

The character analysis of Frederic Henry in 'A Farewell to Arms' =

A Farewell to Arms, a novel of love and war, written by Ernest Hemingway, tells us a gripping story of a passionate lover named Frederic Henry, the protagonist of the novel who never tires of love making. Hemingway's portrayal of Lieutenant Frederic Henry is one of the author's triumphs in the sphere of characterization.

Henry is a man without religion, morality, politics, culture or history. He cherishes private, isolated life and attempts at shirking social responsibilities. He is receptive, a keen observer but curiously passive.

We come to know that Henry is a rootless person who has a stepfather somewhere in America but he has quarrelled so much with his family as hardly to have any communication with them. He is an American who came to Italy to study architecture and he speaks fluent Italian. He has volunteered to serve in the Italian Ambulance Corps for reasons which are nowhere made clear to us. He is a non-combatant and is more of a spectator than a participant in the war.

The loyalty that he feels for Rinaldi and the priest and the group of ambulance drivers is very important. He has also had sexual experiences with many women but none of them affected him in any meaningful way. The priest says that Henry does not love God and he does not love women either. At first, he merely flirts with Catherine thinking her an easy prey to his lust and he plays a game with her.

At one point, Henry falls in love with Catherine and he wonders at this development. From now on Catherine becomes the centre of the world for him. He has made 'a separate peace' and would now like to be reunited with Catherine. He now builds a small-enclosed world for himself and Catherine. Count Greffi tells him that his love is a religious feeling and we feel it too. As for becoming a husband, he has offered several times to get formally married to Catherine but Catherine kept putting off the marriage.

The death of Catherine is the psychic wound which Henry has suffered and which he will always bear in mind. He learns about war, love and finally death. Catherine's death is the final stage in his initiation.

To conclude, in Frederic Henry we see a development from a Hemingway hero to a Code hero. A sexually promiscuous, hard drinking 'creature', he ultimately transcends the cult of hedonism in his true love for Catherine. Catherine's death leaves him a heroic figure in his stoic endurance of his experience.