

Pine imagery: a constant in a world of change



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway, published in 1940, an array of concepts and ideas is introduced. Hemingway places images of nature within the text to contrast the destruction that is war, and to create a visible contradiction. Pine imagery, specifically, plays an integral role in the novel, functioning as a steadfast symbol in a world that spins with many changes in a span of just a few days. It becomes a control variable, the base that all in the text relies on. Furthermore, pine trees are objects that Hemingway utilizes to exhibit the role of mother nature. Within the work, pine serves as a constant shelter, base of relationship, and stimulant of Jordan becoming one with nature in a perpetual environment that is brought by discontinuity throughout the text.

Throughout Robert Jordan's journey, pine imagery is used as a form of shelter from the war. This arises when Anselmo, a peaceful character, looks out over the road counting enemy vehicles. Anselmo "did not start up the hillside but stayed leaning against the sheltered side of the pine tree" (192). This passage explicitly states that the pine is giving shelter. By Anselmo standing under this pine tree, he is removed from the war therefore safe from fighting. However, Pilar, a more violently driven character, is intent on stepping out from under the pine and retaliating. She exclaims, "Then calm yourself. There is much time. What a day it is and how I am contented not to be in pine trees. You cannot imagine how one can tire of pine trees" (96). Pilar validates anxiety to leave and fight for the republic. She feels that by waiting under the shadow of the pine, they are not aiding the cause as they should be. The theory of pines giving shelter is also reinforced. Furthermore, Pilar states, "I like the pines, but we have been too long in these pines" (97).

To Pilar, the pines have restrained her from contributing in a valuable way to the rebellion. The shelter can be seen from two different perspectives, that of its refuge, and of its restriction, however, it continues in its constance. Although these examples contrast, they continue to give further evidence that proves pine to serve as shelter from war. Directly before Jordan's death invoking injury, he was "out in the open" (460). After riding out from the pine, Jordan enters battle and suddenly becomes a target after having stepped from his zone of safety. Despite the pine only being a physical object, it is a representation mother nature watching over them while they are under her arm(the pines); and not in the war. In these actions, the loss of pine leads to the immediate demise of Jordan. Not only does pine give sanctuary, but it also serves as the footing of the characters relationships.

Pine is used as a way to form and become the base of relationships between characters, namely Jordan and Maria. Jordan, in an attempt to build a bed for Maria and him, builds a bed out of spruce (a type of pine), "earlier in the evening he had taken the ax and gone outside of the cave and walked through the new snow to the edge of the clearing and cut down a small spruce tree" (258). This demonstrates how pine is used to structure the relationship. Jordan and Maria are only as strong as the pine, and if the pine splits, their relationship falls out from under them. At the point where Jordan must depart from Maria to blow the bridge, he says and thinks, "'Thou canst talk with me of Madrid,' he said and thought: I'll keep any oversupply of that for tomorrow. I'll need all of that there is tomorrow. There are no pine needles that need that now as I will need it tomorrow" (342). Jordan believes that as long as pine is present, his relationship with Maria will be. He puts off

the notion of Madrid as he feels that it will preoccupy him, and he believes that being a thinker in war will lead to his death. Also, this reveals Jordan's transformation from a soldier to a lover. His mission is to live and return to a new life was formed and all of it was carried out under the pine trees and on the pine needles. Confirming how pine becomes a catalyst in Jordan's change and stems his desire. Overall, while the pine remains, Jordan is able to live on without the threat of death and continue his conversion. While pine is groundwork, it has another purpose in keeping as a constant force throughout the novel.

The pines also stay constant as Jordan becomes one with nature, surrounded by the changing environment he is in. Throughout the text, Jordan experiences a slow shift to being connected to nature. As the work progresses, detail of the earth becomes far more detailed and takes a leading role. This change reveals how Jordan slowly becomes closer to earth, and to become one with earth completely, Jordan will experience death to go full circle. Jordan thinks, "How little we know of what there is to know... I have learned much about life in these four days: more, I think, than in all other time" (380). This acknowledges that Jordan was in theory born in at the beginning of the novel, and he has come to live fully in the past four days. In this time he has made a full resolution, and become one with nature.

However, to complete this journey, death must ensue, as otherwise, he cannot fully become at one with mother nature. Furthermore, The very first words in the novel, Jordan, "lay flat on the brown, pineneedled floor of the forest, his chin on his folded arms, and high overhead the wind blew in the tops of the pine trees." (1). On the other hand, Jordan is flat on the ground,

stomach down, with his heart resting on the pine needles, however, the final lines of the work are, “ He was waiting until the officer reached the sunlit place where the first trees of the pine forest joined the green slope of the meadow. He could feel his heart beating against the pine-needled floor of the forest” (471). At first glance, there is little difference between the two passages, however, when looking in greater depth, there are a few key differences. In the second quote, Jordan’s heart is beating against the earth despite his proximity to death. An idea reinforced by the concept of living the most when closest to death. This is backed up by Hemingway’s use of detail in nature increasing as the text moves on. This exemplifies how his transformation is completed, and how he has come full circle. Throughout his final days he experiences true love and happiness, giving him a fulfilled life, during all of this emotion, pine remains the same, unchanging and lifeless. Despite having a fatal injury outside of the pine, when he was dragged back in, injured and close to death, Jordan became more alive than ever. He had stated that he lived more in his few days in the cave than when he had in his whole life. It is because of this that the pine represents how a constant that is unchanging. The pine keeps steady while all around it the world changes. The consistency of pine throughout the text serves as a counterweight and reference point to Jordan’s unity with nature.

As a part of nature that speaks to the characters’ consciousnesses, pine is integral to *For Whom The Bell Tolls*. It serves as shelter, a basis of relationships, and a balance in all stages of the novel. Its influence on the text is unmeasurable and gives a point of reference. Hemingway achieves in using a natural element to represent the circle of life and its infinity through

the pine. As well as that, pine becomes a physical portrayal of mother nature. The moral of this text is that although there are disruptions to the earth, it still spins, war makes nature stay still, but Hemingway succeeds in his objective to give us an accurate effigy of this concept through pine.