



A Farewell to Arms

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The Work

Before publishing *A Farewell to Arms*, Ernest Hemingway complained bitterly about his editor's acting as censor, removing unsavory words that conveyed important truths about war and love. Despite his editor's efforts, reviews of the novel often asked if it were art or "dirt." Several cities in the United States banned the book briefly because of its language. Italy's Fascist government banned the book because it depicted the cowardice and atrocities of Italian soldiers during the retreat at Caporetto during World War I. The government also forced cuts in a 1932 film adaptation.

Over the years, the book continued to draw fire, especially when taught in U.S. public schools. During the 1980's, the American Library Association listed the novel as perennially challenged for three primary reasons: sex and debauchery; violent deaths and senseless brutality; and belief in a universe indifferent to people's suffering. Despite critical acclaim for the book—its honest description of war, unique writing style, and timeless story of tragic lovers—it continues to be challenged as "pacifist propaganda" and "un-American."

Bibliography:

Beverluis, John. "Dispelling the Romantic Myth: A Study of *A Farewell to Arms*." *The Hemingway Review* 9, no. 1 (Fall, 1989): 18-25. Rejecting the common romantic interpretation, Beverluis asserts that this novel explores the problem of self-knowledge. His reading of the character of Catherine is especially interesting. A special *A Farewell to Arms* issue of the journal.

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Ernest Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms."* New York: Chelsea House, 1987. Offers a representative selection of the best scholarship available on the novel. Includes Bloom's introduction, chronology, bibliography, and index.

Donaldson, Scott, ed. *New Essays on "A Farewell to Arms."* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Appropriate for specialists and nonspecialists. The introduction discusses the novel's composition, publication, and reception, as well as its major critical readings from publication to 1990.

Lewis, Robert W. *"A Farewell to Arms": The War of the Words.* Boston: Twayne, 1992. Comprehensive resource. Concludes that the novel is about language—particularly the language by which truth and falsehood are revealed.

Waldhorn, Arthur. *A Readers' Guide to Ernest Hemingway.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1972. A concise, well-written vision of Hemingway and his works, appropriate for specialists and nonspecialists.

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