

Alain-Fournier, Henri

By [Laurence Campa](#)



Henri Alain-Fournier (1886-1914)

The French author and soldier Henri Alain-Fournier died fighting in 1914. He went under the pseudonym Alain-Fournier when writing his novels.

Unknown photographer: [Recueil. Portraits d'Henri Alain-Fournier (XIXe-XXe s.)], black-and-white photograph, n.p., 1904; source: Gallica, Bibliothèque nationale de France, [ark:/12148/btv1b8528492z](http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8528492z), <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8528492z.r=Alain+Fournier>. This image has been identified as public domain.

Fournier, *Henri* Alban

(Alain-Fournier)

French writer

Born 03 October 1886 in La Chapelle d'Angillon

Died 22 September 1914 in Tranchée de Calonne

Summary

Reported missing in action in September 1914, Alain-Fournier is not officially considered a war writer because of his early death. The author of *Le Grand Meaulnes* has become a symbol for the collapse of the prewar world and the premature death of literary hopefuls. The discovery of his burial place in 1991 has contributed to the progress of research concerning the burial grounds of the Great War.

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Early Life

The son of elementary schoolteachers, in close relationship to [Charles Péguy \(1873-1914\)](#), friend and brother-in-law to [Jacques Rivière \(1886-1925\)](#), the future literary editor of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, [Henri Alain-Fournier \(1886-1914\)](#) was already known before the war as a journalist and columnist. His fame was mostly owed to *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913), however, which was to become a classic among French novels. Drafted by the army in

August 1914, he was promoted to lieutenant in the 288th Infantry Regiment and fought in the [battle of the Marne](#) before being transferred to the sector of Saint-Rémy-la-Calonne (Hauts-de-Meuse). He was reported missing together with twenty soldiers of the 23rd company on 22 September 1914 as the result of an engagement with the enemy.

Posthumous Recognition

It was not until 1991 that the common grave where those men had been buried by the Germans could be found. Thanks to archaeological excavations, it is now almost certain that Lieutenant Fournier died in action after being surrounded by German grenadiers, shot in the chest in retaliation for the attack on a German ambulance carried out by the neighboring 22nd company. In 1992, Alain-Fournier and his men were laid to rest in the cemetery of Saint-Rémy-la-Calonne, commemorated by a war memorial erected in the clearing where they fell. As much as *Le Grand Meaulnes* embodies a longing for [childhood](#) and lost dreams, its author, too, has become a symbol for the irretrievable annihilation of many promising talents in French literature. *Colombe Blanchet*, Alain-Fournier's second novel and written in the same vein as the first, remains unfinished.

Laurence Campa, Université de Paris Ouest-Nanterre

Selected Bibliography

- [Adam, Frédéric: *Alain-Fournier et ses compagnons d'arme. Une archéologie de la Grande Guerre*, Metz, 2006: Serpenoise.](#)

- [Alain-Fournier, Henri: **Lettres à sa famille et à quelques autres**, Paris, 1991: Fayard.](#)
- [Krumeich, Gerd: **1914 Alain Fournier Disparaît. L'Archéologie des sources allemandes**, in: 14/18 Aujourd'hui 2, 1999, pp. 85-93.](#)
- [Rivière, Jacques / Alain-Fournier, Henri, Rivière, Alain / Gaulmyn, Pierre de \(eds.\): **Correspondance, 1904-1914, 2 volumes**, Paris, 1991: Gallimard.](#)

Citation

Laurence Campa: Alain-Fournier, Henri, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer D. Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2014-10-08. DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.10305](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10305)

External Links

- [Alain-Fournier, Henri: Le Grand Meaulnes, Paris 1913 \(Internet Archive\) \(Book\)](#)
- [Alain-Fournier, Henri: Miracles et autres textes, 2011 \(Gallica\) \(Book\)](#)
- [Alain-Fournier, Henri \(translated by Ford, Ed\): Colombe Blanchet, 2006 \(Green Integer\) \(Book\)](#)
- [Association des amis de Jacques Rivière et d'Alain-Fournier \(AJRAF\) \(Institutional Website\)](#)
- [Taylor, John: A Little Tour through the Land of Alain-Fournier, Michigan Quarterly Review 39.3, Summer 2000 \(Michigan Publishing\) \(Article\)](#)

Metadata

Regional Section(s)

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Author Keywords

disappearance; archaeology; French literature

GND Subject Headings

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Key Person(s)

[Péguy, Charles](#); [Rivière, Jacques](#); [Alain-Fournier, Henri](#)

Key Location(s)

[La Chapelle d'Angillon](#); [Saint-Rémy-la-Calonne](#); [Tranchée de Calonne](#)

Title

Alain-Fournier, Henri

Author(s)

[Laurence Campa](#)

Article Type

Encyclopedic Entry

Classification Group

Persons