**Ernest Hemingway – ‘Cat in the Rain’**

There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel. They did not know any of the people they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their room. Their room was on the second floor facing the sea. It also faced the public garden and the war monument. There were big palms and green benches in the public garden. In the good weather there was always an artist with his easel. Artists liked the way the palms grew and the bright colors of the hotels facing the gardens and the sea. Italians came from a long way off to look up at the war monument. It was made of bronze and glistened in the rain. It was raining. The rain dripped from the palm trees. Water stood in pools on the gravel paths. The sea broke in a long line in the rain and slipped back down the beach to come up and break again in a long line in the rain. The motor cars were gone from the square by the war monument. Across the square in the doorway of the café a waiter stood looking out at the empty square. The American wife stood at the window looking out. Outside right under their window a cat was crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on. ‘I’m going down and get that kitty,’ the American wife said. ‘I’ll do it,’ her husband offered from the bed. ‘No, I’ll get it. The poor kitty out trying to keep dry under a table.’ The husband went on reading, lying propped up with the two pillows at the foot of the bed. ‘Don’t get wet,’ he said. The wife went downstairs and the hotel owner stood up and bowed to her as she passed the office. His desk was at the far end of the office. He was an old man and very tall. ‘Il piove,1 ’the wife said. She liked the hotel-keeper. ‘Si, Si, Signora, brutto tempo2 . It is very bad weather.’ He stood behind his desk in the far end of the dim room. The wife liked him. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her. She liked the way he felt about being a hotel-keeper. She liked his old, heavy face and big hands. Liking him she opened the door and looked out. It was raining harder. A man in a rubber cape was crossing the empty square to the café. The cat would be around to the right. Perhaps she could go along under the eaves. As she stood in the doorway an umbrella opened behind her. It was the maid who looked after their room. ‘You must not get wet,’ she smiled, speaking Italian. Of course, the hotel-keeper had sent her. With the maid holding the umbrella over her, she walked along the gravel path until she was under their window. The table was there, washed bright green in the rain, but the cat was gone. She was suddenly disappointed. The maid looked up at her. ‘Ha perduto qualque cosa, Signora?’3 ‘There was a cat,’ said the American girl. ‘A cat?’ ‘Si, il gatto.’ ‘A cat?’ the maid laughed. ‘A cat in the rain?’ ‘Yes, –’ she said, ‘under the table.’ Then, ‘Oh, I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty.’ When she talked English the maid’s face tightened. ‘Come, Signora,’ she said. ‘We must get back inside. You will be wet.’ ‘I suppose so,’ said the American girl. 1 ‘It’s raining.’ ‘Yes, yes Madam. Awful weather.’ 3 ‘Have you lost something, Madam?’ They went back along the gravel path and passed in the door. The maid stayed outside to close the umbrella. As the American girl passed the office, the padrone bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentary feeling of being of supreme importance. She went on up the stairs. She opened the door of the room. George was on the bed, reading. ‘Did you get the cat?’ he asked, putting the book down. ‘It was gone.’ ‘Wonder where it went to,’ he said, resting his eyes from reading. She sat down on the bed. ‘I wanted it so much,’ she said. ‘I don’t know why I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty. It isn’t any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain.’ George was reading again. She went over and sat in front of the mirror of the dressing table looking at herself with the hand glass. She studied her profile, first one side and then the other. Then she studied the back of her head and her neck. ‘Don’t you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?’ she asked, looking at her profile again. George looked up and saw the back of her neck, clipped close like a boy’s. ‘I like it the way it is.’ ‘I get so tired of it,’ she said. ‘I get so tired of looking like a boy.’ George shifted his position in the bed. He hadn’t looked away from her since she started to speak. ‘You look pretty darn nice,’ he said. She laid the mirror down on the dresser and went over to the window and looked out. It was getting dark. ‘I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel,’ she said. ‘I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her.’ ‘Yeah?’ George said from the bed. ‘And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes.’ ‘Oh, shut up and get something to read,’ George said. He was reading again. His wife was looking out of the window. It was quite dark now and still raining in the palm trees. ‘Anyway, I want a cat,’ she said, ‘I want a cat. I want a cat now. If I can’t have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat.’ George was not listening. He was reading his book. His wife looked out of the window where the light had come on in the square. Someone knocked at the door. ‘Avanti,’ George said. He looked up from his book. In the doorway stood the maid. She held a big tortoiseshell cat pressed tight against her and swung down against her body. ‘Excuse me,’ she said, ‘the padrone asked me to bring this for the Signora.

