



Literary Criticism 2018-19

NOTES



A Farewell to Arms

Edna St. Vincent Millay: *Selected Poems*

A Streetcar Named Desire



LITCRIT NOTES

Written by
Jennifer Bussey

Edited by
Mark Bernier
Noel Putnam

Lit Crit Notes author, Jennifer Bussey has been very involved in Literary Criticism since it was a very new contest. Her nationally published works include entries in: *Contemporary Authors*, *Poetry for Students*, *Encyclopedia of American Poetry - The Twentieth Century*, and *Literature of Developing Nations*. Bussey has been writing for Hexco Academic since 1999. With clients as far away as Barcelona, Spain, her works have also appeared on the web and in national magazines and newsletters, including *Focus on the Family*.

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www.hexco.com

P.O. Box 199 • Hunt, Texas 78024

Phone: 800.391.2891 • Fax: 830.367.3824

Email: hexco@hexco.com

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SAMPLE

A FAREWELL TO ARMS

By Ernest Hemingway

AUTHOR PROFILE

A Farewell to Arms Fun Facts!

- *The book was first published in 1929, and Hemingway had to do a lot of convincing with his editor at Scribner not to censor "indecent" language.*
- *The book was initially banned in Boston because the police chief was scandalized by the "salacious" content. (To be fair, a lot of readers were shocked by Hemingway's portrayal of premarital sex.)*
- *The book was an immediate hit. (Because of the "indecent" and "salacious" material? *shrug*)*
- *Only 3 years after publication, Paramount released a movie version starring big-hitters Helen Hayes and Gary Cooper. The movie won two Oscars and was nominated for Best Picture.*

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born on July 21, 1899, in Oak Park, Illinois. He was the second of what would be six children born to Clarence (a physician) and Grace Hemingway. Oak Park was a somewhat wealthy suburb of Chicago and, because it was considered such an upstanding and wholesome community, was a great place for a family. Not long after Hemingway was born, his father bought a family home on Walloon Lake, still part of the Oak Park community. It gave Hemingway a childhood full of pine trees, fishing, row boating, camping, and studying nature, while also having access to the cultural offerings of Chicago. The family attended church, participated in charities, played music, and read.

After high school, he worked briefly as a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*, because at seventeen, he was too young to enlist. In spring 1918, he signed up to volunteer with the American Red Cross as a driver in World War I. He was stationed in Italy, and he was wounded on July 8, 1918, during an attack by Austria on the Fossalta di Piave front. (Sound familiar?) He had been there for only about a month. His recovery was difficult; there were about two hundred pieces of shrapnel in his leg and groin, and because the attack had been at night, he began having psychological difficulties in nighttime. His six months of convalescence not only gave him a unique experience, but it brought him into contact with many different people and their stories and views of war. For more on Hemingway's experiences during this time that parallel Frederic's, see "Semi-Autobiographical" in the **Style** section of these *Notes*.

Hemingway returned to the States in January 1919 and went home to Oak Park. He lived there, and later rented a room in Petoskey, Michigan, where he focused on becoming a writer. Tensions arose between his mother and him over getting a job and moving out on his own. So,

SCENE THREE

Stella and Blanche return before the poker game is finished. Blanche meets Harold Mitchell ("Mitch"), whom she thinks looks more sensitive than the other men. Stella tells her that Mitch's mother is sick. Mitch returns to the room where Blanche is, and the two talk. Talking about a cigarette case Mitch received as a gift turns the conversation to how people handle suffering. She also tells him about how she tried to teach literature to students, but they were not interested.

Stella comes back from the bathroom, and Blanche turns on the radio. She and Mitch are clumsily dancing to it when Stanley storms in and throws the radio out the window. Stella is angry and tells all of his friends to go home; Stanley becomes angrier and hits her.

The men intervene by holding Stanley while the women leave and go to Eunice's apartment. Stanley is desperate to see Stella, so he yells for her until she comes to him. He carries her back to their apartment after humbling himself. When Blanche looks for Stella, Mitch explains what happened.

