

## Hemingway and Modernism

**Objective:** Prove that Hemingway is a modernist by applying the following definition of modernism to either of the two novels (*The Sun Also Rises* or *Farewell to Arms*) or the short stories from *In Our Time*. (1925 edition)

**Definition:** "The term modernism is often used to identify what are considered to be distinctive features in the concepts, sensibility, form, and style of literature and art since World War I. The specific features signified by "modernism" vary with the user, but most critics agree that it involves a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases both of Western culture and of Western art. The modernist revolt against traditional literary forms and subjects manifested itself strongly after the catastrophe of World War I shook men's faith in the foundations and continuity of Western civilization and culture. T.S. Eliot stated that the inherited mode of ordering a literary work, which assumed a relatively coherent and stable social order, could not accord with 'the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.' Major works of modernist fiction, then, subvert the basic conventions of earlier prose fiction by breaking up the narrative continuity, departing from the standard ways of representing characters, and violating traditional syntax and coherence of narrative language by the use of *stream of consciousness* and other innovative modes of narration." (Abrams *A Glossary of Literary Terms*)

**Some hints:**

Make sure you truly understand the definition of modernism before you start out trying to prove anything.

Make sure you can define the "traditional standards" that the modernists are breaking away from.

Break the definition down into provable segments, for example, does Hemingway "break up the narrative continuity," or "depart from standard ways of representing characters," or "violate the traditional syntax and coherence of narrative language?" Does he thematically represent an "immense panorama of futility and anarchy?" These last four are textually provable.

**Length:** 3 to 5 pages, 2 spacing, 12 point Times New Roman (or equivalent), 1" margins

*In Our Time* 1925 edition

story list (pages 68-144 of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway Finca Vigia Edition*):

The 1925 New York edition begins with the short stories "Indian Camp" and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife". The two are linked thematically; they are set in Michigan and introduce Nick Adams. Nick witnesses an emergency caesarean section and a suicide in the first; tension between his parents in the second. The next story, "The End of Something", is also set in Michigan, and details Nick's break-up with his girlfriend; "The Three-Day Blow" follows, where Nick and a friend get drunk. "The Battler" is about Nick's chance encounter with a prize-fighter. "A Very Short Story", which was the longest vignette in the previous edition, comes next and is followed by "Soldier's Home", set in Oklahoma, and "The Revolutionist", set in Italy. The next three are set in Europe and detail unhappy marriages: "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot", "Cat in the Rain" and "Out of Season". They are placed before Nick's reappearance in "Cross Country Snow", which takes place in Switzerland. The penultimate "My Old Man" concerns horse-racing in Italy and Paris, and the volume ends with the two-part Nick Adams story "Big Two-Hearted River", set in Michigan. The vignettes were re-ordered and placed between the short stories as interchapters.<sup>[43]</sup>