

TED ANKARA COLLEGE FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL

EXTENDED ESSAY –ENGLISH A2

RESEARCH QUESTION: How do the events leading up to the World War I and the war itself affect the protagonist Lt. Henry and the characters close to him in the novel “Farewell to Arms” ?

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this extended essay is to state the effects of events taking place and changing life standards of the main character Lt. Frederic Henry and people around him especially Catherine Barkley in WWI in the novel "Farewell to Arms". In this essay the effects of war on main character, people who are in close relationship with him and friendships after the war are examined. There are various changes in people's lives especially the main character himself before and after the war. The situations that the main character Lt. Henry encountered with his friends both in military service and civil life took my interest to write this essay. There are many problems that the main character faced during WWI such as starvation and death of a close friend but these are only the ones that happened when he was in The Italian Army. By depicting those negative situations Ernest Hemingway criticizes war. Interrelational and psychological breakdowns that the characters face are emphasized as a reality of war in this novel. The narrator does not directly express these destructions during WWI. Instead, the narrator communicates ideas via main character Lt. Frederic Henry's observations and experiences of war. As a person with dual nationality born in the USA, these observations are expository and declared. Thus his experiences of these realities such as feeling of loss, pain and love during WWI are highlighted. During this war, his life considerably changes as he tries to pursue his love and relocate in order to meet his beloved again but their distress does not end although they escape from Italy to Switzerland. In army, he also gains affinity to violence by hurting people. In this way the protagonist undergoes changes and his life differentiates as well, but is it possible to confront all the problems?

War is a state of conflict carried on between two or more states and nations. This conflict results in many negative consequences such as civilian and military casualties, psychological disruption, poverty, decrease in population, riots, lack of work power, detention and fear.

“War is fear cloaked in courage.” ~ William Westmoreland

All of these effects can be seen in this novel during WWI just after the main character Lt. Henry begins his mission as an ambulance driver and watches over his colleagues. In the novel “Farewell To Arms” the story line is edited with the observations of Lt. Frederic Henry. These observations include before and after war conditions. After facing with grim reality of war, Henry and his friends undergo many changes after World War I. These changes mostly appear as demise of relationships since the war stroked people in the society.

Before joining the war, Lt. Henry had strong relationships with his friends especially Rinaldi, the physician. Although the war with Austria begins, they keep on enjoying and having fun. Especially they were making fun of the priest with some sort of jokes. Lt. Henry and Rinaldi also try to meet with girls and make impressions. The atmosphere changes as soon as Catherine Barkley whom Henry met, reveals realities of war that she had a 8 year engagement with his boy friend and he is blown into bits in battlefield. In the novel Catherine tells Lt. Henry that she was going to marry him if he wasn't killed during the war.

Catherine appears as a doleful character at first by this way. She carries some stuff that her boyfriend has, such as a wooden stick. After this conversation in the beginning of war, social breakdowns seem to appear often in the plot with the changes in life standarts.

As an ambulance driver Lt. Henry faces with many problems during the war. One of them is starvation. For example; Henry and his colleagues cannot find enough food. Foods that they can find are cheese with rusty metal taste and macaroni. They even cannot find fork to eat. Despite these conditions, they share the food altogether and continue carrying wounded people to hospital till a trench mortar shell goes off near Henry and his friend Passini. This shows us how people find solutions to endure the difficulties that the war brings out and how people gather.

“ I took out my knife, opened it, wiped off the blade and pared off the dirty outside surface of the cheese. Gavuzzi handed me the basin of macaroni.

‘Start in to eat, Tenente. ‘

‘No, I said. Put it on the floor. We’ll all eat. ‘

‘There are no forks. ‘

‘What the hell. ‘I said in English...

I lifted it to arm’s length and the strands cleared. I lowered it into mouth, sucked and snapped in the ends, and chewed,, then took a bite of cheese,

chewed, and then a drink of the wine. It tasted of rusty metal. I handed the canteen back to Passini.” (Hemigway 49)

After Lt. Henry is moved to hospital, he faces some issues about health. The hospital that Lt. Henry is in intensive care is full of flies and Henry tries to swish them away by binding paper strips on a stick although he is wounded.

“It was a hot day and there were many flies in the room. My orderly had cut paper into strips and tied the strips to a stick to make a brush that swished the flies away. (Hemigway 58)

He is also moved to another hospital in Milan where there is a doctor who prefers working in Lake Como. Lt. Henry waits for a doctor for months and during that period he can find few nurses that take care of wounded people. Lt. Henry expresses his feelings in a sarcastic way about the doctor while talking with nurses asking them if he is swimming there and tells them that he wants another doctor. Nurses answer him that the doctor will come soon. Moreover, most of the time Lt. Henry stays with dirty bandages and often becomes thirsty. When he calls someone to drink a glass of water, nobody comes. Henry also makes observations of other seriously injured people. After staying for months, Henry wants to get better as soon as possible. He finds Dr. Valentini for surgical operation and prefers working in military service instead of staying in hospital, Because he was not pleased to stay.

