

Writing from Reading

Summarize

1 What is the conflict between the man and the woman? Based on context clues, what kind of "operation" does he want her to have?

2 Hemingway includes very little exposition—that is, text that explains who the characters are and what their situation consists of. Make a list of all you know about the girl and the man. How much of the list does Hemingway state directly, and how much did you infer? In what ways is relying heavily on reader inferences appropriate for the subject matter here?

Analyze Craft

3 What is the point of view in the story? How does Hemingway's use of an impartial narrator affect the tone of the story? How would the tone change if he had written it in first person from the woman's perspective? The man's? How would the story change if the reader had access to either or both of the characters' thoughts?

4 Choose one of the many symbols in the story, such as the train tracks or the man's luggage, and discuss its meaning in the story. How is your interpretation of the couple's actions or conversation affected by your understanding of this symbol's significance?

Analyze Voice

5 Examine the use of dialogue in this story. What purposes does dialogue serve in this story? How does the use of dialogue here differ from dialogue in other stories you've read?

6 The dialogue in this story seldom includes signpost language such as "he said" or "she said." Discuss how you, as a reader, keep track of which character is speaking. Does Hemingway characterize each character's dialogue in particular ways? Explain your answer.

7 Describe the sentences that appear outside of dialogue. Are they long or short, simple or complex? Taken together, what kind of impression do they create?

Synthesize Summary and Analysis

8 Identify all references to the white hills throughout the story. What do the hills represent? Does the meaning of the hills change as the story progresses?

9 Hemingway is famous for his theory that, like an iceberg, good fiction should show only the tip of the story, leaving the rest below the surface (that is, not stated). Is this story successful in living up to his assertion that the "dignity of movement of an ice-berg" has to do with what's submerged? Why or why not?

Interpret the Story

10 The characters stand on the brink of making a decision. Do you think Jig will go through with the operation? Why or why not? In either case, what do you believe will be the fate of the couple's relationship? What clues in the text lead you to this conclusion?