Cat in the Rain

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Among the pantheon of American writers, Ernest Hemingway is undoubtedly a giant. His own life story rivals the stuff of fiction. Born to a well-to-do family in Illinois, he signed on to become an ambulance driver in Italy towards the end of the First World War (1914-1918), when he was still only eighteen. He won the Italian Silver Medal for Bravery for acts of heroism during the conflict, during which he was also wounded. After the war, he worked as a journalist, moving to Paris as a foreign correspondent in 1921, where he met many of the literary luminaries of the period, including Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and James Joyce. Hemingway's short stories began garnering attention in the 1920s, and he moved on to long-form fiction with his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). As his literary reputation steadily grew, his travels continued. In the 1930s he spent time in Key West, Cuba and Spain, where he reported on the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In 1944, he returned to cover the Second World War in Europe (1939-1944). Meanwhile, he continued publishing novels, including *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *To Have and Have Not* (1937), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), all of which touched on themes of war. Other themes of his writing include the wilderness, masculinity and alienation. In 1954, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Although his writing career was spectacularly successful, his life would end in tragedy. By the beginning of the 1960s, he was suffering from serious depression and health problems, partly as a result of a life of heavy drinking, as well as several injuries and accidents. On July 2nd, 1961, while living in Idaho, he killed himself with his favorite shotgun.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Hemingway lived through, and experienced firsthand, many of the major events of the first half of the twentieth century. Most notable among these experiences was his time serving as an ambulance driver in Italy during the First World War (1914-1918), and as a correspondent during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the Second World War (1939-1945). The First World War—which was triggered by the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand—pitted Austria, Germany and their allies (the Central Powers), against Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy (the Allied Powers). Tens of millions of soldiers fought in the war. Millions died. The United States only sent troops to Europe in 1917. The war finally ended in 1918, when the Treaty of Versailles was signed by both sides, leading to an armistice. The Second World War began with Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. In response, France and Great Britain declared war on Germany and its Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler, who had ambitions to annex large parts of Europe. The war played out between the Allied Powers, which included Russia and the United States in addition to Britain and France, and the Axis Powers, which included Germany, Italy, and Japan. Widespread death and destruction ensued, including the genocide of six million European Jews and the extermination of many Roma, disabled people, and other ethnic and religious minorities under Hitler's orders. In 1945, realizing that he was losing the war, Hitler committed suicide, and the Axis Powers soon surrendered to the Allies. In between the two World Wars, Hemingway was also witness to the Spanish Civil War, a conflict that pitted left-leaning Republicans against fascist-leaning Nationalists led by Francisco Franco.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Hemingway's pared-down writing style—on full display in "Cat in the Rain"—can be credited to the influence of the seminal modernists of his time, particularly the poet Ezra Pound and the novelist James Joyce, both of whom he met while living in Paris in the 1920s. From Pound, Hemingway learned to distill his sentences into tight, concise images—no surprise given Pound's own part in ushering in the "imagist" movement in poetry, which extolled precision and economy of description and rejected elaborate literary or poetic diction in favor of informal spoken language. Such traits are embodied in some of Pound's famous short poems, such as "In a Station of the Metro," as well as his masterwork, the *Cantos*. They are also traits of Hemingway's signature style, notable for its precise and concise description and its simple, straightforward diction. Joyce's influence on Hemingway is also apparent when one compares a story such as "Cat in the Rain" with the collected stories in Joyce's early work, *Dubliners* (1914). Indeed, Hemingway studied *Dubliners* as a model while completing *In Our Time* (1925), the book in which "Cat in the Rain" appears. The modernist themes of alienation, loneliness, and loss are a distinctive aspect both of Joyce's *Dubliners* and "Cat in the Rain."

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** "Cat in the Rain"
- **When Written:** 1923-1925
- **Where Written:** Paris
- **When Published:** 1925
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Short story

- **Setting:** Italy
- **Climax:** The hotel staff brings the wife a cat
- **Antagonist:** George
- **Point of View:** Third person narrator

EXTRA CREDIT

The man with nine lives? Or Superman? Hemingway survived a surprising array of violent accidents during his lifetime, including two plane crashes within two days of one another in 1954.

Tragic endings. Sadly, Hemingway wasn't the only member of his family to take his own life. His father, brother, sister and his granddaughter all committed suicide.

PLOT SUMMARY

Two Americans—an American wife and her husband, George—are staying in a hotel in Italy. The room they occupy overlooks what would, on a nice day, be a beautiful scene: a beach, a public garden, and a **war monument**. However, on this day, the **weather** is terrible. Rain drips from the trees in the garden, on the beach, and on the war monument. The landscape is deserted.

Standing at her hotel window, the American wife looks out on this scene and spots a lone wet **cat** sheltering under a café table. She tells her husband, who reclines on the bed reading a newspaper, that she will go downstairs to save the "poor kitty" from the rain. Her husband offers to go instead, but she declines.

Downstairs, she passes the office of the hotel-keeper, an old, tall, dignified Italian who rises from his seat at the far end of the room and bows when he sees her. The American wife likes the hotel-keeper very much. She likes his dignity, his readiness to serve her, as well as his face and his big hands. She exchanges a few words with him in Italian about the bad weather, and continues on her way.

She opens the door to step outside only to find that it is raining harder. She needs to make her way to the right, and considers going under the eaves to protect herself from the rain. Just then, the hotel maid appears. She opens an umbrella over the wife's head, telling her in Italian that she mustn't get wet. The American wife guesses that the hotel-keeper has sent her.

With the maid following her with the umbrella, the American wife makes her way to the table, but finds that the cat has disappeared from under it. She is terribly disappointed. The hotel maid asks her if she has lost something, and the American wife tells her that there was a cat. Even though the maid laughs at this, the American wife tells her that she had really wanted the cat. The two women return inside, and the American wife passes the office of the hotel-keeper, who bows once more.

When she returns to her room upstairs, her husband asks if she has found the cat, and she tells him that it is gone. She confesses that she really wanted the cat, though she doesn't know why, and dwells on the poor cat's plight in the rain.

