

A clean well lighted place analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A Clean Well Lighted Place "A Clean Well Lighted Place" takes place in a cafe where an old man has had too many drinks. The story deals with man's coping mechanism to the lack of God that Hemmingway assumes. The characters remark soldiers walking in the streets, showing that the story takes place during wartime, exacerbating the Godless situation the characters live in. The characters in the cafe each present their reaction to the realization that there is no God, representing all of mankind's own reaction to the same situation. The first response to the lack of God is to be miserable.

When one waiter asks the other of the old man's attempted suicide, the explanation is that "He was in despair" about "Nothing," about the lack of God; the deaf old realized that there is "Nothing," that there is no God (289). He understands that he was made with no meaning, and becomes disillusioned with life and consequently attempts suicide. However, Hemmingway wants us to understand that although a sad and undesirable situation, the old man's reaction is within reason by showing how he's "clean," "drinks without spilling" (289). The old man thinks: if there is no God, nor life after death, nor meaning to life, then why live?

What can man hope for in this dire realization that on ends? Another position on the matter of a lack of God, is to not realize that there is no supreme being. The young waiter represents those who are too superficial to see that there is nothing there or those who just don't see it. This man is impatient with his client as he only care about getting home to his wife. We know that he values his wife's company very much more than the old man's

predicament, his suicide even! This man is too caught up in his own worldly issues, too superficial, to be concerned with a lack of God.

Hemingway shows us that this is not a reasonable position to take by making the character unlikable and dumb, his syntax even breaking down like “stupid people do” when he talks to the deaf old man (290). Arguably the best way to deal with the Godless world we read of, is the older waiter’s acceptance of a lack of God. This man is an atheist, he prays to “nada,” or “nothing” in English. This man however, doesn’t fall into depression like the old deaf man does, he keeps living life, finding pleasure in the little things that he appreciates. The old waiter accepts that his life has no meaning, but he gives it purpose by aking it is duty to provide others with the titular clean well lighted cafe. He does this because he finds the place to be pleasant and enjoys being there, and others can find it so too. If not in God’s work, the old waiter can find pleasure in the beauty of the contrast of man’s creation and the nothingness of God. The best example of this is seen in the nothingness of the shadows cast by the electrical, manmade lights of the cafe. Presented as a likeable character, we know that the old waiter represents what Hemmingway wants us to believe to be a good stance on the matter of a lack of God.

The old waiter represents those who face the Godless world by finding their own purpose in it, and living life for the pleasure. “A Clean Well Lighted Place” takes place in a Godless world, where some realize that the world is Godless, and some are too simple to see it. The simpler people are superficial and far too concerned with worldly matters to see or care about

the lack of God. Hemmingway casts a bad light on this take of the situation, but one can still appreciate that living in ignorance is bliss.

A more negative approach to the Godless situation is to fall into depression upon the realization that one has no meaning, salvation, or life after death. Although a reasonable reaction to become miserable in such terrible a situation, the old waiter's approach is more optimistic and also reasonable. The last approach presented in the story is that of the old waiter's: one assigns oneself a purpose in life so that pleasure can be attained. The old waiter accepts that God isn't there, and decides that he can live the life he's got despite that by finding beauty in the beauty of what man has made.