

FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

Introduction:

Helpful and engaging **title** – establishes key terms and signals the central conceit of the paper: “A Common Spirit.”

Addresses **‘So what?’ question** early in the essay and elaborates on it effectively later in her conclusion. Lends relevance and consequence to a topic that may seem remote or idiosyncratic to the average reader. Establishes both historical and critical context for her analysis, marking out common ground for her readers.

Crafts a clear but narrowly-defined **problem** to address, and sets off her own approach against the prevailing views of critics (a classic ‘they say/I say’ approach). Effectively employs subordinate clauses that begin with conjunctions/prepositional expressions: “Despite...” “Though...” “While...” to immediately build the argumentative tension in her piece.

Claim/Thesis is emphatic and concise. It falls at the end of the introduction and responds directly to the **problem statement** above.

Body:

Topic sentences set clear and distinct tasks/arguments for each body paragraph.

Effectively employs **return sentences** – sentences at or near the end of body paragraphs that connect analysis in that section to the overall argument in the essay. These **return sentences** help her maintain focus and build cohesion. She does this both argumentatively (by reinforcing claim/thesis) and rhetorically (by returning to her previously-established key terms).

Frames quotations especially well by providing necessary context up-front and responding to/engaging with quotations before moving on.

Topic sentences at bottom of page 3 and middle of page 4 and top of page 6 illustrate strong **transitions**.

Conclusion:

Great model for concluding a piece of literary criticism, which for students can often feel divorced from everyday life or immediate concerns. Opens conclusion with a concise **synopsis** of core argument in essay and follows by addressing the **‘So what?’ question**, adding consequence and relevance to her interpretation of Hemingway’s novel. Her specific references to contemporary European politics and American culture wars are quite effective.

Stephen B. Hodin
KHC 112: Studio II

FROM THE WRITER

In light of the present polarized state of politics in America, I felt drawn to study a text from another ideological schism in history: the Spanish Civil War. American author Ernest Hemingway's political position on the war has been characterized as somewhat ambiguous, and the question of his stance in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* soon became the subject of my research. Hemingway's use of third person omniscient narration incorporates the inner thoughts of both religious and political extremists, which displays clear parallels in thought between both sides of this historic conflict. This technique endorses neither fascists or republicans in his novel, but rather illustrates a useful concept of unity between feuding ideologies.

JULIA FURMANEK is a rising sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences, majoring in English and history. She is from Farmington, Connecticut. She is especially interested in contemporary American fiction and poetry. She would like to thank Instructor Stephen Hodin for his encouragement on this topic and support during the research and writing process.

JULIA FURMANEK

**A COMMON SPIRIT: RELIGIOUS FAITH AND POLITICAL FANATICISM
IN *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS***

On its surface, Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* presents the Spanish Civil War as a binary conflict: a struggle between Fascism and Socialism. This violent division of Spain is a useful example of political extremism and its unfortunate consequences, especially considering the divided condition of American and European politics today. Hemingway successfully captures the polarized condition of the interwar period, and yet both Fascist and Republican characters in the novel demonstrate an ongoing contest between political allegiance and moral belief. Hemingway uses instances of tragedy in the text to reveal a common humanity amongst his characters, which blurs the line between their seemingly distinctive ideologies. Though scholars find his political and ethical opinions to be elusive in his works, Hemingway asserts two main consistencies throughout: the merit of sacrifice in the name of one's beliefs, and the unfortunate necessity of killing for a cause. While his Republican protagonists claim atheism in allegiance to their ideology, those of merit display a feverish sense of religiosity in their devotion to "the movement." In this sense of passion, the Catholic authoritarian Fascists and secular egalitarian Republicans are quite similar. Despite the United States' strong opposition to Fascist ideology, this American author includes several humanizing portrayals that suggest their allegiance to cultural tradition rather than to authoritarianism. While critics have often questioned Hemingway's lack of conviction for the Republican cause, his consideration of both sides of the conflict ultimately reveals a common ground between these adversaries that points to the hope of resolution across this great ideological schism. In light of the polarization troubling both Hemingway's day and contemporary politics, this search for unity is preferable to endorsing such divisions by advocating for one side.

