

THE 'ROSENKRANTZ AND HEMINGWAY' EXERCISE

Read "A Clean, Well Lighted Place" by Hemingway (It is a very short story. If you don't have it in a collection of short stories, you can access it on line at <http://www.cis.vt.edu/modernworld/d/hemingway.html>)

The story is an interesting example of dialogue but is not an intensive instance of point of view. We're asking you to use the story as the springboard for a character point-of-view excursion that Hemingway can only wish he'd thought of. As you do this, it is probably a good idea to put away any thought of sounding like Hemingway by honoring the tone of the original story. What we're asking you to do is entirely new. Make it your own.

Here are the alternatives. Choose one and run with it:

- Shift to the soldier and the girl who pass the cafe, and tell their story. (You can tell it from the soldier's or the girl's or the guard's point of view, or, if you like, from an omniscient point of view.)
- Tell the young waiter's story from the time he gets home after work. (Choose either his or his wife's point of view, or omniscient).
- Write the attempted suicide scene, the rescue, and its aftermath, with a cast of characters that might go beyond the niece and the old customer and include other family, hospital personnel, etc. (Make point of view selections)
- Tell the old customer's story from earlier that evening before he goes to the cafe. Assume that he was with his niece, perhaps he lives with her. (Choose either the niece's or the old man's point of view, or you can write it in omniscient point of view).
- Write a short sequel to the story, in which the older waiter encounters the old customer and helps him find his way home. (Again, choose point of view, or you can continue with the omniscient point of view from the main story.)
- The barman who served the older waiter closed up his establishment and was mugged on his way home that night. In the course of it, he was restrained at knifepoint, and the mugger seriously considered killing him. Write the story of the mugging.
- Write a piece about two college students who have been assigned to read "A Clean Well-Lighted Place."
- Figure some other way to spin off a side story from the story, and do that.

As you write, remember that you don't have to spend a lot of time setting the context of the story you tell. Everyone in the class will have read the underlying Hemingway story, so they will understand. Just come right in in the middle of things -- which also happens to be an effective technique for telling many stories.) You'll also be able to experiment with dialogue, incorporating it into your point of view work and noticing the special capabilities that it presents. And when you write dialogue, don't be as stingy with the 'he said,' 'she said's as Hemingway was. It got him into trouble. Also figure ways to identify who is speaking, as an alternative to the he/she saids. (Please note again, this is not intended to be a Hemingway look-alike exercise -- which means that you can implement any style that's comfortable to you.)

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