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Reading Analysis #2

I have completed the entire book, *A Farewell to Arms*, by Ernest Hemingway consisting of 314 pages. Frederic, the main character, is completely healed from his surgery and returns to the front. Soon after returning, he learns he must retreat with his war mates and they have much difficulty on their return, such as getting their car stuck in the mud, losing a friend, and having to hide in a barn from the German soldiers. Fred gets captured by the Germans posing as Italians that are killing officers specifically because they have abandoned their men. Fred escapes from death by swimming across a river and eventually shows up in Milan, where he finds out that his lady Catherine Barkley is in Stresa. Fred heads out to Stresa where he stays with Catherine until the barman wakes up Fred early in the morning warning them that they will get arrested. Fred uses the barman’s boat and leaves with Catherine by rowing all the way to Switzerland, where they stay and eventually Catherine gives birth. Unfortunately, the baby was born dead because it was choking on its umbilical cord, and Catherine died not long after from childbirth.

The main theme of the book is “war has negative effects on people.” In the text, Rinaldi says to Fred, “This war is terrible. Come on. We’ll both get drunk and be cheerful. Then we’ll go get the ashes dragged. Then we’ll feel fine.” (Hemingway 161) In this example, the readers learn that Rinaldi uses alcohol as a way to escape the reality of the war. The evidence suggests that the war is affecting Rinaldi negatively and he is choosing actions he wouldn’t normally choose. Another example is when Fred says, “They were beaten to start with. They were beaten when they took them from their farms and put them in the army. That is why the peasant has wisdom, because he is defeated from the start. […] Now I am depressed myself. That’s why I never think about these things.” (Hemingway 172) It is important to note this because Fred is explaining that war is depressing, everyone is beaten physically and emotionally, and there are no winners. As a result, one can assume that the war has affected Fred negatively because he is depressed and doesn’t like to think about it. One last reason is when the text states, “The Italians were even more dangerous. They were frightened and firing on anything they saw. Last night on the retreat we had heard that there had been many Germans in Italian uniforms mixing with the retreat in the north. I did not believe it. It was one of the things the enemy always did to you.” (Hemingway 206) Readers learn that the Italians are beyond scared and the Germans are taking advantage of the Italians by posing as them in their uniform. A conclusion that can be drawn is that the Italians are being affected negatively with their emotions and instincts, because they are afraid to the point that they have no judgement or common sense. The evidence suggests that the war is negatively affecting the Germans because they have lost their values and integrity by tricking the Italians into thinking they are allies.

Catherine Barkley is a self-confident, tough, and superficial person. For example, when Catherine says to Fred, “You don’t appreciate what a fine wife you have. But I don’t care. I’ll get you some place where they can’t arrest you and then we’ll have a lovely time.” (Hemingway 241) By looking at this piece of evidence, the readers learn that Catherine thinks that she is a fine wife and she knows that when they get to a place where Fred can’t be arrested that he will appreciate her more. Readers should take away that Catherine is self-confident because she thinks of herself as a fine wife. In another instance, Catherine had been talking to Fred about rowing the boat and he didn’t think she should, but Catherine said, “Nonsense. Rowing in moderation is very good for the pregnant lady.” (Hemingway 262) This piece of evidence means that Catherine is insisting on helping row the boat to Switzerland. One can assume that Catherine is tough because she is willing to help her tired husband with the task of rowing the boat despite being pregnant, so that Fred could have a break. Catherine replies to Fred’s idea of getting married in that moment by saying, “No, it’s too embarrassing now. I show too plainly. I won’t go before anyone and be married in this state. […] Don’t be too technical, darling. I’ll marry you as soon as I’m thin again.” (Hemingway 279) This means that Catherine is more worried about how she looks than getting married before the baby comes. It becomes evident that Catherine is superficial because she cares too much about how she looks and not about what Fred might want.

To conclude, *A Farewell to Arms* is a gloomy novel that has the theme “war has negative effects on people,” because characters are choosing actions they wouldn’t normally choose, becoming depressed, and losing their values due to the war. Also, one of the main characters, Catherine Barkley, is a superficial, tough, and self-confident woman.