **Catherine Barkley**. Catherine is beautiful, with long blonde **hair**, and she and Henry begin flirting as soon as they're introduced. At one point, Henry comments on the **riding crop** Catherine carries. She tells him that it belonged to the man she was engaged to, who was killed in a battle in France. She asks Henry if he has ever loved anyone. He says no. On the walk home, Rinaldi comments that Catherine seems to like Henry more than him.

Catherine has experienced both love and loss, while Henry has not. Before her fiancé died, she had been innocent about what war and love really mean, as Henry is now. Yet Catherine seems to sense something in Henry that makes her trust him as someone she can confide in.



Book 1, Chapter 5

Henry goes to pay a visit on **Catherine** the next day. At the hospital, he speaks with the **head nurse**, who asks why he, an American, joined the Italian army. He answers that he happened to be in Italy and spoke Italian. She tells him to come back in the evening if he wants to see Catherine, who is on duty.

Henry's cocky reply about joining the army suggests that he isn't yet fully aware of what it means to take on the duties of a military officer in war.



When **Henry** returns that night, **Catherine** is in the garden with **Helen Ferguson**, another English nurse. After Helen departs, they talk about Catherine's nursing duties until Henry suggests they stop talking about the war. As Henry had planned, he tries to kiss her. She slaps him. He makes her laugh by saying that at least they are no longer talking about the war.

Henry and Catherine's agreement to not talk about the war is their attempt to create a world of their own, apart from the horrors of war. This is the first of many times they will try to find fulfillment in each other instead of dwelling on the war.



Catherine eventually relents and lets **Henry** kiss her. Afterward, she cries on his shoulder and asks him to be good to her. He obliges by putting his arm around her, though he isn't sure what's going on. She tells him they are going to “have a strange life.”

Henry was just out to have a fling with Catherine. But her prediction of their life together indicates that, even though they just met, she wants to treat their flirting as a serious relationship.



Henry goes back to his room, where **Rinaldi** wants to know all the details of what happened between Henry and Catherine. Henry responds only by saying that he and Catherine are friends.

Henry's refusal to treat Catherine as just another conquest foreshadows the deeper feelings he will develop for her.



Book 1, Chapter 6

Henry can't find time to visit Catherine for two days. When he does visit, **Catherine** tells him how much she has missed him and asks him to say that he loves her. He does, though he knows it is a lie. He thinks that Catherine is probably somewhat crazy, but also that he prefers her to the women in the officers' brothel. Although he has no intention of loving her, he decides he will try to learn the rules of her game and play it.

Catherine has an emotional need to replace her dead fiancé. At this point, Henry is merely physically attracted to her. Both of them have something to gain from pretending to have deep feelings for the other: Catherine's loss will be easier to bear, and Henry will get to sleep with her.



After they kiss for a while, **Catherine** surprises **Henry** by acknowledging that they are playing “a rotten game.” They continue to kiss, but she then suddenly stops, tells him he doesn't have to say he loves her, at least not for a while, and sends him home.

Catherine also understands that they are using each other, each to escape the war in their own way: he through womanizing, she by pretending to find a replacement for her lost love.



Book 1, Chapter 7

The next day, while driving his ambulance, **Henry** encounters an **American soldier** who has a hernia and can't walk. He gives the soldier a ride to the next mountain post. The soldier confesses that he had taken the truss off his hernia so he wouldn't have to go to the front lines (a truss is a device for treating a hernia), but worries that his officers will see through this ploy. Henry tells him to give himself a bump on his head so they will have to send him to the hospital. The soldier takes this advice.

The American soldier is overcome by the pressures and horrors of war. That Henry, an officer, helps the man to avoid the fighting shows that Henry feels very little loyalty to the general war effort or the Italian army. With his stoicism and irony, Henry doesn't seem to feel much of a connection to anything.



At dinner, **Henry** gets into a drinking contest with a **major**. Midway through a mug of wine, Henry remembers he was supposed to go see **Catherine**. By the time he gets there, she has gone to bed. He feels lonely and empty.

All the officers play macho games to assert their manhood but also to escape the war. Henry thought he and Catherine were also playing a game, but his loneliness suggests otherwise.



Book 1, Chapter 8

The next night, **Henry's** unit heads on its way to serve during a battle at the front. As they pass the British Hospital, Henry forces the driver of his car to stop. He runs in to see **Catherine**, and tells her that he will be in “a show” and that she shouldn't worry. Catherine gives him a St. Anthony medal for luck.

By stopping the vehicle to visit Catherine before going to battle, Henry displays his growing feelings for Catherine. Though neither of them is religious, they do turn to religion in the form of the St. Anthony medal during extreme circumstances.



Book 1, Chapter 9

At Pavla, the site of the battle, **Henry** and the drivers he commands—**Gordini**, **Passini**, **Manera** and **Gavuzzi**—wait for the battle to begin while sitting in a bunker. The men fall into a philosophical argument. While all the men hate the war, Henry argues that defeat is more terrible than war, and that if the entire Italian army just stopped fighting everything would be worse. Passini disagrees, arguing that the war will never end until one side decides to stop.

Henry is an officer, but instead of telling the drivers under his command that they're being insubordinate, he engages them in a debate. He has no ideological commitment to the Italian Army, though he does think that the war is a necessary evil. Passini, however, argues that the war is fundamentally unjust.



When the men get hungry, **Henry** and **Gordini** run out and grab some macaroni and cheese from another bunker. As they return, the shelling begins and they rush back to their dugout. The drivers are eating the food when suddenly a mortar shell hits their bunker, killing **Passini** and wounding Henry in the leg. The remaining drivers carry him out on a stretcher and a medical captain examines his leg. Henry is in terrible pain as they load him into an ambulance to leave the battle.

Henry risks his life not for glory, but to get some macaroni and cheese. He is wounded, and Passini killed, in similarly inglorious circumstances: not attacking the enemy or saving anyone, but just filling their stomachs. This illustrates the absurdity and chance nature of battle, and critiques the heroic ideals of honor and bravery in war.



Book 1, Chapter 10

Rinaldi visits **Henry**, who is lying wounded in the field hospital, and brings him a bottle of cognac. He also informs Henry that he will receive a medal for heroism, even though Henry declares that he did nothing at all heroic during the battle. Rinaldi leaves, promising to send **Catherine** to visit Henry.

