

# A farewell to arms – imagery paper essay



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Ernest Hemingway used an abundant amount of imagery in his War World I novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. In the five books that the novel is composed of, the mind is a witness to the senses of sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste. All of these senses in a way connects to the themes that run through the novel. We get to view Hemingway's writing style in a greater depth and almost feel, or mentally view World War I and the affects it generates through Lieutenant Henry's eyes.

In Book One of *A Farewell to Arms*, we get to read of the sense of taste. Taste plays a big role, as we enjoy the flavor of specific foods or liquids, sometimes forcing us to crave for it even. "It tasted of rusty metal, I handed the canteen back to Passani" (Page 54, Hemingway). The wine Lieutenant Fredric Henry's taste buds had been consumed in was rotten. The reader could get a feel of the taste of this "rusty metal", almost reminding them of the taste of blood with its metal-like flavor.

Hemingway shows us his style in writing by giving us a distinct taste of how your body must crave for a bit of food or liquid to quench the hunger/thirst your body yearns for. Henry stated that the wine tasted like "rusty metal", but he still continued to drink the wine a bit later. Maybe the "rusty metal" taste of the wine could stand for blood, since blood has the taste of metal, it could almost foreshadow that blood will be shed soon from the incoming shelling. The wine also stands for the theme of diversions, Henry keeps on consuming this rotten wine to divert his thoughts somewhere different. He would rather taste the rottenness of the wine instead of having his thoughts linger to the almost pungent thoughts of warfare and death. Touch is

important in our lives, as we feel and touch things daily, our fingers brush against maybe a rough surface of a rock or a soft piece of fabric.

We can also feel mentally or physically, feelings such as, protection. Henry describes in Book Two of the novel, the hair of Catherine Barkley and how he feels so protected by it. " I would watch her while she kept very still and then take out the last two pins and it would all come down and she would drop her head and we would both be inside of it, and it was the feeling of inside a tent or behind a falls" (Page 114, Hemingway). This image of being in a tent, gives us the idea of being safe or protected by this almost silk like barrier of hair. Henry describes how he loves Catherine's hair; he loves to watch Catherine take it down and feel it against his flesh. Hemingway's style gives us the feeling of almost being inside a tent, being protected by the outside, and this is what Henry feels.

Protection from the raging war that consumes Europe, and this connects us to the theme of " love as a response to the horrors of war and the world". Henry and Catherine, affected by the symptoms the war, yearn to be loved and protected. We even get a sense of sight as well, as we try to visualize Catherine's beautiful hair that drowns Henry in a protective pool. Henry as well falls under a spell of being mesmerized as his eyes gaze at the sparkle of Catherine's hair. What we smell can be important in interpreting our surroundings, and as we follow Henry's journey on the train back to Milan in Book Three we get the image of scent.

" You did not love the floor of a flat-car nor guns with canvas jackets and the smell of vaselined metal or a canvas that rain leaked through" (Page 232,

Hemingway). The smell of vaselined metal was most likely a usual scent for Henry as he sat among the guns stored beneath a tarpaulin on the train. He states in second-person things he does not love as he's going back to Milan to be with Catherine. Hemingway is telling us this smell of vaselined metal is one scent World War I soldiers must of grew accustomed too, since they're always surrounded by artillery.

While Henry is on the train back to Milan he explains how he will not at all miss that lingering scent of vaselined metal. This relates to the theme of the vicious reality of war and how love's a response to it. Henry yearns to be with Catherine and decides to abandon the army, which also relates to the theme of abandonment. This marks Henry's "a farewell to arms", and Henry's statement that he does not love the smell of vaselined metal, therefore, this explains that he shall not miss it's lingering scent he'd grown used too. Sound can describe a location you're currently at or possibly a type of weather befalling, such as, an ominous thunderstorm or the striking sound of blizzard winds. "That night there was a storm and I woke to hear the rain lashing the window-panes" (Page 264, Hemingway).

The sound of rain woke up Henry during the night in Book Four, rain in the book *A Farewell to Arms* often stands for destruction. For example, rain falls when something bad is going to occur or currently occurring. When the life of Catherine perished, Henry walked into the rain at the end of the novel as he his life shattered before himself. Henry woke up to the rain angrily lashing upon the window panes, and this is right before Henry gets the knock on the door from the barman, telling him he's going to be arrested in the morning.

Hemingway's style shows us that he uses the rain as a foreshadow almost, it foreshadowed the death of Catherine most particularly. In some cases, rain did cleanse; even though Henry walked into the rain at the end of novel and probably was consumed in loneliness and grief, it also was a start of a new beginning. Since rain mostly symbolizes destruction, if Henry didn't decide to run away to Switzerland, he would have therefore been arrested. We can picture the rain lashing hard like hail upon the window panes as it's vicious fury almost foreshadows that something bad will indeed happen if Henry doesn't make a move. When Henry and Catherine are in the boat on the river, the rain storm soon calms itself as they gain more distance from Italy. Our sight is very important to us, it enables our eyes to view the array of color our world yields, along with being able to identify things.

In Book Five of the novel, sight is slightly extinguished by the fury of a snow storm. " We went out in the snow but it was drifted so that we could not walk far. I went already and made a trail down to the station but when we reached there we had gone far enough. The snow was blowing so hard we could barely see and we went into the little inn by the station and swept each other off with a broom and sat on a bench and had vermouths" (Page 296, Hemingway). Snow in A Farewell to Arms blinded Catherine and Henry as they took a walk in the land of their new home of Switzerland.

We can picture the vicious flakes of white creating an almost impossible barrier of the view in front of us, Henry and Catherine therefore retreat into an inn for cover. Hemingway uses this snow to represent family in a sense, since the land of Switzerland is now Henry and Catherine's new home after the two left Italy. Although the vicious snow storm made it impossible to see

on an afternoon walk, it could stand for helping out each other. As pregnant Catherine tries to walk through the wrath of the snow storm, Henry assists her along the way and the two stop at the inn to rest and chat, where they brushed the snow off of each other too. The fury of the snow could almost be like the rain and foreshadow that death will soon drown Catherine in its wave.

Although the storm was rough, it could reflect that love can be rough as well, since it can bring with it struggles, fear, and even pain. Both Catherine and Henry hold fears of losing each other, and face struggles as the book progresses. Although, through snow or shine, the two assist each other, not even with just the snow storm but at other parts in the book. For example, when Henry injured his knee and was in the hospital at Milan Catherine was there to help him, Catherine's hair soothes Henry as well. Henry helps Catherine through her pregnancy and to strengthen as the story goes on; this all relating back to the theme that snow represents family and a family helps each other through rough times.

Imagery had an important role in the novel *A Farewell to Arms*, our minds got to visualize the feelings, sights, sounds, and smells of the war; and our mouths could almost linger onto the taste of "rusty metal" for example. In the end, we're fixed into the novel as we indulge ourselves in this style of Hemingway. Hemingway's writing style and use of imagery depicts the first world war in ways we could not think to imagine.