

Hemingway's iceberg theory in hills like white elephants

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In the 1960s, psychologists identified six stages of human grief, particularly regarding dying and loss: denial; isolation; anger; bargaining; depression; and, finally, acceptance. But Hemingway wrote 'Hills' in 1927, therefore Hemingway must have had an apparently innate understanding, and dramatization, of these stages of grief.

The first stage of grief presented in the story is denial. Hemingway illustrates this by describing the American's attitude toward the idea of fertility.

Hemingway states, "They look like white elephants, she said. I've never seen one, the man drank his beer. No, you wouldn't have". This quote suggests the denial of fertility because the American is unable to see the white elephants, suggesting the bump of a woman's stomach. Hemingway is hinting that the American is unable to accept the fact that Jig is pregnant. Jig responds to the American by saying that he wouldn't have seen the elephants, implying that the only thing he is able to understand is her going through with the operation. Another example denial is conveyed is when the American refuses to accept the fact that her aborting the baby is even considered an operation. In the story Hemingway states, "It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig, the man said. It's just not really an operation at all". This quote reveals that the American is refusing to accept the fact that if Jig does go through with the abortion it wouldn't be a huge deal. The American is denying that her having the operation is anything at all.

The second stage of grief presented in the story is isolation. Hemingway presents this through Jig's expressions and actions. In the story Hemingway states, "I wanted to try this new drink. That's all we do, isn't it - look at

things and try new drinks?”. This quote shows that Jig feels lonely because all the American wants is to have fun. The American is not serious about starting a family with Jig, all he wants to do is travel and try new drinks. Jig feels that she is not supported by the American since all he cares about is having fun and not about her and the baby. Another example that shows isolation in the story is when Hemingway states, “ That’s the only thing that bothers us. It’s the only thing that’s made us unhappy. The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads”. By Jig taking hold of two strings of beads she is showing that she is choosing herself and the baby since the American is not able to provide her with the love and support she needs. Jig feels lonely because the American and her have different feelings about the abortion.

The third stage of grief revealed in the story is anger. Hemingway portrays anger through silence and emotion. In the story it states it states, “ I know you wouldn’t mind it, Jig. It’s really not anything. It’s just to let the air in. The girl did not say anything”. The silence of Jig represents how annoyed and angry she feels by what the American said. Even though Jig did not say anything after it is clear that Jig is angry with the comments that the American made. Another demonstration of anger in the story is when the author states, “ But I don’t want you to, he said, I don’t care anything about it. I’ll scream, the girl said”. This quote suggest anger because since Jig is feeling frustration and confusion she tells the American that if he doesn’t shut up she is going to scream. Jig is tired of the American always telling her what to do. The anger that rises inside of Jig symbolizes her growth as a

person and that the American no longer has control over her life. Not only is Jig angry with what the American is saying but Jig also feels angry with herself because she knows that whatever decision she makes she is going to lose somebody.

The fourth stage of grief presented is bargaining. In the story Hemingway states, " And you think then we'll be all right and be happy. I know we will. You don't have to be afraid". This quote describes the American convincing Jig that if she has the operation they will be able to live a happy life together. The American is promising Jig a different world where they can get along with each other peacefully. Another instance that bargaining is portrayed is when the American promises Jig that they could have everything. The American is offering Jig the whole world, but only if she does the operation. Since the American is an older man he is able to get into Jig's mind and at times almost convinces her to get the operation.

The fifth stage of grief is depression, we see it when Hemingway describes the landscape. Hemingway states, " They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry". The brown and dry areas of the country suggest the idea of depression because everything on this side is dead. Another example that captures the idea of depression is when Hemingway states, " the girl looked across at the hills on the dry side of the valley". This quote represents depression because on one side of the valley there is no fertility due to the heat of the landscape, implying the abortion.

The sixth stage of grief is acceptance, we see it when Jig finally makes up her mind. In the story it states, " The girl smiled brightly at the woman, to thank her". This quote suggest that Jig has made up her mind. She realizes that she does want to have this baby. It is thanks to the woman that helped guide Jig into the right direction. Another example of acceptance is when the author states, " She was sitting at the table and smiled at him. Do you feel better? he asked. I feel fine, she said. There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine". At this point in the story Jig has also accepted the fact that by her having the baby her and the American can no longer be together. In the end Jig has discovered that her happiness is more valuable than being with any other guy that does not support her.

During the life of Hemingway he had numerous amounts of wives and a family history of suicide which led Hemingway to have a deep understanding and dramitization of the six stages of grief: denial, isolation, anger, bargaining, depresion, and acceptance. His health also played a role in him having an innate understanding and dramatization of the six stages of grief because he experienced many pain throughout his life.