

Ernest hemingway's  
use of the code hero  
concept in the sun  
also rises



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Hero in Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* The hero is a concept introduced by Ernest Hemingway in all of his novels. This concept is usually personified in the main characters of his stories. In *The Sun Also Rises*, it is apparent that the narrator, Jack Barnes, is himself the character that plays the role. Barnes is a man that has set up his own ideals for courage and honor and he tries to uphold this even as he tries to survive an environment when the strength of such principles are put to the test or challenged. In some of Hemingway's novels, the code hero himself dies while trying to confront the challenges to his principles. Obviously, the message that the author wishes to impart is that the values of such ideals are not in their definition but in the manner that one would live and die while trying to uphold and apply them. As Philip Young would describe, "the code hero, then, offers up and exemplifies certain principles of honor, courage, and endurance which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man, as we say, and enable him to conduct himself well in the losing battle that is life." (11) At the end of *The Sun Also Rises*, Barnes clearly fails to get what he wants, which means that cannot claim victory in the struggle to promote his own principles. Barnes, however, is not the stereotypical hero, one with only strengths being highlighted by the author. This is because Hemingway's code hero has his own frailties, an important element so that the reader can relate himself or herself to the character. In fact, in Barnes is obviously still on the process of strengthening his principles as he observes the weaknesses and strengths of the other people that surround him. This means that he too is in the process of determining which ideals he must uphold and which human tendencies that he must avoid. At the beginning of the story, Barnes does not show anything that proves his tight grasp on his ideals. However, as he narrates his

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abhorrence of Cohn's characteristics, it become clear what principles is he upholding. For example, he says that Cohn "cared nothing for boxing... but he learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness..." (Hemingway 11) Barnes is referring to the fact that Cohn does not have the nature to stand up, be competitive, and to fight for pride. Cohn is just forced to learn boxing because he feels he would be isolated from the rest of the men if he does not. The code hero is not one who indulges in fantasy or fairy tales. This is another major characteristic that Hemingway has developed in the person of Jack Barnes. Barnes expresses his disgust over Cohn's tendency to be carried away by his imaginations which are triggered by his reading of fantasy books such as *The Purple Land*. Commenting on the book, Cohn says that "it recounts splendid imaginary amorous adventures of a perfect English gentleman in an intensely romantic land, the scenery of which is very well described." (Hemingway 12) Barnes does not object to the fact that Cohn reads the book and is entertained by it. What he finds disagreeable though is when Cohn actually goes to the extent of actually believing every word in the book, which is actually an excuse for choosing the easier or less challenging routes in life. The code hero is one who does not fear challenges, regardless of whether he has the capabilities to overcome these or not. As mentioned earlier, it is not in the result but in the effort or the struggle that really counts. While Barnes dislikes Cohn, he admires Romero's courage as shown every time he fights bulls. In fact, it is because of his admiration of Romero's bravery that he deems him to be the better man for Brett. Knowing that Romero has what he does not have, he does not insist on his relationship with Brett. Ultimately, he steps back from the conflict arising from Brett's dalliances with other men. This too is another

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characteristic of Hemingway's code hero. As Young explains, "this man will die a thousand times before his death, and although he would learn how to live with some of his troubles, and how to overcome others, he would never completely recover from his wounds as long as Hemingway lived and recorded his adventures." (10) Obviously, Hemingway's code hero is a combination of strengths and weaknesses. Works Cited Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. New York, NY: Scribner, 1954. Young, Philip. *Ernest Hemingway*. Minneapolis, MA: University of Minnesota Press, 1964.