Marlee Yerkes

Jeff Chan

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Paper Four: Narrator/POV

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The Decision

“Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway

Most people might find Ernest Hemingway’s “Hills Like White Elephants” hard to interpret or understand. I have had a similar past experience and therefore could make sense of the story instantly through the dialogue. Several conversations with a past signifiant other of mine were quite similar to the conversations in the story. I instantly knew this story was about a young couple making the decision to abort a child.

The central idea of the story “Hills Like White Elephants” by Ernest Hemingway is that when young people take upon adult actions, they may develop adult problems, leading them to become overwhelmed and unable to take a course of action to solve the problem properly.

The third-person dramatic (objective) narrator takes the bird eye’s view approach to a whole new level in "Hills Like White Elephants." Both the narrator and the main character in Hemingway working together to illustrate information in a more suspenseful way. It doesn’t tell us what the characters are thinking, only what they see, do, and say. An example of this in on page 143, “ The woman came out through the curtains with two glasses of beer and put them down on the damp felt pads. "The train comes in five minutes," she said.

"What did she say?" asked the girl. “That the train is coming in five minutes." . The story provides only minimal context: the train schedules, the heated weather, and the setting of Spain, Ebro, and the hills like white elephants. The story is being told in past tense, meaning the narrator is telling the story after the fact, from memory.

The narrator and point of view of the story helps cause the central idea to emerge because the narrator allows us to see what everyone is doing from an objective reliable point of view. This is best illustrated on page, 140 “ It’s really an awful simple operation, Jig,” The man said. “It’s not really and operation at all.” The girl looked at the ground that the table legs rested on. “Then what will we do afterwords? (141)”. By seeing what both characters do and say, we an get a more honest and reliable idea of what is really going on through the third person objective narrator.

After reading the story, I knew that the couple would not last because my significant other and I, having a similar experience, did not last. The story reminded me a lot of my younger self, as well as the experiences and decisions I was faced with coming into to adulthood. Making the decision was hard, but in the end, you need to make the decision that will make you happy in order to become your full potential.

Work Cited

Lawn, Beverly. “Hills Like White Elephants.” *40 Short Stories: a Portable Anthology*, by Ernest Hemingway, 5th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2017, pp. 139–143.