The army has to promote the idea of heroism in order to keep its men fighting. So it gives medals to men who did nothing heroic, such as Henry. A realist, Henry understands how the Italian Army is using him.



Book 1, Chapter 11

Later that day, the **priest** comes to visit **Henry**, bringing vermouth and English newspapers. As the two men talk, Henry admits that he hates the war. The priest responds that there are two types of men: men who would make war and men who would not. Henry retorts that the first men make the second men do it, and adds that, as an officer, he helps the first men.

In his debate with Passini, Henry argued that the war was necessary. His experiences of war have now changed his mind. He is now disgusted with himself for participating in a system that kills innocent men like Passini.



As they continue to talk, the **priest** expresses a wish to return home to the Abruzzi, where "a man may love God. It is not a dirty joke." **Henry** responds that he does not love God or much of anything. The priest assures him that he has a capacity to love, and says that having sex with a woman is not the same as truly loving another person. When he loves another person, the priest tells him, he will wish to sacrifice for them.

For the first time, Henry declares his disconnection from the world. In the grim reality of war, he sees nothing worth loving or sacrificing for. The priest has faith in God, but understands that Henry's purpose lies in a more personal "religion" of love for another person.



Book 1, Chapter 12

The doctors in **Henry's** hospital want to ship him to another hospital in Milan, mostly because they'll need every bed for casualties when the upcoming offensive begins. The night before Henry is to leave for Milan, news arrives that America has declared war on Germany. In celebration, **Henry**, gets drunk with **Rinaldi** and another **major**. Henry confidently predicts that the U.S. will soon declare war on Austria as well, while Rinaldi informs Henry that **Catherine** is also being sent Milan to work at the hospital there.

The soldiers drink whether the news is good or bad, whether they are wounded or well. Here they drink even as the hospital is emptied out to prepare for the influx of new casualties. Intoxication is a way for them to escape the realities of the war. By getting to go to Milan, which is far from the fighting, Henry and Catherine really will escape the war for a while.



Book 2, Chapter 13

When **Henry** arrives in Milan, he is taken to an American hospital. The ambulance drivers who carry him inside jostle his leg, causing him pain. Once inside the hospital, the harried nurse on duty, **Mrs. Walker**, can't give him a room because there is no doctor present to order it and she can't read the Italian note from Henry's doctor. Henry tells the drivers to bring him into a room. He falls asleep.

The American hospital is still getting its act together because America has just joined the war. Henry's experiences here with an incompetent military bureaucracy foreshadow the even more profound military incompetence he will experience through the rest of the novel.



The next day, he meets another of the nurses, the young **Miss Gage**, who comes to take his temperature. He also meets the hospital superintendent, **Miss Van Campen**, with whom he forms an immediate and mutual dislike. When Henry requests wine with his meals, she tells him he can't have any alcohol unless the doctor, who is on his way from Lake Como, prescribes it. Henry pays a **porter** to secretly bring him wine and the evening papers. That night, Miss Gage brings him eggnog with sherry in it, a gift from Miss Van Campen.

Miss Van Campen is the head of the military bureaucracy within the hospital. She dislikes Henry for being so independent. While sending Henry the eggnog is a gesture of kindness, it is also emasculating. Henry wants wine, not a creamy Christmas drink with a bit of alcohol. By denying him wine, she is, in a way, denying him his manhood.



Book 2, Chapter 14

In the morning, **Miss Gage** tells **Henry** that she discovered his secret wine. He worries that she will turn him in, but is surprised when she says that she wishes he had told her so that they could have shared a drink. Then she tells him **Catherine Barkley** has arrived, and that she doesn't like her. Henry promises her that she will eventually like her.

Miss Gage dislikes Catherine because Miss Gage is also attracted to Henry. Just like the ambulance drivers and Henry himself, Miss Gage is willing to bend army rules. Anyone unwilling to bend rules is painted as a kind of strict military zealot.



At Henry's request, a **barber** comes to give **Henry** a shave. Henry tries to make conversation with the man, but the barber angrily threatens Henry with the razor. Afterward, the amused **porter** tells Henry that the barber thought he was an Austrian officer.

In wartime, there can be a razor-thin line between comical events and tragic misunderstandings.



A bit later, **Catherine** appears in **Henry's** room. He knows that he is in love with her the moment he sees her, and pulls her onto his hospital bed as soon as she closes the door. They make love for the first time. Afterward, Catherine warns him that they will have to be more careful in the future. She leaves, promising to return soon. Henry considers that he hadn't wanted to fall in love, but he has anyway.

Both Henry and Catherine have been traumatized by the war and need the comfort that the other can provide. Their love is founded on their ability to help each other "escape" from the war. That they have to keep their affair secret only adds to the intensity of their privacy.



Book 2, Chapter 15

A "thin, quiet little" doctor comes to inspect Henry's injury, but is exhausted by the task of pulling all the shrapnel from Henry's leg. Later, the doctor returns with two of his colleagues, who all agree that Henry will have to wait six months in bed and on crutches before the shrapnel can be removed. Henry asks for another opinion. A few hours later, **Dr. Valentini**, arrives. Valentini wears the **stars** of a major, cheerfully shares a drink with Henry, and tells Henry he will operate on his leg in the morning.

Hemingway typically portrays "real" men as skilled in their professions and fond of the finer things in life, such as drinking. The timidity of the first three doctors, who consult each other rather than act, is a clue that they are not fit to operate on a real man like Henry. Dr. Valentini, in contrast, is a man just like Rinaldi.



Book 2, Chapter 16

Catherine spends that night in **Henry's** room, making love and watching searchlights roam the sky. In the morning, she prepares him for the operation and warns him that the anesthetic tends to make people chatty, so he should be careful not to brag about her.

The searchlights are part of the Milan defenses. Even as they make love, they can't escape the war. And in the daytime, they must hide their relationship entirely.



Catherine then asks **Henry** how many other women he has loved. He says "None." Next, she asks how many he has slept with. He gives the same answer, though they both know he's lying. Even so, Catherine is pleased at these responses.

Catherine knows that Henry isn't a virgin. The actual truth of their pasts is less important to her than the idea that they will create a future together that only involves each other.



