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Lesson Eight

FOCUS: The Plot Unfolds

The author artfully builds a plot structure to create expectations, increase suspense, and inform character development. The timing of events, from beginning, to middle, to end, can make a novel predictable or riveting. A plot, propelled by a crisis, will reach a climax, and close with a resolution (sometimes called *dénouement*). Foreshadowing and flashbacks allow the author to defy time while telling the story. A successful author will keep a reader entranced by clever pacing built within the tale, sometimes confounding a simple plot by telling stories within stories.

Some turning points in the novel include Henry's first meeting with Catherine, the serious wound he suffers at the front, Catherine's unplanned pregnancy, Henry's escape from execution, and Emilio's intercession that allows the couple to escape to Switzerland.



Discussion Activities

Use the homework assignment from the last lesson to have students present the most important turning points in the novel. Ask them to refer to key passages. Use this information for the next activity.

In small groups, have students map a time line that depicts the development of the story and the building of drama. This time line should include the most significant turning points, but also examine lesser events that build tension. As students develop their time lines, they should define the beginning, middle, and end of the novel. Groups should present their time lines to the class. You might also divide the thirty-six chapters among students, with each student contributing part of the time line. Could one delete any chapters and still tell a good story?



Writing Exercise

Ask students to imagine a sequel to *A Farewell to Arms* and have them outline it. What would the beginning, middle, and end of the sequel look like? Then write the opening paragraphs to the sequel, imagining a beginning that plunges the reader into the story. Students should come up with a provocative first sentence.



Homework

Have students read Chapters XXXVI-XXXVII (pp. 264-285). They should come to class ready to discuss the meaning of the novel. What sort of statement does Hemingway make by telling this story, and by crafting the story in sparse language with frequent dialogue?