

Course: English Literature (1st year)

Lesson02: “Cat in the Rain” Analysis

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## **Analysis of “Cat in the Rain” (1925) by Ernest Hemingway**

### **Plot summary:**

The story is about an American couple staying at a hotel near which there is a war monument. It is raining heavily one day, the American wife looks out of the window and spots a cat who is trying to get shelter from the rain under a table. She goes to fetch the cat while her husband, George is sitting in bed, reading a book. On her way downstairs, she meets the hotel operator whom she likes. Once she is downstairs, a maid appears with an umbrella telling her that she mustn't get wet. The wife fails to find the cat and she goes upstairs to her hotel room feeling sad and disappointed. She starts telling her husband that she wants a cat and many other things such as wanting to grow her hair out, wanting a table with her own silver among other things. Her husband, engrossed in his book, tells her to “shut up” and to find a book to read. The story ends with the maid knocking on the American wife's door and handing her a cat from the hotel owner.

### **Plot Elements:**

**Rising Action:** The American wife, from her window, notices a cat underneath a table seeking shelter from the rain and she decides to go out and bring her to her hotel room.

**Climax:** The American wife goes out into the garden looking for the cat with the help of a maid but she doesn't find her eventually.

**Falling action:** The American wife starts showing interest in possessing a new life.

**Denouement/resolution:** The American wife has been given a new cat.

### **Characters Analysis:**

**Major characters:** The American wife.

**Minor/supporting characters:** The husband, George, the hotel keeper, the maid and the cat.

### **The American wife:**

- The American is the protagonist of the story.
- The readers never learn her name throughout the story. All that we know about this character is that she has feelings of isolation and loneliness.
- This character represents the case of many women in 1920s America where they were thought to have had much freedom in comparison to the previous generation.
- While it is true that they had some freedom, they were still restricted by social laws that still expected them to stay indoors.
- This short story is a reflection of the American wife's struggle to cope with the confines of marriage and her longing for new freedom outside the confines of the home that is represented in the hotel room.

### **George (the husband)**

- George is a passive character and he is too self involved, he sits and reads.
- He is very dismissive of his wife in the way that he keeps ignoring her.
- He tells her to shut up in response to her material demandings
- He does not show any care towards his wife. Even when he said he would fetch the cat, he did not show any efforts to do so.

### **Central Themes of the Story:**

- **Lack of communication:** "Cat in the rain" is a short story that was published in 1925 and is set in the early years of the 20th century. In the years following the first world war, the disruption of traditional social norms became a characteristic that defines this age. There was a collapse of traditional notions of family and other social institutions. This breakdown at the level of family in particular and society in general led the individual to experience feelings of rootlessness in the present and disillusionment about the future. The couple of "Cat in the Rain", traveling in Italy, are representatives of those realities of the society. There appears to be no affectionate communication between them and they appear to have only a very superficial connection. The husband does not show much interest in the wife and this lack of attention is evidenced by the fact that the wife is pleased when the hotel owner shows

concern for her well being. These are attentions that she apparently does not get from her husband.

- **The desire for freedom:** The American wife seems to be a prisoner of her hotel room as well as her mind. This means that the sense of imprisonment she feels in the hotel room represents the confining position in her society. She is clearly confined within her meaningless marriage which offers no escape. Her constant complaining about wanting material things indicates that she desires a new life away from the restrictions of marriage.

### **Setting of the Story:**

**Location:** hotel room in Italy.

**Time:** 1925

**The narrator:** third person omniscient because he has got access to many details about different characters and especially the major character.

### **Conflict of the Story:**

**External conflict:** between the American wife and her husband. The wife seeks attention from her husband by constantly asking for things she wants to have and her husband in turn ignores her.

**Internal conflict:** within the American wife's mind. She is confined and restricted in her marriage life and she longs for freedom and independence.

**Symbolism:** Symbolism is a literary device that uses symbols to represent something beyond the literal meaning. symbols can be words, objects, characters, or concepts that elicit a range of other meanings beyond the literal. Some examples of symbolism in this story are:

The Cat symbolises the American wife.

Rain symbolises unfortunate family life.

New Clothes: Symbolise the need for new life.

