

How i met my husband essay sample

[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



" Hills Like White Elephants" is a short story by Ernest Hemingway. It was the first published in August 1927, in the Literary transition, than later in the 1927 short story collection Men without Woman. The story takes place at a train station in the Ebro River valley of Spain. This particular day is oppressively hot and dry, and the scenery in valley is barren and ugly for the most part. While waiting for the train to Madrid the American and the girl with him drink beer and liquor called Anis del Toro which the girl compares to the drink. Their conversation is mundane at first but quickly drift to subject if an operation the American is attempting to convince the girl to undergo. Though it is never made explicit in the text it is made clear (through phrases of dialogue such as, " It's just to let the air in", and, " But I don't want anybody but you", among numerous context clues) that the girl is pregnant and the procedure in question is an abortion.

After posing arguments to which the American is largely unresponsive, the girl assents to the operation, while declaring that she does not care about herself. The man tries to give the girl a feel that he is letting her decide but tries to convince her to proceed with the operation. The girl is uncomfortable with their conversation and tries to persuade the man into quieting. He does not concur. The barmaid comes out through the beaded curtains with two glasses of beer and puts them down on the felt pads. She notes that the train will be arriving shortly. The girl is distracted, but then smiles brightly at the woman and thanks her. The American leaves the table and carries their bags to the opposing platform, but there's still no sight of the train in the distance. He walks back through the station, and everyone else is still waiting reasonably for the train.

The American could see the baby as a white elephant and does not want to raise it because of the cost, while the girl could see the child as an extraordinary addition to her mundane life of drinking and mindless traveling. Apart from the hills, other parts of the setting provide symbolism which expresses the tension and conflict surrounding the couple. The train tracks form a dividing line between the barren expanse of land stretching toward the hills on one side and the green, fertile farmland on the other, symbolizing the choice faced by each of the main characters and their differing interpretations of the dilemma of pregnancy. The girl focuses on the landscape during the conversation, rarely making eye contact with the American. " They look like white elephants," she said.

" I've never seen one," the man drank his beer.

" No, you wouldn't have."

" I might have," the man said. " Just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything." The girl looked at the bead curtain. " They've painted something on it," she said. " What does it say?" " Anis del Toro. It's a drink."

" Could we try it?"

The reader must interpret their dialogue and body language to infer their backgrounds and their attitudes with respect to the situation at hand, and their attitudes toward one another. From the outset of the story, the contentious nature of the couple's conversation indicates resentment and unease. Some critics have written that the dialogue is a distillation of the contrasts between stereotypical male and female relationship roles: in the excerpt above, for instance, the girl draws the comparison with white

elephants, but the hyper-rational male immediately denies it, dissolving the bit of poetry into objective realism with “ I’ve never seen one.” By saying, “ No, you wouldn’t have” she implies he hadn’t had a child before, or hadn’t allowed birth in the past. She also asks his permission to order a drink. Throughout the story, the girl is distant; the American is rational.

While the American attempts to frame the fetus as the source of the couple’s discontent with life and one another, the tone and pattern of dialogue indicate that there may be deeper problems with the relationship than the purely circumstantial. This ambiguity leaves a good deal of room for interpretation; while most critics have espoused relatively straightforward interpretations of the dialogue (with the girl as the dynamic character, traveling reluctantly from rejection to acceptance of the idea of an abortion), a few have argued for alternate scenarios based upon the same dialogue.

Another interesting facet of this story in the text of Hemingway’s fiction is the clear superiority of the women to the man. Hemingway is not particularly kind to woman generally certainly not to women want to have children. Usually such women are interested in asserting their sexual power over men and depriving men of their freedom and their maleness. This girl may prove to b e angry and frustrated enough to evolve into a castrating harridan in this story however she is a tragic figure seemingly driven into a barren and feeling empty by loving this man.

References:

Clugston, R. W.(2010). Journey into Literature. San Diego, California:
Bridgepoint Education, Inc.

Fletcher, M. “ Hemingway’s Hills Like White Elephants.” Explicator, Summer
1980. Vol. 38 No. 4. p. 16.

Smiley, P. “ Gender-linked Miscommunication in ‘ Hills Like White
Elephants.’” Hemingway Review, Fall 1988. Vol. 8 No. 1. p. 2

Renner, S. “ Moving to the Girl’s Side of ‘ Hills Like White Elephants.’”
Hemingway Review, Fall 1995. Vol. 15 No. 1. p. 27