She goes to a dressing table and looks at herself with a hand glass, studying her face and the back of her head and neck in detail. She asks George whether it wouldn't be a good idea to let her hair grow out. George considers her short hair and tells her that he likes it the way it is. She responds that she's tired of looking like a boy, and George reassures her that she looks pretty good.

The wife goes over to the window, and notices that it's getting dark. As she looks out, she expresses a long list of desires. She wants hair that she can pull back into a knot at the back of her neck. She wants to have a kitty to sit on her lap and to purr when she strokes it. She wants to eat at a table with her own silver, and she wants candles. She wants it to be spring. She wants new clothes.

George, who had begun by paying attention to his wife's statements, loses interest and tells her to shut up and get something to read. The wife continues looking out of the window. It's dark, but still raining. She repeats several times that she wants a cat—especially since she can't have long hair or any fun.

George, who is immersed in his reading, is no longer listening. Just then someone knocks at the door and George invites them to enter. The hotel maid stands in the doorway with a large tortoise-shell cat in her hands. She informs them that the "padrone"—the hotel-keeper—has sent her with the cat for the American wife.

CHARACTERS

The American Wife – The story's protagonist is a nameless young American woman on holiday in Italy with her husband, George. She is attractive, with short boyish hair. She is clearly unhappy, bored, and lonely, spending much time gazing out of the window of the hotel room she shares with George, from whom she seems to be disconnected. However, when she sees a cat in the rain across the street, she perks up, telling George that she's going to go find it and bring it to their hotel. Her deep sense of dissatisfaction and alienation is not only embodied in her disappointment in failing to find the **cat**, but also in the litany of complaints and desires that she shares with George. She seems to feel ambivalent about her own femininity. On the one hand she takes an independent stance in rejecting her husband's offer to find the cat on her behalf. On the other hand, the desires that she expresses to George—such as her desire for long hair, silver, and a creature to nurture—reflect an attraction to conventional femininity. As an American, she

seems to be oblivious to the destruction that has recently been wrought in Europe by the First World War (1914-1918), destruction which is embodied not only in the desolate, rainy weather, but also in the **war monument** that the hotel room overlooks.

George – The American wife's husband, George spends most of the story reading on a bed in a hotel room in Italy. He is in the country on holiday with his wife. Though George at times seems to be attentive to his partner—offering to go down to get the **cat** that she spots from their hotel window, and also telling her that she looks nice—he ultimately seems unable to connect and respond to his wife's loneliness and unhappiness. When she returns to their room after having failed to find the cat and shares a long list of wants and desires with him, he responds by telling her to shut up and get something to read.

The Hotel-keeper – A tall, old, dignified Italian man who looks after guests of the hotel in Italy where the American wife and her husband George are staying while on vacation in Italy. The American wife passes his office on the ground floor of the hotel twice when she goes in search of the **cat** that she had spotted from her hotel window in the bad weather. On both occasions, the hotel-keeper rises and bows to her. The hotel-keeper contrasts with the American wife's husband, in that he seems to be much more sensitive to her wishes and desires than George. He acts out his part as consummate and attentive host by anticipating her needs, first by sending out the hotel maid with an umbrella for the wife when she goes outside in search of the cat, and at the end of the story, when he sends up the maid to the couple's room with a cat for the wife.

The Maid – An Italian woman who works in a hotel in Italy under the hotel-keeper. Her responsibilities include cleaning the room occupied by the American wife and her husband, George. Within the hierarchy of characters in the story, the maid is the most powerless (all of her actions, such as following the American wife outside with an umbrella, as well as bringing up a **cat** to her room, are directed by her boss, the hotel-keeper). However, she also seems to be quite bold and unafraid, laughing in the face of the American wife when she learns that she has gone out in the bad **weather** to look for a cat.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

LONGING AND DISAPPOINTMENT

In Ernest Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain," a woman's yearning to bring a cat indoors becomes an embodiment of all her longing and desire. On a rainy day in Italy, the unnamed protagonist of the story, an American wife, spots a **cat** from the window of the hotel room she shares with her husband, George. Her sudden impulse to save the cat from the rain, however, is frustrated when she descends to the street only to discover that the cat has disappeared. Through this simple incident, the story delves into the discontent and disillusion that often haunt people's ordinary lives. The world is indifferent to people's whims, the story suggests, and thus even as longing and desire are fundamental human impulses, they inevitably end in frustration and disappointment.

At first, the woman's desire seems simple and easy enough to fulfill. Upon seeing a cat taking shelter from the rain beneath a café table, the woman informs her husband that she will go downstairs to bring it indoors from the bad weather. In noting to her husband how "the poor kitty" is "out trying to keep dry under a table," the protagonist seems to recognize the cat's own frustrated desire to find shelter. It is significant that the cat's predicament triggers the wife's empathy, as this suggests that there is something about the animal's plight with which she identifies.

When she goes out in the rain only to find that the cat has disappeared, however, the woman is "disappointed." Instead of being glad that the cat has perhaps found a better shelter elsewhere, she is frustrated, telling the hotel maid who has followed her out with an umbrella that "she wanted [the cat] so much." This moment reveals that, despite her feeling of kinship, the animal—perhaps representative of the larger world itself—is indifferent to her desire. In expecting to find the cat easily, the woman is left longing for something she can't have.

The woman's desire for the cat is, of course, about much more than the cat. Indeed, her disappointment over the disappeared animal awakens a whole host of other frustrated longings. After returning upstairs to the hotel room where her husband continues to read the paper, she examines herself in the mirror, and tells him that she wants to grow out her short hair. Her desire to transform her appearance is implicitly linked to a latent desire to transform her life; she not only wants a cat, she wants to change the way she looks, and she also adds that she wants her own silver. She even wishes it were spring—something decidedly out of her control. On the surface, the desires that the woman expresses are mundane, but they point to a deeper striving for radical and transformative change, which seems to be beyond reach.

At the end of the story, the woman does indeed get a cat. The attentive hotel-keeper, who had found out about her search earlier, sends up the hotel maid with a cat to give to her. This ending, however, is ambiguous. On the one hand, the woman's longing for a cat seems to be on the brink of fulfillment: standing in front of her is the maid with an animal in her hands. On the other hand, it is not clear whether the cat that the maid presents is the same one that the woman had sought earlier.

