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A Farewell to Arms

Adversity is a common occurrence in life, and it is resolved differently by different people. All people will encounter obstacles in their life and they will either choose to deal with their problems or succumb to the challenges. In *A Farewell to Arms*, written by Ernest Hemingway, Frederic Henry experiences a plethora of adverse events during World War I as an Italian Army ambulance driver. He deals with every pain imaginable; mental and physical. He loses all that he holds dear and despite this, his determination and spirit do not diminish. He can be described as a rose bush because of his unwillingness to give up and his continued strength throughout the novel. He is a rose bush, the more he is pruned, the stronger he grows.

Frederic Henry’s first test of strength occurs in the form of great physical pain. He and several of his men are bombarded by a trench mortar shell, injuring almost all of them. Henry is left with severe leg injuries, and undeterred by this, attempts to save Passini’s life, but fails. While being transported to the field hospital, Henry is placed under a hemorrhaging soldier, who eventually dies above him during the ambulance ride. This incident adds further to his already extensive amount of shock and anguish. Shortly after, while at the field hospital, he is visited by the priest who discusses the war. Henry asks the priest if the war is completely hopeless and the priest responds, “It is never hopeless. But sometimes I cannot hope. I try always to hope but sometimes I cannot” (Hemingway 71). The priest’s statement becomes imbedded in Henry’s psyche, which plants the seeds of Henry’s disillusionment with the war. From his traumatizing experience as an ambulance driver he acquires a new found emotional strength and also becomes hardened to the events in war.