Book 2, Chapter 17

Henry feels very sick after the operation, and **Catherine** doesn't visit him for a while. While he recovers, three new American soldiers appear in the hospital, one with malaria, one with malaria and jaundice, and a third who had tried to unscrew the fuse cap from a shrapnel shell because he wanted it for a souvenir.

The Americans are like younger versions of Henry, who joined the war on a whim without knowing the risks. The soldier injured while trying to collect a souvenir echoes Henry's own inglorious injury received while eating mac and cheese.



Henry also comes to like Catherine's friend, **Helen Ferguson**, who has started working at the hospital and passes his notes along to Catherine. **Miss Gage**, meanwhile, continues to try to flirt with Henry. One day, when Henry asks if Helen if she will come to his wedding with Catherine, she replies that she doesn't think that they will actually get married. In fact, Helen has become concerned about Catherine's health, and Henry talks with Miss Gage about getting Catherine a few days off. Catherine returns three days later. Their reunion is so passionate that it feels as if she has returned from a much longer journey.

Though Henry is surrounded by many women at the hospital, some of whom flirt with him, Henry shows none of his former inclination toward womanizing. Instead, his entire emotional life now revolves around Catherine, and he imagines a future with her that seems to disregard the war entirely. Helen, however, dismisses these dreams with her insistence that Henry and Catherine will never marry and that Catherine seems unwell.



Book 2, Chapter 18

Henry recovers enough to walk on crutches. He and Catherine share an idyllic summer together in Milan, taking romantic carriage rides and eating at fine restaurants. Henry wants to get married but Catherine does not. She is sure that if she were married the army would send her away from the front, and adds that it doesn't matter whether they get married because she's not religious—her love for Henry is her only religion. She says that when she met him, she was crazy, and begs him to just be happy and love her. She admits that terrible things will probably happen to the two of them, but promises that unfaithfulness won't be one of them.

Catherine is desperate to keep her love for Henry secret, because that way the Army in particular and the war in general can't touch it. The intensity of their love allows her to ignore everything that has gone missing in her life, including her dead fiancé, a loss that she admits drove her a little mad. The priest commented that Henry could find a kind of religion in loving another person. Here, Catherine says that she has done just that.



Book 2, Chapter 19

When apart from Catherine, Henry spends time with a number of people, including a man named **Meyers** and his wife. One day, when he is in a bar in Milan, Henry runs into two American opera singers, **Ralph Simmons** and **Edgar Saunders**, and an Italian-American soldier in the Italian army named **Ettore Moretti**. Moretti has five medals and three war wounds. He brags about the promotions he is about to receive, and advises Henry to join the American Army, which is likely to pay him better. Henry describes Ettore as a "legitimate hero who bored every one he met."

Henry is no longer interested in stories of what he sees as the wartime illusion of bravery and heroism. Henry is particularly disgusted by Moretti's smug willingness to cash in on his heroism, peddling his services to the highest bidding army. Moretti's behavior even further disillusiones Henry about every aspect of the war.



At the hospital that night, Catherine tells Henry that she dislikes **Moretti**, and prefers quieter heroes. It soon begins to rain, and as they lie in bed, Catherine cries and tells Henry that she has always been afraid of the rain. When Henry asks why, she says that it is "very hard on loving" and that she can see herself dead in it. Henry comforts her, tells her not to be crazy, and she stops crying. Outside, the rain continues to fall.

Catherine sees rain as a symbol of all of those outside forces—war, military bureaucracy, death—that interfere with the privacy of life and love. Henry does not understand this yet. He stops Catherine's crying, but he can't stop the rain.



Book 2, Chapter 20

A few days later, Henry goes to the horse races with Catherine, **Helen Ferguson**, **Crowell Rodgers** (the boy who had been wounded by the shrapnel shell), and **Mr. Meyers**. Meyers is well-connected in the crooked world of Italian horse-racing. At the track, Catherine notices a horse that has been dyed dark-purple, and insists they bet on it because she believes it is a champion horse in disguise. The horse wins, but they win much less than expected because heavy betting just before the race shifted the odds.

Sports and games continue to be important during wartime, but the games are increasingly rigged. This change suggests both the immorality of the war but also that the game of life is rigged—it always ends in death.



They then bet based on a tip from Mr. Meyers and win again, but Catherine soon tires of this. Henry and Catherine leave their friends to be alone together, and Catherine bets on an unknown horse, which loses badly. Nonetheless, she is happier and she and Henry agree that they feel best when alone together.

Catherine would rather lose money on a horse she chose than win by cheating. In a sense, her relationship with Henry is that "unknown horse." She'll do everything to escape the rigged world to live within the privacy of their relationship. Henry joins her, giving up the masculine games he has long enjoyed.



Book 2, Chapter 21

In September, the weather turns cooler and the leaves start to change. The war begins to turn against the Italian army and the Allies in general. Henry's recuperation from his injury is nearly complete, and he now has only three weeks left of convalescent leave before having to return to the front.

Henry and Catherine's relationship thrives in summer while he is injured. But injuries heal, and autumn and cold weather always return. These are the realities of life, and Henry must soon return to the front.



Henry notices that Catherine seems upset, and after a little pressuring he gets her to tell him what's wrong: she's three months pregnant. Catherine asks Henry if he feels trapped. He responds that you "always feel trapped biologically." This leads them close to a fight, but they both quickly back off and promise that nothing will come between them.

Catherine's pregnancy is another reminder of reality. It will make it impossible to hide their relationship and pit Henry's duty to Catherine against his military duty. They don't fight because they need their relationship to seem perfect, without conflict.



Henry comments that Catherine is too brave for anything bad to happen to them, though Catherine counters that even brave people die. Henry then quotes the famous saying, "The coward dies a thousand deaths, the brave but one." Catherine responds that whoever came up with that was probably a coward, and that the person who is both intelligent and brave dies two thousand deaths but doesn't mention them.

Catherine's comment about the "intelligent and brave" articulates the stoic philosophy that many of Hemingway's heroes share: suffer, but don't complain about it. Henry still seems to think that bravery will protect him from harm, but Catherine, who has experienced more loss, knows better.



Book 2, Chapter 22

It rains the next morning, and Henry is diagnosed with jaundice. **Miss Van Campen** discovers Henry's stash of empty alcohol bottles, and accuses him of drinking in order to give himself jaundice so he won't have to return to the front. He compares jaundice to being kicked in the scrotum, and asks if she thinks anyone would inflict it on themselves. But she does not believe him, and files a report that causes Henry to lose his convalescent leave and get sent immediately to the front.

