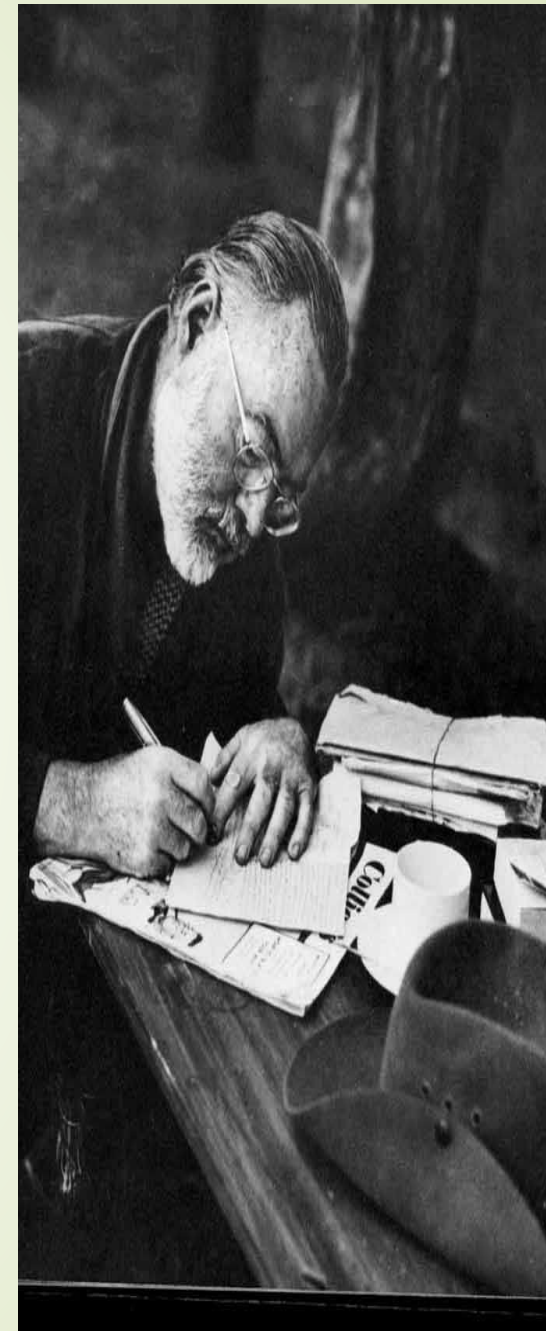




Asst. Lect . Sumaya Majeed Al- Yassiry

Ernest Hemingway was born in 1899 into the family of a respected doctor who lived in a suburb of Chicago. During the First World War, he volunteered as an ambulance driver in Italy, where he was seriously wounded and hospitalized. After the war, he returned to America and married for the first time in 1921. In the following years, Hemingway worked as a newspaper writer in Europe, where he met several famous writers, including James Joyce and the poet Ezra Pound. His first poems and short stories were published in Paris in 1923. In 1954, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

