

## **A Comparative Study of the themes of Identity and Belonging in**

**Selected Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway**

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### **Abstract:**

This comparative study explores the themes of identity and belonging in selected short stories of Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway is renowned for his straightforward writing and study of the nuanced feelings of people. The purpose of this research is to examine the representation of these themes throughout his works, with particular attention to the characters' problems with identity and quests for a place where they genuinely belong. Two short stories were chosen for this study: "The Old Man and the Sea" and "Hills Like White Elephants." Since the characters and situations in these stories are so varied, it is possible to analyze the themes in great detail.

This study explores how Hemingway's characters wrestle with their identities in relation to societal expectations, personal experiences, and cultural origins through attentive reading and textual analysis. It also examines the idea of belonging in relation to how these characters interact with one another and their immediate environment. This study also takes into account Hemingway's personal experiences and how they affected the way he portrayed identity and belonging in his writing. Hemingway was renowned for drawing inspiration from his own experiences and frequently incorporating autobiographical themes into his stories.

This study offers a deeper comprehension of Hemingway's viewpoint on these issues by studying the parallels between the author's life and his fictional stories.

The issues of identity and belonging in a few of Ernest Hemingway's short stories are clarified by this comparative research. It emphasizes the challenges experienced by his characters as they try to figure out who they are and find a place where they actually fit in. This study provides insightful understandings into the author's investigation of human emotions by studying these themes in the context of Hemingway's writing style and personal experiences.

Key words: (Comparative , identity and belonging , short stories , insightful , human emotions).

### **Introduction :**

Ernest Hemingway, a journalist and writer from the United States, was well-known for both his unique writing style and his adventurous way of life. He was created on July 21, 1899, in Oak Park, Illinois. In April 1917, he received his high school diploma, and he was ready to enlist in the army to fight in the First World War. His father objected, so he decided to become a reporter instead. Hemingway was employed as a reporter with the Kansas City Star. In order to drive a troop carrier in Italy, he left the paper in May 1918, but he was injured by a bomb and had to return home.

After obtaining guidance and encouragement from prominent American authors there, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound, he began to have his non-journalistic writing published in Paris. After first appearing in Paris in 1924, his first notable book, a collection of stories titled *In Our Time*, was released in New York City in 1925. In 1926, he published *The Sun Also Rises*, the book that brought him his first considerable level of success. This depressing yet fascinating book is about a group of indolent

expats living in France and Spain that Hemingway mocked while popularizing the term, The Lost Generation. Through this job, he was also exposed to the limelight, which he would later come to both love and hate. Hemingway released *The Torrents of Spring* in 1926; it was an American writer's parody of Sherwood Anderson's book *Dark Laughter*.

When he was 29 years old and had just returned from Paris, he arrived in the United States. He wrote a notable piece of literature while he was in Key West, Florida. In Paris, he began writing *A Farewell to Arms*, which he finished in 1929. The book, which was released in September 1929, quickly rose to the top of the bestseller list and went on to sell 80,000 copies in only four months. He published the short story collection *Winner Take Nothing* in 1933 and the novel *Death in the Afternoon* in 1932, respectively. 1935 saw the publication of the nonfiction book *Green Hills of Africa*, which detailed the African hunting trip. The well-known short novel *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* was inspired by his trip to Kenya. He joined the Republican army at the start of the Spanish Civil War in 1937. The highly regarded book *1940 For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which is set against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War, was completed by Hemingway after the fascist revolutionary army had triumphed in the civil war and he had returned to the United States. He served in the military in 1944 as a correspondent for the Normandy landings and afterwards moved back to Cuba.

*The Old Man and the Sea* was published in September of 1952. Hemingway earned the Pulitzer Prize in 1953, and in 1954, he was given the Nobel Prize

for Literature. After *The Old Man and the Sea* was released, he didn't write another story and struggled with other illnesses including alcoholism and melancholy. After all, he killed himself with a gun on July 2, 1961, in the morning. Hemingway's characters plainly reflect his own principles and worldview. The principal characters of *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* are young men who have been profoundly impacted by their experiences in combat. These three books are all set in World War II. Hemingway considered war to be a potent symbol of a complicated, ethically ambiguous world that delivered almost unavoidable suffering, harm, and destruction .

### **The Purpose of the Study**

Ernest Hemingway, the famed American author and journalist, was known for his unconventional writing style and daring lifestyle. He was born on July 21, 1899, in Oak Park, Illinois. and was died on July 2, 1961, in Ketchum, Idaho . Hemingway often tackled themes of love, loss, masculinity, and combat in his work. His literary influence was immense, and he was considered one of the greatest American writers of the 20th century. The famously concise and minimalist writer Ernest Hemingway regularly explored questions of identity and belonging in his writing. This comparative study aims to investigate the presentation of these subjects in several of Hemingway's short stories. "The Old Man and the Sea" and "Hills Like White Elephants," two short stories, were chosen for this study. The great diversity of locations and

personalities in these stories must be taken into account in order to thoroughly explore the ideas of identity and belonging .

