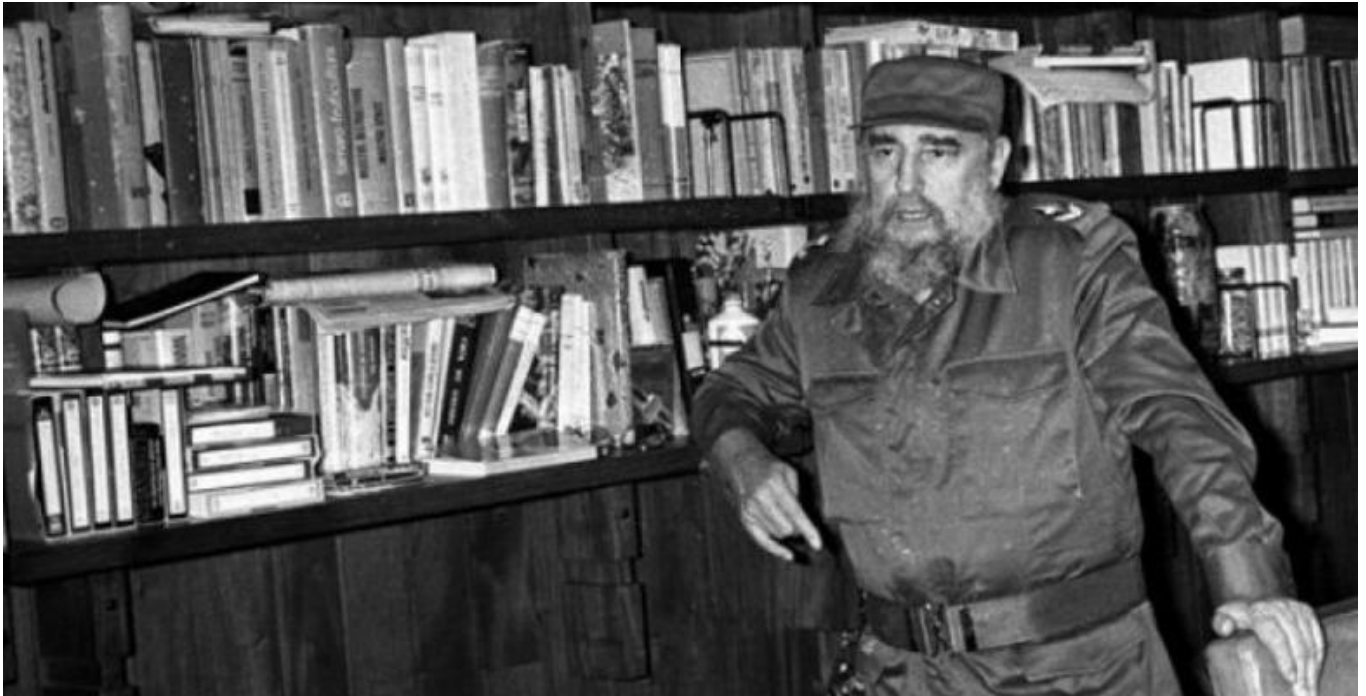

Fidel's Favorite Book and Why You Should Read It

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The Cuban revolutionary had an eclectic reading taste. But what was his favorite book?

While Fidel Castro is best recognized as a revolutionary political leader, the former Cuban president had another serious passion — reading.

IN DEPTH: [Fidel: A Revolutionary Life](#)

Following the failed attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1952, Fidel was sent to a prison north of Santiago. It was here that the leader of the Cuban Revolution immersed himself in books, avidly reading all genres — from philosophy to history and the great literary masterpieces.

This period proved formative in finessing his political ideology and outlook on the modern Cuban state.

Trapped in a gloomy cell, Fidel found inspiration in the works of Freud, Kant, Shakespeare, Munthe, Maugham and Dostoyevsky. But while the Comandante accredits many authors for expanding his political education, there was another

book that deeply moved Fidel — “For Whom the Bell Tolls,” by Ernest Hemingway.

The novel is told through the perspective of Robert Jordan, a young U.S. guerrilla in the Spanish Civil War. Fighting for the Republicans against the fascists, Jordan meets Spanish fighter Maria and together they plan an attack against an enemy transport route.

It is a story of resistance, solidarity and the struggle for justice — themes that resounded with Fidel Castro and would later inspire the Cuban Revolution.

The title is taken from the John Donne poem “No Man Is an Island,” which also speaks to human camaraderie.

In the poem, Donne writes, “any man's death diminishes me, / because I am involved in mankind.”

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These sentiments are echoed throughout “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”

In the book, a character asks “For what are we born if not to aid one another?” and later states, “I am thee and thou art me and all of one is the other.”

As well as appealing to Fidel Castro’s humanism, he also saw in “For Whom the Bell Tolls” lessons on how to stage guerrilla warfare.

Speaking in a 1975 interview with U.S. writers Kirby Jones and Frank Mankiewicz, Fidel revealed that “Of U.S. authors, Hemingway is one of my favorites.”

“I read ‘For Whom the Bell Tolls’ when I was a student ... Hemingway spoke about the rear-guard of a guerrilla group fighting against a conventional army ... The novel was one of the works that helped me devise strategies to fight against Batista’s army.”

As the world prepares to pay their final respects to Fidel Saturday, the words of the Cuban leader’s favorite book appear more pertinent than ever:

“If we win here we will win everywhere. The world is a fine place and worth the fighting for and I hate very much to leave it.”