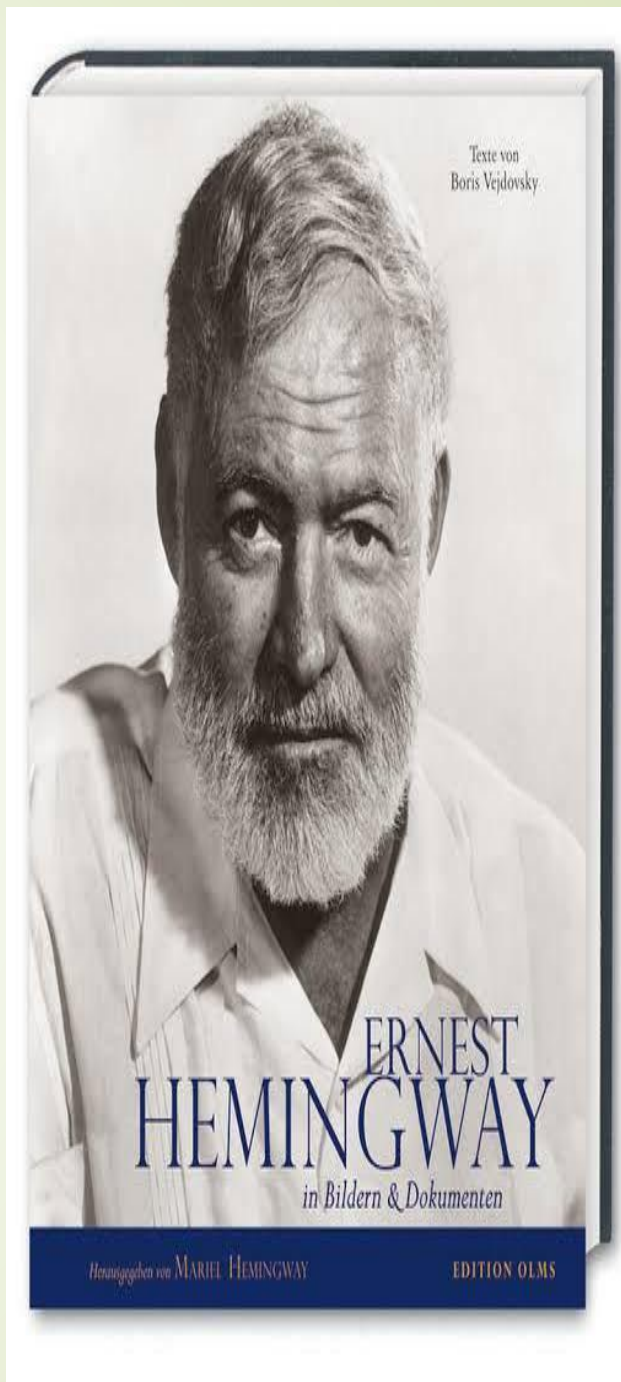
He spent much of his later life in Cuba, where he died in 1961. Hemingway became famous during his lifetime, especially for his distinctive writing style, which is deceptively simple and direct. His tough, typically American style often reflected his personal interests in sports such as bullfighting and big-game hunting And deep-sea fishing, all of which provided themes for his fiction. “Cat in the Rain” is a very short story which is apparently simple in its plot. In fact, behind the very realistic surface there is a wealth of symbolism and possible meanings for the reader to supply for himself, and it is not surprising that this very brief story has given rise to so much contradictory criticism on the part of literary critics and academics.



Elements of the story

Setting

The story has an exact setting and namely in a hotel: **“There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel.”** The action took place in Italy because the staff of the hotel (the hotel-keeper, the maid) spoke Italian language. Because the room was situated on the second floor the couple had the opportunity to have a good panorama from their room. There was a public garden near the hotel and the war monument. The garden comprised big palm trees which beautify the garden. It was a rainy day and the square was empty. No one was outside except a waiter who stood in the café which was placed across the square. The writer pointed these settings directly, however he mentioned more than two times the war monument. In this way, the writer drove the attention, in an indirectly way, to the fact that the action took place after the war.



Plot Structure

The story begins with the **exposition**, where the writer introduces the two main characters and the setting: “There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel.” After that, the story slowly moves **into the rising action**, shown in the description of the cat: “The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on.” As the events continue, the main conflict appears when the wife expresses her desire to get the cat: “I’m going down and get that kitty,” the American wife said. ‘I’ll do it,’ her husband offered from the bed. ‘No, I’ll get it.’”

The **climax** of the story is revealed when the wife openly talks about her wishes and dissatisfaction with her life: “And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes.” From this moment, the reader understands that the wife wants change and longs for a better life, similar to the one before the war. She clearly states her desire for a cat by saying: “If I can’t have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat.”

This leads to the **conclusion, or the resolution** of the conflict. The narrator explains that George is not paying attention and continues reading his book, while the maid finally arrives with “a big tortoiseshell cat” sent by the housekeeper. The author emphasizes the “tortoiseshell cat,” which may symbolize the wife’s hope for change in her life.



Characters

The story has two main characters, the American couple, and two minor characters, the house-keeper and the maid. The cat also appears in all parts of the story, either directly or indirectly. At the beginning, the wife sees the cat outside. Then she talks about the cat with her husband, later with the house-keeper, and finally the maid brings a cat. Because of this, the cat can be considered a minor character in the story.

The story mainly shows the relationship between the American couple. It is important that the wife has no name, while the husband has a name, George. This shows that the husband is more powerful in the family. At the beginning, he is polite and speaks kindly to his wife: “I’m going down and get that kitty,” the American wife said. ‘I’ll do it,’ her husband offered from the bed.” Later, his behavior changes and he becomes rude and careless toward her: “Oh, shut up and get something to read,”.

The wife is different from her husband. While George is indifferent, the wife has many wishes and hopes for the future. She wants change and dreams of having a simple and comfortable home: “I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles”.