“But I can’t wait six months.’

The doctor spread his delicate fingers on the cap he held and smiled. ‘You are in such a hurry to get back to the front?’

‘Why not?’ (Hemigway 90)

Alcoholism is also a sign of social destruction. During and after war Henry suffers from this addiction. He uses alcohol in every meal even at the hospital. Henry hides a bottle of cognac under the bed and when he is alone, he takes it back to drink. In addition he offers a glass of drink to Dr. Valentini and he accepts without hesitation and asks him where the bottles are.

“‘Will you have a drink, Dr Valentini? ’

’A drink? Certainly. I will have ten drinks. Where are they?’” (Hemigway 90)

Similar characteristics can be observed when his girl friend Catherine comes, and asks why he doesn’t share the drink. Even the priest that visits him at hospital, gives a bottle of wine as a present. Therefore Lt. Henry begins drinking so much that he becomes jaundice and a nurse begin suspecting him of being an escapee. The surgeon realizes the situation first and informs Miss Gage the nurse about the yellowness in his eyes. Lt. Henry also knows that he was sick for two weeks.

The other factor that destroys the social life is the poverty. This issue both appears on Lt. Henry and his friend Rinaldi. In the novel, there are several times that Lt. Henry appears penniless and it was all during his military mission. For example; while Italian army is retreating and ambulances are stuck in the swamp, Lt. Henry could afford only ten liras for the girls in the car whom he want them to leave the area. Although they were not willing to escape, Lt. Henry convinces them saying that they are going to live with their friends and families. They become anxious and helpless.

The joke that Bonello made after this conversation is also a sign of poverty. He says that he will go back to Austria if Lt. Henry gives him two hundred lire.

Moreover, his friend Rinaldi asks for some money from Henry very often. Rinaldi even thinks about the reward that Henry can get if he explains that he was injured while fighting with enemy, although he was eating just before his injury. Rinaldi asks Henry if he did something heroic repeatedly. He doesn't lie and says that he wasn't carrying someone during war and he couldn't even move. Furthermore, the state of hospitals where Henry is cared is unhealthy and poor too.

Regression during the war is another issue that the main character Lt Henry and his colleagues face. Because they cannot retreat at the first stage and lose time while trying to get the ambulance cars out of the swamp and persuading engineers to help. Eventhough they struggle too much, their effort turns out to be useless. Ambulance cars stuck deeper in the swamp while they try to run the cars and dig the front part of the wheels. They also use brushes and try to push the cars.

After that, retreatment becomes dangerous and risky for them since Lt. Henry and his friends decide to march on Udine. During their tread, Lt. Henry loses his friends and he crosses the Venetian plain alone by this way with many difficulties. For instance Aymo who is an ambulance driver like Henry, is shot twice.

“We pulled him down on the other side and turned him over. ‘ His head ought to be uphill,’ I said. Piani moved him around. He lay in the mud on the side of the embankment, his feet pointing downhill, breathing blood irregularly. The three of us squatted over him in the rain.” (Hemigway 191)

In addition, his friend Bonello decides to back down to become a prisoner instead of taking a high risk while Aymo is shot by an enemy troop and Piani is caught by battle police. Lt. Henry was afflicted when he arrives Milano with small wound to meet his girl friend Catherine again. After these events, he

doesn't even want to see the news about the war when he escaped to Switzerland for freedom as a war criminal.

Loss of freedom during the war is one of the social issues that Lt. Henry and his friends face. Despite their attention and confidence not to get caught by a German troop, one of Henry's friends becomes afraid of troops and escapes from the farmhouse where they camp and hide from their enemies. They become afraid of German troops about getting shot or detained. So they try to follow a safe path. For example; they check a bridge before passing and invigilate German soldiers who are passing with a vehicle. Henry examines the cars crossing the bridge with details and sees Udine although it is rainy.

