

For Whom the Bell Tolls

by Ernest Hemingway, 1940

WORK AND AUTHOR

For Whom the Bell Tolls:

1. Published in 1940.
2. A tragic romance about the Spanish Civil War.
3. A massive book, almost 500 pages long, that sold more copies than any other Hemingway work.
4. Written in English with Spanish grammatical structure.

Ernest Hemingway:

1. An American novelist, journalist, and short-story writer known for his simple and concise descriptions and dialogue.
2. Experimented with a new writing style in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.
3. Used more complicated sentence structure, lengthier passages, and more substantive descriptions than in his earlier works.

THEME AND CONTENTS

1. Set during the Spanish Civil War, a time in history when the forces of fascism, totalitarianism, democracy, and communism were all lining up as opposing powers and ideologies.
2. It focuses on:
 - Antifascism.
 - Camaraderie.
 - Treachery.
 - Brutality.
 - Love.
 - Death.

MAIN CHARACTERS

1. Robert Jordan, an American Spanish teacher, fighting with the Spanish loyalists.
2. Maria, a young Spanish woman who becomes Jordan's lover.
3. Pablo, the treacherous leader of the guerilla gang that Jordan joins.
4. Pilar, Pablo's wife, part of the guerilla band. A strong and commanding woman.
5. Anselmo, an elderly guerilla who serves as Jordan's guide.
6. Rafael, a Gypsy member of Pablo's band.
7. El Sordo, the leader of another guerilla group.

STORY

1. Jordan and Anselmo hike to the guerilla's camp to prepare to blow up a bridge.
2. Pilar helps Jordan get more men to help with the job.
3. Pablo, who is drunk and disagreeable most of the time, disapproves of Jordan's plan.
4. Jordan and Maria become lovers, giving Jordan something to live for.
5. El Sordo agrees to help Jordan blow up the bridge, but he and his men are killed and beheaded by Fascist units.

6. Pablo steals the explosive equipment from Jordan's pack.
7. Jordan must use grenades to set off the dynamite, a very dangerous method.
8. Jordan's plan works. The bridge is blown up, but Anselmo is killed.
9. Jordan is injured trying to escape. He sends the others ahead and is firing at a Fascist officer as the novel ends.

LASTING IMPACT

1. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* extols the virtues of commitment to a cause. Jordan leaves a safe and secure life to fight for what he believes in. While Frederic in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* leaves the army to pursue his personal needs, Jordan commits himself to his own beliefs and stands bravely by that commitment.
2. Hemingway believed that the destiny of the Spanish Civil War affected the destiny of all mankind. He had changed from his previous work, believing the point of John Donne's famous work, which said, "No man is an island."
3. The positive sense of unity with mankind was a new perspective for Hemingway, the novelist. The book was far more optimistic than his previous works and gave fresh vitality to the idea that death is not necessarily defeat.