

# The jazz age and the harlem renaissance part ii critical thinking examples

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## **Hemingway's Big Two-Hearted River: Parts I and II**

If it were not mentioned in the question for part one, I would have missed the idea that Nick is suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). From this brief section of Hemingway's writing, it is hard to know the experiences Nick has been through that caused PTSD. However, his comfort with absolute isolation from humanity is one indicator that he has suffered, and his independence in his camping as a self-healing experience lend to the idea that he has faced an ordeal he is escaping from.

The descriptions of the stream and the trout, as Nick observes them, seem like a metaphor for life and Nick himself. The stream is like life, always moving, and the "The trout was steady in the moving stream" (Perkins 260). Nick is trying to be like the trout, remaining steady in the moving current of life. Nick also observes, "If a trout was touched with a dry hand, a white fungus attacked the unprotected spot" and he describes the outcome, how he once saw a "dead trout, furry with white fungus (Perkins 260-261). It is the spoiling hand of man that Nick seeks to avoid with his isolated camping excursion, and nature, without the spoiling of men is healing to Nick.

The swamp is a difficult area where the stream runs into, and man is not suited for walking or living in the swamp. To Nick, it represents an undesirable part of life that he can avoid if he holds steady in the clear water of the stream of life before the swamp.

## **Gertrude Stein's The Gentle Lena**

I enjoyed Stein's The Gentle Lena in part because it was unconventional. There is enough of a "plot" to make the order of the words make sense.

Even though plot and setting is deemphasized in favor of the portrait of Lena, this does not mean the story lacks flow or character development. Not only is Lena's character developed, but also that of the people she is surrounded by. For instance, her cousins are described as "The two daughters, who were fourteen and fifteen looked like unkneaded, unformed mounds of flesh" (Perkins 269). Other aspects of characters besides their physical attributes are also revealed, for instance, "Mathilda Haydon . . . felt very badly that she had to say that this was her cousin Lena, this Lena who was little better for her than a nigger" (Perkins 271). Strong words like these reveal much about a character, and all the character descriptions give interest to the piece, which allows readers to care what happens to them. Despite Lena's evident passive nature and lack of passion, I still found myself caring about her because the descriptions of herself and her daily life make her feel like a real person. Stein's effect of using repetition helps connect one incident or description to another throughout the piece, giving it continuity and a poetic flow.

## **Works Cited**

Perkins. "The Jazz Age and the Harlem Renaissance Part II." *American Literature Since the Civil War*, 2011. 249-287. McGraw-Hill/Create.