

A MAN OF FEW WORDS

Ernest Hemingway: Combining darkness and beauty in writing

Any list of great 20th-century writers must include Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961). Hemingway published ten novels and wrote hundreds of short stories, most of which are literary classics.

A journalist and a writer

Hemingway's first job was as a reporter for the *Kansas City Star* newspaper. He was unsatisfied at the newspaper, and he saw the First World War as a way of getting out. In 1918 he **volunteered**¹ to go to Italy to be an ambulance driver. Driving ambulances was dangerous work, and in July 1918, Hemingway was badly injured in an **artillery barrage**².

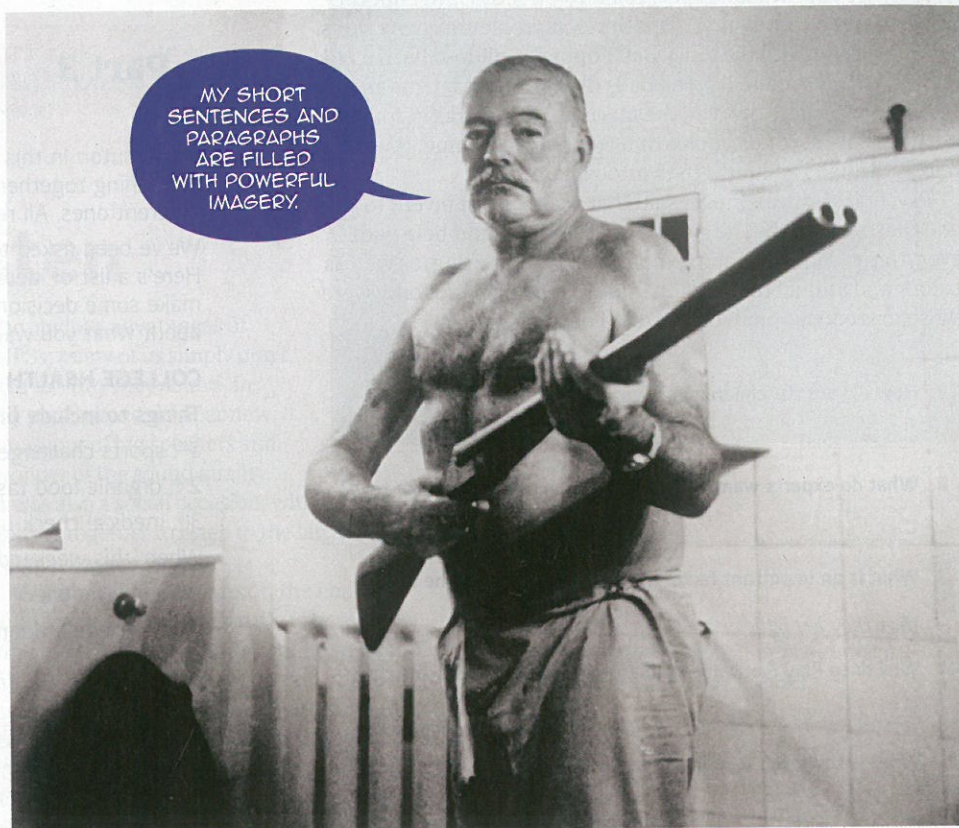
After the war, Hemingway moved to Paris, where he became friends with other writers and began writing novels and short stories. The newspaper business was the biggest influence on his style of writing. He was taught as a reporter to keep things short and simple. Hemingway's short sentences and paragraphs are filled with **powerful imagery**³, and yet are easy for English learners to understand.

A life of adventure

Hemingway's adventurous life inspired much of his writing. His first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, is about a group of American and British expatriates⁴ traveling from Paris to Pamplona in Spain for the running of the bulls. It was a trip Hemingway had made many times. *A Farewell to Arms* tells the story of an American ambulance driver in the First World War, and was a story that Hemingway had lived himself.

The second of Hemingway's great war novels, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, deals with the Spanish Civil War⁵. Hemingway was in Spain as a war correspondent and he used that experience to create a masterpiece (= masterly work) that brings the war to life.

The shortest, but perhaps the most famous of his novels, is *The Old Man and the Sea*. In only 127 pages, Hemingway tells



Hemingway with a gun at his country house in Cuba (1950).

the story of an old Cuban fisherman's epic (= great) fight to catch a marlin⁶ he has on his **fishing line**⁴. Hemingway loved deep sea fishing and, at the time he wrote the book, he was living in Cuba. The novel was so brilliant that it won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.


Hemingway's love of big **game**⁵ hunting and being on safari can be found in many of his short stories, and his love of travel and alcohol can be seen in the story *Hills Like White Elephants*, where one character complains to another, "That's all we do, isn't it – look at things and try new drinks."

His darker side

Sadly, Hemingway's alcoholism caused him many problems, and was a factor (= played a part) in the failure of three marriages. Hemingway also had a darker side that his alcoholism made even worse. He suffered from mental illnesses that included depression and paranoia. In 1961 he committed suicide, shooting himself in the head with his favorite **shotgun**⁶.

Hemingway left behind a **legacy**⁷ as one of the greatest writers who ever lived and perhaps was the most **influential**⁸ American writer of the 20th century. As a man, he seemed like a character from his own writing, and in many ways he was.

Patrick Phillips (USA)

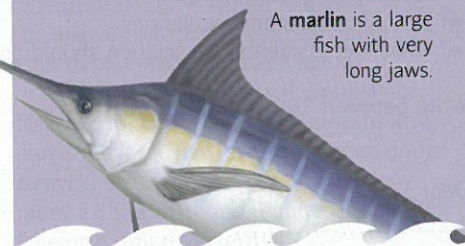
 In TF – Activity Tips, you can find a comic based on *The Old Man and the Sea* and tasks to go with it.

CULTURE POINTS

An **expatriate** is somebody who doesn't live in his own country (e.g. American expatriates in Prague). It is often shortened to 'expat'.

The **Spanish Civil War** (1936–9) was a conflict between the republicans loyal to the democratically elected Spanish Republic and the rebelling nationalists, led by General Franco. The nationalists won and Franco ruled Spain until 1975.

A **marlin** is a large fish with very long jaws.



VOCABULARY

- 1 **to volunteer** [vɒlən'tiə] – přihlásit se jako dobrovolník
- 2 **artillery barrage** [ɑː'tɪləri 'bærə:ʒ] – dělostřelecká palba

- 3 **powerful imagery** – působivé obrazy
- 4 **fishing line** – udice
- 5 **game** – (lovná) zvěř
- 6 **shotgun** – brokovnice

- 7 **legacy** ['legəsi] – odkaz
- 8 **influential** [ɪn'flu:enʃ(ə)] – vlivný