

# “soldier’s home” literary analysis

[Family](#), [Mother](#)



"Soldier's Home" Literary Analysis It is an undeniable fact that war changes people, and this change becomes especially apparent when soldiers return home to their families. In the short story "Soldier's Home", Ernest Hemingway paints a picture of a soldier's state of mind after arriving home from the war and shows the difficulties of trying to live a normal life, fit in with society, and start over. Hemingway introduces Harold Krebs as he returns home from World War I much later than the rest of the soldiers. It is very evident from his behavior that he is traumatized, confused, and feels very much out of place. He doesn't know where to begin to pick up where he left off and truly feels confused about his purpose in life, which can be very much related to the way many soldiers feel in our generation. Things such as fitting in with the society, getting a job, and starting a new relationship become a lot more complicated, and Krebs expresses this several times throughout the story. He especially focuses on the subject of starting a relationship with a girl and his inability and lack of interest of even introducing himself. He likes to observe women, and even desires to be with one; however, the idea of courting and investing time into it completely turns him off. Hemmingway never explains why Krebs feels this way but gives enough hints that perhaps Krebs once suffered heartbreak. "Now he would have liked a girl if she had come to him and not wanted to talk, but here at home it was all too complicated. He knew he could never go through it all again." The reader is focused on the words "again" and "It all", allowing the audience to assume that he might have done this once before. The word "complicated" is repeated a numerous times when it's associated with girls; "the girls live in a complicated world, " "they were too complicated", "it is

too complicated" and " He had tried to so to keep his life from being complicated. " which is another clue that Krebs might have gone through a rough break-up. Whether this happened during his time away or before the war, Hemingway never explains. Another reason for Krebs' lack of interest to date could be assumed that he developed different outlook on women in his time in Germany. During any war women usually become victims of sexual and physical assault and it is safe to assume that maybe Krebs experienced this during his time in Germany. " His acquaintances, who had heard detailed accounts of German women found chained to machine guns..." and " Vaguely, he wanted a girl but he did not want to spend a long time getting her are statements that can allude to him having interest in getting a girl just for a short time, for pleasure, but nothing more. With all the disconnect Krebs feels, the reader is forced to question " Where is home for Harold Krebs? " It is obvious that he doesn't feel home, even though he comes from a great small town in Oklahoma, has a supportive and loving family, and has others praying for him. This, however, is not enough for Krebs to compensate for all the horrors he witnessed during the war. His mother encourages him to talk about it but never truly pays attention, which results with Krebs feeling like he cannot express himself without being misunderstood. During breakfast, his mother asks him to pray with her to what he responds, " I can't. " This signifies that Krebs lost his faith. He truly doesn't care what happens to him and proceeds to speak apathetically. When his father says " don't you love your mother, dear boy? " and Harold replies, " no" " I don't love anyone". His mother instantly starts to cry, to which Harold realizes. He knows he hurt her feelings even though it doesn't seem like he meant to do

it on purpose. Many can presume that Krebs cannot make his parents understand everything he went through in combat. Statement such as " I don't love anyone" almost sounds as if he is showing his parents he is all grown up and not the little boy he used to be. It is safe to say that Krebs is probably going through many emotions at once. There are things in which he says that he probably doesn't mean, but doesn't know how to express them otherwise. One example of this is toward the end of the story when Harold's mother tells him she held him close to her heart when he was a baby, to which he replies, " I know, Mummy, I'll try to be good for you. " He contradicts himself by calling his mother " Mummy", which shows he does indeed love her. He proceeds to tell himself that his conversation with his mother didn't touch him and moving away to Kansas City would be a good escape from his family situation. His thinking shows that he could possibly be lying to himself, trying to convince himself that life would be better away from them. Maybe he doesn't want his mother to love him because he feels ashamed and nauseated for all the things he's done during the war. Hemingway leaves much of " Soldier's Home" to the reader's interpretation. The story doesn't have a set plot and the main character Krebs is not better off in the end of the story or at the beginning. A lot of Krebs' behavior can be paralleled to our modern day soldiers' who come home from war in Iraq and Afghanistan. From personal experience, most of them never truly talk about everything that happened there, and if they do they never express their true emotions about the events. Many have trouble coping with day-to-day lives and sometimes even express violent behavior toward their loved ones. It's hard to make judgments on their condition because the subject of killing

another human being is rather incomprehensible to someone who has never been at war. It is something so abstract for us that the only way for us to understand is to be there physically and mentally and no cinematic movie will ever truly capture those feelings. Unfortunately during Hemingway’s era PTSD was something that wasn’t discussed or even treated. The society and culture at the time was very much removed from the realities of what war was really like. It wasn’t broadcasted over the internet, and people were not exposed to explicit documentaries that showed all the horrors that happen to people. I personally believe Hemingway, who also served briefly in World War I, could relate a lot to Krebs and his environment. It is something that could have been a way for him to cope with his own personal demons while trying to make the readers understand the feelings of apathy, emptiness and the state of mind of soldier upon his return home.