

CAT IN THE RAIN THEME OF

ISOLATION

The cringing kitty under the table in the rain is the ultimate image of isolation in "Cat in the Rain." Not only is it alone; it's also trapped. Like the cat, the American wife and her husband are both isolated from each other, which is made all the more palpable since they're living in such close quarters. Their isolation from everyone else as the only Americans in the hotel also reinforces the strangeness and discomfort of their feelings towards each other. The isolation between them is something you read in their lack of real communication, in the way they barely seem to hear or respond to one another. This gap between them is indeed wider and more difficult and hostile than any language barrier. This was definitely not a match made in heaven.

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DISSATISFACTION

The wife's restlessness is a mounting force in this story. She's unable to say what exactly is making her dissatisfied in her life; instead, she harps on a multitude of small things. Her dissatisfaction with the life she leads with her husband is particularly problematic because, like the cat trapped under the table in the rain, there's not really any way to escape

Setting

An Italian city on a Rainy Day

This story is set in an Italian city. This city may have been familiar to Hemingway, as he was stationed in Italy during [World War I](#). 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. 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 city 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 cities 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.

Characters Analysis

The AMERICAN WIFE

we simply never learn this woman's name. Neither the narrator, nor the hotel staff, nor even her own husband ever address the American wife by her name, which means that we can only talk about her using the words we're given by the story – American wife, American girl, and the title used by the maid and the padrone, "Signora. By not naming her, Hemingway helps us ask how much this character is an "American wife"—a stereotype or reflection of a typical "American wife" in the 1920s

—"American girls" are not just known as complacent, passive people. In many other parts of the world, people think of Americans as fiercely independent, even rash. This side of the coin is reflected in the story, too. The wife goes out into the rain on a whim, speaks her mind, and has the trademark boyish ["flapper" haircut](#)

By giving us this image and representation of an "American wife"—and not even letting us call her by another name—allows Hemingway to make a pretty interesting jab at the problems faced by his overly-idealistic generation.

we could also argue that the "American wife" is ready to be something other than the American girl we see her as. She's restless. She has nothing to do with herself. The way she springs into action when she sees the cat tells us a lot about just how bored she is. The idea of rescuing a cat offers her a temporary sense of purpose, and perhaps even a more permanent purpose if she gets to keep it...never mind the fact that she's far from home in an Italian hotel.

Think, too, of the list of "wants" she spouts when she returns to the room: a cat, her own silver, candles, her own dining table. The other things she wants, long hair (when she has short hair), springtime (when it's not), and new clothes are all desires for change.

George

George is the most realistic character in this story. George is clearly pretty content with staying put—unlike his wife. The wife in this story is almost constantly in motion, but her husband is the complete opposite of this. He's

perfectly content with his reading. He even suggests that his wife does the same after throwing a cranky "shut up" in her direction.

George is the most inactive figure in the story. His eyes look up from the book now and then, he "shifts" at one point, but the guy never actually leaves the bed. George's sense of stability and satisfaction is in the life of books,

In a way, George's character represents everything the wife wants to escape. Her wish list is full of material goods, which can be seen as at odds with her husband's fondness of intellectual fulfillment. George might sense her dissatisfaction with him, which would explain the slightly touchy "shut-up." Then again, he's just trying to read his darn book.

The Hotel-Keeper : the padrone

the padrone looking something like: mature, handsome, and very dapper. Even though the story is told mostly in the third person, we certainly get to hear a lot about how the wife feels about this guy

we'd say these thoughts are just projections of her own desires. Hemingway could have chosen to tell us that the padrone genuinely wants to serve her and really likes being a hotelkeeper, but he doesn't do that. We never hear what the padrone thinks of the wife, at least not from his own point of view. Instead, by putting these thoughts and judgments in the wife's mind, he's reminding us of the intense and basic reason why the wife likes him: he makes her feel a certain way about herself—respected, cared for, "important." The fact we never hear what the padrone is actually thinking serves as a reminder of how focused the story's perspective is on the wife's experience.

In some ways, it seems like the padrone is a kind of symbol of masculinity—or perhaps he is just more masculine than the woman's husband. Hemingway's emphasis on the largeness of the man and the way he makes the wife feel "small inside" makes us think her reaction is in some way related to the padrone's masculinity. He, being so masculine, makes her feel feminine—something that comes to bear just a few minutes later as the wife tells her husband how she "gets so tired of looking like a boy"