Rain is always a symbol of outside forces Henry can't control. Miss Van Campen is a recurring character type in this novel: someone who enforces the rules of an unjust system without having to suffer the consequences. In particular, she shares this role with the military police in Chapter 30.



Book 2, Chapter 23

The night he is to leave for the front, Henry reserves a seat on the train and goes to a wine shop to meet Catherine. They stroll down the street. When they pass a soldier kissing a girl against the wall of a cathedral, Henry says, "They're like us," and Catherine unhappily replies, "Nobody is like us."

Henry still wants to believe that he and Catherine can fit normally into society, but Catherine has a different view of the world. She thinks they will always be set apart from everyone else.



They go into a gun shop where Henry buys a pistol and ammunition to bring to the front. Then he suggests to Catherine that they go some place where they can be alone. They go to a hotel across from the train station. When they get to their room, however, Catherine says that she feels like a whore. Henry wonders why she is starting an argument now and gets upset, but then she invites him to bed and they make love.

The pistol reminds Henry that he will soon be separated from Catherine. Catherine's comment that she feels like a whore is never entirely explained, but may imply that at this moment she feels Henry is just using her, as he has used other women, to forget about the war to which he must soon return.



While they eat dinner in their room, Henry quotes a passage from a poem by Marvell: "But at my back I always hear / Time's winged chariot hurrying near." Henry worries about Catherine being alone when she has the baby, but she tells him not to worry.

Henry's recitation of the poem shows his acute awareness of the time slipping away from them. Catherine displays her typical stoicism.



Book 2, Chapter 24

Henry and Catherine say their goodbyes in front of the train station in the rain.

Rain is always a bad omen in the novel.



The train is crowded, with every seat taken. When Henry gets on and takes the seat that he had paid someone to hold for him, an Italian army captain takes exception. After some back and forth, Henry lets the captain have the seat and goes to sleep on the floor.

The episode with the captain is a reminder of the petty bureaucratic idiocies that are a part of army life and which take precedence over goodness and fairness.



Book 3, Chapter 25

Henry returns to Gorizia. The **major** fills him in on the summer full of combat, and comments that Henry was lucky to have gotten wounded just when he did. The major adds that if he had gotten an injury he probably wouldn't have returned to the front.

Henry was able to escape the war for the summer, but now reality has asserted itself. Even the major has lost faith in the war, and would desert if given a chance.



Henry then reunites with **Rinaldi**. Due to all the casualties from the summer of fighting, Rinaldi has had plenty of experience operating on wounded soldiers, and now drinks and womanizes more heavily than ever. Rinaldi notes that Henry seems like a "married man," then asks whether **Catherine** is good in bed. Henry refuses to tell him. Rinaldi notes with surprise that this seems to be a "sacred" topic.

As the war has intensified, Rinaldi's drinking and womanizing seems less macho and more a desperate ploy to forget the war. Rinaldi's "sacred" crack highlights that Henry has made the sort of religious commitment in his love for Catherine that the priest predicted in Chapter 11.



At dinner, the mess hall is quiet, as there are fewer men at the table. **Rinaldi**, getting drunk, tries to bait the **priest** as he used to. But his jokes fall flat, and he gets angry at the priest and the war and announces that he may have syphilis before heading off to the whorehouse.

Through what begins as joking, Rinaldi reveals a deep desperation and anger that God could let horrible things happen in war. Rinaldi's attempts to forget the war by womanizing may have given him syphilis. In other words, you can only hide from reality for so long.



Book 3, Chapter 26

After dinner, **Henry** and the **priest** talk in Henry's room. The priest thinks that now that the destruction from the war is apparent, both sides will eventually stop fighting. Henry disagrees, and argues that the winning side will never give up. Henry says that it is only in defeat that people become "Christian," or gentle. He adds that he no longer believes in victory or defeat. The priest asks what Henry does believe. He answers that he believes only in sleep.

Henry's thoughts about religion are deeply cynical. He no longer believes in the idea of war. Henry's belief only in "sleep" shows how literally fatigued he has become. It also suggests that war has made him only believe in death.



Book 3, Chapter 27

Henry goes the next day to Bainsizza, a mountainous region that has seen heavy fighting. There, he meets **Gino**, a local Italian youth. They talk military strategy and Gino then dismisses talk of defeat, saying that they cannot let the losses the Italians suffered be in vain. Henry is embarrassed by the expression "in vain," as well as by other abstract words like "sacred, glorious, and sacrifice." He considers these words to be meaningless and even obscene in comparison to objective details like the names of places and dates.

Henry now views anyone who is optimistic about the war as naive. The words "sacred, glorious, and sacrifice" mean nothing to him because he sees how the army uses them to get men to fight and die for no real reason. The expression "in vain" means nothing to him because, to Henry, everyone who dies for an abstract idea like "glory" dies in vain.



Rain begins to fall and an enemy bombardment begins. Word races through the Italian lines that Germans are among the attacking soldiers and that the Italian lines have broken. The Italians begin a massive retreat. When they reach Gorizia, **Henry** sees the girls from the soldiers' brothel being loaded into a truck. **Bonello**, one of Henry's drivers, says that he'd like to ride in that truck and "have a crack at them for nothing." Everyone has evacuated, including **Rinaldi**. After briefly resting and eating, Henry and the other ambulance drivers join the retreat.

The retreat marks a major defeat for the Italian army, and even the former safe haven of Gorizia, to which the soldiers could go to escape the war, must now face the realities of war and evacuate. In this time of heightened danger and confusion, the soldiers cling even harder to the basic pleasures of food, alcohol, and sex.



Book 3, Chapter 28

The retreating Italian vehicles move excruciatingly slowly, and often stall. **Henry** checks on his drivers. **Bonello** has picked up two engineering **sergeants**, while **Aymo** has picked up two local girls, who are frightened of the vulgar soldiers around them. Henry looks up at the **rain** and wishes **Catherine** good night, promising not to leave her, and falls asleep. He wakes to find that lines of peasants have joined the slowly retreating vehicles. He and his men decide to break off from the main road and take a smaller road through the countryside.

