Farewell To Arms Essay, Research Paper

Ernest Hemingway^s A Farewell to Arms captures the inspiring

trials and tribulations of a disillusioned man caught between

love and war. Driving an ambulance on the Italian front of

World War One Frederick Henry discovers his values as he

realizes his love for Catherine Barkley, a innocent English

Nurse.

An American Second Lieutenant in the Italian Army^s Ambulance

Corps, Frederick Henry is depicted as an average man in search

of a set of values. Initially Frederick is lonely, lustful,

confused and restless, but as he becomes involved with

Catherine Barkley he finds his niche, and a meaning to life.

Frederick can be considered heroic in that he is honorable, not

interested in material commodities, and puts his fellow soldier

before himself. When the entire mess hall teases the priest

Frederick defends him and is his only true friend. Also, when

offered an award, Frederick refuses. Additionally, when he and

the other drivers were bombed, he ignores his own injuries to

assist the others and insists that the doctors treat others

before himself. Catherine Barkley is a young English nurse who

has already lost a fianc to the war and is introduced as

partially crazy. She begins her relationship with Frederick

pretending, he is her lost fianc who has returned, but soon

falls! in love with him and regains her sanity. Throughout

the story Catherine remains static, and represents the ideal Hemingway

character that Frederick is to become as the novel comes to an end.

The basic plot of the novel revolves around Frederick^s

relationship with Catherine. Frederick experiences the war in

the Italian Alps and sustains a leg injury that hospitalizes

him for several months. Although he knew Catherine before his

hospitalization, their relationship blossoms during this period

when he is away from the front. Soon after his return to the

front, there is a huge retreat and he takes his ambulance crew

on a back road to get around traffic. When he finally does

make it back to the army he is forced to desert in fear of

execution. He finds Catherine and they begin a new life

together in Switzerland. Ultimately, Frederick learns his

basic values through Catherine in their adventures of love,

war, and death during World War One. The theme shown is that

love can come from even the strangest places, also there is a

basic good versus evil shown by the dramatic tragedy at the

end.

A Farewell to Arms is a very emotional and understanding

story. Throughout the book Frederick acted as a confused hero

with Catherine as his guidance. Frederick is very realistic

and while he is a better man than the average he has several

flaws. Catherine on the other hand is entirely too perfect.

She seems almost supernatural, like an angel at times.

Initially when she is a little insane her character was more

believable. The story is written in the first person narrative

where Frederick is the narrator and sometimes refers to future

events. Overall, A Farewell to Arms is an excellent book that

while not always action packed kept me reading and surprised me

many times.