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Hills like White Elephants

Hills like White Elephant is a short story, written by Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway uses different imagery in his story. The most prominent imagery is ‘White Elephants’. The white elephant represents the unborn child of a girl that no one wants. The girl's remark at the start of the story makes it seem that the nearby hills look like a white elephant which seems unusual initially. It’s a signal to her and the Americans to converse their child and the option of having an abortion. The girl later withdraws this remark that the hills do not really look like white elephants, may because she wants the child to live. In fact, she says that the hills look like white elephants at first but looking at them closely, they are beautiful. The comparison of hills and metaphor of baby is a verbal expression of something sorely clear and nobody wants to talk about it. Another imagery of bamboo curtain is used by Hemingway. Bamboo curtain presents separations and partitions. Jig and the American man have different opinions about abortion, nature of happiness and their future. “It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig”, the man said. ’It's not really an operation at all(*Bloom’s Literary Reference Online | Normal Public Library*).” The imagery of train station and the luggage is also used symbolically by Hemingway. There are two couples who are killing time between Barcelona and Madrid. They face difficulty in making the decision whether they should get married or have an abortion. Train station, ports and bus stations give the sense of being in experiences and worlds. The stickers on suitcase represents and serves a visual reminder of how and where Jig became pregnant.

The setting of the story is in a train station to highlight the fact that the relationship between the girl and the American man is at crossroads. Settled in the middle of a deserted valley, the station is not a journey's end but just a pausing point between Madrid and Barcelona. So travelers, plus key personalities of the story, must choose where to go, and in this circumstance, whether to go with each other and endure their relationship or not. “There was no shade…. The station was between two long rails in the sun(*Bloom’s Literary Reference Online | Normal Public Library*).” This line endures to offer a literal account, which simultaneously fills the story setting in detail. Furthermore, the difference between the barren valley and white hills may highlight the dichotomy between death and life, infertility and fertility, and reflect the girl's choice between having a baby and having an abortion. The girl looks uncertain between the two scenes, not only remarking on the loveliness of the hills but also walking physically to the end of the platform and staring at the brown void around the station. The story is mostly narrated in dialogue, with slight parts used to explain the setting. Characters use dialogues to describe the setting of the story. Hemingway makes no comment from a particular personal point of view, nor does he, in storytelling, offer his candid sentiments on how to think or feel about emerging issues. Hemingway shapes the story that ends abruptly, without the couple's conflict being fixed(*“Hills Like White Elephants” and the Collusion of Non-Communication - Hektoen International*). The mystery of the end is much debated; though, the effect of what is not said in words can be obtained through the symbolism of their environment. When examining the setting, the final choice of the couple becomes immediately apparent anyway.

**Work Cited:**

*Bloom’s Literary Reference Online | Normal Public Library*. https://www.normalpl.org/blooms-literary-reference-online. Accessed 19 Nov. 2019.

*“Hills Like White Elephants” and the Collusion of Non-Communication - Hektoen International*. https://hekint.org/2017/01/23/hills-like-white-elephants-and-the-collusion-of-non-communication/. Accessed 19 Nov. 2019.