1-Hemingway explores the ideas of identity and belonging in "The Old Man and the Sea" in writings by Americans. The protagonist, an elderly fisherman named Santiago, seeks to define his worth and reclaim his identity in a society that values youth and physical might. Despite his physical decline and loneliness, Santiago finds solace in his bond with the water, which becomes to represent his inner self .

2- "Hills Like White Elephants": This story, which revolves around a couple's discussion about an upcoming abortion, has an abortion as its main issue. Hemingway thoroughly explores the concept of belonging via character interactions as they battle societal norms and their own aspirations. By looking closely at these specific short stories, we may comprehend Hemingway's investigation of identity and belonging. We can examine our own experiences and the common human yearning for self-discovery and a sense of belonging via the challenges and journeys of the characters.

## **"Identity Construction and The Sublime Sensation"**

### **1- The Old Man and the Sea :**

Hemingway's work attempts to convey identity, which is one of the qualities of great writing that repetition strengthens. The Old Man and the Sea is based on widely recognized novel form norms; it must relate to the reader in order to fulfill its role as a novel. Santiago is the name of the elderly Cuban

fisherman. Throughout, Santiago is referred to by his name or as the elderly fisherman. The narrative revolves around Santiago, the water, and the fish in a particular place and time. Hemingway's writing seeks to express identity, a key aspect of powerful writing that gains strength through repetition. The Old Man and the Sea follows widely acknowledged novel conventions; it needs to connect with the reader to fulfill its purpose as a novel. Santiago is the name of the aged Cuban fisherman. Throughout the narrative, Santiago is consistently addressed by his name or as the aged fisherman. The story centers on Santiago, the sea, and the fish within a specific setting and timeframe. For the previous eighty-four days, Santiago, an elderly fisherman, has been fishing in the Gulf Stream without success.

As Hemingway puts it in *The Old Man and the Sea*, "I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea, a real fish, and a real sharks." (Page 16 of Baker, 1961).

Hemingway's realist perspective on his own writing draws attention to how his work is comparable to significant literature since significant literature's characters are portrayed realistically and with distinct traits. The name and location of the sea, which in *The Old Man and the Sea* shifts from "Dynamically Sublime" to "Mathematically Sublime" throughout the narrative, are also included in this version along with the fish that is Mathematically Sublime.

Hemingway claimed that the Gulf Stream is the sea that first displays the "Mathematical Sublime" and then the "Dynamic Sublime." According to

Hemingway's description at the beginning of the book, the Gulf Stream is a warm water circulation that travels from the Gulf of Mexico across the Atlantic Ocean and towards England (Hemingway, 2013, p. 5). Santiago is catching swordfish in the Gulf Stream. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, every detail is distinct and individual characters are easily recognized.

### **In *The Old Man and the Sea*, how does Hemingway express the ideas of identity and belonging?**

Ernest Hemingway uses the aged fisherman Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* to examine the ideas of identity and belonging. Themes of uniqueness, connection, and finding one's place in the world are explored by Hemingway through Santiago's journey and his interactions with the sea and other characters. His portrayal of the idea of identity includes Santiago's close relationship with the water. Santiago considers himself to be a fisherman, and his connection to the sea is fundamental to who he is. He describes being at sea as giving him a feeling of purpose and connection, saying, "The sea is my brother... I must live with it and understand it as I do my own self" (Hemingway 10). As a fisherman, Santiago finds joy and comfort in his work, and his identity is deeply entwined with his awareness of the sea.

Hemingway also examines the subject of identity in his writing through Santiago's relationships with other characters. Through his ties with the youngster, Manolin, and the other fisherman in his hamlet, Santiago manages to feel a sense of belonging despite his physical separation from others. Manolin looks up to Santiago as a father figure and mentor, and their

relationship embodies a feeling of belonging and common purpose. Hemingway emphasizes the value of interpersonal relationships and how important they are in forming an individual's identity through their interactions.

Hemingway uses Santiago's battle with aging and his own limits to further explore the idea of identity. Santiago struggles with his physical condition as he ages and has self-doubts. Still, he doesn't allow his age define him; instead, he is resolute and strong. Santiago's identity is derived from his unshakable spirit and inner strength rather than only his physical prowess or fishing prowess. A man can be destroyed but not vanquished, he says, adding, "But man is not made for defeat" (Hemingway 103). Santiago's character is derived from his tenacity and his steadfastness in the face of adversity.

It's critical to take into account the author's personal experiences and convictions when evaluating Hemingway's depiction of identity and belonging. Hemingway was well-known for his examination of masculinity and the quest for purpose in an uncertain world by the individual. Through Santiago's journey, Hemingway makes the argument that a person's identity is also shaped by their relationships with others, inner strength, and principles rather than just by outside influences.

In conclusion, Hemingway uses Santiago's strong bond with the sea, his interactions with other people, and his fortitude in the face of adversity to illustrate the ideas of identity and belonging in *The Old Man and the Sea*. The novella looks with finding one's place in the world, community, and

individualism. Hemingway highlights the value of remaining loyal to oneself and discovering meaning and belonging in one's own special way through Santiago's journey .

