



The Writing Style of Ernest Hemingway

The Modernization of
American Literature



Early Career, continued

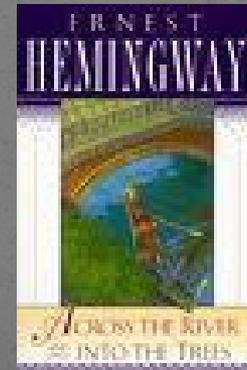
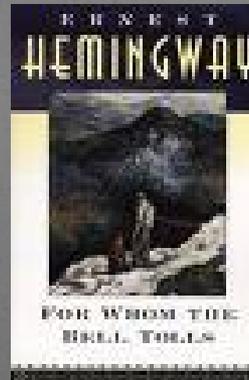
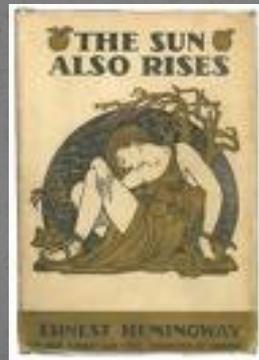
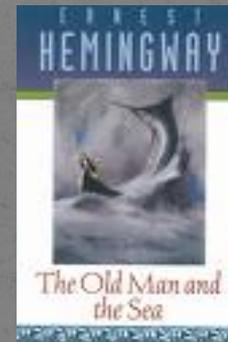
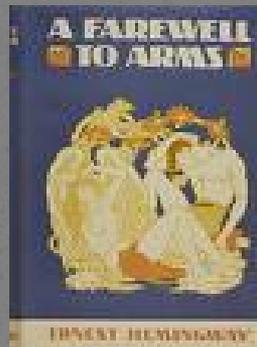
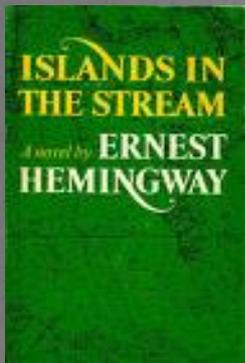
- While working for the newspaper, he was introduced to the writing style advocated by the company. This style guide would have a tremendous impact upon his eventually published fiction. The style guide emphasized (1) short sentences, (2) brief paragraphs, (3) active verbs, (4) authenticity, (5) compression, (6) clarity, and (7) immediacy.

Hemingway's Style

- Hemingway's deceptively simple, intensely compressed writing style has influenced countless writers the world over.
- His writing can be characterized as the following:
 - Concise
 - Direct
 - Objective
 - Precise
 - Rhythmic

Hemingway's Style, continued

- To be more precise and clear, Hemingway's fiction can be categorized grammatically.



Hemingway's Style, continued

- His writing demonstrates an emphasis on nouns and verbs rather than adjectives and adverbs, showing his preference for the actual as opposed to the abstract.

“I remember waking in the morning, Catherine was asleep and the sunlight was coming in through the window. The rain had stopped and I stepped out of bed and across the floor to the window.” A Farewell to Arms

Hemingway's Style, continued

- He was fluent in the three romance languages of French, Italian, and Spanish, languages with a smaller vocabulary than English, yet still remaining richly expressive. Thus, Hemingway demonstrated a limited word-palette.

“Here it is the shift from deadliness to normal family life that is the strangest.” For Whom the Bell Tolls

Hemingway's Style, continued

- From Gertrude Stein (“A rose is a rose is a rose”) he learned the power of frequent repetitions of the same words or phrases.

“The strange thing was, he said, how they screamed every night at midnight. I do not know why they screamed at that time. We were in the harbor and they were all on the pier and at midnight they started screaming.” ***In Our Time***

Hemingway's Style, continued

- He often expressed his ideas in short, declarative sentences.

*“A man can be destroyed but not defeated.” **The Old Man and the Sea***

Hemingway's Style, continued

- By exhibiting a lack of clarity in the relationship between one sentence and the next, he forces the reader to be actively engaged, connecting the dots and filling in the blanks.

Hemingway's Style, continued

“Do many men kill themselves, Daddy?”

“Not very many, Nick.”

“Do many women?”

“Hardly ever.”

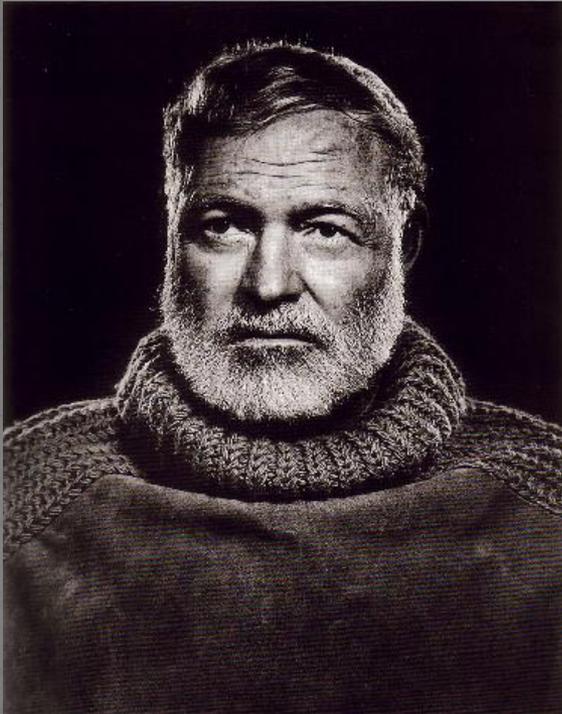
“Don't they ever?”