Impending death, in the form of rain, is falling all around Henry and his fellow soldiers. He retreats into his private world by carrying on an imaginary conversation with Catherine. Meanwhile, as the peasants join the retreat it becomes clear that the soldiers are not the only ones affected by the war. Everyone is affected, even the peasants who played no role in it at all.



Book 3, Chapter 29

At noon, ten kilometers from their destination, **Aymo's** cars gets stuck in the muddy road. **Henry** orders the two engineering **sergeants** to help free the vehicle. Fearful that they will all be overtaken by the enemy, the sergeants refuse, and run. Henry pulls his pistol and shoots one of them, injuring him. The other escapes. **Bonello** then takes Henry's gun and finishes off the injured sergeant with a bullet to the head.

The chaos of the retreat has caused the drivers to do whatever it takes to get to their destination. Within this context, Henry is just doing his duty as an army lieutenant—he is forcing men who don't want to engage in battle to either fight or die.



Henry puts the coat and cape of the dead sergeant under the wheels of the car to help it escape from its rut, but it doesn't work. As they walk away, **Bonello**, who is a Socialist, says that he has always wanted to kill a sergeant.

In war, the belongings of the dead are treated without any reverence or respect. Bonello's comment shows the fractured loyalties within the Italian Army.



Book 3, Chapter 30

Henry and the drivers, now on foot, come to a railway bridge. Henry spots Germans going across the bridge and wonders why his own army did not blow the bridge up during the retreat.

The Italian Army, for which Henry has just killed a man, is totally incompetent. Henry did his duty for an army that is not fulfilling its own duties.



To avoid the Germans, the drivers sneak down the river embankment beneath bridge and are fired upon. **Aymo** is shot through the neck and killed. **Henry** realizes that the frightened Italian rear guard, not the Germans, are the ones shooting at them. He and his men scramble for a place to hide.

Now, through its incompetence, the Italian army goes from being an unhelpful ally to a dangerous enemy. The Army for which Henry has sacrificed so much is now trying to kill him.



The remaining drivers find an abandoned farmhouse in which to eat a meal. As **Henry** sets up camp in the barn, **Bonello** and **Piani** search for food. Piani soon returns, alone, and reports that Bonello ran off, hoping to be made a prisoner of the enemy rather than being shot at by his own army.

Another condemnation of the Italian Army: Bonello would rather be captured by the enemy than risk the chance of being shot by his own skittish and incompetent side.



That night, **Henry** and **Piani** rejoin the main Italian retreat heading south. Eventually they arrive at a bridge, where Italian military police are detaining and questioning officers about their "treachery," which is blamed for the Italian defeat.

The military police place unfair blame on officers like Henry in order to protect the "honor" of the army. In reality, the Army's incompetence is to blame.



Henry is himself seized by two military policemen. He then watches as a dignified lieutenant-colonel is questioned, pointlessly, about the retreat. The lieutenant-colonel asks to be shot rather than be subjected to stupid questions. He is executed. During the commotion surrounding the execution, Henry runs for the river. He hears shots as he dives in, but the current quickly carries him away.

Although Henry earlier shot a man for cowardice, he despises the systematic execution of innocent officers. As the Italian Army turns on him, he refuses to adopt its corrupt ideals and instead acts to save himself, throwing away all vestiges of duty and loyalty.



Book 3, Chapter 31

Henry is pulled downriver. When he is close enough to the shore, he grabs a branch and pulls himself out. To disguise himself, he cuts the **stars** from his sleeve that mark him as an officer.

By cutting off his officer's stars, Henry is throwing away his connection to his responsibilities and to the war in general.



That night, Henry sneaks onto a train. When a young soldier looks at him, he glares at the boy with contempt so that the boy looks away. Henry hides in a train car loaded with guns.

Henry, now a fugitive, is able to protect himself by appearing threatening and confident.



Book 3, Chapter 32

As he hides, **Henry** tries to avoid thinking about how hungry he is by thinking about **Catherine**, but thinking about her without being able to see her makes him feel as if he is going crazy. He decides that he has no more obligation to the Italian army that tried to kill him, and that the war is none of his business anymore. All he wants to do is "eat and drink and sleep with Catherine."


Thoughts of Catherine allow Henry to escape the forces of the outside world, including even hunger. He explicitly decides to cut his ties to the war. The one thing he wants is to escape the war and the rest of the world by focusing solely on his love for Catherine.



Book 4, Chapter 33


Henry gets off the train in Milan. He stops in a wine shop, where the **proprietor** gives him a glass of grappa (a type of brandy) in exchange for news of the front. Henry's vague answers, and the mark on his sleeve where the **stars** have been cut away, lead the proprietor to guess that he is in trouble. He offers to let Henry stay. Henry refuses the offer and assures the proprietor that he is not in trouble.

The proprietor's willingness to help Henry, who has clearly deserted the army, shows that much of the population shares Henry and the other army members' hatred of the war. Henry's refusal of help shows his rugged individualism.



Henry goes to the hospital. The porter tells him that Catherine left two days ago for the town of Stresa. Henry then goes to the house of the American opera singer **Ralph Simmons** who gives Henry civilian clothes in which to disguise himself.


Now that he has left the army, the most important goal for Henry is finding Catherine, who gives him a sense of purpose. Ralph Simmons's willingness to help Henry indicates that Ralph also dislikes the war.



Book 4, Chapter 34


Henry takes the train to Stresa. As a man of military age who could be fighting in the war, he attracts scornful stares because he is dressed in civilian clothes. The stares don't bother him because he has made "a separate peace" with the war.

Henry is now a fully formed individualist who refuses to be a part of a war he sees as corrupt. He considers his own peace with the war as valid as any official treaty.




In Stresa, **Henry** checks into a hotel, where he knows the barman, **Emilio**. In response to Henry's questions, Emilio directs Henry to the hotel where "two English nurses" are staying. When Henry arrives, **Catherine** is thrilled to see him, but **Helen Ferguson** angrily accuses Henry of ruining Catherine's life. Then she bursts into tears and demands that Henry marry Catherine and make a proper woman of her.

Helen recognizes that Catherine and Henry are preparing to live outside the normal boundaries of society. Though this prospect excites Catherine, it offends Helen, who blames Henry for seducing her friend.




After **Henry** and **Catherine** make love in Henry's hotel room, Henry lies awake and thinks about how he never feels lonely when he is with her. And yet he also thinks about how the world breaks everyone eventually, and that those who it doesn't break—the good, the gentle, and the brave—it kills.

