

Harold krebs's struggles after returning from world war i



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In "Soldier's Home," Ernest Hemingway makes use of a small-town setting to provide his readers with insight into the troubled, young mind of Harold Krebs. Harold Krebs struggles to adjust to life in Hemingway's lifeless Oklahoma town shortly after his late return from combat in World War I. Hemingway's social environment in "Soldier's Home" contributes to its family-based, yet dull atmosphere, with which Krebs must attempt to cope. Hemingway utilizes many aspects of setting, constructively pairing place and time, along with the social environment present in "Soldier's Home," to develop a monotonous atmosphere that parallels Krebs' sentiment.

Hemingway produces a place for the reader: an Oklahoma town during a 1920s boom to which Harold Krebs returns after serving his country in World War I, only to find that most everything is the same, with only few changes to its setting. Krebs finds Hemingway's world much too complicated underneath, for its simplicity on the surface; Krebs particularly notices the young girls of the town, mainly from the comfort of his home porch:

Upon return, Krebs finds that Hemingway's town is unchanged; the young girls grow up with their own issues, too many for Krebs to care about any one in particular. Watching the good-looking girls from the shelter of his porch becomes a pastime; they dress indistinguishably and still bear shortly cropped hair. The unvaried girls grow up in Hemingway's setting, bringing Krebs' youthful memories back to life with them, a long time after Krebs lives them. Short hair and Dutch collars have become commonplace for young girls. Krebs sees girls wearing collars as he himself became accustomed to wearing with his fraternity brothers: "There is a picture which shows him among his fraternity brothers, all of them wearing exactly the same height

<https://assignbuster.com/harold-krebs-struggles-after-returning-from-world-war-i/>

and style collar" (170). Time does not change anything. Hemingway's character spends much of his time at home as well as the pool hall: "...to spend the hottest hours of the day in the cool dark of the pool room. He loved to play pool" (171). The pool room, a second home to Krebs, is cool and dark, much like the feelings that reside within Krebs. Much like Hemingway's flat, uniform Oklahoma prairie setting parallels Krebs' unchanging present time existence, the pool room creates a blunt atmosphere applicable to a homogenous civil backdrop.

The details of Hemingway's social environment and the atmosphere that they create have a negative effect on the protagonist, causing him much difficulty with readapting to his surroundings. Krebs uncomfortably resides in Hemmingway's town, whose residents only open their ears to dramatized tales of the war, driving Krebs to speaking half truths and whole lies in an ineffective attempt at pleasing his audience, as at the pool room, a beloved venue for the young man:

In seeking his acquaintances' approval, Krebs revises his war stories at the pool room in a shallow attempt to thrill his peers; they, however, remain unswayed. There is no change in their emotion, Krebs does not fit in.

Hemingway bases his primarily middle class town, where most families own a single car, on a strong value system, wrapped in a religious lining. Love, a common theme professed throughout Hemingway's story, makes Krebs uncomfortable. Krebs' sister, who loves her brother and looks up to him asks: " Do you love me?" (173). His mother as well loves him very much in her motherly way and questions Krebs: " Yes, don't you love your mother dear boy?" (174). Krebs replies " no" to his mother, and this brings her to tears.
<https://assignbuster.com/harold-krebs-struggles-after-returning-from-world-war-i/>

Krebs discomfort with Hemingway's social environment becomes quite evident. Once Krebs comes to apologize to his mother, she requests to pray with him. He declines, and upon his refusal she asks, "Do you want me to pray for you?" (174). Hemingway's town possesses a peaceful yet indifferent aura; bacon and eggs are an everyday breakfast, not just a meal for Sundays. The story represents the 1920's time period very well. Krebs' father works in the real estate business and never makes an appearance on Hemingway's pages: "His father was noncommittal" (171). The time's social standard of men settling down and marrying is ever-present in Hemingway's writing. This causes Krebs' mother to distressfully confront him in the way of a veiled nag, explaining to him: "Charley Simons, who is just your age, has a good job and is going to be married. The boys are all settling down; they're all determined to get somewhere; you can see that boys like Charley simmons are on their way to being really a credit to the community." (174) Bringing evidence of Krebs' displeasure with Hemmingway's value system are some of Hemingway's last remarks: "He would go to Kansas City and get a job and she would feel alright about it. There would be one more scene maybe before he got away" (174). Krebs evidently wants to get away. The civil environment in Hemingway's story troubles Krebs very much, despite the peaceful, indifferent atmosphere of the town. He does not want to love again, he has no drive for life, living in the wrong place at the wrong time.

With the setting of a peaceful Oklahoma town, Ernest Hemingway, once a soldier himself, places the reader in the shoes of troubled young man who struggles to adhere to the social backdrop of his conservative town after returning from the front lines of World War I. Hemingway provides Krebs with

an unchanged social environment in a monotonous place where he does not want to spend his time. As Krebs uncomfortably plods through the complications of Hemingway's indifferent atmosphere, displeased with the social backdrop, its abstruse details become too problematic for Krebs to appreciate. One can only be left to wonder what Hemingway's intent for Krebs future may be, whether he will move on and in time find happiness in another place, or be damned to struggle with his social problem as long as he may exist.

Works Cited

Hemingway, Ernest. " Soldier's Home." In The Bedford Introduction to Literature. Michael Meyer Ed, 7th Edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2005. 170-175.