The reader is never given a description of the cat that the woman sees from the hotel window, while the cat that is brought up by the maid at the end of the story is described as a "big tortoise-shell cat."

At the end of the story, the narrator doesn't describe the woman as recognizing the cat—in fact, the story ends before the reader is given the woman's reaction to the animal at all. Thus, there is the strong possibility that the hotel owner has simply found another cat to give to the woman. In this way, the story leaves the reader in the dark about whether the woman's desire is in fact fulfilled or not. The woman gets a cat, but is it the cat she wants? By leaving open the possibility that it is *not*, the story reinforces the idea that, even in their fulfillment, people's wishes may be frustrated. Whether the woman chooses to settle for this replacement animal—in a way, to accept her reality—remains left unsaid. The story also leaves open-ended the question of whether it is wiser to anticipate disillusionment, or to forever seek a (perhaps foolish) sense of personal fulfillment in an indifferent world. Either way, the woman's frustrated desire for the cat in this story reflects the longing that all people experience at one point or another—a longing for more, and for better.

LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

Set on a rainy day in Italy, "Cat in the Rain" has an atmosphere of isolation and loneliness. The unnamed American wife is unable to find the companionship and emotional closeness she seeks from those around her—including from her husband George, despite that they are living in the same hotel room. To assuage her feelings of loneliness, she becomes fixated on getting a **cat**. Hemingway's brief tale implicitly argues for the importance of connection through its exploration of the pain and desperation of isolation—which, it further suggests, can develop regardless of one's physical proximity to another person.

The setting of the story itself mirrors the isolation of its characters. The wife and her husband are stuck inside their hotel room because of the rain. The room faces out onto the sea and a public garden, yet even looking out the window offers no comforting glimpse of other people; there are no artists out painting in the garden, as there would be in better weather, and the square on which the room faces is empty—no cars can be seen anywhere. The image of water standing "in pools on the gravel path" further imbues the landscape with a sense of stillness and desertion.

Even if there were others around, however, the story suggests that the husband and wife would remain isolated. They are notably the only two Americans staying at the hotel and do not know any of the other guests. This implicitly suggests their sense of alienation from those around them in this foreign country—they are strangers in a strange land. What's more, as the husband contentedly retreats into a book, he leaves his wife alone to look out the window upon this wet, abandoned world, thereby deepening her feelings of solitude.

Indeed, the couple is not only isolated from those around them, but also from each other. The first image of the wife presented to the reader depicts her facing away from her spouse, who reclines on the bed reading. As she looks out the window, her physical position in relation to her husband echoes the emotional distance between them. The wife's alienation from her husband is again emphasized when she returns to their room after failing to find the cat. Again, the wife does not look at George, but instead goes to the mirror to look at herself before proceeding to look out the window—effectively choosing to turn away from her lonely life and toward the world beyond, which perhaps offers the possibility of connection.

George is not sympathetic to her subsequent string of complaints and desires about wanting the cat, wanting new silver, and wanting it to be spring. He responds by saying, "Oh, shut up and get something to read." This response affirms that George is unable to understand or connect to his wife's emotional needs. It is no wonder that she feels estranged from him and never bothers to look at him directly. Nevertheless, the wife still clearly longs for connection with *someone*—a desire that manifests in the narrator's statements about the hotel-keeper whom she meets when she descends to find the wet cat. The narrator states that the "wife liked him," and "[s]he liked the way he wanted to serve her." The narrator never communicates any such feelings of fondness on the part of the wife for her husband.

Yet her relationship to the hotel-keeper is also ultimately characterized by distance. When the wife goes downstairs, for example, he stands "behind his desk in the far end of the dim room." He is physically separated from her—just as her husband had been upstairs. This distance between the woman and the hotel-keeper alludes to the fact that, regardless of her fondness for him, their relationship remains formal and remote; she can only interact with him in his professional capacity as the hotel-keeper.

These markedly cold relationships establish the wife's desperate loneliness; she has no means by which to feel valued, needed, and close to another living creature. The woman, in turn, projects her own feelings onto the cat that she seeks to save from the rain. Looking out of the hotel window at the beginning of the story, the woman sees the cat alone, crouching under a dripping café table. That the cat's trouble provokes her immediate sympathy suggests that she identifies with the animal's isolation.

Significantly, the woman's disappointment at not finding the cat when she goes to rescue it further highlights her need for some sort of intimate emotional contact and connection. She tells George that she "wanted [the cat] so much." That she sought to overcome her own loneliness through her contact with the cat

is implied in her statement to George that "I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her." This image of close, warm, physical touch again underscores the woman's immense sense of isolation—a feeling she had hoped her contact with the animal would alleviate.

Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain" thus repeatedly highlights alienation as central to the American wife's experience. In portraying her distance from her husband, the story further underscores the ways in which people can feel emotionally disconnected even from those with whom they are supposedly most intimate. Nevertheless, the need for close emotional contact and connection remains irrepressible. People will look for such connection anywhere—even if that means turning to a helpless cat caught in the rain.

GENDER ROLES AND FEMININITY

Published in 1925, a time of liberation and new-found freedoms for many women, "Cat in the Rain" projects a clear ambivalence regarding certain changes in women's position in society. The female protagonist herself—a short-haired, ostensibly childless wife living out of a hotel room—seems to bristle at being distanced from more stereotypical femininity, as is evidenced by her ultimate longing to embrace a more traditional woman's role (that is, to be a caretaker, a homemaker, to be beautiful). Yet the fact that she also seems to be dismissed or infantilized by the men around her (and even by the author himself) implicitly suggests the reductive nature of restrictive notions of both masculinity and femininity. The story's ultimate ambiguity regarding gender roles can be read both as a general reaction to era's promises of "progressiveness" that dictated new (but ultimately equally restrictive) rules for women's behavior, and as a likely consequence of Hemingway's own positioning as a "macho" author writing at a time of radical transformation in the relations between the sexes.

George's attitude towards his wife is marked by condescension, which seems to stem from a stereotypical understanding of gender. When the wife first informs her husband that she will go outside to rescue the **cat** from the rain, George tells her, "I'll do it." In offering to take on this very simple task, one which his wife is easily capable of doing herself, the husband seems to position her as weak and dependent, and he himself as able and powerful by contrast. In this way, he reinforces a traditional gender hierarchy.

