

10

Lesson Ten

FOCUS: What Makes a Great Book?

Novels illustrate the connections between individuals and questions of humanity. Great stories articulate and explore the mysteries of our daily lives, while painting those conflicts in the larger picture of human struggle. Readers forge bonds with the story as the writer's voice, style, and sense of poetry enchant the plot, characters, and themes. By creating opportunities for learning, imagining, and reflecting, a great novel is a work of art that affects many generations of readers, changing lives, challenging assumptions, and breaking new ground.

Discussion Activities

Ask students to make a list of the characteristics of a great book. Put these on the board. What elevates a novel to greatness? Then ask them to discuss, within groups, other books they know that include some of the same characteristics. Do any of these books remind them of *A Farewell to Arms*? Is this a "great" novel? Make sure you clearly define what you mean by "great."

A great writer can be the voice of a generation. What kind of voice does Hemingway provide through Henry? What does this voice tell us about the concerns and dreams of Hemingway's generation? How does this voice represent the era of the Lost Generation?

Divide students into groups and have each group determine the primary theme of the novel. Have spokespeople from each group explain the group's decision, supporting the group's conclusions by referencing the text. Compare and contrast differences of opinion that might emerge within the class.

Writing Exercise

If you were the voice of your generation, what would be your most important message? Why might you choose to convey this in a novel rather than a speech or an essay? What story would you tell to get your point across?

Have students work on their essays in class. Be available to assist with outlines, drafts, and arguments. Have each student partner with another to edit outlines and/or rough drafts. Provide students with the characteristics of a well-written essay.

Homework

Students should begin working on their essays. See "Essay Topics" at the end of this guide. For additional questions, see the Reader's Guide "Discussion Questions" (pp. 14-15). Turn in outlines and/or rough drafts for the next class.