

Themes and symbolism in hills like white elephants by ernest hemingway

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That is the main theme of the short story, talking versus communicating. Both parties eventually became frustrated with the direction their conversation is heading, which then leads both of them to put more walls between them, thus aggravating the situation. For example, the girl looked at the hills and mentioned they are lovely, but the man replied pertaining to getting another drink. Then the American said “ The beer’s nice and cool,” to which the girl replied, “ It’s lovely.” (Clugston, 2010, p. 112). They were obviously talking about two separate things.

This then leads the readers to the symbolism used in the story. The American wants to say anything to convince the girl to go through an abortion, a fact that is not directly mentioned in the story. This is linked to the story’s title Hills Like White Elephants. Hills is usually a symbolism of wanting to escape, while white elephants usually symbolize something that an individual does not want; in this story, it is the unborn child. Afterward, the girl takes back her statement and mentions that the hills do not really look like white elephants at all (Clugston, 2010, p. 112). It is a subtle hint that she might want to keep the baby despite the American’s encouragement to abort it.