The wife also likes the house-keeper because he is serious, polite, and respectful: “The wife liked him. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints”. This shows that she needs someone to listen to her and understand her feelings. The house-keeper is kind, and at the end of the story, he sends her a cat.

In this way, George represents everything the wife wants to escape from. Her wishes show her need for care and emotional comfort, while George prefers reading and does not pay much attention to her. His rude words may show that he feels her unhappiness, or he simply wants to continue reading his book.

1. The American Wife

The American wife is the main female character in the story. She feels lonely and sad even though she is married. She lives in a hotel far from home and wants more care and love from her husband. She dreams of a better life with small comforts, like having a cat to hold and care for. The cat is a symbol of her need for affection and warmth. She feels ignored by her husband and finds comfort in small things, such as the kindness of the house-keeper.

2. George (The Husband)

George is the American wife's husband. He is calm and likes to read his books. However, he is distant and does not pay attention to his wife's feelings. Sometimes he is rude and impatient when his wife tries to talk to him. George represents a typical man of his time who focuses more on his own interests and does not understand the emotional needs of his wife. His behavior makes the wife feel more alone.



3. The House-Keeper

The house-keeper is a polite, serious, and respectful man who works at the hotel. The American wife likes him because he listens carefully and seriously when people complain. He is kind to the wife and understands her feelings better than her husband. At the end of the story, he shows his kindness by sending the wife a big cat as a gift. He represents someone who cares and understands emotional needs.

4. Signora (The Maid)

Signora is the maid at the hotel. She is a small but important character who helps the wife by bringing the cat from the house-keeper to her. Signora's action shows that even small signs can bring happiness. She acts as a helper and a link between the wife and the kindness she desires.

5. The Cat

The cat is a very important symbol in the story. It is a small, poor kitty caught in the rain. The cat represents loneliness, weakness, and the need for care. The wife sees the cat as a reflection of her own feelings of being cold, alone, and ignored. The cat symbolizes her desire for love, attention, and comfort. The story's title focuses on the cat because it shows the wife's emotional state without using many words.

► Analysis

- Ernest Hemingway's short story "Cat in the Rain" shows the relationship between an American couple that suffers from misunderstanding and loneliness. This situation is connected to the period after the war. The writer focuses mainly on the wife's loneliness, which is caused by her husband's indifference. At the same time, Hemingway indirectly refers to the war by mentioning that many men came to see the bronze war monument. Although the monument is described in detail, its real purpose may be to remind the reader that the war had happened and that people continued living, but they did not forget the tragedy.
- "Cat in the Rain" was written in the 20th century, a time when many writers wrote about the effects of war on human life and feelings. In this story, the reader can clearly see the lack of communication between the married couple. The wife and her husband, George, are emotionally distant and do not understand each other's needs. George is busy reading his book ("...The husband went on reading, lying propped up with the two pillows at the foot of the bed. "), while his wife wishes to have someone to care for her and give her attention ("I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her.").

- The author begins the story by introducing the main characters, the American couple. He then describes their stay at a hotel near a war monument. The wife looks out of the window and sees a cat in the rain. She decides to go outside to take the cat, so she leaves the room. On her way downstairs, she meets the house-keeper, whom she likes. When she goes outside, she realizes that the cat is no longer there, so she returns to the hotel. She talks to her husband, but George does not listen to her. At the end of the story, the hotel maid brings a big cat to the wife on behalf of the house-keeper.
- The title of the story is symbolic. Normally, cats dislike rain and try to find a warm place to stay dry. However, in this story, the cat is “in the rain”. This may show the weakness of the cat and its inability to escape the situation. The writer’s choice of the cat may suggest a comparison with a baby, as the wife seems to want someone to care for and love. The cat can also symbolize the wife’s loneliness and her need for attention and understanding, which her husband fails to provide.
- In conclusion, “Cat in the Rain” deals with an important human issue, which is the relationship between a husband and wife. The story shows that a successful relationship cannot exist when loneliness, misunderstanding, selfishness, and emotional distance are present. Even today, the story remains meaningful and teaches readers how people should not behave toward those they love.

1. Loneliness and Isolation

Loneliness is one of the main themes in *Cat in the Rain*. The wife feels lonely even though she is married. Her husband does not listen to her or care about her feelings. She stays alone in the hotel room while he reads his book. This shows emotional isolation, not physical isolation. She wants love, attention, and someone to understand her.

2. Unfulfilled Desires

The wife has many wishes, but none of them are fulfilled. She wants the cat, she wants comfort, and she wants a better life. The cat represents these wishes. When she wants the cat, it is not really about the animal, but about her need for care, warmth, and affection. Her desires are ignored by her husband, which makes her feel unhappy and frustrated.

