

Empire of the summer moon essay sample

[History](#), [Empires](#)



The protagonist in Ernest Hemmingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes, is a down on his luck war veteran living in France. Jake is characterized by his experiences prior to the events of the book and he narrates the story from a quiet observer's third person perspective, often times quite cynically, exemplified when he tells his friend Robert Cohn, " You can't get away from yourself by moving from one place to another." Although never openly stating it, Jake on several occasions implies that due to a war injury he has lost the ability to have sex which leaves him feeling very insecure about his own masculinity, likely contributing to his pessimism. Also contributing to his bad attitude is that Lady Brett Ashley, the woman whom he focuses his affections on, refuses to commit to him because it would mean sacrificing sex. The events of the book follow Jake around as he drinks and parties all of his worries and misery away in many bars all over Europe; meeting many different people, each new character with their own unique personality contrasting and accentuating Jake and his closest friends.

At the beginning of the book, Jake and his friends are living in France in the 1920's, most of them not originally from France and several of the World War I Veterans. Jake's assorted escapades detail and depict the 1920's nightlife for him and his friends, and the many people they meet along the way, which is little more than purposeless self indulgence. The prevailing problem for Jake is more of a psychological battle than anything else. Although ailed by physical disabilities from war, and perhaps worried about his own financial security, Jake's personal demons lie more in his brain, plaguing him with self doubt and depression. Self conscious of his erectile dysfunction,

depressed that Brett won't fully return his affections, and prone to verbal lashings, Jake lives a fairly unfulfilled life of debauchery.

Jake does very little to actively try and fix his situation; he is a good person, but a little bit lost. Jake is consciously aware that there is a problem, which is more than can be said about his friends. Perhaps the people that surround Jake are the issue, though. His close friends and the people whom he travels with include Lady Brett Ashley, Robert Cohn, Bill, and Mike. Brett, the target of Jake's unrequited affections, is likely someone whom he should stop spending time with; however, it seems that he just can't get away from her. She is a very strong and independent woman who isn't known to behave in a traditionally feminine way. Jake does remark that although she is very independent, "She can't go anywhere alone." Robert Cohn is a Jewish, wealthy expatriate; but unlike many of his friends, did not spend any time in the war. Cohn also falls head over heels in love with Brett, who soon rejects his affections as well.

As a wealthy, Jewish, non war veteran Cohn stands out in the group and his fumbling attempts to court Brett are the source of much mockery and leads to many fights. Bill is also an American veteran who seems to be always drinking. He tends to use humor to try and deal with the emotional scars of war; however, is not immune to the immaturity and cruelty sometimes characterized by Jake and his friends. Finally, Mike is a very heavy drinking Scottish war veteran who is completely bankrupt. He is seen to have a terrible temper, which most often displays while he is drunk. Mike is also not comfortable with the idea of Brett's infidelity and is very self conscious about

his own financial security. Often times throughout the book, Cohn is the target of many insults and mockery, berating him for loving Brett and mocking him for just about everything else. During the small group's travels, they meet and make many new friends, each new person contributing to the group in a new and unique way.

The first night out, Jake takes a prostitute out to dinner, but ditches her to be with Brett later on. That same night they meet the Count Mippipopulous, a wealthy Greek who immediately takes an interest in Brett. Although infatuated with Brett, the Count, unlike most men, does not subscribe to the jealousy which often time surrounds Brett. He stands out as a sane and moral person, accentuating Jake and all of his friend's insecurities and flaws. Later on, while in Spain, the group also meets the bull fighting prodigy Pedro Romero, a very attractive 19 year old bull fighter who becomes involved with Brett. He stands out from the group as a symbol of purity. He carries himself with pride and confidence, and his passion and talent for bullfighting gives his life a purpose.

Romero is a figure of honesty and purity who again accentuates Jake and his friend's flaws. The story likely climaxes when Cohn, full of jealousy, violent beats Jake and Mike for making fun of him, and then goes back to the hotel to ruthlessly beat Romero. This just goes to show what Brett's corrupting and controlling attitude can do to people, and the scene captures the petty cruelty characterized by Jake and his friends, as well as the demonstrate the anger in Cohn's heart, and the destructive nature of sex. The book often times uses male insecurities, the aimless and hopeless attitude of war

veterans, the power of sex, and heavy drinking to show what can happen to people if they are lead down a path of violence or amorality.