Furthermore, when the wife returns upstairs after having failed to locate the cat and begins examining herself in the mirror and wondering whether she should grow her hair out, George seems concerned that she keep her appearance according to his liking. Considering her short hair, he says, "I like it the way it is," and affirms again, "You look pretty darn nice." While perhaps a half-hearted attempt to assuage his wife's anxieties about her looks, these comments implicitly reveal George to be more fixated on his own appreciation of his wife's appearance, rather than on hers; his comments—however complimentary—suggest that his wife's appearance exists primarily for his consumption.

George's condescension towards his wife is further reflected in his irritation over the list of desires she communicates to him. Rather than affirming her desires—for a cat, for long hair, for silver, and for spring—he tells her, "Oh, shut up and get something to read," before turning back to his newspaper—effectively ending the discussion with a complete dismissal of his wife's attempt to communicate her needs. While it's arguable that the wife's desires are in many ways mundane and petty, George's refusal and/or inability to respond to them—particularly to her need for genuine connection, expressed through her longing for the cat—alludes to a certain masculine insensitivity and callousness.

While the hotel-keeper behaves more kindly towards the wife than her husband does, his attitude, too, is ultimately marked by a distinct sense of condescension. The wife seems to like the hotel-keeper more than her husband. When she sees him downstairs, the narrator notes how she "liked" him and "liked the way he wanted to serve her." In responding to the way that he "wanted to serve her," the woman seems to be adopting a more traditionally feminine posture in relation to the hotel-keeper than towards her husband, whose offers of service she had refused.

And indeed, the hotel-keeper does serve the woman. At the end of the story, he sends up the hotel maid with a cat (one, however, that is likely not the same one that the woman had sought earlier). It remains unclear if the hotel-keeper's action is a reflection of his genuine respect for her wishes, or simply a sloppy attempt to "serve" an eccentric female guest. The fact that the cat the hotel-keeper offers may very well not be the same cat that the woman had wanted suggests that the hotel-keeper, like the husband, treats the woman in a condescending way—he thinks that any cat will do, and thus, in a way, fails to understand that her hankering for a cat has really been an expression of her longing for emotional intimacy. In fact, he arguably treats her like a child, seeking to distract her from the loss of one "toy" by offering another instead. This action suggests that he, like George, infantilizes her and her wishes.

The wife's own attitude towards gender is complex, in that she seems to revolt against the feminine passivity ascribed to her by her husband, yet also seems to embrace a more traditionally feminine identity. By insisting on going down to get the cat herself, for instance, she acts against her husband's presumption of her weakness and incapacity. In this way, she steps out of the role of passivity ascribed to her by George.

However, the longings that the wife expresses after failing to find the cat also suggest her desire for the stereotypically "feminine." She wants to grow her hair out because she is tired of "looking like a boy." She wants silver, presumably to entertain with, thus affirming her traditionally feminine identity a

homemaker. She wants to nurture the cat—again expressing an impulse for caretaking often associated with femininity.

The wife's contradictory actions and expressions suggest an ambivalence at the heart of her identity. Again, given that this story was published in 1925, this can be read as a response to specific changes in women's position in society. The wife acts independently of her husband and wears a short hairstyle that, at the time, was reflective of the more progressive, rebellious identity that women were adopting. As such, her desire for things that are more traditionally "feminine" may suggest that she is not yet entirely comfortable with these changes, or that she ultimately finds them to be unfulfilling demands on her behavior.

The fact that the wife remains unnamed further complicates the story's ambiguous gender dynamics. While the narrative begins by referring to the two Americans as "husband" and "wife," this changes over the course of the story. The husband is given a name—George—while the wife never is. This is especially striking given that she is the tale's protagonist. Her lack of naming can be taken to allude to her anonymity and invisibility as a woman; indeed, George ignore her desires and needs.

Furthermore, the tag that the narrator uses to identify the woman also changes over the course of the story. While the narrator refers to her as "wife" to begin with, as she grows increasingly insecure and unhappy after failing to find the cat the narrator begins to refer to her as "girl." Both labels identify the woman condescendingly: either in relation to her husband or in terms of her emotional immaturity. This, in turn, raises questions about the narrative voice telling the story: the voice seems to reflect (ironically or not) a masculine bias whose attitude towards the woman is characterized either by feminine dependency or feminine emotional immaturity.

Ultimately, the treatment of gender in Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain" is anything but simple. Ambiguity and ambivalence are reflected even in the wife's attitude towards her own femininity. The men that surround her take on stereotypically masculine postures in relation to her, either by dismissing her desires, or by infantilizing her even in their attempts to appease her. "Cat in the Rain's" complicated depiction of gender is, of course, a reflection of the time in which the story is set—when gender roles were being fiercely contested both by women and men, and when attitudes towards gender were very much in flux. Furthermore, Hemingway's well-known tendency to idealize masculinity may well be a reason why the story, while striving to engage meaningfully with the predicament of its female protagonist, raises more questions than it answers.

TOURISM AND WAR

"Cat in the Rain" depicts an American couple on holiday in Italy shortly after the First World War. In doing so, the story inherently foregrounds issues around tourism, difference, and foreign identity. The American wife's longings—which include having the **cat** as a pet—become mundane when played out against the backdrop of the conflict that had recently traumatized Europe. Implicitly contrasting the wife's dissatisfactions with the tragedy of war of which she hardly seems aware, "Cat in the Rain" highlights the innocence, and privilege, of the American experience.

Through his landscape and setting description, Hemingway highlights the First World War as a backdrop to the story. In the opening paragraph, the narrator tells the reader that the room occupied by the American woman and her husband, George, faces out onto a "public garden and the **war monument**." The narrator goes on to further state that the monument "was made of bronze and glistened in the rain." In highlighting the monument, these details immediately call the reader's attention to the fact of the recent war, which broke out in Europe in 1914; American troops did not join until 1917, two-and-a-half years after the conflict's start. At the time of the story's publication in 1925, the First World War was the largest and most violent conflict ever witnessed in history.