Literary critics and historians alike find Hemingway difficult to label in his political and religious views. At the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, Hemingway voiced overt opposition to intervention in Spain, proclaiming, "we were fools to be sucked in once on a European war and we should never be sucked in again" (quoted in Nilsson 81). This rhetoric, when compared to his later work *The Spanish Earth* (1937)—a film created in the interest of commissioning American support in the struggle against fascism—demonstrates a drastic fluctuation with respect to Hemingway's personal position. His opposition to interventionism is also negated in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), as the main protagonist Robert Jordan is an American man fighting for the cause of Spanish liberation: he is even branded by his new comrades with the pet name "*Ingles*." Hemingway's play *The Fifth Column* (1938) seems unconcerned with the means taken for victory in the war, a striking difference from his preoccupation with the implications of violence in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Nilsson 86). As summarized by literary critic Michael K Solow, this collection of work proves "Hemingway had apparently come full circle—from apolitical certainty to political idealism and back again" (111). Hemingway's religious sways are similarly undefined. While raised by devout Christian parents, Hemingway converted to Catholicism at the age of twenty-eight for marriage and proved religiously indifferent throughout his lifetime, despite a preoccupation with biblical themes in many of his works (Johnson).

In *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway uses third-person omniscient narration to accommodate a great variety of opinions through the voices of his characters. The perspectives of peasant Republicans, Spanish women, Fascists, American interventionists, and Russian Communists are all incorporated in the text. Literary critic Anton Nilsson credits this technique as one of “many indications in the novel of Hemingway’s ambition to give a multifaceted and dynamic account of the war” as the “omniscient third-person narration technique...allows the author to express the private feelings of characters other than the protagonist when needed” (89). In order to present this historical moment with adequate complexity, Hemingway must incorporate viewpoints which he himself may not sympathize with. This technique may render attempts to identify Hemingway’s personal opinion fruitless; his mission is not to choose sides, but to reveal their common humanity rather than perpetuate conflict by defaulting to the American perspective and exclusively supporting the republicans.

Hemingway establishes a dualism in the texts between Fascism and Republicanism that mirrors their adverse relationship historically. Using individual characters as representatives of entire ideologies, a binary continuum of “old” and “new” values surfaces. The Fascists personify “Old Spain,” and their professions of Catholic faith embody the traditionalism and their fidelity to a strict social hierarchy. Meanwhile, Robert Jordan and his comrades defend the “New Spain,” representing values of modernity such as secularism and egalitarianism. According to literary critic Stacey Guill, Hemingway encapsulates this concept of a “New Spain” using his strong female characters, Pilar and Maria, as Republicanism transformed the role of women in Spain. The assertive nature of Pilar and her genuine passion for the republic mirrors the values of the *Mujeres Libres*, a Spanish anarchist feminist group of the time (Guill 9). However, Hemingway does not simply encapsulate the “old” and “new” in his depictions of women; all of his characters reflect some aspect of the distinction. Considering the polarization of ideology that characterized the division of Spain, Hemingway’s wealth of personifications are critical tools for communicating these networks of belief in order to illustrate underlying similarities between these distinct ideologies.

Just as Hemingway embodies the feminist ideologies defended in the conflict, his personifications also address differences in religiosity between these combative sides. The Spanish Church was a long-standing symbol of an “Old Spain” and the values of hierarchical and unchanging Catholicism would prove to be a polarizing issue in the schism of Spanish politics. For Fascists, the Church was a critical institution that solicited devotion both to God and to the Spanish cause. Meanwhile, the liberal Spanish recognized long-recurring corruption within the Church, and with Marxist leanings, released their ties with Catholicism. Robert Jordan summarizes this sentiment as he evaluates the relationship between Spanish liberals and the Church, reflecting, “The people had grown away from the Church because the Church was in the government and the government had always been rotten” (Hemingway 355). This statement does not point to fallibility in the nature of faith or religiosity, but rather in human error and exploitation. Therefore, Hemingway does not suggest fault in spirituality, but rather condemns a corrupt institution. This distinction between genuine faith and formal institutions is significant for the number of Hemingway’s characters who repeatedly construct and deconstruct their own codes of belief.