Henry's thoughts show the novel's philosophical shift from denouncing the horrors of war to viewing the entire world as a cruel, unfair place in which even Henry and Catherine's love is just a temporary refuge.



In the morning, **Henry** doesn't read the newspaper while they eat breakfast. He promises to tell **Catherine** about his experiences once he himself understands them, and she jokes that he shouldn't feel bad about deserting since it was only the Italian army that he left. Henry brings up the idea of escaping to Switzerland, and Catherine agrees.


Henry has given up on the world and no longer even reads the newspaper. To this point, Henry and Catherine's love has been a metaphorical escape, but it becomes a real escape from the war and the world when they decide to flee to Switzerland, a neutral country.



Book 4, Chapter 35


While **Catherine** goes to visit **Helen Ferguson**, **Henry** reads the papers and learns that the Austrian advance is continuing.

Henry is only able to ignore the world when he's with Catherine.




Henry then invites **Emilio** to go fishing. They have no luck and end up drinking vermouth instead. Henry asks Emilio what he will do if he is drafted, and Emilio replies that he will not go to war. He also offers to let Henry use his fishing boat anytime he wants.

Hemingway, an avid fisherman, often has characters speak their minds in a fishing boat. Emilio's refusal to fight again shows that even civilians have low opinions of the war.



That night, **Henry** plays billiards with **Count Greffi**, a 94-year-old former diplomat whom Henry had befriended on an earlier trip to Stresa. Count Greffi regrets that, despite his expectations, he has not grown more devout as he has grown older. He adds that old men do not grow wise, but just careful. He asks what Henry values most. "Some one I love," Henry answers. Count Greffi tells him not to forget that love, too, is a religious feeling.


Count Greffi and the priest serve as two father figures for Henry. The count is a secular man, but he echoes the priest's advice: embrace love as some men embrace a love of God. The Count, a diplomat, also represents a world of aristocracy and diplomacy that is being swept away by World War I.



Book 4, Chapter 36

Emilio wakes **Henry** in the middle of that night and tells him that the military police have found him and plan to arrest him in the morning. He advises Henry to use his boat to escape to Switzerland. Henry wakes **Catherine** up. They hurry out into the **rain** and down to the dock. Emilio gives Henry and Catherine some sandwiches and brandy, and shows Henry how to row across the lake to the Swiss side. Henry gives him 50 lire for the food and promises to send 500 francs for the boat once he is settled in Switzerland.


Once again, it is raining when characters move from one place to another, signalling that there are some things they can never escape. Notice how Henry insists on repaying Emilio for his help. Now his own man, Henry is determined not to be indebted to anyone.



Book 4, Chapter 37


Henry rows through the night in the choppy, storm-tossed lake. Though sore, he is desperate to get across the lake before the sun comes up so that they won't be visible to customs guards. Eventually, he gets so tired that he lets Catherine row for a brief while. He tells her to be careful not to bump her belly with the oar. She responds that things might be easier if she did bump herself.

Catherine's comment about knocking herself in the belly reveals her reluctance about having the baby—it might intrude on their private love. They're fleeing in order to be alone together, but they can't escape the realities of life, including Catherine's pregnancy.



Henry and **Catherine** are elated when they step ashore in Switzerland. Immediately, they go to eat breakfast, leaving their bags in the boat. When they come back for the bags, they are arrested. Henry lies to the customs officer, telling him they are tourists looking for winter sports. The guards believe them because they have passports and money. Two customs officials argue over which Swiss town would be better for winter sports. The couple decides on Montreux, a skiing town in the mountains.


Switzerland is neutral in the war, and its defenses are, apparently, more lax. The ease with which Henry fools the guards, and the guards' focus on trivialities like winter sports, seems to bode well for Henry and Catherine in Switzerland.



Book 5, Chapter 38


In Montreux, Henry and Catherine settle into a ski chalet owned by a kind old couple, **Mr. and Mrs. Guttingen**, who live downstairs. Their life is peaceful and idyllic, full of walks through nature to neighboring villages.

Catherine and Henry are living a life without responsibility. They appear to have escaped the war successfully.




Henry still wants to get married. **Catherine** is less interested in marriage, but agrees to marry once the baby is born so that it will be "legitimate." In the meantime, Catherine drinks beer, because she has heard it will keep the baby small. She is worried about the baby's size because her doctor told her that her pelvis is narrow. Catherine talks often about how grand it will be to see all the sights in America after she becomes an American through marriage.

Yet even in this peace they can't ignore the reality of the pregnancy. Catherine's nerves about the baby's size and her narrow pelvis foreshadow the complications she'll suffer during childbirth in Chapter 41.



As Christmas approaches, Catherine asks Henry if he is restless. He does sometimes think of **Rinaldi**, the **priest**, and the war, but assures her he is not. Nonetheless, Catherine suggests Henry change something in his life to reinvigorate it. Henry agrees to grow a **beard**. For her part, **Catherine** wants to get her **hair** cut short to become even more like **Henry**, but Henry objects. Catherine then proposes that they go to sleep at the same time, but she falls asleep first and Henry stays awake watching her.


Catherine doesn't just want to be alone with Henry, blocking out the rest of the world. She seems to want herself and Henry to be the same person, with the same haircut, going to sleep at the same time. Their failure to fall asleep simultaneously, and Henry's observation of her asleep, foreshadows Catherine's premature death.



Book 5, Chapter 39

In January, the weather turns sharp and cold. **Henry's beard** has grown in. One day, as they rest at an inn during a walk, they agree that they don't miss seeing other people. They worry that the baby, "that little brat," might interfere with their isolation and come between them.

Henry and Catherine's relationship is too insular by now to make room for anyone, even their own child.



Book 5, Chapter 40

March and spring arrive, and **Henry** and **Catherine** move to the town of Lausanne to get closer to the hospital. Henry reads in the paper that the German offensive against France has begun. He drinks a lot and, in deference to Catherine's wishes, continues to grow his **beard**. He begins to box at a local gym and she buys baby clothes, but they both have the feeling that with the baby coming so soon they cannot waste any time together.

Though Henry and Catherine have escaped the war, they cannot escape the other realities of life simply by hiding in Switzerland or disguising themselves with beards or doing domestic activities. Their desire to spend every moment together seems to imply that they sense some kind of approaching doom.



