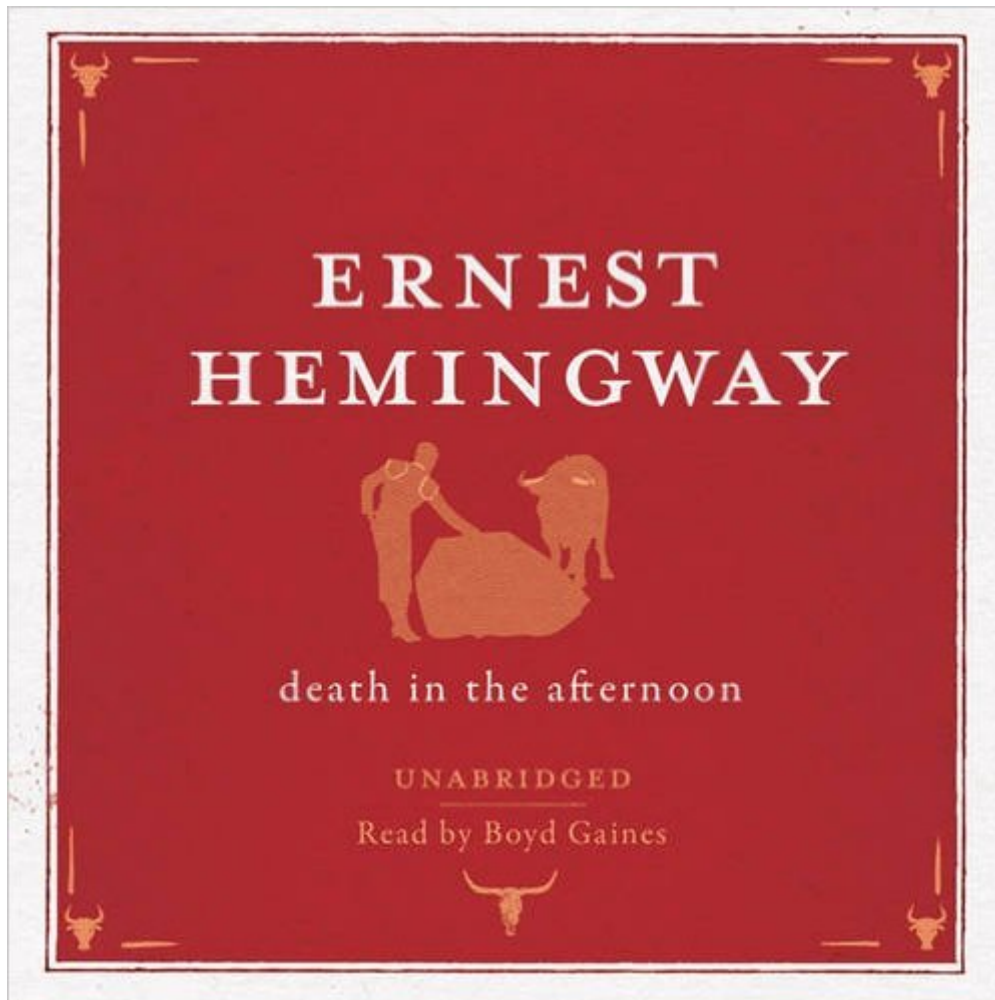


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Death In The Afternoon



Synopsis

Still considered one of the best books ever written about bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon* reflects Hemingway's belief that bullfighting was more than mere sport. Here he describes and explains the technical aspects of this dangerous ritual, and "the emotional and spiritual intensity and pure classic beauty that can be produced by a man, an animal, and a piece of scarlet serge draped on a stick." Seen through his eyes, bullfighting becomes an art, a richly choreographed ballet, with performers who range from awkward amateurs to masters of great grace and cunning. A fascinating look at the history and grandeur of bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon* is also a deeper contemplation on the nature of cowardice and bravery, sport and tragedy, and is enlivened throughout by Hemingway's pungent commentary on life and literature.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (95 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I am an aficionado of the corrida and, almost necessarily, loved this book. It is the best thing every written on the subject and, although I don't agree with Hemingway's every point, I still enjoy it. The book was written in 1930 and, even then, he decries a certain corruption in the spectacle. He maintains that the bulls have been bred down in size to make it easier for the matador to work and ultimately kill the bull. Maybe, although I haven't seen this tendency during my lifetime. He also decries the fact that the emphasis is less and less on the killing as opposed to pageantry and hot-dogging [read Mitchener's "Mexico"]. There is some truth in this but, even back in 1930, Madrid was becoming a tourist mecca and, to a certain extent, the matadors were and are playing to unsophisticated audiences. On the other hand, my experience in less touristy areas has been the

opposite. The kill, although not the total point of the fight, is definitely the most important part. Pity the poor matador who has a perfect fight only to have his sword, at the "moment of truth", glance off a rib. He won't get two ears and a tail. He'll be lucky if he gets one ear. I think Hemingway should have more emphasized that the corrida is NOT a sport. It is a tragedy which appeals to the Spanish [and some non-Spanish] mind. It is not meant to be "fair" in the Anglo-Saxon sense of the word. A brave beast rages courageously only to be bloodied, broken and killed. The matador, on his part, needs to be just as brave. If you don't think so, just try to face an enraged 1500 lb beast with a cape and a flimsy sword. To go to a bullfight hoping the matador will be knocked down and gored, would be like going to a ballet and hoping the prima ballerina fall on her face.

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