The description of a desolate, wet landscape also implicitly calls attention to the destruction wreaked by the war. The public garden is deserted; there are no cars on the square by the war monument. The vast expanse of the sea—which the American woman can see from her hotel window—also gives the impression of desolation; there is no one on the beach, only the sea breaking "in a long line in the rain." This image of a deserted, bleak landscape echoes the fact that the war had only recently wreaked havoc on this environment in which the couple now comfortably visits. The emptiness also recalls the great death toll of the war, which literally led to a significant depletion of the European population.

While the woman looks out on this landscape marked by war, she seems completely unaware, or uninterested, in the conflict itself. The narrator tells the reader that "Italians came from a long way off to look up at the war monument." This suggests the importance that the war holds for the Italians, who after all experienced it firsthand and lived through it. The woman's attention, on the other hand, seems not to be caught by the monument, but rather by a wet cat sheltering under a café table. By setting up a contrast between the Italians' interest in the war monument and the woman's interest in the cat, Hemingway implicitly reflects the main character's obliviousness to the toll of the war on this community. This obliviousness is significant, because it alludes more broadly to the lack of consciousness among many Americans about the destruction caused by the war, having not lived through or experienced the conflict themselves.

Furthermore, the positioning of the woman and her husband as tourists in this war-riven landscape further reinforces the sense that they are "foreign" in Italy, not only as Americans, but

also as a result of the innocence of their experience. The narrator states that the couple are the "only two Americans stopping at the hotel," and that they "did not know any of the people they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their room." By highlighting their estrangement from those around them, the narrator points to a gulf between the couple and the Europeans who surround them.

This gap is further reinforced in the differences in language that the story highlights. The American woman speaks some Italian, but clearly her grasp of the language is weak—she lapses into English when speaking to the maid who accompanies her outside. By including Italian dialogue in the story, Hemingway calls the English reader's attention to difference: the reader is forced to read words that he or she most likely does not comprehend. In this way, the story creates a gap—or a gulf—on the page. This gulf can be taken to allude to the gap in experience between the Americans who can enjoy the landscape as "tourists," and the Europeans who have experienced its destruction.

Within this context, the American wife's mundane desires and longings seem petty to those around her. When the hotel maid who accompanies her outside discovers that she is looking for a cat, she laughs. While the rescue of the cat seems very important to the American woman, to the Italian maid it is so trivial as to be funny. Given the backdrop of the war, all of the American woman's longings and desires—not only for the cat, but to grow her hair out, for new silver, and for spring—seem trivial. They allude to her privileged obliviousness as a person who has not suffered the true deprivations of war.

Hemingway's story thus highlights aspects of tourism and the foreign in such a way as to draw a contrast between the Americans at the center of the story and the landscape and people that surround them. By framing the story's action in the context of the First World War, "Cat in the Rain" underscores the naïve—and privileged—innocence of the American tourists visiting Italy, whose mundane desires and longings seem to take no account of the experience of cataclysmic destruction and desolation that marks the foreign environment through which they move.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

THE CAT

When the American wife spots a cat stuck in the rain across the street from her hotel, it strikes a chord in her. This suggests that the creature's pathetic state encapsulates her own feelings of loneliness and vulnerability. When the wife tells her husband, George, that "It isn't any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain," it echoes her view that her own life is lacking in "fun" and happiness. She feels lonely and vulnerable, something suggested in the long list of unfulfilled desires and wishes she shares with the unsympathetic George. As such, the cat's plight seems to mirror her own emotions. The wife's desire for the animal also embodies her desire for close contact and connection. When she returns upstairs to her room, disappointed after failing to find the animal under the café table, she tells George that she wants a cat to sit on her lap and purr while she strokes it. This fantasy of close physical contact and connection with the creature points to the wife's longing for emotionally intimate bonds, bonds which seem lacking in her marriage to George.

THE WAR MONUMENT

The bronze war monument visible from the hotel room that the American wife shares with her husband George symbolizes the violence and destruction of the First World War (1914-1918). Given that the story is set shortly after the War, Hemingway uses the monument to draw the reader's attention to that recent history of bloodshed and destruction. The narrator's comment that Italian sightseers come from afar to look at it further reinforces the significance of the monument as a token of that recent devastation—to the Italians, it is a reminder of the loss and sacrifice that resulted from the conflict.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scribner edition of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* published in 1998.

Cat in the Rain Quotes

❝ There were only two Americans stopping at the hotel. They did not know any of the people they passed on the stairs on their way to and from their room.

Related Characters: George, The American Wife

Related Themes:

Page Number: 129

Explanation and Analysis

These first two sentences of "Cat in the Rain" emphasize the alienation of the two hotels guests, the American wife and her husband, George, from the people who surround them. By highlighting that they know no one in the hotel,

Hemingway calls attention to the characters' estrangement in Italy, the country through which they pass as tourists. This estrangement and their distance from the country in turn suggests the gulf that exists between American and European identities and experiences. The Americans are strangers in a strange land, alienated from knowledge of those around them.

> Italians came from a long way off to look up at the war monument. It was made of bronze and glistened in the rain. It was raining. The rain dripped from the palm trees. Water stood in pools on the gravel paths…The motor cars were gone from the square by the war monument.

Related Characters: The American Wife

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 129

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator describes the scene American wife sees from her hotel room in Italy. The presence of the war monument—highlighted by the narrator's description of it glistening in the rain—reminds the reader of the fact that the First World War (1914-1918) had recently taken place in Europe. The war monument, therefore, provides a historical context to the story. By noting how Italian sightseers come from afar to look at the monument, the narrator conveys the importance of the war to the Italians—the conflict was one of the bloodiest and most violent in Italian and European history.

The description of the rainy landscape, particularly of the water standing in "pools on the gravel paths" and the empty square by the monument, is significant in that it implicitly alludes to the destruction and desolation wrought by the war. The emptiness and stillness of the scene inevitably recall the obliteration caused by the conflict.

> The American wife stood at the window looking out. Outside right under their window a cat was crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on.
>
> "I'm going down and get that kitty," the American wife said… "The poor kitty out trying to keep dry under a table."