Book 5, Chapter 41

One night, at three in the morning, **Catherine** goes into labor. **Henry** takes her to the hospital, as she talks in a jovial way about the pain of her contractions. Once they reach the hospital and she is given a room, she tells Henry to go out to get breakfast. The nurses tell Henry everything is going fine. He goes to get breakfast.

Catherine's stoicism while in labor is reminiscent of the casual language Henry and other soldiers used in the war to talk about their wounds.



When **Henry** returns from breakfast, **Catherine** has been brought to the delivery room and is strapped to an operating table and inhaling gas to help the pain. She has been in labor for nine hours. Henry goes to have lunch. When he comes back, she is drunk on the gas and her labor has not progressed.

The carefree tourist life that Henry and Catherine have been living, eating all their meals in cafés, contrasts sharply with the deadly predicament that Catherine is in now.



The doctors decide that a Caesarean section is the best option to save both **Catherine** and the baby. They wheel Catherine away. Soon, the doctor emerges with a **baby** boy. Henry feels nothing for the baby. He tells the nurse that he hadn't wanted a boy and rushes inside to see Catherine. She asks about the baby. He tells her it is fine. The nurse looks at him strangely, and takes him out of the room to inform him that the baby was stillborn.

Henry goes to dinner and reads in the paper about some success on the British front. When he returns, he learns that **Catherine** has had a hemorrhage. Henry begs God not to let her die, but when he gets to see Catherine, she stoically tells him she's dying and asks him never to say the things he said to her to anyone else. The doctor's ask him to leave, assuring him that Catherine will be fine. She dies while Henry is in the hall.

The doctor wants to take **Henry** back to his hotel, but he refuses. Instead he goes in to say goodbye to **Catherine's** lifeless body. But, "it was like saying goodbye to a statue." He leaves the hospital and walks back to his hotel in the **rain**.

To Henry, the importance of his son's life pales in comparison to Catherine's life. He looks at the baby and sees only something senseless that Catherine will die for in vain. He preferred having a girl to a boy because if he had to have a child, he wanted another Catherine.



As Catherine approaches death, the war returns to Henry's consciousness. Even though Henry has professed his distrust of God throughout the novel, here he falls back on prayer. Love has become his religion, but his earlier cynicism is borne out: Catherine dies.



In the end, there is a single inescapable reality: everyone dies. Henry and Catherine escaped the war and tried to live only within the confines of their love, but any success they had was an illusion. The realities of the war and mortality destroyed their fantasy. Now Henry can do nothing more than bear his loss with typical stoicism.



Important Quotes

Chapter 1 Quotes

At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera. But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army.

Chapter 3 Quotes

I had gone to no place where the roads were frozen and hard as iron, where it was clear cold and dry and the snow was dry and powdery and hare-tracks in the snow and the peasants took off their hats and called you Lord and there was good hunting. I had gone to no such place but to the smoke of cafes and nights when the room whirled and you needed to look at the wall to make it stop, nights in bed, drunk, when you knew that that was all there was.

Chapter 6 Quotes

"You don't have to pretend you love me. That's over for the evening. Is there anything you'd like to talk about?"
 "But I do love you."
 "Please let's not lie when we don't have to." — *Catherine and Henry*

Chapter 7 Quotes

Maybe she would pretend that I was her boy that was killed and we would go in the front door and the porter would take off his cap... and we would drink the Capri and the door locked and it hot and only a sheet and the whole night and we would both love each other all night in the hot night in Milan. That was how it ought to be.

Chapter 9 Quotes

I sat up straight and as I did so something inside my head moved like the weights on a doll's eyes and it hit me inside in back of my eyeballs. My legs felt warm and wet and my shoes were wet and warm inside. I knew that I was hit and leaned over and put my hand on my knee. My knee wasn't there.

Chapter 11 Quotes

"You do not love Him at all?" he asked.
 "I am afraid of Him in the night sometimes."

"You should love Him."

"I don't love much." — *The Priest and Henry*

Chapter 14 Quotes

God knows I had not wanted to fall in love with her. I had not wanted to fall in love with any one. But God knows I had.

Chapter 15 Quotes

I have noticed that doctors who fail in the practice of medicine have a tendency to seek one another's company and aid in consultation. A doctor who cannot take out your appendix properly will recommend to you a doctor who will be unable to remove your tonsils with success. These were three such doctors.

Chapter 16 Quotes

"There, darling. Now you're all clean inside and out. Tell me. How many people have you ever loved?"
 "Nobody." — *Catherine and Henry*

Chapter 18 Quotes

"You're my religion. You're all I've got." — *Catherine*

Chapter 19 Quotes

"I'm afraid of the rain because sometimes I see me dead in it." — *Catherine*

Chapter 27 Quotes

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.

Chapter 29

"I killed him. I never killed anybody in this war, and all my life I've wanted to kill a sergeant." — *Bonello*

Chapter 30 Quotes

The questioners had that beautiful detachment and devotion to stern justice of men dealing in death without being in any danger of it.

Chapter 32 Quotes

Anger was washed away in the river along with any obligation.

I had the paper but I did not read it because I did not want to read about the war. I was going to forget the war. I had made a separate peace.

The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.

Chapter 35 Quotes

"Then too you are in love. Do not forget that is a religious feeling." — *Count Greffi*

Chapter 40 Quotes

We knew the baby was very close now and it gave us both a feeling as though something were hurrying us and we could not lose any time together.

Chapter 41 Quotes

God please make her not die. I'll do anything you say if you don't let her die. You took the baby but don't let her die. That was all right but don't let her die. Please, please, dear God, don't let her die.

But after I had got them out and shut the door and turned off the lights it wasn't any good. It was like saying good-by to a statue. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain.













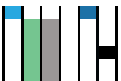
ThemeTracker™

The LitCharts ThemeTracker is a mini-version of the entire LitChart. The ThemeTracker provides a quick timeline-style rundown of all the important plot points and allows you to track the themes throughout the work at a glance.

