

## **Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway, book of a lifetime**

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# Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway, book of a lifetime

[Akhil Sharma](#) Thursday 1 May 2014 23:00 BST

A Farewell to Arms is a better book. It is more sophisticated in structure and the language has a sheen which none of Ernest Hemingway's other works contain.

A Moveable Feast is more tender and more genuinely doubting and baffled, which is one of my tests for a work's greatness. But Fiesta is the most important of Hemingway's works for me. In this book, you can see him grappling with ideas of form and authenticity which you don't see in his more mature works and so, to some extent, Hemingway the person is more present in this work than in anything else.

I began reading Hemingway in high school. I used to lie all the time about books I had read. One day I decided that I would read a biography of Hemingway so that I could then lie about his works with greater authority. Reading this book, I was amazed that this man had travelled to France and Spain without being a doctor or engineer, the careers that I thought were most likely for me. I thought that perhaps I too could be a writer. All I needed to do was learn how to write. I read dozens of collections of essays on this author before I read a single word of his fiction. And when I started to do so, I found him boring. To teach myself how to appreciate him, I began to write down the number of words each sentence contained or ask myself questions about why he might have made certain choices.

The first sentence of Fiesta begins with the plain language that Hemingway is so famous for. "Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton." But the second sentence is unnecessarily complicated. "Do not think that I am very much impressed by that as a boxing title, but it meant a lot to Cohn." The "very much" is a weird phrasing. What it does, though, is right at the beginning, when the

contract with the reader is being negotiated, declare that the reader is not reading a voice that exactly renders how people might speak. It tells the reader that he is reading a constructed reality.

The techniques Hemingway used in all of his novels are present in *Fiesta*. Here, though, they can be spotted, and there is the strange and pleasing satisfaction of watching a young genius learn his craft.

*Akhil Sharma's novel, 'Family Life', is published by Faber*