

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

A literature lesson based on an extract from a novel

ERNEST HEMINGWAY and FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

For Whom the Bell Tolls was inspired by Hemingway's experiences as a foreign correspondent in Paris and Spain during the Spanish Civil War. In 1937, Hemingway travelled to Spain to write about the war for the North American Newspaper Alliance. When For Whom the Bell Tolls was published, it was considered Hemingway's finest work, and many critics still consider it to be his masterpiece. Specifically, the literary world praised Hemingway's spare style and powerful symbolism.

People still consider this book to be not only Hemingway's best, but also as one of the best war novels of all time.

It is the Spanish Civil War. In the forests of the Spanish Sierra, a guerrilla band prepares to blow up a vital bridge. Robert Jordan, a young American volunteer, has joined the small group of rebels on this mission. It is night in the rebel camp, and Pablo – one of the Spanish guerrillas – has insulted the American.

“Pablo is drunk” Primitivo said. “Pay him no heed, *Inglés**.”

“I do not think he is so drunk,” Robert Jordan said.

Maria was standing behind him and Robert Jordan saw Pablo watching her over his shoulder. The small eyes, like a boar's, were watching her out of the round, stubble-covered head and Robert Jordan thought: I have known many killers in this war and some before and they were all different; there is no common trait nor feature; nor any such thing as the criminal type; but Pablo is certainly not handsome.

“I don't believe you can drink,” he said to Pablo. “Nor that you're drunk.”

“I am drunk,” Pablo said with dignity. “To drink is nothing. It is to be drunk that is important. *Estoy muy borracho.***”

“I doubt it,” Robert Jordan told him. “Cowardly, yes.”

It was so quiet in the cave, suddenly, that he could hear the hissing noise the wood made burning on the hearth where Pilar cooked. He heard the sheepskin crackle as he rested his weight on his feet. He thought he could almost hear the snow falling outside. He could not, but he could hear the silence where it fell.

I'd like to kill him and have it over with, Robert Jordan was thinking. I don't know what he is going to do, but it is nothing good. Day after tomorrow is the bridge and this man is bad and he constitutes a danger to the success of the whole enterprise. Come on. Let us get it over with.

Pablo grinned at him and put one finger up and wiped it across his throat. He shook his head that turned only a little each way on his thick short neck.

“Nay, *Inglés,*” he said. “Do not provoke me.”

* *Englishman*

** *I am very drunk.*

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

1. What kind of animal is a boar?
2. Pablo has a stubble-covered head. Does he have a lot of hair or only a little?
3. What is a hearth?
4. Look at the last sentence about Pablo. Can you mime the actions he does?
5. There are two examples of very old English expressions in the text. *Pay him no heed* and *Nay*. What do you think they mean?

REPORTED SPEECH

Look at this example of direct speech from the text. It has been changed to reported speech. What changes do you notice?

"Pablo is drunk" Primitivo said. ----- Primitivo said that Pablo was drunk.

Now look at the following example, using the verb "tell" instead of "say".

"Pay him no heed, Inglés." ----- Primitivo told Robert to pay him no heed.

Find the other examples of direct speech in the text and change them to reported speech using "told" or "said". What other changes did you make?

WRITING

What do you think will happen next? Write a conclusion to this extract.

WEBQUEST – ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Find out some more information about this famous American author and his work. You can use the following websites as a starting point.

www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/belltolls/about.html

www.hemingway.org

www.lostgeneration.com

www.timelesshemingway.com

- When was the Spanish Civil War? Who fought against who? Which side did Ernest Hemingway support?
- The main character in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is an American volunteer. Was this unusual in this war?
- Hemingway was one of the authors of "the lost generation". What was "the lost generation"?
- Much of Hemingway's writing was based on his adventures. What kind of adventures did he have?

Teacher's Notes – For Whom the Bell Tolls
by Lindsay Clandfield

Level: Intermediate +

Note: This lesson plan combines the language and content approaches to teaching literature. Students read an extract from a famous war novel and are encouraged to deduce the meaning of difficult words from their contexts. This text also serves as a vehicle for practicing reported speech (any extract with lots of dialogue is good for this). Finally, through a webquest, students learn more about the life and work of Ernest Hemingway.

Warmer

As a warmer you could use some of the discussion questions about literature. Ask the students if they know of any famous war novels. Have they heard about the Spanish Civil War? (it isn't important to go into the details of this at this point in the class, as students will be looking at this for the webquest). Give students the first page of the handout and read the background to the book For Whom the Bell Tolls.

Reading and Vocabulary

Most of the difficult words in the extract can be understood from their context and are therefore dealt with after the reading. However, two key words to the understanding of the extract are *drunk* and *cowardly*. Write these on the board and ask the students if they know what they mean. If they don't, explain them briefly. Then tell students to read the extract.

Answers to vocabulary in context

1. A wild pig
2. He has a little hair.
3. The floor of a fireplace in a house.
4. –
5. Pay him no heed=pay no attention to him. Nay=no

Reported Speech

This exercise is intended as extra practice of reported speech and not a presentation. If this is the first time your students have encountered reported speech you might want to use some other material to present it.

Writing

This writing could be done for homework, or in class. For tips on getting students to write a story in class, look at the Writing Section of Onestopenglish (Writing Tips – Thinking about Writing).

http://www.onestopenglish.com/News/Magazine/Vocab/writing_thinkingabout.htm