



*Ernest Hemingway.* (The Nobel Foundation)

## Short Story Writers, revised edition

# Ernest Hemingway

**Born:** Oak Park, Illinois; July 21, 1899

**Died:** Ketchum, Idaho; July 2, 1961

### **Principal Short Fiction**

*Three Stories and Ten Poems*, 1923; *In Our Time*, 1924, 1925; *Men Without Women*, 1927; *Winner Take Nothing*, 1933; *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-nine Stories*, 1938; *The Snows of Kilimanjaro, and Other Stories*, 1961; *The Nick Adams Stories*, 1972; *The Complete Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 1987.

### **Other Literary Forms**

During the four decades in which Ernest Hemingway worked at his craft, he published seven novels, a collection of fictional sketches, and two nonfiction accounts of his experiences in Spain and in Africa; he also edited a collection of war stories and produced a considerable number of magazine and newspaper articles. The latter have been collected in posthumous editions. Manuscripts of two unfinished novels, a series of personal reminiscences, and a longer version of a bullfighting chronicle have been edited and published posthumously as well. In 1981, Hemingway's first biographer, Carlos Baker, brought out an edition of the writer's correspondence.

### **Achievements**

After spending a decade in relative obscurity, Ernest Hemingway finally became a best-selling author with the appearance of *A Farewell to Arms* in 1929. His long association with the publishing firm Charles Scribner's Sons, where the legendary Max Perkins was his editor for more than two decades, assured him wide publicity and a large audience. His passion for high adventure and his escapades as a womanizer made him as famous for his lifestyle as for his literary accomplishments.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) was selected to receive the Pulitzer Prize in 1940, but

the award was vetoed. In 1952, the Pulitzer committee did give its annual prize to *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). Two years later, Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Even more significant than these personal awards has been the influence that Hemingway has exerted on American letters. His spare style has become a model for authors, especially short-story writers. Further, Hemingway has received significant critical attention, though not all of it laudatory. His tough, macho attitude toward life and his treatment of women have been the subjects of hostile reviews by feminist critics during the 1970's and 1980's.

### **Biography**

Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois, a Chicago suburb, in 1899, the second child of Clarence (Ed) and Grace Hemingway's six children. Growing up in a doctor's house, under the domination of a forceful mother, would provide Ernest grist for his literary mill in years to come. The family's frequent trips to northern Michigan would also figure in his development as a writer, providing him a locale for numerous stories and an appreciation for wild terrain.

After graduating from high school, Hemingway left Chicago to take a job on the Kansas City *Star*. Shortly after the United States entered World War I, he quit his job and went to Italy as a Red Cross volunteer. There, he was wounded while assisting Italian soldiers. He spent several weeks in a Milan hospital, where he met Agnes von Kurowsky, who would serve as a model for Catherine Barkeley in *A Farewell to Arms*.

Hemingway returned to the United States in 1919 and began writing stories--none of which sold. In 1920, he met Hadley Richardson, whom he married the following year. They returned to Europe late in 1921, and for the next decade, Hemingway spent his time in Paris or in other locales on the Continent, sharpening his skills as a short-story writer. Two collections of his work were published by literary presses. The many expatriates whom he met in Paris served as models for his first full-length novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, which appeared to favorable reviews in 1926. In the same year, he and Hadley separated, and Hemingway pursued his relationship with Pauline Pfeiffer, whom he married in 1927.

In 1928, Hemingway began the novel that would establish his reputation, *A Farewell to Arms*. Published in 1929, it sold quite well and freed the novelist to pursue other interests for several years. Though he had his residence in Key West, Florida, during the 1930's, he spent considerable time in Spain studying the art of bullfighting and took Pauline on a big-game safari in Africa. Out of these experiences came *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935); neither received the acclaim that the earlier novels had enjoyed.

In 1937, Hemingway managed to secure a position as a reporter to cover the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). While in Spain, he spent most of his time with Martha Gellhorn, a young writer whom he had met the previous year in Florida. They were married in 1939 after Hemingway divorced Pauline. The Spanish Civil War furnished him materials for a major novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and a play, *The Fifth Column* (1938), which had a brief run on Broadway.

After the outbreak of World War II, Hemingway found a way to be with the American troops, joining his third wife as a war correspondent in Europe. His relationship with Martha deteriorated as the war progressed, and by 1945, they had agreed to divorce. Hemingway made Mary Welsh his fourth wife in 1946, after courting her for two years. The two spent Hemingway's remaining years together in Cuba or in various retreats in the United States and in Europe. During the years following World War II, Hemingway started several major projects, but few came to fruition. A notable exception was *The Old Man and the Sea*, which ran in *Life* magazine, sold millions in hardback, and became a motion picture. Growing bouts of depression became harder and harder to fight off, however, and in 1961, Hemingway finally committed suicide while staying at his second home, in Ketchum, Idaho.

### **Analysis**

Any study of Ernest Hemingway's short stories must begin with a discussion of style. Reacting against the overblown, rhetorical, and often bombastic narrative techniques of his predecessors, Hemingway spent considerable time as a young man working to perfect the spare form of narration, dialogue, and description that became the hallmark of his fiction. Nowhere does he achieve greater mastery of his medium than in his short stories. He expressed his belief and described his own method in a passage in *Death in the Afternoon*: "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer has stated them." Following this dictum, Hemingway constructed stories that sometimes make readers feel as if they are unseen auditors at some closet drama, or silent observers at intimate moments in the lives of characters struggling with important, although often private, issues.

*Laurence W. Mazzeno*