1 What is the theme of a literary text?

2 What is the idea of a literary work?

3 What is the plot of a literary work?

4 What is this text really about?

5 What was the author's purpose in writing this text?

6 The functions of the title of a literary work.

7 How does this text apply to real life?

8 Types of literary charterters.

9 What are the narration types?

10 What will work best for the audience?

11 What is the description of a literary work?

12 What is the genre of a literary work?

13 Relations between the author and the image.

14 What is the story of a literary work?

15 Who is the audience?

16 How clear is the writing?

17 How true are the facts used in the text?

18 How much new did you learn from this text?

19 What have you concluded about the text?

20 Do you recommend to read this text. Why? Why not?

Ernest Hemingway

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*"Hemingway" redirects here. For other uses, see*[*Hemingway (disambiguation)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hemingway_(disambiguation))*.*

*For the fictional character Ernest Hemmingway, see*[*A Very Peculiar Practice*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Very_Peculiar_Practice)*.*

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| --- | --- |
| **Ernest Hemingway** | |
| Hemingway working on his book [*For Whom the Bell Tolls*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_Whom_the_Bell_Tolls) at the Sun Valley Lodge, [Idaho](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idaho), in December 1939 | |
| **Born** | July 21, 1899 [Oak Park, Illinois](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oak_Park,_Illinois), U.S. |
| **Died** | July 2, 1961 (aged 61) [Ketchum, Idaho](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ketchum,_Idaho), U.S. |
| **Notable awards** | [Pulitzer Prize for Fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulitzer_Prize_for_Fiction) (1953)  [Nobel Prize in Literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature) (1954) |

**Ernest Miller Hemingway** (July 21, 1899 – July 2, 1961) was an American journalist, novelist, short-story writer, and noted sportsman. His economical and understated style—which he termed the [iceberg theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iceberg_theory)—had a strong influence on [20th-century fiction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/20th_century_in_literature), while his adventurous lifestyle and his public image brought him admiration from later generations. Hemingway produced most of his work between the mid-1920s and the mid-1950s, and he won the [Nobel Prize in Literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature) in 1954. He published seven novels, six short-story collections, and two non-fiction works. Three of his novels, four short-story collections, and three non-fiction works were published posthumously. Many of his works are considered classics of [American literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_literature).

Hemingway was raised in [Oak Park, Illinois](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oak_Park,_Illinois). After high school, he reported for a few months for [*The Kansas City Star*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Kansas_City_Star) before leaving for the [Italian Front](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Front_(World_War_I)) to enlist as an [ambulance driver in World War I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ambulance_drivers_during_World_War_I). In 1918, he was seriously wounded and returned home. His wartime experiences formed the basis for his novel [*A Farewell to Arms*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Farewell_to_Arms) (1929).

In 1921, he married [Hadley Richardson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadley_Richardson), the first of what would be four wives. The couple moved to Paris, where he worked as a [foreign correspondent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Correspondent) and fell under the influence of the [modernist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modernism) writers and artists of the 1920s "[Lost Generation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_Generation)" expatriate community. His [debut novel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debut_novel), [*The Sun Also Rises*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sun_Also_Rises), was published in 1926. After his 1927 divorce from Richardson, Hemingway married [Pauline Pfeiffer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pauline_Pfeiffer); they divorced after he returned from the [Spanish Civil War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Civil_War), where he had been a journalist. He based [*For Whom the Bell Tolls*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_Whom_the_Bell_Tolls) (1940) on his experience there. [Martha Gellhorn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martha_Gellhorn) became his third wife in 1940; they separated after he met [Mary Welsh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Welsh_Hemingway) in London during [World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II). He was present at the [Normandy landings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normandy_landings) and the [liberation of Paris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_of_Paris).