3. Gender Roles

The story shows traditional gender roles between the husband and the wife. George is dominant and relaxed, while the wife is emotional and dependent. He stays in bed reading, and she moves around, searching for meaning and comfort. The wife has no name, but the husband does, which shows his power and importance. This reflects how women were often treated as less important than men at that time.

The Symbol of the Cat

In *Cat in the Rain*, the cat is a symbol. It is not only an animal. The cat represents the wife's feelings. The cat is small, weak, and alone in the rain. The wife feels the same way. She is lonely and sad in her marriage. Her husband does not care about her feelings. So, when she sees the cat, she feels sorry for it because she sees herself in it.

The rain shows sadness and discomfort. The cat in the rain means being without protection or warmth. This is like the wife's emotional life. She has a place to live, but she has no emotional warmth. The wife wants to take the cat. This shows that she wants to care for someone and feel love. The cat also may symbolize a baby. The wife wants something to love and something that loves her back. At the end of the story, the house-keeper sends her a cat. This shows that another person understands her needs better than her husband.

The Relationship Between the Cat and the Wife

The wife identifies with the cat. Both are dependent, silent, and vulnerable. The wife does not openly rebel against her husband, just as the cat does not resist the rain. Her emotional voice is weak in the relationship, and her needs are ignored. Through the cat, Hemingway shows the wife's inner suffering without directly explaining her feelings. This reflects Hemingway's simple style, where symbols carry deep meanings.

Why the Wife Has No Name While the Husband Does

The wife is never given a name in the story, while the husband is called George. This is a very important detail. It shows the imbalance of power in the marriage. George has an identity and authority, while the wife's identity is unclear and weak. By not naming the wife, Hemingway presents her as a universal figure. She represents many women of that time who felt emotionally ignored and powerless in their marriages. Her lack of a name shows her lack of individuality and voice. She is known only as "the American wife," which reduces her to a role, not a person. On the other hand, George's name gives him control and presence. He is confident, distant, and self-focused. The naming difference highlights how men were often dominant, while women were expected to remain silent and emotionally dependent, especially in the early 20th century.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the cat in *Cat in the Rain* is a symbol of loneliness, emotional need, and unsatisfied desires. It reflects the wife's inner life and her longing for warmth and care. The wife's lack of a name emphasizes her loss of identity and power within her marriage. Through simple symbols and quiet scenes, Hemingway presents a deep and realistic picture of emotional isolation and gender imbalance.

QUOTES

1. **“It isn’t any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain.”**

Speaker: The American wife

Explanation: The wife feels sorry for the cat because it is outside in the rain and is unhappy. She understands that the cat is cold and alone. This shows how she feels about herself, lonely, sad, and without care.

2. **“I wanted it so much. I don’t know why I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty.”**

Speaker: The American wife

Explanation: The wife says she really wants the cat, but she doesn’t know exactly why. This shows her deep feelings and emotional need. The cat represents more than just an animal, it means comfort, love, and someone to care for. It shows her loneliness and desire for affection.

3. **“The wife liked him. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints.”**

Speaker: The narrator

Explanation: The wife likes the house-keeper because he listens seriously when people complain. This shows she wants someone who understands her, unlike her husband.

4. **“There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel.”**

Speaker: The narrator

Explanation: This shows that the American couple is alone in the hotel. It highlights their feeling of being isolated and away from their home.

5. “I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her.”

Speaker: The American wife

Explanation: The wife says she wants a cat to sit on her lap and purr when she pets it. This shows she wants love, comfort, and attention. The cat is a symbol of her need for care and warmth.

6. “I’m going down and get that kitty,” the American wife said. “I’ll do it,” her husband offered from the bed.

Speakers: The American wife and then her husband George

Explanation: The wife says she will go get the cat, but the husband offers to do it instead. This shows the husband is relaxed and wants to stay in bed. It also shows a small moment of interaction between them.

7. “Oh, shut up and get something to read,”

Speaker: George (the husband)

Explanation: George says this rudely when his wife talks to him. It shows he is not interested in her feelings and is cold toward her. This makes the wife feel more lonely and ignored.

8. “...The husband went on reading, lying propped up with the two pillows at the foot of the bed.”

Speaker: The narrator

Explanation: This describes George continuing to read his book comfortably in bed. It shows he is emotionally distant and does not pay attention to his wife’s needs.