It’s been said that after Ernest Hemingway, one either tried to write like Hemingway or one tried not to write like Hemingway. Such was the enormous impact on the craft of English letters by the late writer, and for his contribution, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. Many are first introduced to “Papa” and his work in middle school or high school with The Sun Also Rises, The Old Man and the Sea, or one of his numerous [short stories](https://www.themanual.com/culture/best-short-stories-ever-written/), all of which are damn fine, to borrow his verbiage. These books have lost little over their years since their publishing in the early and mid-20th century, and they continue to influence and inspire in the present. But there are many more Hemingway books that he wrote or was writing that, while overshadowed by the titans of his canon, are nevertheless worth a read by more than just the die-hard fan.

We’ve ranked the 10 best Hemingway [books](https://www.themanual.com/topic/books/) that, in our eyes, round out a thorough reading list for any aspiring acolyte. Lists are, by their nature, subjective, and they only become more so when one cares deeply about the subject. But while you may not want to run with the bulls in Spain, work as a game warden in Kenya, or marry four different women (really), Hemingway’s work inspires adventure and sacrifice. While the man had his own faults, his work displays surprisingly few, and there is no better time to get to know one of the greatest American authors to have ever lived.

Start here. You start here because, when you first read this book, you were much too young. Back then, you were worried about getting an A on your essay and where you would go to college and who you would ask to prom. This time around, don’t search for themes or ponder the significance of colors — as Hemingway himself said, the sea is just the sea, the sharks are just sharks, and, “All the symbolism that people say is shit.” Let the plight of the old fisherman, who finds his once-in-a-lifetime marlin torn to nothing, echo around your head. Know that it was Hemingway’s last novel published in his lifetime, and enjoy that finality. Praised by just above everyone from critics to competitors, it was viewed by Hemingway himself as his finest work. It’s a short book, and one that appears in many all-time novel lists (despite the fact that it’s technically a novella). But as a reintroduction to Hemingway, there are few of his works that require as little a commitment, nor are there many that will stay with you as long.

Approach your first Hemingway novel without fear and trembling. Arms, published in 1929, was the writer’s sophomore effort, and it follows an AWOL American soldier serving in the Italian army and his Florence Nightingale-style nurse as they flee the Great War. It’s got daring escapes, Alpine skiing, and a tragic ending, and it also borrows from the author’s own autobiography, though greatly embellished and adapted. Its place as one of the most important works on World War I cannot be diminished, but it also represents a more confident writer, coming off a win, stretching his literary and fictional muscles. In short, don’t call it a comeback. It’s been made and remade and remade again into movies, and if there ever were a Hemingway book that might be considered a beach read (although admittedly it’s still filled with gravitas), this is it. Pack it next to your towel and sunscreen.

**By-Line: Ernest Hemingway**

Those new to Hemingway might believe that he sprung fully formed onto the literary landscape, but the reality is that he hustled. Before he was a famed novelist, he was essentially a freelance writer, working on assignment for newspapers around the U.S. while often living abroad. But even with this seeming drudgery, Hemingway had that *je ne sais* quoi in his copy, and his editors and readers alike felt it. By-Line collects 77 of his nonfiction newspaper dispatches, and they have the same appeal as his fiction. Granted, this may be too in the weeds for some, but for any young man slogging his guts out for minimal pay and yet still fueled by a dream, this book gives courage and fortitude to stay the course.

**Death in the Afternoon**

A book considered seminal in the history of bullfighting, Hemingway dives deep into its culture and roots, as well as his own firsthand experience. (Hint: Even for such a manly man, the writer is humbled when faced with the power of a young cow.) Running with the bulls in Pamplona is something many men desire in order to test their mettle, but this tome is fascinating as a kind of pet project for the author. Hemingway, as some may guess through some of his other works, revered and adored the bullfighting culture, and it responded by loving him back. Elevating it to both poetry and religion, he was given unfettered access to explain it for the first time in his own words, and as such, it belongs among some of the best sport-that-transcends-sports writing ever assembled.

**Three Stories and Ten Poems**

An obscure book, and small, Poems represents one of the author’s first triumphs. It was Hemingway’s first published book, which had been his burning desire that sustained him through years of privation and practice. Its title is also indicative of his initial efforts: Hemingway would never again publish or write poetry, but in those heady days of youth, when anything was possible, he explored every possible direction. While the poetry itself may be forgettable, this small collection also includes several notable short stories, including the very fine (and often anthologized) “Up in Michigan.” No man emerges without striving, and for this reason alone, Poems belongs on any ambitious man’s bookshelf.

**Green Hills of Africa**

When one examines Hemingway’s life, it’s almost as if the man had crafted a checklist of the most remote places in the world, which would offer the greatest adventures, and then moved there for a spell. Such is the backstory of Hills, which chronicles his real-world adventures hunting in East Africa. Like others on this list, it provides a snapshot of scenes that are no longer available, or, if available, are not wanted. His hunting expeditions show him discovering the rich, unsullied lands and their fat herds, but it also hints at the trouble to come with overhunting and scarcity of resources. Anthropological in nature, this book is essential travel reading for those fans of the genre.

**For Whom the Bell Tolls**

Many mistakenly believe Hemingway to be a war veteran, but in reality, the closest he came to combat was being insignificantly wounded while volunteering as a Red Cross ambulance driver during the First World War. However lacking in firsthand experience, he would continue to revisit mortal conflict in both his fiction and his nonfiction. Like another book later in this list, Bell does have some basis in reality. It was researched by Hem himself while working as a war correspondent during the Spanish Civil War and going behind enemy lines to meet a man very much like his protagonist, Robert Jordan. The theme of one man against long odds not only betrays the writer’s admiration for the trait but also for the cause itself, and he, like the late photographer Robert Capa and many others, deeply sympathized with the Second Spanish Republic’s doomed fight against fascism. Its antagonists would prove a durable enemy, as the rise of the Nazi Germans during World War II would play a role in both Hemingway’s own life and in that of his fiction.