Shortly after the publication of [*The Old Man and the Sea*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Old_Man_and_the_Sea) (1952), Hemingway went on [safari](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Safari) to Africa, where he was almost killed in two successive plane crashes that left him in pain or ill-health for much of the rest of his life. Hemingway maintained permanent residences in [Key West, Florida](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Key_West,_Florida) (in the 1930s) and [Cuba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuba) (in the 1940s and 1950s). In 1959, he bought a house in [Ketchum, Idaho](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ketchum,_Idaho), where, in mid-1961, he ended his own life. "[A Very Short Story](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Very_Short_Story)"

he popularity of Hemingway's work depends on its themes of love, war, wilderness, and loss, all of which are strongly evident in the body of work.[[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hemingway#cite_note-190)

CAT IN THE RAIN ANALYSIS

Literary Devices in Cat in the Rain

[Symbolism, Imagery, Allegory](https://www.shmoop.com/cat-in-the-rain/symbolism-imagery.html)

Hemingway is an author who takes the material world very seriously. So before we get all crazy-analytical with things, stop and consider this for a second: that the cat in the rain is perhaps just a cringing, drippy, unhappy cat under a table.

Let's imagine this soaking wet cat for a minute. It has to be pretty pitiful. A horse or a dog in the rain is one thing, but there's something really wretched about a [wet cat](http://www.alienworldscomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/WetCat02.jpg). It's basically trapped, too, beneath its little table-shelter in the plaza. The rain is pouring down so hard that it's trying to make itself as "tight" and small as possible to stay dry. As the American wife so perceptively says:

*"It isn't any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain"*(30).

Hold up—did you catch that part where the cat was described as "tight"? A bit later in the story, Hemingway uses the same word to describe the way the wife feels around the padrone: "tight" Also with the silly quote above, we hear the wife sympathize with the cat. If we match this sympathetic statement alongside the shared adjective "tight," we'd say we have enough evidence to consider the cat as a symbol for the wife—or at least for some aspect of her.

There's something in the cat that the wife both wants and identifies with, which means that it's a symbol that works in at least two ways. Think about the cat's isolation, pitifulness, its lack of protection, and also the hostility of its surroundings.

All of these things remind us of the wife's own situation with her husband. She, too, is in an environment that's far from ideal, which explains why she might sympathize with the cat. The word that she uses in her statement about the kitty—"fun"—is also echoed later when she tells her husband that if she can't "have any fun," she should at least have a cat. When you're dealing with a writer who is as choosey with his adjectives as Hemingway, the repetition of a word is *a big huge deal*.

So, if the wife identifies with the cat's dire straits, what might she want from it? Well, think back to that adjective that they share: "tight." The cat's tightness and the "small, tight" feeling that the wife has before the padrone, are both instances of them being or feeling diminutive. It's the protection of the table that makes the cat tighten up and the largeness of the padrone that causes this in the wife. The protectiveness and respectfulness she sees in the padrone makes the wife want to tighten and draw towards him. She's experiencing her own sensitivity and vulnerability.

Amazing isn't it? The wet kitty doesn't get more than two sentences of face-time in the story, yet it's important to our understanding of the wife in two completely different ways. And never will you feel the same about wet cats again …

Settings

Where It All Goes Down

An Italian Seaside Town on a Rainy Day

This story is set in a small, coastal Italian village. This town may have been familiar to Hemingway, as he was stationed in Italy during [World War I](https://www.shmoop.com/wwi/). The Great War happens to be tremendously present in this story, too. Remember the War Monument in the public garden? It's one of the things the wife sees from her perch at the window.

If you've ever been to Europe, you may have noticed that these sorts of monuments are in pretty much every town, commemorating the citizens of that particular town who were lost to the violence. The fact that the story was written in 1925 hints to us that the story must take place pretty near 1918, the year the war ended.

The sheer scope of World War I's tragedy and destruction across Europe was immense and unprecedented. It wiped out nearly an entire generation of young men and left the landscape scarred with trenches, craters from bombs, and half-populated towns. The fact that the war *was* over, however, also meant a period of relief and celebration amid the mourning. In the opening paragraph, Hemingway [juxtaposes](https://www.shmoop.com/literature-glossary/juxtaposition.html) the painters and colors in the public garden with the war memorial. This is a pretty good representation of the dueling sorrow and celebration in the years following the armistice. The town in the story is on the seaside, too, which suggests it's as a place for vacationers, for people wanting to get away and forget.

