The Sun Also Rises
Concept Analysis
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Literary Text: The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway (Scribner; New York, 2006)

Plot Summary:
Jake Barnes has been in love with Lady Brett Ashley all his life. In post WWI Paris around 1920, their paths cross again. Jake is a writer and veteran of the war. When he runs into Brett at a nightclub in Paris, his love for her is ignited once again, although she is in the process of getting a divorce and marrying Mike Campbell, a debt-stricken Scotsman. Robert Cohn, a Jewish ex-boxer who is unhappily married to a controlling woman and is friends with Jake, meets Brett and falls in love with her as well. Brett leaves Paris for Spain because she believes it will be easier for Jake and her if they are apart. Cohn leaves Paris as well.

Eventually Jake and Bill (another friend from the war) decide to take a fishing trip to Spain. While in Spain Jake runs into Brett and Mike. Brett informs Jake that Cohn was in San Sebastian with her over the past several weeks. Eventually Cohn joins the group in Spain and they all spend time in a lavish hotel drinking wine and enjoying the bull fighting during the fiesta in Pamplona.

Brett begins to fall in love with Pedro Romero, the nineteen-year-old bullfighter, and they begin to spend time together behind Mike’s back. Mike verbally abuses Cohn for being Jewish and following Brett around even when she doesn’t want him on around. After Romero fights and kills a gigantic bull that killed a man during the morning running of the bulls, he and Brett leave for Madrid and Cohn leaves for home. Mike, Bill, and Jake rent a car and drive out of Spain and then go their separate ways. Jake returns to San Sebastian and decides to spend a few days relaxing. He receives a telegram from Brett that she is in trouble and needs him to come back to Spain. He takes the next train back.

When Jake arrives at Brett’s hotel, he finds that she has broken up with Romero and she wishes to get back together with Mike. Jake once again comes to her rescue, buys tickets for them to return home, and while in the taxi Brett finally expresses regret that she and Jake would have been great together had they ever married. Jake simply replies, “Yes, isn’t it pretty to think so?” (p 251).

Organizational Patterns:
The novel is divided into three parts called books. It is also divided into chapters. Book one is set in Paris, Book two includes all the travels and activities around Spain with the fishing and the fiesta, and Book three concludes the novel as the three men leave Spain and Jake returns to help Brett. The organizational pattern reflects the pattern of a three act play. Each book includes important developments in the action and character development, as well as literal changes in setting that are separated by the book divisions.

Central Question of Enduring Issue:
How do our actions affect the lives of those we have relationships with?
Issues Related to this Study of Literature

Themes:

The Negative Effects of War on a Society:

World War one left a generation of individuals that lacked any moral center in their lives. The war distorted humanity’s opinion on the meaning of life and created what is now known as “The lost generation,” a group of individuals in which Hemingway was a part that had no real motivation or guidance in their lives. They coped with the war through their artistic elements. The characters in the novel are also “lost” because they feel they have no aim or purpose in life. They go about their days thinking only of the here and now. The majority of the book is filled with elaborate details about the drinking habits of all of the characters. It is difficult to think that so many events could have happened when the characters would have undoubtedly been hung-over for the majority of the novel. Although Hemingway never explicitly points out the meaningless of their activities, it is implied through the repetition and style he uses in the novel.

Damaged Masculinity and Female Empowerment:

Brett is a strong, powerful woman who leads her own life free from the constraints of anyone. Although she relies on having a man in her life, she never seems to fully commit to that person. Her unconscious flirtations with Cohn in San Sebastian lead Cohn to question his masculinity and participate in very female activities like crying and following Brett around. Brett wears her hair short, has a man’s name, calls herself a “chap,” and has a strong stomach for alcohol and the bullfights. She is in many ways, more of a man than the men. The war left men with conflicted ideas of masculinity. The horrors of war forced them to resort to fear in order to survive. In Jake’s case, the war also damaged his physical masculinity; it is implied that Jake was no longer able to procreate because of an injury in the war which was one of the main reasons why Brett did not want to marry him.

The Negative Effects of Aimlessness on life:

Book three of the novel shows the truly negative effects of the aimless lifestyle. Brett finally expresses a sense of regret that she and Jake never married. She has been tossed from one man to the next and has never been able to satisfy her thirst for true happiness. Although she has Jake’s devoted friendship, they will never be together and they will never get their chance at happiness. Brett’s aimlessness has kept her from the one constant in her life that would make her truly happy.

Setting:

Paris: In the 1920’s Paris was a bustling metropolis of art, culture, and the Parisian nightlife. Cafés and bars were open all night and people often spent their nights on the streets and days sleeping off their hang-overs in bed. The streets of Paris were widened during this time to allow for a more active nightlife to take over and the city
reacted exactly as expected. Artists and writers flocked to Paris to develop their crafts and experience the Paris life.

Spain: During the fiesta that dominates the time the characters are in Spain, the city is full of people who have come to see the bullfighting. Hotels are packed. Bars and nightclubs are constantly active. The nightlife of Paris is merely extended to Spain during this time as foreigners travel to see the famous fiesta. This is where the traditional running of the bulls would take place and the famous bullfighting that is portrayed so often in television and movies. Some students might not be familiar with bullfighting and it would be helpful for them to see an arena in Paloma where the fights would take place.

**Point of View:**

The novel is written in first person from the perspective of Jake throughout the entire course of the novel. The first person perspective adds to the disconnect between characters because we are only able to see the characters from Jake’s perspective. We are constantly unaware of the personal feelings and opinions of the characters outside of Jake.