Related Characters: The American Wife (speaker), George

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 129

Explanation and Analysis

At the beginning of the story, the American wife is depicted looking out of the window of her hotel room in Italy. Her husband George sits in the room with her, and yet the first image the reader gets of her is one that shows her turned away from him. Her positioning in relation to George alludes to the gulf that exists between husband and wife. The American wife does not feel connected to George, and this is reflected in her posture, which faces away from him.

The cat's plight strikes a chord in the American wife. She seems to sympathize with the animal's vulnerability as it tries to shelter from the bad weather, as reflected in the fact that she refers to the animal as the "poor kitty." That the American wife is moved enough by the cat to venture out into the rain to rescue it, therefore, suggests that she emotionally identifies with the animal's isolation and helplessness.

> The wife liked [the hotel-keeper]. She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her.

Related Characters: George, The Hotel-keeper, The American Wife

Related Themes:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

When she goes downstairs to rescue the cat, the American wife meets the hotel-keeper, who rises from a chair in his office to bow to her. Her feelings towards the hotel-keeper seem to contrast with the feelings she has towards her own husband, George. The narrator never registers any feelings of affection on the part of the wife for George, but the wife emphatically likes the hotel-keeper. By noting how she "liked the way he wanted to serve her," the narrator suggests that the wife misses attention or consideration from her husband, attention and consideration which she receives and responds to from the hotel-keeper instead.

With the maid holding the umbrella over her, she walked along the gravel path until she was under their window. The table was there, washed bright green in the rain, but the cat was gone. She was suddenly disappointed.

Related Characters: The Maid , The American Wife

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

The American wife's feelings of disappointment upon failing to find the cat after venturing out in search of it point to her deeper dissatisfactions. Instead of being happy that the cat might have found shelter elsewhere, for instance, the wife's disappointment suggests that she herself hoped to gain something from the animal. Her disappointment also implicitly alludes to the ways in which people's aspirations—both large and small—are often frustrated. What one wants is often just beyond one's reach, just as the cat—whom the wife had spotted moments earlier from her hotel window—disappears just as her desire for it takes hold.

"Ha perduto qualche cosa, Signora?"

"There was a cat," said the American girl.

"A cat?"

"*Sì, il gatto.*"

"A cat?" the maid laughed. "A cat in the rain?"

"Yes," she said, "under the table." Then, "Oh, I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty."

When she talked English the maid's face tightened.

Related Characters: The Maid , The American Wife (speaker), The Maid

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

The use of Italian dialogue in the text, as reflected in the maid's first question to the American wife, as well as the wife's response, suggests not only a linguistic, but also a cultural and emotional gulf between the maid and the wife. Presumably, many of the story's English readers do not understand Italian. As such, Hemingway's use of Italian alienates the reader in such a way so as to call attention to that gulf that exists between the American characters (as well as the English-speaking readers of the story) and the Italian characters.

In the quotation above, this gulf is made further manifest in two regards. The change in the maid's facial expression when the wife speaks English to her, indicates that the maid also feels estranged from the wife as a result of their linguistic discrepancy. Furthermore, the maid's reaction to the loss of the cat is in striking contrast to the wife's. The maid's laughter suggests that she finds the wife's search for the cat to be so trivial as to be funny, whereas the wife is clearly deeply affected by the loss of the animal. This, again, emphasizes that a gulf exists between the perceptions and feelings of the two women.

Finally, this is the first point in the story when the third-person narrator begins to refer to the American wife as a "girl." This change in labeling is telling: it suggests that as the wife becomes more insecure and unhappy, the narrative perspective on her changes, casting her in terms of an immature youngster rather than a grown woman.

As the American girl passed the office, the padrone bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important.

Related Characters: The Hotel-keeper, The American Wife

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

The American wife's confused feelings as she passes by the office of the hotel-keeper after failing to find the cat underscore the emotional upheaval that the loss of the cat occasions in her. Her sense of being "very small" highlights her own vulnerability and powerlessness, feelings, perhaps, that she had projected onto the "kitty" she had glimpsed from the hotel window earlier. The contradictory feeling of importance serves to highlight her confusion and emotional

disturbance. In losing the cat, she also seems to lose a sense of her own identity—she is no longer certain whether she is in fact "small" or "important." Here, the narrator also refers to her for the first time as a "girl." As the wife's insecurity and uncertainty increases, the narrative perspective on her seems to change, casting her as an immature youngster.

"Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" she asked, looking at her profile again.

George looked up and saw the back of her neck clipped close like a boy's.

"I like it the way it is."

"I get so tired of it," she said. "I get so tired of looking like a boy."

Related Characters: George, The American Wife (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

The wife's comments about her appearance to George, once she returns to the room after having failed to locate the cat, encapsulate the ambivalent attitude she holds towards her own femininity. In the 1920s, when Hemingway's story is set, short hairstyles sported by women were emblematic of a more rebellious, liberated feminine identity emerging at the time. The wife's short haircut, therefore, is a marker of that identity. And yet, her statement that she is "tired of looking like a boy," and her desire to grow her hair out, suggest a yearning for a more conventional, traditional feminine identity. As such, the wife's statements point to her own ambivalent feelings about her femininity—she seems to be torn between more progressive and more traditional notions of the feminine.

George's comment to his wife that he likes her hair the way it is self-centered. Instead of putting his wife's own feelings about her appearance first, he prioritizes his own impressions. This suggests that he approaches his wife's appearance as existing primarily for his satisfaction, rather than hers.

"I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel," she said. "I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her."

"Yeah?" George said from the bed.

"And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in from of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes."

"Oh, shut up and get something to read," George said.

Related Characters: George, The American Wife (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 131

Explanation and Analysis

The list of desires that the American wife expresses—though seemingly trivial—point to a deep dissatisfaction that pervades her life. She wants many things to change, including things over which she has no control, such as the weather. Her desire to touch a cat that sits purring on her lap suggests a yearning for close contact and connection, something that is clearly lacking in her relationship to George, whose cruel response, "Oh, shut up and get something to read," confirms his estrangement from his wife, particularly his inability to respond to her needs.

The other things that the wife wants—such as long hair and her own silver, presumably to entertain with—are also telling. Both long hair and the accessories of the domestic, such as silver, are associated with conventional femininity. In this way, the wife's desires also imply that she yearns for a more a more traditional, clearly-defined feminine identity.