## **2-Hills like White Elephants (1927)**

The story begins with a description of the surrounding hills, fields, and trees. It is set in a Spanish valley at a train station. Waiting to board a train to Madrid is a man and his girlfriend. While sampling different flavors, they talk about how alcohol tastes. While the person known as the American does not see any resemblances to white elephants, Jig, the girl, does. She takes back her statement. Subsequently, the man attempts to get Jig to undergo a procedure while downplaying its gravity. The procedure in question is simply implied to be an abortion (Page 216 , Atanu Bhuiyan, 2019) .

He makes an effort to reassure the girl that after she has the abortion, everything will return to normal and happiness. She acquiesces coldly, provided he promises to still love her after the surgery. She conveys a sense of hopelessness and the realization that all else is lost. In an attempt to control her, he tells her again how much he loves her and that he does not want her to do anything if she does not want to. If he does not stop talking, she swears she will scream.

As she makes her way to the station's conclusion, she questions whether this is actually the answer. The man carries their bags to the train stop as the train has just a few minutes to arrive. When he returns, he asks her how she is feeling. She says there's nothing wrong with her and she's well.

The 1927 collection "Hills like White Elephants" bears a striking resemblance to Charlotte "Perkins Gilman's groundbreaking feminist short tale "The Yellow Wallpaper.

It shows Jig, the female lead, as fighting to voice her opinions on abortion in opposition to her American lover. Hemingway depicts a traditional intellectual conflict between the two characters about pro-choice and pro-life themes. While he does not ultimately disclose the resolution of the conflict, it is still possible to ascertain the woman's triumph through analysis of the imagery and objective correlatives like location, nature, and character positioning. Jig's growth throughout the novella is commendable, making her a strong candidate for a feminist interpretation . (Atanu Bhuiyan , 2019, Page 217)

## **Hills Like White Elephants**

### **Analysis of the Symbolism**

A detailed analysis of the girl's words and actions within the meticulously imagined setting of the story reveals that she first learns to follow her own true feelings regarding not only what to do with the child she is carrying but also what will be the most completely fulfilling path to follow in life. (Renner 27)

The revolutionary feminist short tale "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman bears a striking resemblance to "Hills like White Elephants," which was collected in *Men Without Women* in 1927.

In regards to the abortion problem, it depicts Jig, the female character, as fighting to voice her opinions against her American lover. Hemingway depicts the two characters engaging in a traditional intellectual battle between pro-choice and pro-life arguments. Even though he does not ultimately reveal the outcome of the dispute, it is still possible to identify the woman as the victor by analyzing the imagery and objective correlatives, such as the characters' positioning, nature, and geographic area.

The true meaning of the story is revealed through indirect allusions to the title, landscape, drinks, dialogue, and their figurative connotations. Jig is a great choice for a feminist reading because of her development over the course of this short story, which is praiseworthy.

A description of the hills, meadows, and trees in the area opens the story, which is set in a Spanish valley near a train station. In order to board a train to Madrid, a man and his girlfriend are waiting. They taste different flavors and talk about how alcohol tastes .

The girl, Jig, perceives resemblances of white elephants in the hills, however the guy, called as the American, does not. She takes back her statement. Subsequently, the man attempts to get Jig to undergo a procedure while downplaying its gravity. The procedure that is being discussed here is obviously an abortion. In an attempt to reassure the girl that things will return

to normal and happiness after the abortion, he She apathetically consents, provided that he maintains his affection for her following the surgery.

She conveys a sense of hopelessness and the realization that all else is lost. In an attempt to control her, he tells her again how much he loves her and that he does not want her to do anything if she does not want to. If he does not stop talking, she swears she will scream. As she makes her way to the station's conclusion, she questions whether this is actually the answer. The man carries their bags to the train stop as the train has just a few minutes to arrive. When he returns, he asks her how she is feeling. She asserts that nothing is wrong with her and that she is well. (*Atanu Bhuiyan, 2019, Page 239*)

“The hills across the valley of Ebro were long and white. On this side there was no shade and no trees and the station was between two lines of rails in the sun. Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building ... “ (Hemingway 475)

A description of the story's setting opens these opening lines. This aspect of Ebro is portrayed as being incredibly desolate, akin to the emptiness and infertility of a desert. When the characters arrive at the train station for the first time, this is how they perceive the surroundings. They notice this before anything is addressed or fixed. This is a metaphor for the American and Jig's relationship's core being barren and fruitless. The two opposing sides of a choice that the two characters must make can also be represented by the "two lies of rails." (Renner 28).

## **Conclusion**

The narrative "Hills Like White Elephants" chronicles the remarkable emotional transformation of an emotionally reticent woman into a remarkable decision-maker with relation to her personal identity. Ernest Hemingway demonstrates a clear comprehension of the challenges faced and the development of the female character. Jig, the extraordinary woman, transcends the ideals of feminists and becomes self-actualized, establishing an unchangeable identity.

Hemingway's subtle examination of identity and place in "The Old Man and the Sea" and "Hills Like White Elephants" highlights the universal human search for connection and self-awareness. Hemingway asks readers to consider the complexity of personal identity and the essential need for belonging in the face of hardship by exploring the internal and external difficulties that his characters experience .

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