

Self-Absorption in Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms

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Self-Absorption in Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms

Catherine Barkley and Frederick Henry, the main characters in Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms are two of the most self-absorbed characters I have ever come across. Frederick Henry thinks only of what he wants while Catherine worries only about what Frederick thinks and wants. They are constantly thinking only about themselves, which is why I believe that it was a good thing that the baby was not born alive. They are too absorbed in themselves to think of anyone else.

Shortly after meeting Catherine, Frederick attempts to get her into bed. By complimenting her hair, admitting that she had every right to slap him, and holding her hand, he uses these words and actions to get a [kiss](#), the first step towards his goal. He does not stop to think that she might still be grieving for her lost boy and so he should take it slowly. Instead, he plunges right into trying to get her into bed without thinking about how she might feel. When he is [hurt](#) and in the hospital, he demands that the nurses pay attention to him although they are not ready for an injured soldier. He gets upset because they do not want to do anything without the doctor's [permission](#). They were trying to do their job and he just made it more difficult for them. He also did not notice that Catherine was

getting tired from working so much. All he saw was that they got to spend time together and so did not think that she might be wearing herself down. It was only with a lot of convincing that he finally saw that she needed some time off.

Catherine did not even realize herself that she was getting worn down because of how absorbed she was in Frederick. She put his needs and desires before her own and believed that if sh...

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...ch other very much, but they did not want to include anyone else in that love. Catherine was more concerned with being a good wife than being a good mother. Frederick just did not seem to think of anything that was not Catherine or himself. They did not think much about the child before it was born and said things like "She won't come between us, will she? The little brat." "No. We won't let her." (304). They were too wrapped up in themselves to worry or care about anyone else. If the child had been born alive, it probably would have been neglected or not treated as well as it should be. "Aren't you proud of your son?" "No, he nearly killed his mother." (325). The hostility that Frederick shows is evident of how the child would have been treated if it had actually lived.

Works Cited

Hemingway, Ernest. "A Farewell to Arms" Scribner Paperback Fiction, 1929.

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