In the doorway stood the maid. She held a big tortoise-shell cat pressed tight against her and swung down against her body.

"Excuse me," she said, "the padrone asked me to bring this for the Signora."

Related Characters: The Maid (speaker), The Hotel-keeper, George, The American Wife

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 131

Explanation and Analysis

The cat that the maid presents to the American wife at the end of the story—a gift from the hotel-keeper—may or may not be the same cat that the wife had spotted earlier from her hotel window. The narrator never clarifies this point, and thus the story ends on a note of ambiguity. However, there are in fact indications that this may not be the same cat. The narrator describes the animal that the maid presents as "big," and yet the American wife had referred to the cat she had seen from the window as a "kitty," which suggests that it is a small creature, even a kitten.

This note of ambiguity on which the story ends is significant, because it leaves the reader in doubt about whether the wife's desire has in fact been fulfilled. On one level, the wife gets what she wants: a cat. But if this is not the same cat that she had wanted, then her desire has also been frustrated. In this way, the story's ambiguous ending leaves the reader pondering the ways in which our desires may be frustrated even in their very fulfillment.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CAT IN THE RAIN

Two Americans are staying at a hotel. They know no one there. They have a room that faces onto the sea, the public garden, and the **war monument**. When the weather is nice, artists paint in the public garden, attracted by the way the palms grow and to the bright colors of the hotels facing the gardens and the sea.

By telling the reader that the Americans know no one at the hotel, the narrator highlights their otherness—they are strangers in a strange land. The landscape that the hotel room looks out on is beautiful. However, the narrator's comments suggest that on the day the story is set, the weather is not in fact very nice, given that there are no artists painting in the garden. Furthermore, the presence of the war monument communicates to the reader that there has been a major conflict in this region.

The **war monument** is a point of interest for Italian sightseers, who come from far off to look at it. The monument is made of bronze, and on the rainy day in which the story is set, it glistens.

The war monument calls the reader's attention to the fact that the First World War (1914-1918) has recently passed through Europe. By referring to the Italian sightseers who come to visit the monument, the narrator locates the action of the story in Italy. Furthermore, the interest that the Italians take in the monument suggests just what a momentous event the war was for them. The image of the monument glistening brightly in the rain further highlights the monument as an important aspect of the landscape.

It is a day of bad weather—overcast with rain dripping from the palm trees and standing in pools in the gravel paths. The sea advances and retreats in the rain. The square by the **war monument** is empty of motor cars. In a café doorway, a waiter stands alone looking out on the empty square.

The overcast, rainy weather gives a desolate aspect to the scene. The landscape—except for the lone waiter in the café doorway—is practically deserted. The stillness and bleakness of the scene implicitly recall the destruction and desolation wrought on this landscape by the war, which is referenced through the war monument.

Standing at her hotel window and looking out, the American wife takes in the rainy scene. She notices a **cat** under a café table, trying to shelter from the rain, and tells her husband George, who is reclining reading the paper, that she's "going down and get that kitty." The husband offers to do it, but she tells him she'll go. She feels sorry for that "poor kitty" trying to keep dry. The husband returns to his paper, only offering to tell her that she shouldn't get wet.

As she looks out on the scene, the wife's attention is on the cat—not the war monument. This is significant because it implicitly suggests that the wife is not very interested in the war. As an American, she is removed from the conflict, unlike the Italians who have experienced the war firsthand and who come from a long way off to visit the monument. Instead, it is a small animal that catches her attention. That the wife sympathizes with the cat in its predicament is also significant, because it suggests that she identifies with the animal's vulnerability and loneliness.

When the American wife goes downstairs, she passes the hotel-keeper's office. As the consummate host, he rises from his seat and bows down. He's faraway, standing at his desk at the far end of the office. He is old and very tall. The wife speaks in Italian to him, telling him that it's raining. She likes the hotel-keeper, who responds in Italian that it is indeed very bad weather.

The hotel-keeper's courtesy to the wife is emblematic of old-world European hospitality. The emphasis that the narrator puts on the distance between the hotel-keeper, who stands at the far end of his office, and the wife as she passes by, however, suggests that although she likes him, a certain formality and remoteness characterizes the wife's relationship to the hotel-keeper.

As the hotel-keeper continues to stand behind his desk, the narrator communicates again to the reader that the American wife likes him, including the "deadly serious way" he receives complaints. She likes him not only because he is dignified, but also because he wants to serve her. She admires the way he feels about being a hotel-keeper, as well as his "old, heavy face and big hands."

The American wife's strong feelings of liking for the hotel-keeper are notable because there is a stark absence in the story of an expression of such feelings towards the American wife's own husband, George. The narrator's comment that the American wife likes the way the hotel-keeper is ready to serve her implicitly suggests that the American wife lacks such attention and consideration from her own husband.

The American wife opens the hotel door and looks out. It's raining harder, and there's a man in a cape crossing the square to the café. She needs to head right, and considers that she might keep dry by staying under the eaves. Just then an umbrella opens behind her: the maid who looks after their room has stepped out, telling her that she must not get wet. The American wife conjectures that the hotel-keeper has sent her.

The hotel-keeper's consideration and attentiveness are dramatized here through his action of sending out the maid to follow the wife with an umbrella. While earlier in the story, the wife's husband, George, had simply commanded his wife not to get wet, here the hotel-keeper acts to actually prevent the wife from exposure to the elements. Again, this sets up a contrast between the consideration and attentiveness of the hotel-keeper and George's inattentiveness.

The American wife ventures out towards the café with the maid holding the umbrella over her head. When she arrives under their hotel window, however, she sees the table, but the **cat** has disappeared. She is disappointed. The maid asks her in Italian if she has lost something, and the American wife answers that "There was a cat." The maid laughs, but this doesn't alleviate the American wife's feelings of disappointment. Speaking in English, she tells the maid that she really wanted "a kitty." The maid's face tightens when the wife speaks English, and she tells the wife that they must return inside, otherwise she will get wet.