Still, Hemingway doesn't set this story on your typical sunny day on vacation. The relentless rain and the way it envelops the whole scene—gardens, sea, square—conveys a feeling of imprisonment. No one's going out, there's no moving around, no distraction. Rainy days in vacation towns also have a more disappointing feeling to them than rainy days elsewhere. It sort of hints that things aren't what they're supposed to be, or they're not what people hoped for when they set out on holiday. Hm…sound at all similar to a certain marriage in this story?

Narrator point of view

Who is the narrator, can she or he read minds, and, more importantly, can we trust her or him?

Third Person, Omniscient

You might think the narrative perspective of this story sounds very third person: the basic sentences and statements seem strictly factual, and we don't get a sense that the narrator has an opinion or bias. Or do we? It *does*seem that we have a bit more intimate connection with what's going on in the wife—more so than any other character. She's the one we travel with.

Our view of the hotel owner in particular is filtered through the wife's mind: Hemingway's perspective is more focused on what *she* feels and thinks about him than it is on the padrone himself. By staying in third person, Hemingway can also convey things about her that she might not be aware of in herself, like her feelings, which are described in a deeper way than she could articulate in speech. In this way, the narrator's omniscience (all-knowingness) allows Hemingway to both remain on the surface, above what characters may be thinking for themselves, but also to go much deeper than those personal conscious thoughts.

ANALYSIS: GENRE

Short Story

"Cat in the Rain" is the epitome of its genre. It is slim, thoughtfully written, and full of more suggestions than it has words. You might think of it like a sculpture, where each sentence is three-dimensional—it carries has multiple meanings. There is nothing wasted in Hemingway's descriptions or his dialogue. Each word earns its keep and it's up to you to ask yourself…how?

ANALYSIS: TONE

Take a story's temperature by studying its tone. Is it hopeful? Cynical? Snarky? Playful?

Controlled

You might be hard-pressed to find a more controlled writer than Hemingway. The word "control" generally implies that there is something that needs to *be* controlled, right? There's a conflict between restraint and rebellion present in this story, but Hemingway only suggests it. The husband and wife are at odds and discontent with one another, but they don't talk about it. Instead, the tension lies in their *lack* of real interaction. There's an unhappiness that they are studiously avoiding, but trapped as they are in their room on this rainy day, as each other's only company and as the only Americans at the hotel, the awkwardness becomes pretty concentrated. Hemingway's sentences, both in the dialogue and the descriptions, are terse. It's so clipped that you know that there's something being excluded. Thanks for leaving us hanging, Ernest.

ANALYSIS: WRITING STYLE

Lean, Mean, Prosy Machine

Before he started writing fiction, Hemingway worked as a journalist in Michigan, and the lessons he learned at his newspaper job stood by him throughout his career. His stories don't include many adjectives or adverbs, with the primary focus normally on the action. Sometimes this can lead people to assume that his writing lacks emotion, but we think it's just a more artful way of *building* emotion. Feeling is created and conveyed without the narrator having to name it and, as in this story, that emotion can feel more authentic because it goes unnamed.

Another unfortunate assumption about Hemingway's style is that it's simply…well, simple. This can lead readers to be less attentive than they should be to the art and beauty of Hemingway's lines. Take this one from the first paragraph of "Cat in the Rain"…it's beautiful and quite lovely:

*The sea broke in a long line in the rain and slipped back down the beach to come up and break again in a long line in the rain.* (1)

That right there is one single, fluid clause: no commas, no modifiers. This sentence is one "long line," just like the sea it describes. If you read it to yourself aloud, you can hear and feel the movement of the waves, slipping back, only to break again; it's the way the sentence *moves*. This is an example of the incredible artistry of Hemingway's style: his sentences might be simple, but they can also embody the essence of what they are describing. They can make the thing, the movement, the feeling they are describing actually happen in your mind and body as a reader.

Clearly, this is something more artistically advanced than a newspaper article. As prosy as Hemingway's writing style is, you might say that it's actually almost like poetry. So take a moment, pretend you're in an art gallery, stop looking at your computer screen and worrying about your paper. With stories like this, you are looking at the art of language: simple, but in no way plain.

ANALYSIS: WHAT'S UP WITH THE TITLE?

Ok, so there doesn't seem to be too much imagination behind this title, but that's when you know something important is going on.

