A FAREWELL TO ARMS

by ERNEST HEMINGWAY
The KU Common Book program connects first-year students to a compelling piece of literature, to KU’s community of scholars, and to each other.

You received a copy of this year’s KU Common Book, Ernest Hemingway’s *A Farewell to Arms*, from your Orientation Assistant, who has read it cover to cover.

As you read the book over the summer, use this guide, and take to social media with #KUcommonbook to start the conversation with Orientation Assistants and fellow first-year students.

In the fall, we’ll explore *A Farewell to Arms* together through the KU Common Book events listed in the back of this guide. These events will be some of your first chances to think critically and engage intellectually as a Jayhawk.

commonbook.ku.edu
A FAREWELL TO ARMS & KU

A Farewell to Arms was chosen as the 2015-16 KU Common Book for many reasons:

It is a classic piece of literature.

The book has local ties. Hemingway worked for the Kansas City Star before joining the war effort, wrote part of A Farewell to Arms while in Kansas City, and the National World War I Museum is located there.

The novel is challenging and rewarding. Our community will use the book to engage in important discussions about race, gender, war, alcohol, and relationships.

The University of Kansas is commemorating both the 100th anniversary of World War I and the sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) of the founding of the university. Many events planned for campus are tied to these commemorations and the book.

The themes of the novel — self-discovery, love, conflict, and growing up — are timeless and relatable to new Jayhawks.
“He had always known what I did not know and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget.”

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CHOICES & CONSEQUENCES

Watch for moments when Frederic and Catherine are nearing a choice with consequences that shape the direction of the novel.

- How does the novel foreshadow Frederic and Catherine’s choices and their consequences?

- How do Frederic and Catherine respond to the consequences of the choices they each make? What happens to the ways they view the war, Italy, relationships, and family?

- How do Frederic and Catherine learn to accept that choices have consequences? Or, do they ever come to that conclusion? How can you tell?

Think about decisions you will make as a Jayhawk. How will you handle the consequences? What will your support system be? All first-year students will deal with a hurdle at some point in their first or second semester. How will you surpass the challenge and be successful in earning a KU degree?
A SENSE OF PLACE & SETTING

Pay careful attention to Hemingway’s vivid descriptions of the Italian landscape and scenery. Note how he invites the reader into each scene with sensory descriptions of sights, smells, and sounds. Consider how the novel is a guide to Italy and Switzerland during World War I.

• How does the novel show the reader the importance of the landscape, from the first paragraph to the final sentence?

• How do the characters’ social positions relate to the setting?

• How does the war change the characters’ perceptions of those social positions?

• How did you feel when you read the descriptions of Italy and Switzerland?

Milan comes to mean so much to Frederic and Catherine. Use #KUcommonbook to share a picture of a place that is meaningful to you now. Soon you’ll find your favorite places at KU.

“I could look down through the woods and see, far below, with the sun on it, the line of the river that separated the two armies.”
Frederic’s major relationships are with Catherine, the surgeon Rinaldi, and the priest. Other characters provide important insights in the novel, yet these three shape Frederic’s character and provide the most complete picture of him as a narrator.

- Consider carefully the interactions Frederic has with these three — Catherine, Rinaldi, and the priest — and his thoughts when they are mentioned.

- What role do the characters play in presenting Frederic’s personality? How do you learn more about Catherine through Frederic’s interactions with Rinaldi and the priest?

- How do these four central characters respond to the separations and hardships that the war brings?

- As you learn about each character’s previous relationships, how does that knowledge shape and change your opinions of the relationships in the novel?

How will your personal connections grow during your four years at KU? How can new relationships with friends, advisors, professors, and others help you succeed?
COMMON BOOK PROGRAMMING

Common Book Discussion Groups
Sunday, Aug. 23, 1-2:30 p.m.
Residence halls and various campus locations

An Evening with Jim Carothers, Professor of English, KU
Wednesday, Sept. 9, 5-6 p.m.
Woodruff Auditorium, Kansas Union. Reception to follow

An Evening with Heather Perry, Professor of History,
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Thursday, Oct. 22

An Evening with Laurie Stoff, Professor of History, Arizona State University,
Barrett Honors College
Monday, Nov. 2

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Stay up-to-date with event details, announcements, and resources throughout the summer and academic year. Check it often and follow First-Year Experience socially:

facebook.com/kufye twitter.com/NewJayhawks instagram.com/newjayhawks
CONNECTING TO YOUR FIRST YEAR AT KU

Like Frederic and Catherine in Italy and Switzerland, you are experiencing a new environment that comes with excitement, challenges, and opportunities.

As you read *A Farewell to Arms*, reflect on what you are learning and note questions that are difficult or challenging to answer. Attend discussion groups and participate in Common Book events throughout the year. Use social media to share how your first year at KU relates to the experiences and emotions in the book.

And then tell us what you think! We look forward to hearing about your thoughts on the book and discovering new ways to think about the story based on your observations.

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