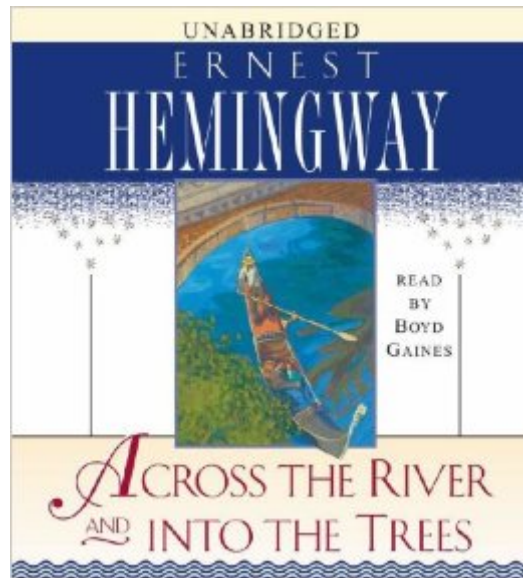


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Across The River And Into The Trees



Synopsis

HEMINGWAY'S POIGNANT TALE OF A LOVE FOUND TOO LATE Set in Venice at the close of World War II, *Across the River and into the Trees* is the bittersweet story of a middle-aged American colonel, scarred by war and in failing health, who finds love with a young Italian countess at the very moment when his life is becoming a physical hardship to him. It is a love so overpowering and spontaneous that it revitalizes the man's spirit and encourages him to dream of a future, even though he knows that there can be no hope for long. Spanning a matter of hours, *Across the River and into the Trees* is tender and moving, yet tragic in the inexorable shadow of what must come. Ernest Hemingway did more to change the style of English prose than any other writer in the twentieth century, and for his efforts he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954. Hemingway wrote in short, declarative sentences and was known for his tough, terse prose. Publication of *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* immediately established Ernest Hemingway as one of the greatest literary lights of the twentieth century. As part of the expatriate community in 1920s Paris, the former journalist and World War I ambulance driver began a career that led to international fame. Hemingway was an aficionado of bullfighting and big-game hunting, and his main protagonists were always men and women of courage and conviction, who suffered unseen scars, both physical and emotional. He covered the Spanish Civil War, portraying it in fiction in his brilliant novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and he subsequently covered World War II. His classic novella *The Old Man and the Sea* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1953. He died in 1961.

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Customer Reviews

Ok folks. I had no intention of writing a review of *A Farewell To Arms*, but what's been written on this page necessitates a response. This is not an anti-war novel. Well, I suppose it's anti-war in the sense that there is a war and wars are bad. There is no definitive literary content in this novel that suggests that Hemingway was making an anti-war statement. In FACT, the only work that Hemingway unequivocally dubbed "anti-war" was *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. There really are only two grotesque war scenes (the shell exploding in the drivers' tent and the man bleeding to death in the ambulance) and that hardly constitutes the book's classification as an "anti-war novel" or "anti-war allegory" or parable or masterwork or whatever you want to insert to justify yourself. Sure, one can make the assertion that the man bleeding to death in the ambulance was indicative of the slow, callous slaughter of the world's young healthy males during WWI, but it would have been impossible for Hemingway to have written the entire book without making SOME reference to the grotesque nature of the war. *A Farewell To Arms*, however, is not *Guernica*. It is not a Dadaist painting. It is certainly not that old Mel Gibson movie where he dies at the end (remember that?). The point is, this book has thematic elements that hardly relate to war. Take love, for instance. But love, unto itself, is more a complication than anything. At it's simplest, the novel is about strength. Strength, unabashed and unflinching. It is about the eternal struggle that every strong man and woman fights until their (untimely) death. It is the struggle with the world and the universe, which so callously torments the strong until they succumb to the weight of the unforgiving cosmos.

Exactly what sort of book would one expect from a writer who had just written "*For Whom the Bell Tolls*"? I don't know either, but probably not this hushed, elegiac novel. It's not the brooding melancholy of "*Across the River and Into the Trees*" itself that's surprising - it's that the book contains no action and no climax of pretty much any sort, and that it still manages to be so good. Essentially, the book is the restless consciousness of one Richard Cantwell, Colonel in the United States Army, veteran of two world wars, recipient of many grave wounds, who is travelling through Europe one last time to shoot some ducks, meet some old friends, and spend a couple of days with his last, real and only love, a nineteen-year-old (!) countess named Renate. The book is aptly titled - it flows like a quiet old river, slowly but surely and a bit sadly. Like many a Hemingway hero, Cantwell is stuck with an empty existence, a profession he doesn't much care for, and awareness of both of the above. Love Renate though he does, he lives in the past, constantly reliving this and that battle, moving imaginary troops one minute, then wondering about the meaning of it all the next. Renate herself is the least realistic of all Hemingway women, and as a female lead she's poor indeed. That is not, however, the way she should be seen. She is described as having

almost unworldly gentleness and purity, an enormous contrast to the colonel (esp. given her youth). In a way, she becomes almost a symbol of the youth the colonel has irrevocably lost, an epitome of everything he missed out on - and the stories of the battles he tells her become almost like religious confessions.

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