

## Summer Reading Assignment: *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway

### Introduction

Ernest Hemingway was born July 21, 1899, in Oak Park, Illinois. After graduation from high school, he moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where he worked briefly for the *Kansas City Star*. Failing to qualify for the United States Army because of poor eyesight, he enlisted with the American Red Cross to drive ambulances in Italy. He was severely wounded on the Austrian front on July 9, 1918. Following recuperation in a Milan hospital, he returned home and became a freelance writer for the *Toronto Star*.

In December of 1921, he sailed to France and joined an expatriate community of writers and artists in Paris while continuing to write for the *Toronto Star*. There his fiction career began in "little magazines" and small presses and led to a volume of short stories, *In Our Time* (1925). His novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) established Hemingway as the most important and influential fiction writer of his generation. His later collections of short stories and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) affirmed his extraordinary career while his highly publicized life gave him unrivaled celebrity as a literary figure.

Hemingway became an authority on the subjects of his art: trout fishing, bullfighting, big-game hunting, and deep-sea fishing, and the cultures of the regions in which he set his work -- France, Italy, Spain, Cuba, and Africa.

*The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) earned him the Pulitzer Prize and was instrumental in his being awarded the Nobel Prize in 1954. Hemingway died in Ketchum, Idaho, on July 2, 1961.

Assignment:

Pick four of the five questions to respond to. You will need to write a minimum of one page single-spaced or two pages double-spaced for each discussion question on the novel (4 single-spaced pages or 8 double-spaced pages minimum total).

Each response should follow this format:

- A. Begin with a topic sentence. This ONE sentence should give a brief answer to the question. Also, mention the author's full name and the title of the work (properly formatted) in the first sentence here.
- B. Next, develop at LEAST one transition sentence after the topic sentence moving into your evidence for the claim in your topic sentence. These sentences should support your topic sentence with further explanation.
- C. After that, pick two quotes from the relevant chapters that supports your explanation of the question. After each quote, you should write at least one sentence explaining what the quote shows and how it relates to your topic sentence's claim that answers the question. High-scoring responses often include much more than one sentence of explanation per each quote.
- D. Finally, have ONE concluding sentence that effectively closes your paragraph.

As this is your first sophomore writing assignment, we expect that you will work to clearly respond to the question. These paragraphs may require some further revising or editing when you return to school in August.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Is Pablo opposed to blowing the bridge because he is a coward, as Pilar says, or is Pablo, himself, correct when he says he "has a tactical sense"? Why does Jordan agree with Pablo's reference to "the seriousness of this"? Is Agustín correct when he calls Pablo "very smart"?
2. Was the communist effort to eliminate God successful? What does Anselmo's view of killing suggest about the limitations of dogma? What does he mean when he says of the bridge sentries, "It is only orders that come between us"? What is implied when Anselmo says soldiers should atone and cleanse themselves after the war?
3. "Time" is a major theme in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. How does Pilar's awareness of time affect her attitude toward Robert Jordan's and Maria's relationship? What conclusions does Robert Jordan draw about his own life during the very short time he spends with Maria?

4. Pablo calls his compatriots "illusioned people." Does this remark prove to be true? Does Jordan expose illusions? Does *For Whom the Bell Tolls* suggest that because of their illusions and vulnerability to exploitation the victims of the war were the entire Spanish people?

5. Does the epigraph (the quote at the end of the novel), an excerpt from John Donne's *Devotions XVII*, convey the theme of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*? What is that theme? What scenes in the novel develop the sentiment of the epigraph? What is the narrator telling us when he says that Robert Jordan, lying on the forest floor waiting for death, is "completely integrated"?