The wife's deep disappointment at not finding the cat suggests that she herself seeks something from the animal. Her disappointment contrasts with the maid's reaction, who seems to find the American wife's mission trivial and humorous. This perhaps suggests the gulf that exists between the Italian maid's experience—presumably, like other Italians, she had lived through the deprivations of the First World War—and the experience of the American hotel guest, whose whimsical wants imply that she has lived a life far-removed from true deprivation. Furthermore, the difficulty in communication here, expressed through the wife's lapsing into English, further reinforces the idea that a gulf in experience divides the two women.

The American wife and the maid go back along the gravel path and enter through the hotel door. The maid stays behind to close the umbrella. Meanwhile, the American wife passes the office again. The hotel-keeper again bows from his desk. Something feels "very small and tight" in the American wife, who is now referred to as a "girl" by the narrator. The hotel-keeper makes her feel small and at the same time very important. She has a fleeting feeling of being terribly important.

The American wife's feelings as she passes by the hotel-keeper's office highlight the extent to which the cat's loss has affected her. That she feels small points to her own feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness—feelings, perhaps, that she had projected onto the cat. Her contradictory emotion of self-importance points to the confusion and upheaval she experiences as a result of the loss of the cat. It's also significant that the narrator begins to refer to her as a "girl" here. It's as if, as she grows more insecure and uncertain, the narrative perspective on her changes, casting her as an immature, vulnerable youngster.

The American wife continues upstairs. There, she opens the door to her room to find her husband George in the same position she had left him in: on the bed, reading. He puts down his book and asks her if she has managed to get the **cat**. She informs him that it is gone, and he wonders aloud where it has gone to.

George's prostrate position on the bed suggests the contrast between his attitude towards his wife and the hotel-keeper's. While the hotel-keeper rises from his seat on each occasion he meets the wife, George remains stretched out. His own comfort and ease seem to take precedence over his wife's.

The American wife sits down on the bed, and tells George that she wants the **cat** so much, though she doesn't quite know why. She broods over the poor kitty's fate, stuck out in the rain. As she speaks George goes back to reading.

The wife's preoccupation with wanting and losing the cat affirms the sense that there is something beyond the cat itself that she desires. That George returns to his reading as she speaks suggests that an alienation or distance pervades the relationship between husband and wife. George seems inattentive and unresponsive to his wife's needs.

The American wife goes to the dressing table, where she sits examining herself with a hand glass. She looks at her profile—both left and right sides. She looks at the back of her head and neck. She asks George whether he thinks it would be a good idea for her to let her hair grow out. George looks up and studies the back of her neck, where the hair is cut close like a boy's. He tells her he likes it how it is, but she protests that she's tired of looking like a boy. George continues to stare at her, and reassures her that she looks "pretty darn nice."

The wife's action of examining herself in the mirror suggests that she is going through some process of self-reevaluation, one triggered by the loss of the cat. Her dissatisfaction with her short hair, and her desire to not look like a boy, also imply an ambivalence on her part towards her own femininity. She sports a short hairstyle that, considering the time in which the story is set, was a marker of a progressive and liberated feminine identity. And yet her hankering for long hair suggests that she desires a more conventional and traditional feminine identity. George's response that he likes her hair the way it is is also telling, in that he seems to cast her appearance in terms of his own needs, rather than hers. What seems to matter to him is what he thinks of her hair, not what she thinks.

The wife lays down the mirror and goes to the window to look out. It's getting dark. She says that she wants to pull her hair back tightly and smoothly, and to be able to make a big knot at the back of her head that she can feel. She wants a **cat** on her lap, one that purrs when she strokes her. Encouraged, perhaps, by George's "Yeah?" she goes on to list other things she wants. She wants a table with her own silver. She wants it to be spring. She wants to brush her hair out in front of a mirror. She wants a cat. And she wants some new clothes. George doesn't respond and seems to be exasperated by this list, telling her to shut up and find something to read. He returns to his book.

The long list of desires that the wife shares with George indicates that a deep dissatisfaction pervades her life. Her desire for a cat with which she can have close physical contact specifically implies that she yearns for close and warm connection and contact. Such connection seems to be lacking in her relationship with George. His abrupt order to her to shut up and get something to read points to his own callousness, as well as his alienation from her needs. The wife's desires are also suggestive of a hankering for a more conventional feminine identity. Long hair and silver, as well as a need to nurture, as expressed through her desire for the cat, are all associated with conventional femininity.

The American wife continues to stare out of the window. It's dark outside but still raining. She repeats that she wants a **cat** now, especially if she can't have long hair or any fun. George, who is absorbed by his book, isn't listening to her. The wife continues to look out, noticing that the light has come on in the square.

The wife's return to the window, where she takes up the same posture she had held at the beginning of the story, reinforces her distance from George. Her husband has returned to his reading, and she has turned away from him towards the window—as though she is searching for possibilities for satisfaction from the outside world. Her repeated demands for a cat indicate that her feelings of dissatisfaction continue to consume her. George's obliviousness to his wife's words as he reads his book underscore his inability to address, or even recognize, her unhappiness.

Someone knocks on the door and George invites them to enter. The maid stands in the doorway, holding a large tortoise-shell **cat** in her hands. She politely states that the "padrone" (the hotel-keeper) has sent her up with a cat for the "Signora."

The maid's arrival with a cat—a gift from the hotel-keeper to the wife—ends the story on an ambiguous note. The reader is not given the wife's reaction to this cat. Furthermore, it's not certain that this is the same cat that the wife had spotted earlier from her hotel window, given that the wife referred to the cat she had seen as a "kitty," and the cat that the maid brings up to the room is "large." As such, the reader is left in doubt about whether the wife's desire for a cat has been fulfilled or not. She has gotten a cat, but it's quite likely that it is not the cat she had initially sought. The story's ambiguous ending suggests to the reader the ways in which people's desires, even when they are satisfied, can often be disappointing.

HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Abbas, Fatin. "*Cat in the Rain*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 30 Oct 2018. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Abbas, Fatin. "*Cat in the Rain*." LitCharts LLC, October 30, 2018. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/cat-in-the-rain.

To cite any of the quotes from *Cat in the Rain* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Hemingway, Ernest. Cat in the Rain. Scribner. 1998.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Hemingway, Ernest. Cat in the Rain. New York: Scribner. 1998.