SCENE FOUR

The next morning, Blanche goes back to her sister's apartment and can't understand why her sister would go back to Stanley. Stella tells her to calm down and tries to reassure her by telling her how gentle Stanley was. She also tries to convince her protective sister that she is very happy with Stanley and their life together. Nevertheless, Blanche is determined to figure out how to get them both out of the situation. She feels that there is no way she can live in the same apartment as Stanley, and she thinks Stella needs to get out, too. Stella continues to tell her that she is fine right where she is.

At one point in their back-and-forth, Stanley enters the room without the women seeing him. He hears what Blanche is saying, and it is all very critical of him. She describes him as an animal and a caveman. Stanley leaves the room as quietly as he entered. When he comes back in, Stella embraces him.

SCENE FIVE

It has been three months, and Stanley and Blanche are still not getting along. He is slamming doors, and she asks him about his astrological sign. In return, he asks her about a man who knew her at the Hotel Flamingo. She claims that she would never be seen at a place like that, so he says he'll look into it. Blanche is very flustered, and Stanley leaves to go bowling. Still flustered, Blanche talks to Stella and wonders if she has heard anything about her from their hometown. She explains that when she was having such a difficult time with Belle Reve, she was not as strong as she should have been and became the subject of gossip. Upset by their conversation, Blanche spills her drink on her dress and overreacts. She says she is nervous because she is seeing Mitch at 7:00. She confides in Stella that she has presented herself as an innocent and proper woman to Mitch, and she has lied about her age. Stella questions how sincere Blanche's interest in Mitch is, and Blanche assures her that she is interested in him. On her way out the door, Stella tries to encourage her sister to believe that things will work out with Mitch.

When Blanche is alone, a young man comes to collect money for the newspaper subscription. She tells him that she doesn't have any money, but she keeps stalling him with

SONNET XLVI FROM *FATAL INTERVIEW*
"[EVEN IN THE MOMENT OF OUR EARLIEST KISS]"

LITERARY DEVICES: Shakespearean sonnet; alliteration (lines 2 and 3); inversion (lines 3, 4, and 5); metaphor (lines 3, 6, and 14); assonance (lines 10, 12, and 13)

THIS POEM IS ABOUT

The main idea of this poem is that the end of this relationship existed in its beginning. It's a reflection on a love relationship that has ended.

In the first quatrain, Millay recalls that from the moment of their first kiss, she knew the seed of the unhappy ending was already there. She calls it a "dry seed," meaning that it had not yet begun to grow, but all the potential was there to grow in time.

In the second quatrain, she attributes her being a wise country woman to knowing the futility of fighting the seasons. Autumn will do what autumn does, and winter will do what winter does; nothing can stop it. This is her way of saying that once she saw the end of the relationship coming, she could read the changing "season" and knew it would be futile to try to change the course.

The third quatrain begins with the repetition of the word *hope* (line 9) and reveals that, with the season change inevitable, the best she could hope for was a "fairer summer and a later fall." In other words, she could only hope that the relationship would be really good and that the end could be delayed (knowing it could not be avoided).

She ends with a couplet describing a grapevine that had ripe, sunny clusters in the summer, although now they are blackened by the cold weather.

Themes include: love, breaking up, futility, metaphorical seasons

SONNET "[TIME, THAT RENEWS THE TISSUES OF THIS FRAME]"

LITERARY DEVICES: Italian sonnet; alliteration (lines 1 and 8); consonance (line 2); asyndeton (line 3); imagery (line 5); inversion (lines 6 and 10); metonymy (lines 10-12)

THIS POEM IS ABOUT

Millay lets the reader know right away that the overarching theme of the poem is time. It is the first word of the poem, and the first word of the turn in the concluding couplet. In the first quatrain, the persona describes how time develops a man from the womb to childhood. Line 2 describes the development of the child in his mother's womb; line 3 describes infancy; and line 4 describes childhood.

The second quatrain continues the line of thinking by adding that the passage of time has not only developed and matured the child, but it has also made it possible for the child to forget the "watery darkness" (his mother's womb) where his life began. In line 6, the persona considers the grown man who is still connected to time. Growing into adulthood, the man has new raiments (clothes), which represent not only aging but also the effect of time in stripping away certain things to replace them with others. According to the persona, this includes remorse and shame. This is an important shift in the poem, as the persona has gone from objective descriptions of growing up to looking inside the person at his emotional self, along with the realities of his experiences and choices.