The characters' actions and dialogues in this short, short story do indeed center on a cat in the rain, but the title is actually kind of mysterious when you think about it. Just *why* is this cat is so darn important? Why is it so particularly important to the American wife who spots it from her hotel room window? What is it about the cat's position, huddling under a table in the rainy Italian square that makes the woman want it so much? What is it about her own situation, trapped in the hotel with her neglectful husband that makes her sympathize with the cat?

Calling this story "Cat in the Rain"—as opposed to " *The* Cat in the Rain"—opens up a lot of possibilities. Maybe there isn't just one cat in the rain. Maybe there could be any number of people or animals living in such a crouched, helpless position.

When it comes to Hemingway, words are super important, so let's examine the four words in this title. They are all simple, monosyllabic words—like something you might find in a Dr. Seuss book, or in a book for kids just learning how to read. They're deceptively simple. Let's take a closer look at each one.

**Cat**

Cats are pretty typical animals, right? We see them everywhere. They're cuddly, independent, and often hang around people's houses. They can entertain themselves. Sometimes they go a little crazy and attack birds or hunt mice, but for the most part, cats are pretty cool, calm, and collected. There's nothing in this word that would alarm us readers, right? Or maybe not. What do you think?

It *is* interesting that there is no article (like "the" or "a") in front of this word. Without a "The Cat in the Rain" or "A Cat in the Rain," we're kind of stumped. Which cat is it? Also, the absence of "the" or "a" makes this title sound like the title of a painting. Like "[Still-life with Basket of Apples](http://ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/cezanne/sl/basket-apples/)" or "[Girl in White in the Woods](http://www.vangoghgallery.com/catalog/Painting/166/Girl-in-White-in-the-Woods.html)." It could be said that, much like these famous works, Hemingway is trying to paint a picture with his words—a study of a restless American tourist on a rainy day in a sleepy Italian village.

Before we start reading this story, we almost feel like the cat isn't going to be a very important part of what's to come.

**In**

"In" means to be in the middle of something—surrounded by it on all sides. In this case, the cat is getting soaked by the rain.

**The**

Ah, finally—an article! Imagine what this title would sound like if "the" weren't in it: Cat In Rain. That sounds like a poem or like a bit of conversation from a small child. Perhaps the "the" here helps us take the title a bit more literally. Maybe it helps us understand that there actually *is*a cat and there actually *is* rain in the story that follows.

**Rain**

Rain is a pretty ordinary thing, but there's something fascinating about it—water from the sky, *ooh*. Have you ever noticed that when it shows up, the mood starts to change—sometimes we get more sleepy when it starts to rain, or we feel like curling up in a blanket. Sometimes we get a bit more thoughtful.

ANALYSIS: WHAT'S UP WITH THE ENDING?

The ending in this story is pretty typical for a short story: a delicious, surprising twist. The wife and her husband seem to have reached the climax of their argument. *She* has all of these desires for a different life. *He*has no interest in hearing them. She has returned to her window and he has returned to his book.

But then…there's a knock at the door. The maid is standing there in the doorway with a cat in her arms, sent, as she says, by the padrone. Is it the same cat as the one the wife had seen in the rain from her window? That part remains unclear. Had the wife told the padrone what she was looking for a cat, or that she even wanted one to begin with? No and no.

This means that the padrone probably went through a bit of trouble to get this gift to the Americans' room. He must have first thought about the woman and decided he *wanted* to do something to help make her happy. He also would have had to talk with the maid, who *did* know what woman went out for. Then, of course, he needed to find a cat. It's a gesture of thoughtfulness—like when someone gives you exactly you want even though you never told them you wanted it. That's how the wife must feel at this moment. Hemingway, of course, doesn't tell us how she feels, but does he need to?

ANALYSIS: TOUGH-O-METER

We've got your back. With the Tough-O-Meter, you'll know whether to bring extra layers or Swiss army knives as you summit the literary mountain. (10 = Toughest)

(5) Tree line

Hemingway's stories may be short, but honey, they sure ain't sweet—and they certainly aren't simple. At a grand total of three pages, "Cat in the Rain," is one of the shortest full prose pieces that Hemingway wrote, but the concentration of it also means that there's a lot that goes unsaid (and, thus, all the more for you to figure out yourself).

Who are these Americans? Why are they there in this Italian town? How long have they been there? How long have they been married? What do they feel and think about each other? Hemingway offers no definitive answers to any of these basic questions. He has no interest in "explaining" the situation at all, actually. This, if you care, is for you to imagine and figure out for yourself.