For some of Hemingway’s characters, this renouncement of faith in the Church contributes to inner turmoil. Anselmo, a former peasant now fighting in a rebel guerilla band, professes this loss of faith during one of his earliest appearances in the text. While he claims to have abandoned his religiosity in allegiance to the Republican movement, his understanding of morality and commitment to the movement reflect a conviction much like that of faith. Regarding Spain and the evils of war, Anselmo exclaims, “we do not have God here any more” (Hemingway 41). But by clarifying that

God is not in Spain “any more,” Anselmo suggests His presence was once there, rather than never having existed at all. An admitted conception of God also characterizes Anselmo as a non-Communist. Incompatibility with religious faith is central tenet of Communism, yet here this professed Republican acknowledges the Catholic faith. He admits, “Clearly I miss Him, having been brought up in religion. But now a man must be responsible to himself” (41). By admitting he misses God, Hemingway presents Anselmo’s faith as having been a deep, interpersonal connection; the Spaniard speaks as though his faith was once a personal relationship and his change in belief has been a genuine loss. Yet Anselmo firmly professes many ideals that suggest a sense of faith within him, whether it be of a Catholic basis or not. He argues, “a man must be responsible to himself,” suggesting a commitment to self-affirmed morality despite his change in religiosity. Such a profession is again anti-Communist, as it asserts a sense of self-interest over collective belief. In fact, this concept of personal responsibility is more reflective of democratic principles, though it still falls beneath liberal sentiment on the political spectrum. Hemingway thereby accounts for many individuals forced to choose a side in the Civil War without personally subscribing to either. While Anselmo may not favor Fascism or Republicanism completely, this character is not without a sense of conviction. He asserts this idealism further as he firmly states, “with or without God, I think it is a sin to kill” (41). Anselmo may not practice Catholicism anymore, but it is unfair to argue he lives without belief. The religious connotation of the word “sin” is especially powerful in this dialogue, as it suggests a retention of certain Catholic values within Anselmo despite Republican abandonment of the church itself. “With or without God,” this Spaniard presents a retention of moral value, challenging traditional notions that religious influence is necessary for maintaining ethical principles within a society. Through Anselmo, Hemingway suggests the possibility of idealism and ethical responsibility even in a world without religion. Furthermore, Anselmo’s ideology against the killing of man speaks to Hemingway’s own demonstrated belief in a common humanity while underscoring the very complexity of such a conflict; in order to protect the rights of mankind, the Republican characters must deprive their fellow man of life and defy the very ideology their efforts aim to protect.

The similarly fervent belief in the republic professed by Republican characters in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* resembles the devoted Catholic faith of their Fascist enemies. The role of “orders” and their indifference to the individual will of those they apply to resembles the influence of religious doctrine. In the same way that the Bible’s Christ story encourages self-sacrifice in the name of a greater cause, orders function by overriding the personal interests of many of Hemingway’s characters. Ruminating on the presumed suicide mission he has been asked to carry out, Robert Jordan notes, “there are necessary orders that are no fault of yours and there is a bridge and that bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn” (43). The grand consequence of Robert Jordan’s mission as a potential influence of “the future of the human race” simulates an air of religiosity by identifying a larger purpose beyond his individual existence. Robert Jordan and his comrades have relinquished their own free will and humanly wants in the name of this greater cause, a mindset which Hemingway relies upon to explain the heart-wrenching violence his characters must conduct and even fall victim to. As the characters’ devotion to their cause is continuously tried by increasingly dangerous situations, Hemingway challenges the division between the spiritual and the political even further.

In a later assault of the Republican guerrilla band of Sordo, Hemingway uses the threat of death to manipulate the line between religiosity and political conviction further. While the men lay surrounded by Fascist enemies, awaiting death, some begin to taunt their comrade Joaquin, a professedly passionate Communist. They tease, “send for thy Passionaria. She alone can help us”

