

Symbolism in hemingway's cat in the rain



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Hemingway's *Cat in the Rain* recounts the story of an American couple having their vacation in Italy. During their stay at their hotel room, the woman takes pity on a cat dripping in the rain. She is determined to get this cat even if it means getting wet. Thus, she goes out of the hotel which is run by a man who seems always ready to please her and spark her interest as well, but the cat has gone. She then returns to their room with her husband still buried in his books. She tells him of the things that she wants like her own silver, clothes, long hair, and the cat. A knock at the door brings the maid with a cat in her hands which the hotel owner asks her to bring to the American wife.

This short story of Hemingway clearly illustrates one chapter of marriage life which is enriched through the use of symbolism. The story starts with the beautiful description of the place outside the couple's hotel with the view of the sea and the picturesque panorama that artists cannot resist to paint. After this, Hemingway starts to build the situation where the couple are—"rain dripped from the palm trees (Hemingway 1)," "motor cars are gone (1)," and "empty square (1)"—which are all in contrast to the previously depicted beauty of the place. This description can be seen as Hemingway's illustration of the husband and wife. When they first got married, everything seems to be so well between them. However, they are now faced with the hardship of making their relationship work because of their individual differences which is further portrayed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Hemingway's use of cat which is "trying to make herself compact that she would not be dripped on" (2) can be directly linked to the emotional suffering that the woman is going through. It should be noted that like the cat, she is battling the coldness of her husband and is trying to make him understand

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what she wants. The woman clearly desires being pleased, protected, and provided with the things that she wants. However, the husband just dismisses this and tells her to shut up.

In this short story, the author uses the cat to symbolize the woman who seeks physical and emotional attention from his husband. The woman communicates that she feels like a boy because the husband doesn't seem to treat her like a woman. She is starved with affection and intimacy like the cat which she wants to sit in her lap and stroke.

The hotel-keeper is in a stark contrast with the woman's husband. This character responded to the desires of the woman causing her a " momentary feeling of supreme importance" (24) because of his efforts to serve her. The end of the story also symbolizes the possibilities of this woman having an affair with the hotel-keeper. Since it is him and not her husband who responded to her needs and has brought the cat for her, it is indicated that the hotel-keeper will provide her with the physical and emotional attention that she longs for.

Works Cited

Hemingway, Ernest. " Cat in the Rain." 2004. 20 February 2008