Themes	Chapter	
	Back story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Henry enlists in the Italian Army and becomes an ambulance driver in World War I. Catherine's fiancé dies in battle during the war.
	1	Henry describes the situation of the Italian troops. Cholera breaks out, but "only" 7,000 soldiers die.
	2	The following year, Henry's unit is stationed in the town of Gorizia, which is near the front but is safe enough to have cafés and brothels for the soldiers.
	3	Henry takes a winter leave and then returns to Gorizia. His friend the priest is hurt that Henry did not visit his family, but went instead to big cities.
	4	Henry's friend Rinaldi introduces him to two English nurses: Helen Ferguson and Catherine Barkley, who has lost a fiancé in the war. Catherine and Henry are immediately attracted to each other.
	5	Henry goes back to see Catherine. When Henry tries to kiss Catherine and she starts crying, he realizes she is emotionally unstable.
	6	The next time Henry visits Catherine, she asks him to tell her he loves her. He does, though he has no intention of loving her. She acknowledges that they are playing a "rotten game."
	7	Henry encounters an American soldier in the mountains and helps him fake an injury in order to get out of combat. At dinner, Henry gets into a drinking contest, and when he realizes he has forgotten to visit Catherine, he feels genuine regret and loneliness.
	8	Catherine gives Henry a St. Anthony's medal for luck as he heads toward a battle along the river.
	9	Henry and the other ambulance drivers debate the justifications for war. While they are eating macaroni and cheese, a mortar shell hits their bunker, killing one of them and wounding Henry in the leg. He is taken away in a stretcher.
	10	Rinaldi comes to visit Henry in the hospital and insists Henry will get a medal, even though Henry knows he did nothing heroic.
	11	Next, the priest visits. He asks Henry whether he loves anything enough to sacrifice for it, and Henry admits that he does not. The priest suggests that Henry will one day want to sacrifice for a person he loves.
	12	Henry is to be shipped to another hospital in Milan. The news that America has joined the war causes Henry and several officers to get so drunk in Henry's hospital room that he is hung over for the entire train ride.
	13	Henry finds the hospital in Milan badly managed. There is no doctor, and the head nurse, Miss Van Campen, forbids him to drink alcohol for his pain.
	14	Catherine Barkley is transferred to Henry's hospital. When he sees her, he knows he is in love with her. They make love for the first time on his hospital bed.
	15	Three timid doctors examine Henry's leg and conclude that he should wait six months before risking an operation. He asks for another opinion, and the brash and competent Dr. Valentini agrees to operate in the morning.
	16	Before the operation, Catherine tenderly gets Henry ready. She asks him how many other women he has loved, then how many he has slept with. His answer, true or not, is "None."
	17	The operation is successful, though Henry feels sick for a while afterward. More American soldiers arrive in the hospital. One has injured his eye trying to unscrew the fuse cap from a shrapnel shell to keep as a souvenir.
	18	Henry and Catherine have an idyllic summer together in Milan. Henry offers to marry her, but Catherine prefers to avoid such an official engagement.
	19	Henry meets a war hero, Ettore Moretti, in a bar and is bored by him. Henry and Catherine lie awake listening to the rain. Catherine is afraid of rain and says she can see herself dead in it.
	20	Henry and Catherine go to a horse race, where Catherine refuses to take a hot tip and instead bets on a losing horse.
	21	Henry will soon have to go back to the front. Catherine reveals to him that she is pregnant.
	22	Miss Van Campen discovers Henry's stash of alcohol bottles and accuses him of trying to give himself jaundice by drinking. He loses his convalescence leave.
	23	The night before Henry is to leave for the front, he checks into a hotel with Catherine, where they say their goodbyes. He also buys a pistol.
	24	The train going back to the front is so crowded that Henry doesn't get a seat.
	25	The mood at Gorizia is more serious than when Henry left. The mess hall is quieter, and although Rinaldi tries to mock the priest, his jokes turn to anger at the war.
	26	Henry tells the priest that he does not believe in victory or defeat, but only in sleep.
	27	Austrian and German troops have broken the Italian lines. Henry and his fellow ambulance drivers prepare to join the mass retreat out of Gorizia.
	28	The main road is so clogged that Henry orders his drivers, who have picked up spare passengers along the way, to cut across the muddy countryside.

Theme Key

	War
	Love and Loss
	Reality vs. Fantasy
	Self vs. Duty
	Manhood
	Religion

-  **29** – The ambulances become stuck in the mud. Two **sergeants** who have been riding with them refuse to help, and start to run away. **Henry** shoots one of them and **Bonello** finishes him off.
-  **30** – They try to sneak along the river, and **Aymo** is shot by friendly fire from the Italian rear guard.
– When they finally reach the bridge to cross the river, **Henry** sees that military police are executing officers for having retreated. To save himself, he jumps into the river and the current carries him away.
-  **31** – **Henry** climbs out of the river and cuts the lieutenant's stars from his sleeve to disguise himself. He sneaks onto a train going to Milan.
-  **32** – While lying in a pile of guns on the train, **Henry** decides he is done with the war and that **Catherine** is all that matters to him.
-  **33** – When **Henry** gets to Milan, he learns **Catherine** has gone to the resort town of Stresa. He borrows civilian clothes from **Ralph Simmons**, and takes the train to Stresa.
-  **34** – **Henry** finds **Catherine** in a hotel in Stresa, accompanied by **Helen Ferguson**. Helen, who knows Catherine is pregnant, gives Henry a stern lecture and then bursts into tears. Catherine goes back to Henry's hotel and they are reunited.
-  **35** – **Henry** plays billiards with **Count Greffi**. The Count complains that Henry has not grown more religious as he has grown older, and reminds Henry that love is a religious feeling.
-  **36** – **Emilio** warns **Henry** and **Catherine** that the military police have come to arrest Henry. They escape in Emilio's boat.
-  **37** – **Henry** and **Catherine**, though exhausted, make it across the lake to Switzerland. They are detained by Swiss officers, who eventually believe their story about being students on holiday and let them have visas.
-  **38** – **Henry** and **Catherine** move into a chalet outside the ski resort of Montreux. They plan to marry after the baby is born.
-  **39** – **Henry** grows a beard and tries to find ways to pass the time. Neither of them is excited about the baby's arrival.
-  **40** – They go to the town of Lausanne on vacation, with a mutual feeling that they should not waste any time together.
-  **41** – **Catherine's** water breaks and they go to the hospital. The birth becomes complicated. The baby is stillborn and Catherine dies of multiple hemorrhages.
– **Henry** walks out into the **rain**, alone.