



Viva la pace!

Henry travels to the front, where Italian forces are losing ground and manpower daily. Soon after Henry's arrival, a bombardment begins. When word comes that German troops are breaking through the Italian lines, the Allied forces prepare to retreat. Henry leads his team of ambulance drivers into the great column of evacuating troops. The men pick up two engineering sergeants and two frightened young girls on their way. Henry and his drivers then decide to leave the column and take secondary roads. When one of their vehicles is stuck in the mud, Henry orders the two engineers to help in the effort to free the vehicle. When they refuse, he shoots one of them. The drivers continue in the other trucks until they get stuck again. They send off the young girls and continue on foot toward Udine; they rejoin the retreat the following day.

Ernest Hemingway
A Farewell to Arms
(1929)

Book III, Chapter 30

That was a very strange night. I do not know what I had expected, death perhaps and shooting in the dark and running, but nothing happened. We waited, lying flat¹ beyond the ditch² along the main road while a German battalion passed, then when they were gone we crossed the road and went on to the north. We were very close to Germans twice in the rain but they did not see us. We got past the town to the north without seeing any Italians, then after a while came on the main channels of the retreat³ and walked all night toward the Tagliamento. I had not realized how gigantic the retreat was. The whole country was moving, as well as the army. We walked all night, making better time than the vehicles. My leg ached⁴ and I was tired but we made good time⁵. It seemed so silly for Bonello to have decided to be taken prisoner. There was no danger. We had walked through two armies without incident. If Aymo had not been killed there would never have seemed to be any danger. No one had bothered us⁶ when we were in plain sight⁷ along the railway. The killing came suddenly and unreasonably. I wondered where Bonello was.

‘How do you feel, Tenente?’ Piani asked. We were going along the side of a road crowded with vehicles and troops.

‘Fine.’

‘I’m tired of this walking.’

‘Well, all we have to do is walk now. We don’t have to worry.’

‘Bonello was a fool.’

‘He was a fool all right.’

‘What will you do about him⁸, Tenente?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘Can’t you just put him down as taken prisoner?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘You see if the war went on they would make bad trouble for his family.’

‘The war won’t go on,’ a soldier said. ‘We’re going home. The war is over.’

‘Everybody’s going home.’

‘We’re all going home.’

‘Come on, Tenente,’ Piani said. He wanted to get past them.

‘Tenente? Who’s a Tenente? *A basso gli ufficiali!* Down with the officers!’

Piani took me by the arm. ‘I better call you by your name,’ he said. ‘They might try and make trouble. They’ve shot some officers. We worked up past them.’

‘I won’t make a report that will make trouble for his family.’ I went on with our conversation.

‘If the war is over it makes no difference,’ Piani said. ‘But I don’t believe it’s over. It’s too good that it should be over.’

‘We’ll know pretty soon,’ I said.

‘I don’t believe it’s over. They all think it’s over but I don’t believe it.’

‘*Viva la pace!*’ a soldier shouted out. ‘We’re going home!’

‘It would be fine if we all went home,’ Piani said. ‘Wouldn’t you like to go home?’

‘Yes.’

- 1 lying flat. Distesi bocconi.
- 2 ditch. Fosso.
- 3 the main channels of the retreat. Le colonne principali della ritirata.
- 4 ached. Faceva male.
- 5 we made good time. Siamo riusciti ad andare di buon passo.
- 6 had bothered us. Ci aveva dato fastidio.
- 7 in plain sight. In piena vista.
- 8 What ... him. Che cosa gli farà.
- 9 Can't ... prisoner. Non può semplicemente dichiararlo catturato dal nemico.



‘We’ll never go. I don’t think it’s over.’
 ‘*Andiamo a casa!*’ a soldier shouted.
 45 ‘They throw away their rifles¹⁰,’ Piani said. ‘They take them off and drop them down
 while they’re marching. Then they shout.’
 ‘They ought to keep their rifles.’
 ‘They think if they throw away their rifles they can’t make them fight.’
 In the dark and the rain, making our way along the side of the road I could see that
 50 many of the troops still had their rifles. They stuck up above the capes¹¹.
 ‘What brigade are you?’ an officer called out.
 ‘*Brigata di Pace*,’ someone shouted. ‘Peace Brigade!’ The officer said nothing.

10 They throw ... rifles. Buttano
 via i loro fucili.

11 They stuck up above the
 capes. Sporgevano sulle
 mantelline.

LITERARY COMPETENCE

> VOCABULARY

1 READ the text and match the highlighted words with their meaning.

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | army unit | 3 | bodies of soldiers |
| 2 | hitting with a bullet or shell | | |

> COMPETENCE: READING AND UNDERSTANDING A TEXT

2 READ the text again and find out

- why the narrator considered that night very strange;
- how Henry and his men succeeded in avoiding the German troops;
- how long they walked and what they saw near the river Tagliamento;
- what the Italian army was doing;
- what Bonello, an ambulance driver under Henry’s command, had decided to do;
- what had happened to Aymo;
- whether someone had bothered Henry and his men during their walk;
- what a soldier announced and what another shouted;
- what Piani said the soldiers were doing while they were marching;
- what a soldier called the brigade he belonged to.

> COMPETENCE: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING A TEXT

3 FOCUS on the description in the first paragraph.

- 1 What are the main stylistic features? What does the style succeed in communicating?
- 2 The reader is given very little access to Henry’s feelings. There is, however, a sentence which conveys the protagonist’s fear and tension. Identify it.

4 READ lines 15-52 again: a straightforward conversation, isolated from the context, can be found.

- 1 How does the author achieve it?
- 2 What mood does this essential dialogue mirror?

> COMPETENCE: PRODUCING A WRITTEN TEXT ON A GIVEN SUBJECT

5 WRITE a 10/12-line paragraph about the following topic: ‘*A Farewell to Arms* is one of the most famous war novels ever written. Unlike many war stories, however, the novel does not glorify the experience of combat or offer us portraits of heroes as they are traditionally conceived. What is the novel’s attitude toward war?’