

A clean well-lighted place essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The theme in Ernest Hemingway's *A Clean Well-Lighted Place* is the same theme that is present in all of his literary works. Themes pertaining to questions of the existence of God, the meaning of the world are evident in his writings. According to Hemingway, man is constantly looking for distractions that will prevent them from finding out the horrible truth. For the old waiter in the story, the well-lighted cafe provides a convenient escape from the realities of the world.

The light is only an artificial light that is made by humans for themselves and yet this light becomes the only way to step out from the darkness of reality that life really has no meaning. This totally nihilistic view of the world only glorifies people like the old waiter in the cafe and the elderly drinker who has found a way to cope with the hardships of life in a dignified manner. Even though the man is already drunk, he does not become rude or unruly. He remains polite in his word and shows good behavior.

Despite the difficulties in life that even provoked him to attempt suicide, the man did not lose his temper but remained in control of himself which shows that he can handle stress under pressure. Such grace under pressure must be the goal of every individual as Hemingway assert in his literary work. The prevailing metaphor in this story is of course the clean, well-lighted place. For Hemingway, the physical darkness did not frighten him as much as the darkness of reality. Ernest Hemingway was a realist, modernist and also a philosopher.

He believed that the ultimate goal of one's life is to find such a place in the story to provide an escape from the darkness of the truth that life is nothing

but without meaning or truth. The image of the well-lighted cafe amidst in the sea of empty darkness is Hemingway's view of a world that has no hope, escape or solace except the ones that humans create for their benefit. The Clean, Well-Lighted Place is an excellent minimalist story that was lauded for its presentation of the major concerns of the author in a concentrated form.

These include the possession of good conduct and manners and also the expression of solidarity. The younger waiter was judged on his violation of the rules that he must be respectful and polite to an old man. The older waiter upholds these principles by staying in the cafe as long as the old customer wants him to stay. The emotional and philosophical hopelessness and austerity sums up to a profound and really tragic story. For the critics of Hemingway, it is he author as a parody of himself. The old man is the main character of the story.

He is an elderly man who drinks by himself near the back of the cafe. He is the main topic of discussion for the other waiters who are beginning to get ready to close the pub for the night. The waiters talked about the old man's suicide attempt and wondered about the other aspects of the old man's life. It has seemed to them that the man is always drinking at the cafe alone to let the time pass by in this well-lighted and clean environment. The younger waiter is beginning to get impatient with the old man who was hoping to go home to his wife by an acceptable hour.

The waiter does not understand how important it is offer comfort to his customer like in such an environment that he is working in. The older waiter, which represents Hemingway himself, understands the deeper things in life

and he strongly believed that he must let the cafe remain open in order to let the others like the old man stay and wait out the night. The old waiter also wants to remain under the light of the cafe. He has a hard time sleeping through the night and wanders the streets because he cannot accept and bear the burden of the darkness of the world.

What is significant in the story is how both waiters of the cafe respond to the feeling of emptiness or the nothingness of the world. It is the feeling of the condition of man in nothingness and not the nothingness only in itself. None of the old men are passive victims. The old man retains his dignity. When the younger waiter makes a statement that old men are nasty, the old waiter accepts that statement but he comes to the defense of the old customer and pointed out that the man is clean and only likes to drink in a clean and well-lighted environment.

The old man left the cafe with dignity that is not much of human dignity. This is what man has in facing the condition of nothingness but this dignity is all people have left as what Hemingway is trying to say. The younger waiter wanted to persuade the old man to transfer to the other cafes that remain open through the night but the old waiter does not approve of this because he regards cleanliness and the presence of good lighting as important. The light in the cafe symbolizes the attempt of man to hold off the darkness the latest that he can possibly can.

There is a danger of being alone in the nothingness found in darkness. Being alone in nothingness is suicide. For Hemingway, in order to keep nothingness and darkness back from coming, people should have light, order, discipline

and dignity to hold on to. If all else has failed to hold back darkness, man must have something else that will serve as a distraction or else the only alternative would be to commit suicide. Attempting suicide becomes the ultimate end. Towards the end of the story, the old waiter is now alone drinking in a cheap bar that is clean but not well-lighted.

Because the man has been thinking about the idea of nothingness, his response was nothing when the bartender asked for his order. The bartender told him that he was crazy in Spanish. In realization, he responds by uttering the Lord's prayer containing the word nothing. By his lonesome, he is left with the realization that all is really nothing. He stands by a bar that is dirty and unpolished. He cannot reflect the dignity that the old man at the cafe has displayed. He knows that he cannot sleep because he thought he has insomnia.

The truth is, he can't sleep because he is afraid of the nothingness and darkness. Hemingway has also suffered from insomnia and always felt alone and deserted in this world (Wagner-Martin 1987). The author leaves the readers with the universality of the story in " Many must have it. " Not only many people are suffering from insomnia and lack of sleep but many people also need clean, well-lighted places in which they will have a feeling of security and a place where they can be alone and isolated from the darkness of the world.