(311). La Pasionaria was a significant figurehead in the Spanish Communist movement, and as an empowered woman, symbolized the values of “New Spain” (Guill 8). The remarks of Joaquin’s comrades charge him with a religious sense of devotion to Communism, and suggest his commitment to the movement involves a passion that rivals spirituality. Yet, in some of his final moments, even Joaquin defaults to the Catholicism of “Old Spain.” In the crossfire of battle, Joaquin reassures himself, “Passionara says ‘Better to die on thy—’” but halts, switching instead to the Catholic “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee” (321). This transference between reliance on Communist ideology and Catholic religion suggests a universal impulse for faith not fully sufficed by either doctrine. Yet, Joaquin still strives to reassure himself through spirituality. At this critical moment of desperation, Hemingway reveals an attachment to belief within the human spirit. Only at the height of crisis are we provided with a window to resolution; in the final test of death, Hemingway portrays these adversaries with a unanimous need for faith proving their common humanity. The line between political duty and religious faith again is obscured as Anselmo prepares for his awaited mission to blow the bridge. The old man prays, “Help me, O Lord, tomorrow to comport myself as a man should in his last hours. Help me, O Lord, to understand clearly the needs of the day” (327). In this moment, the force of orders and the force of God fold into one: Anselmo employs his spirituality in order to serve successfully this secular cause. This blending of two ideologies therefore obscures the need for war at all; Anselmo displays a possibility for compromise between traditionalists and modernists through his personal ideologies.

Scholars have criticized Hemingway of lacking complete sympathy for the liberal position in the text, especially in the story of the execution of Fascists in the village of Pablo. Remaining true to his multifaceted perspective in the novel whilst still underscoring a universal humanity, Hemingway entertains a shared evil between his Republican heroes and their Fascist enemies. At this critical point in the text, the capacity for cruelty, even amongst fanatics of idealism, is made apparent as individual Fascists are dragged from the town hall. While the group prays inside with the village priest, each Fascist is taken, beaten, and thrown from the cliff in a town square. Pilar tells this dark story to Robert Jordan and Maria, remembering “men were screaming as horses scream in a fire. And I saw the priest with his skirts tucked up scrambling over a bench and those after him were chopping at him with the sickles” (125). In this instance, the forces of anger and chaos beneath the political conviction of the Republicans surfaces in a mindlessly violent scene. While attacking a priest certainly deflects sympathies for the Republican side in this instance, this moment provides an excellent historical metaphor for tensions between the people and governing institutions at the start of the movement. Acting as a symbol of the Spanish Church, the priest ironically embodies both morality and corruption because of the ties between this institution and the government. Hemingway emphasizes this distinction by the priest’s housing in the *ayuntamiento*, or town hall, rather than a church signifying that he acts as part of the state during this moment in the text. Furthermore, the Republicans attack the priest with sickles—a symbol of Communism—suggesting that this is distinctly a battle of ideologies and common frustration with the Spanish government, rather than interpersonal hatred. Hemingway therefore presents the Spanish people as equal victims of a government that has failed them, rather than as natural enemies to one another. Mistaking Hemingway’s illustration of mindless violence in the Republican uprising as an insult to their cause, critics have failed to understand this chapter as another example of commonality between these combating groups.

For Whom the Bell Tolls is paradoxical in the unity it suggests despite our societal tendencies towards dualism, revealing an inner human spirit that no interpersonal conflict can violate. In bridging the gap in ideologies between radicals and fascists, Hemingway relieves the Spanish Civil

War of its very propagator: disunity in the beliefs of a people. Using third-person omniscient narration, Hemingway brings readers inside the mind of dozens of Spaniards, and reveals a unified moral undercode beneath external allegiances to various parties. In the context of civil war, such an enlightening presence surely reflects a greater inclination towards unity than modern politics might otherwise indicate. The problem of political divergence is not a remote issue of the past. Hemingway's presentation of ideological unity might be applied to the recent divisiveness in this time of considerable polarization in the contemporary West. Despite the lessons of the Second World War, right-wing authoritarians have reemerged in Europe; for example, Hungarian leader Viktor Orban and Italian deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini have been labeled as fascists. While the direct threat of another civil war is yet to pose itself to the United States, the methods of President Trump have been equated to some of the most controversial leaders in history, including Adolf Hitler. Loud reactions against Trump on behalf of liberalism have populated recent news stories, and incidents such as the Charlottesville protests also resonate with the extremism addressed by Hemingway in his novel. Though the world has yet to arrive at Hemingway's great understanding, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and texts like it are invaluable tools for addressing even the most complex disputes.

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