**Dialogue:**

A large portion of the book is written in dialogue. Unlike dialogue that students are familiar with, Hemingway often fails to include “he said” and “she said” in the lines. For example, on page 44, there is a dialogue between Jake and a colleague of his named Krum. The dialogue spans all the way to page 47 with only minimal indications of who said what. Another example is found on page 126 in a conversation between Jake and Bill and does not stop until page 129. This style produces a need for hyper-sensitivity to the plot so that the reader can keep track of who is saying what. Usually the person who speaks first in a dialogue is mentioned just before the dialogue begins, but it is often difficult to anticipate and the reader must go back to find out who said what.

**Affective Issues Related to the Work:**

Students will most likely be able to relate to the negative effects of excessive drinking in the novel. They have probably all had some experience with drinking and peer pressure or have seen negative side effects of drinking. The book offers a hidden condemnation of excessive drinking because the characters drink in ridiculous amounts at all hours of the day. The aimlessness of their lives in taken out on a bottle of wine and students will be able to relate to that.

Regrets are also something that students will understand. They are in a time in their lives where they make choices everyday that will affect them in the future. The consequences of their choices are immense and therefore it is likely that they have some feelings of regret over things they have not done that they probably should have or would have liked to. The book portrays the negative effects of regrets on a more long term level (Brett is 34). Students will be able to relate to the idea that one must seize opportunities in the here and now so that you don’t regret it in the future.

**Vocabulary Issues:**
The novel is written in the language of the 1930’s. Some of the words will be unfamiliar to students. For example, the word “rot” is used in place of angry. The word “tight” is used to mean hung-over or stressed. The novel is also filled with Spanish and French vocabulary. Unless the students speak those languages, they will struggle to understand the text. Students will need to gain a basic knowledge of French and Spanish culture in order to understand some of the vocabulary. There are also elaborate names of places in the cities where they visit that students will not be familiar with. Hemingway constructs many of his sentences in reverse order and students will need to be trained on how to make sense of these sentences in order to find out what is happening in the novel.

**Background Knowledge:**

The Parisian nightlife and attitude is a huge part of what goes on in the novel. The students also need background knowledge about bullfighting and the fiesta that occurs in Spain every year. It is also essential that the students have background information about World War one so that they can understand the devastation that accompanied it, particularly the devastation on the lives of those who survived.

**Implications for Students of Diversity:**

There are issues of racism in the novel. The character of Cohn is Jewish and he is often ridiculed for his religious heritage. He is called a “kike” (168) and Mike Campbell frequently makes comments about his Jewish heritage and that he would “like to see [him] in jail,” (195). Students of diversity will be able to relate and facilitate class discussion about what it is like to be ridiculed because of race or religion. This is a theme that students of diversity, as well as students with disabilities, will be able to directly relate to.

The Spanish culture presented in the novel is something that could be magnified to honor diversity and culture. The book is centered on English men and women who spend their time enjoying the culture of others (Parisian and Spanish). This underlying theme could be pointed out and encouraged as something that all people should enjoy and participate in.

**Gender Issues:**

The gender issues in the book center around the empowerment of women. Brett does many things to make herself appear more masculine. Frances, Cohn’s wife, is seen as a controlling and eccentric woman that Cohn cannot stand. There are a few other female characters in the novel but they all have minor parts. There is one woman in particular that spends time with Jake on the night that he meets Brett again for the first time. This woman is treated as merely an appendage to Jake and he even leaves money for her at the club and leaves without saying goodbye. It would be interesting to analyze how the three women in the book are treated and what they do as a result of that treatment.

**Research Issues/Project Ideas:**

Aimlessness:

- It would be interesting to have the students analyze their own lives and their own moments of “aimlessness.” The students could write in the first person and reflect on things that they do that are, in essence, aimless. They could write from the perspective of

Roberge, BYU, 2010
ten years from now and how they would look back and change the way they spent their
time. They could address issues of how they treat other people, what they do with their
free time, what their goals and aspirations are and how they plan to achieve those goals.
Students could use Stephan R. Covey’s novel *7 Habits of Highly Effective Teenagers* and
compare their lives against Covey’s standards.

**Geography:**
- There are many cities that are mentioned by name in the novel. It would be interesting to
  have the students put together a google earth lit trip where they have to select specific
  locations where the events in the novel take place. They would have to find a hotel in
  Spain that they think looks like the one the characters stayed in and explain why. The
  students could plan out the travels in the novel and find corresponding sites for several of
  the scenes in the novel. They could work in groups and then present their google earth lit
  trip to the class when the projects are finished.

**Characterization:**
- In order to increase the students’ understanding of characterization, they could write
  journal entries for specific characters. They could chart their growth over time and
  represent that growth through entries in the journal. They would have to include how the
  character feels about things that happened that day and what they plan to do about it. The
  students would be able to pick the character they wanted to write on, except Jake Barnes
  would be off limits because the book is written from his perspective. These journal
  entries could be written and presented in a variety of ways (myspace page, facebook
  page, traditional journal, blog, etc.) and the students could create a reflection paper at the
  end of the assignment.

**Analyze Hemingway’s Writing Style:**
- Students will become accustomed to Hemingway’s style as they read the novel. As they
  read they could take note of specific techniques he uses. After looking at other books by
  Hemingway, the students could construct a formula or code of his style of writing. They
  could also indicate reasons why Hemingway wrote the way he did with reference to his
  participation in the “Lost Generation” and the many places he lived throughout his life.

**Enrichment Resources:**
- A picture book that presents the physical characteristics of bulls would be interesting for
  students to read. *Ferdinand the Bull* is one possibility but there are many other that would be
  more helpful. A short documentary film on WWI would help students comprehend the negative
  effects of the war or even a narrative from the war would work. It would be very helpful for the
  students to see how a bullfight and the running of the bulls occur and there are many videos of
  these events available through Youtube.