

Close reading points from class:

- #1 – Jig is “the girl” but the waitress is “woman”
- #2 – word order: “The American and the girl with him”
- #3 – Jig’s tone: petulant, seeking approval
- #4 – Jig is reliant on the man because she doesn’t speak Spanish
- #5 – But still, Jig is the main character and is a 3-dimensional character

### Sample Close Reading

In Ernest Hemingway’s 1927 short story “Hills Like White Elephants,” the young woman Jig is represented as wholly subordinate to her male companion. To begin, the narrator constantly refers to her as “the girl” rather than as a woman although she is of childbearing age. Even the waitress at the Spanish bar, though just a minor character, is given the status of “woman,” thus making Jig seem infantile in comparison. When the two main characters are first introduced, Hemingway’s choice of word order clearly demotes Jig compared to the significance of the man: “The American and the girl with him sat at a table in the shade, outside the building” (Hemingway 50). Jig is introduced almost as an afterthought, as merely “the girl with him,” despite the fact that she is the main character in the story. In her exchanges with the man at the bar, it becomes clear that Jig is indeed reliant on the man she is with. She can be seen seeking the man’s approval in her childlike question, “And if I do it you’ll be happy and things will be like they were and you’ll love me? (Hemingway 52). Not only does she constantly seek his approval, asking questions in a petulant tone, she also does not understand Spanish and must rely on the man for translation when they are traveling and interacting with the locals.

However, despite the many details that undermine Jig’s independence, she still has glimmers of depth and maturity. For example, readers learn of Jig’s name, giving her a human element when compared to the other characters, who are simply referred to as “the man” or “the woman.” Moreover, she is a three-dimensional character who evokes the reader’s sympathy because her desires and frustrations are made clear through the use of symbol and imagery throughout the story. Her observations about the long hills looking like white elephants help readers identify her as a pregnant woman facing the problems of abortion, attuning us to her insecurities, fears, and hopes.