



# **FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS**

ERNEST HEMINGWAY



## **BOOK REVIEW**

### **FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS**

The book is set during the period of Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In the spring of 1937, Robert Jordan, an American explosives expert, joins the Republican volunteers in the war. Jordan's objective is to blow up a specific bridge that is under the control of a dominant fascist group referred to as the Nationalists. Further, he seeks to succeed in his goal with the help of a group of guerrilleros, who are fighting against the traditional military units being headed by another hot-headed character named Pablo.

The most important message that Hemingway sends his readers through this book is that war is never good for anyone. There is no romance or victory, rather war is always accompanied by tragic losses and desolation. Through this book, Hemingway also reflects upon the two World Wars which preceded the Spanish Civil War. At the time of publication of this book, World War-II was already in progress. During the war, the allied factions claimed to possess a higher moral ground, while ironically committing the same war crimes that they were denouncing. Thus, Hemingway through this book is trying to explain the readers that there no such thing as "taking the good side" in a war since both sides are ultimately seeking subjugation of either side, even if that means resorting to violence and death.

In the book, Jordan is having his own inner struggle concerning the notion of killing Pablo, despite the fact that it was unanimously agreed upon that it would be a lot better off if Jordan was to carrying out the execution. Pablo's actions had resulted in loss of lives. However, Hemingway points out that taking such decisions are not easy. In fact, Jordan himself had already learned the lesson that taking a life creates a burden on the person, especially when they already have blood on their hands.

At last, there is another theme that the book explores i.e., love. The theme of love is one thing that is common in all his books, they are in a way his own expression of his complicated relationship with the notion of romance. Robert Jordan's love interest in this book, Maria is a woman who is takes refuge with the very same guerrilleros whose aid Jordan seeks, to escape the fascists. Jordan and Maria share a deep and immediate love connection, motivating him to fight for more than just his life's ideals, since now he has someone to safeguard.

*For Whom The Bell Tolls* is still hailed as one of the finest works and is still considered by the critics to be his masterpiece. The book leaves the readers in awe of Hemingway's spare style and string symbolism. The iconic moments in the story such as the love scenes between Jordan and Maria, the dramatic narration concerning El Sordo's defeat, and the paradoxical commentary regarding the death of ideals have created a story of broad scope containing immense emotional strength. Themes such as war and love have been narrated by a lot of authors, however Hemingway unlike the other authors, doesn't romanticize the notion of war, rather he paints a realistic picture of what it is to live in a war.