"As I watched, a yellow mud coloured motor car crossed it. ... But I saw the heads of the driver, the man on the seat with him, and the two men on the rear seat. They all wore German helmets. (Hemigway 188)

They also extrapolate about German soldiers that they may wear Italian army uniform, but inspite of their constant attention, they are caught by battle police and they see many people detained and shot in turn. The death of the people that are interrogated saddens Henry and he jumps into a river to escape. Lt. Henry moves with the current and with his heavy clothing he stays under water easily. *"The minute I came up I took a breath and went down again. I was easy to stay under with so much clothing and boots."* (Hemigway 202)

One of the example for loss of freedom appears during the main character Lt. Henry and his girl friend Catherine try to go to Switzerland by boat to have a peaceful life unlike in Italy, but even though they both have passports, they are detained by an officer and interrogated. If Lt. Henry didn't tell a lie that they were here for winter sports, they could be sent back to Italy where Lt. Henry has unfavourable memories.

"I carried the bags and Catherine walked beside me and the soldier walked along behind us to the old custom house. In the custom house a lieutenant, very thin and military, questioned us." (Hemigway 249)

The actions of battle police that detain Henry and his friends are also against the human rights since they bear no regard for human life. For instance; one of the officers shoots arrested people after long interrogation and torture.

Increase in casualties during war is a social problem as well. For example; in the novel Henry takes news about the riots against the war in Italy. He learns that death toll is about two hundred thousand. The course of events doesn't seem well for him. Because some places under siege cannot be taken back. For example Henry says that the fight at the front lines were bad and San Gabriele could not taken back. Some people also say that casualties are increased on Bainsizza plateau.

World War I also had an impact on close relationships. After Henry joined the army, his relationships with his close friends are broken down too. For example; after escaping from battle police, Henry could only receive bad news about his best friend Rinaldi. He learnt that Rinaldi is suffering from syphilis. Furthermore, although he wants to stay in a hospital where his girl friend works they can rarely meet. When they meet with each other in Milan, Catherine's friend Ferguson doesn't approve their marriage. Because she thinks that Henry will die in course of duty and Miss. Barkley will be widowed.

"Will you come to our wedding, Fergy?" I said to her once.

'You will never get married. '

'We will. '

'No you won't. '

'Why not? '

'You'll fight before you'll marry. '

'We never fight. '" (Hemigway 98)

Generally, during war starting a family can be difficult. Moreover, Lt. Henry and Catherine cannot marry and Catherine dies in the hospital from hemorrhage while expecting a baby. There was also lack of medical supplies in that hospital and hemorrhage could be prevented by blood transfusion. The death of the baby is also about infant mortality rate which shows the under development in the field medicine and war is one of the factors affecting this rate negatively. (Higher infant mortality means less development.) After that, Lt. Henry becomes completely alone in Switzerland and could only go to a hotel room.

"It seems she had one hemorrhage after another. They couldn't stop it. I went into the room and stayed with Catherine until she died. She was unconscious all the time, and it did not take her very long to die." (Hemigway 293-294)

After the army retreated, Neither Lt. Henry nor his friends join any social activity. In post war period, the only activities that Lt. Henry does, was to watch horse races and play billiards in the lobby of the hotel with an old man. Lt. Henry only talks about arts while he speaks with a Swiss officer and Catherine to ask whether she knows about arts. When he says that they cannot study architecture the officer brings their passports back.

"What have you been doing in Italy?"

'I have been studying architecture. My cousin has been studying art. '

" (Hemigway 251)

In conclusion, war is the direct expression of hatred. Its nature is destructive regardless of technology and criteria. This destruction develops just before the war begins and at the end of it. Moreover, its effects can be seen in every field of life. Especially, in the novel "Farewell to Arms" social

breakdowns appear often and the main character Lt. Henry begins hating war just before it and after having troubles such as getting wounded, detainment and other psychological trauma. He suffers from starvation, sickness and loses his friends close to him. Not only Henry is unhappy, but also his girl friend Catherine is downcast too. She has the sorrow of losing her exboy friend who has been killed in the battlefield. The social issues about war concern all the characters in the novel. Especially, Henry and Catherine are the most affected ones since they work intensively in the sanitary field with difficulties. Therefore they dared to escape from Italy in order to get rid of the disturbance of war. As a soldier Henry witnessed many unusual events as well. Although he had heavy physical trauma, it vanished in a short time period, however psychological and social ones did not disappear. His broken knee is healed whereas his life standarts and mood are not fixed.

“Many a man survived the battlefield with his physical – and often mental – health so damaged that his life could no longer be enjoyed and perhaps ended prematurely.” (Warner 239)

Nevertheless Lt. Henry doesn't surrender, he and Catherine support each other and confront with the negative consequences of World War One. During that, Lt. Henry loses many close friends including Catherine and Rinaldi and becomes all alone.

As it is illustrated in the novel “ Farewell to Arms” war is not a solution of any problem, it is the problem itself. The solution is, as Atatürk says “Peace at home, peace in the world.”

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