“Oh, yes. They do sometimes.”

“Indian Camp”

A Complete Tangent

“I don’t always read literature. But when I do, I prefer Hemingway. Stay literate, my friends.”



The Hemingway Hero

- The term “Hemingway Hero” refers to the main character (always a male) of the author’s fiction who attempts to live his life according to a particular code, or belief system, as advocated by the lifestyle of Hemingway himself.



The Code

- A man's man who enjoys consuming alcohol, engaging in consistent and promiscuous love affairs, and participating in true sporting conquests, such as big game hunting, bullfighting, boxing, and other brutal or murderous contests.
- Action, not words, is the preferred method of communication. Theory is irrelevant. Abstract qualities are rejected.

The Code, continued

- The old values of a Christianity-dominated society were passé , for this belief system did not serve to save humankind from the destruction of World War I.
- The concept of death is summarized simply as “When you are dead you are dead. There is nothing more.” Life’s rewards must be sought now. Immediate physical gratification is essential.

The Code, continued

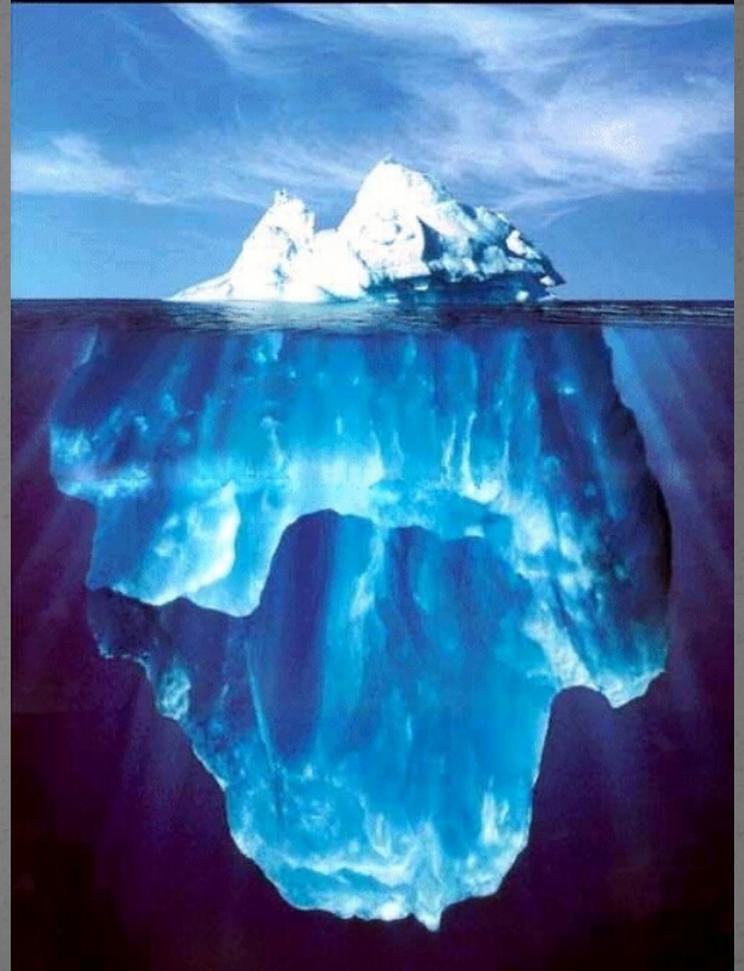
- Life is to be savored and saved at all costs. When encountered with a life or death situation, the Hemingway hero must exude grace under pressure.
- Fear of death is unacceptable. Cowardice is loathsome. Emotional discipline is to be practiced at the height of harrowing times.

The Code, continued

- Restlessness is pervasive; activity is sought during the nighttime, for darkness is an unconscious symbol of death and nothingness.
- Exceptional concrete skills and talents are regarded highly, yet mediocre effort is abhorrent.
- Loyalty to a small group of trusted friends is essential.

The Iceberg Theory

- Sometimes referred to as the “theory of omission,” Hemingway believed that the deeper meaning of a literary work should not be evident on the surface, but rather should shine through implicitly.



The Iceberg Theory, cont'd

- Hemingway himself wrote of this theory in his novel *Death in the Afternoon*:
 - “If a writer of prose knows enough of what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing.”

The Iceberg Theory, cont'd

- Hemingway further asserted:
 - *"A few things I have found to be true. If you leave out important things or events that you know about, the story is strengthened. If you leave or skip something because you do not know it, the story will be worthless. The test of any story is how very good the stuff that you, not your editors, omit."*

The Iceberg Theory, cont'd

- As you read and examine Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, remember that his deceptively simple style is only 1/8 of the overall puzzle...be sure to investigate what belies the surface of his literature.