At the same time, context is a lot easier to focus on than the meaning. So if you're as good a reader as Hemingway is a writer, then you'll do away with those questions of who and where, too, and spend more time on what *is*there: a wife, her reading husband, a cat in the rain, and some very strong but uncertain feelings for something completely different. It's this combination of simplicity, intensity, and ambiguity that earns "Cat in the Rain" a solid score of 5.

ANALYSIS: PLOT ANALYSIS

Most good stories start with a fundamental list of ingredients: the initial situation, conflict, complication, climax, suspense, denouement, and conclusion. Great writers sometimes shake up the recipe and add some spice.

Initial Situation

Vacay

Who wants to spend their vacation stuck inside? The situation of the couple stuck in their room is both monotonous and restless. The description of the view from the window suggests that it's a view the wife is used to. She's seen the square, the public gardens, and the war monument before. It sounds like this is a woman who spends a lot of time looking out the window. Her focus on the world outside the hotel is in contrast to her husband's absorption in his book, suggesting that the two are quite different: she is extroverted and oriented towards lived life, he is focused toward the internal world of books and ideas. They say opposites attract—but that doesn't necessarily mean they can stick together.

Conflict

Hiding Cats

Seeing the cat doesn't necessarily create a conflict between the characters, but it does give the wife a reason to move—something she has clearly been waiting for. Hey, it's not like she had Facebook or even an iPod to entertain her or anything. The husband's half-hearted offer to go down instead and her ready dismissal of it further suggests her desire for independent movement. She may also know full well that he didn't *actually* want to go down to find the cat, but that doesn't seem to bother her much.

Complication

A Cat in the Rain?

Once she goes downstairs, the wife encounters the hotelkeeper—known as a 'padrone' in Italian. She likes him very much, and is thinking of this as a maid escorts her outside with an umbrella. When she looks under the table, however, the cat isn't there. The maid is a little amused at the thought of a cat in the rain, but the wife is disappointed. They return inside, damp and cat-less.

Suspense

A Feeling of Great Importance

As she passes the padrone again, the wife is aroused and filled with a sense of importance in his presence. The feeling is very strong, but not defined or labeled. The wife isn't necessarily conscious of her feelings either, but is strongly affected as she proceeds upstairs. Sounds like someone's got a crush.

Climax

Back in the Room

When the wife returns to the room, her husband casually asks if she found the cat. She replies no and sits down in front of the mirror, evidently even more restless than before. We know she's bored when she starts to critique her hair and profile and proceeds to list all the things she wants: long hair, a cat on her lap, her own silver, candles, springtime… Her husband, George, is quickly fed up with this and tells her to shut up and find something to read.

Denouement

Modified Expectations

The wife doesn't react to her husband directly, but does seem to feel his scolding tone. She stays looking out the window as the evening darkens around her. If she can't have "long hair or any fun," she decides at the very least, she still wants a cat.

Conclusion

A Gift from the Padrone

The room and the couple seem to have settled into the same state of restless rest we saw at the beginning of the story when there's a knock at the door. The hotel maid is there with a large cat and tells them it was sent for "the signora."

ANALYSIS: STEAMINESS RATING

Exactly how steamy is this story?

PG-13

The *lack* of sexual tension between this couple is astounding, but it also explains why the padrone affects the American wife in such a significant way. That brief moment when he bows to her from his desk is filled with the kind of restrained, romantic arousal that you'd be more likely to expect from [Jane Austen](https://www.shmoop.com/jane-austen/) than Hemingway. The emphasis of the narrative on the way he wants to "serve" the wife, and the way he makes her feel "important" suggests a type of chivalric fantasy in the way she sees him; he allows her to feel the importance of her pleasure as a woman.

ANALYSIS: ALLUSIONS

When authors refer to other great works, people, and events, it’s usually not accidental. Put on your super-sleuth hat and figure out why.

Historical References

* Hemingway's allusion to a "War Memorial" in the first paragraph is a pointed allusion to World War I. Memorials like these, dedicated to the young men from a particular town who died in battle, were erected after the war in numerous towns and cities, large and small, throughout Europe. Don't forget—these memorials might be nearing a century old today, but back when this story takes place, the destruction and tragedy of the war was still fresh in everyone's mind.