

# The Era, The Hero In The Stories Of Ernest Hemingway And Adil Yakubov

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**Abstract:** This work examines Ernest Hemingway's portrayal of the "Lost generation" and the psychological aftermath of the First World War through the stories "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" and "Now I Lay Me." The study highlights how themes of loneliness, despair, and the search for meaning are expressed through symbolic elements such as light and silence. Hemingway's nameless characters, minimalist style, and semi-autobiographical elements illustrate the lasting emotional and spiritual effects of war on the human psyche.

**Keywords:** Hemingway, lost generation, First World War, psychological trauma, loneliness, symbolism, Nick Adams, existential despair, postwar literature, inner conflict.

**Introduction:** The time, the social environment, the way of life of people described in a particular work of art also reflect the era. When each creative person describes reality, he reflects the problems of the era. The writer's works reflect the scenes of the era in which he lived.

In the works of the famous American writer Ernest Hemingway, the image of the time and environment in which the author lived, his problems, and the image of the heroes formed against their background are highlighted. Various problems of the time can be found in his stories included in a number of collections.

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Ernest Hemingway's early short stories are connected with the events of the First World War. This is because during that period the writer served as an ambulance driver for the American Red Cross and witnessed the events at the front with his own eyes. After returning from the front, in 1925 the writer published a collection of stories entitled "In Our Time", in which the mood of protest against war was expressed with strong pathos, and the main theme of these stories was devoted to war. In his series of essays dedicated to Nobel Prize

laureates, the scholar B. Gilenson, while analyzing the autobiographical essence of a writer who participated in five wars, expressed the following opinion about Hemingway: As a creative individual, he resembles Byron, Jack London, John Reed, and Saint-Exupéry. He presented himself as the Byron of the 20th century. Most importantly, he was a humanist artist, an anti-fascist, and a person with principled inner independence, opposing all forms of totalitarianism. He served no one, flattered no one, did not pursue cheap success, and always expressed his thoughts boldly. By the late 1920s, he finally determined the main theme of his work: a person placed in extreme conditions beneath the upheavals of the 20th century.

Indeed, the Spanish Civil War left an indelible mark on Hemingway's work and became a turning point in his political thinking and creative development. The writer's works on the theme of war were connected with the problem of the 'lost generation'—people who had participated in the battles of 1914–1918, suffered psychological trauma, and experienced human tragedies. In the stories from the collection "In Our Time", features characteristic of the 'lost generation' are also revealed. In these works, Hemingway depicts the tragedy of the psychological wound and inner crippling experienced by those who took part in the war.

## METHODS

The issue of the “Lost generation” held an important place in Western literature of the 1920s–1930s, and it caused a noticeable increase in works with pacifist sentiments after the First World War. As noted by the Belarusian literary scholar and translator I. Bass, this term introduced by Gertrude Stein refers to a generation that had been cut off from society and abandoned any form of belief after the war due to its negative consequences.

The phrase “Lost generation” was used for the first time as an epigraph in Ernest Hemingway’s novel “The Sun Also Rises”: “You are all a lost generation.” “All of you are a lost generation” This phrase refers to the entire cohort of participants of the First World War. The experiences and emotions of this generation during the war and in the postwar years became a central theme in the works of a number of writers from the United States and Western Europe.

As a result, in the 1920s a literary movement known as the “Lost generation” emerged, and writers such as Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, William Faulkner, Richard Aldington, and Erich Maria Remarque can be cited as representatives of this literature. In the novels created by these authors, the fate and inner struggles of people whose lives were disrupted by the war are depicted through realistic imagery. In such works, along with descriptions of war episodes, the postwar life and destiny of former soldiers are also reflected. The tragic consequences of the First World War and the human response to this war became the central theme of the literature of the “Lost generation.” Hemingway’s story “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” included in the short story collection “Winner Take Nothing” published in 1933, begins with the description of an old man drinking cognac in a Spanish café early in the morning. The young waiter becomes irritated by the old man’s long stay, wishing to close the café and return home sooner. The old man is lonely, and for this reason, he even attempted suicide the previous week. When the older waiter asks the younger one about it, he explains that the old man had fallen into despair.

- Why did he feel compelled to commit suicide?
- How should I know?
- And how did he do it?
- He hanged himself with a rope.
- Who cut him down from the noose?
- His niece.

From the dialogue above, it can be understood that the old man had developed a feeling of hopelessness. The war had injured him not only physically (he is deaf), but

also mentally. Similar to the protagonist of the story “Old Man at the Bridge” the main character in this story — the old man — is also nameless. In fact, all three characters in the story are nameless: the old man, the older waiter, and the younger waiter. The old man’s deafness in the story can be assumed to be a consequence and aftermath of the First World War. The old man has fallen into despair — alone among people. Like the old man, the older waiter is also lonely. They have nowhere to rush to, because they have no reason to do so. Nobody is waiting for them. Through the method of contrast, the writer introduces the character of the young waiter into the story — meaning that this young man has everything. In the story, this contrast becomes clearly evident through the speech of the older waiter:

You have youth, confidence, and a job, the older waiter said. What more does a man want. (A Clean, Well-Lighted Place).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thus, the author’s concept is vividly illustrated through the contrast between hopelessness and faith in life, portraying the elderly as searching for meaning in life and falling into despair.

There is also symbolism in Hemingway’s choice of the title “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” Light — brightness — is a symbol of peaceful life. The characters of the story are those who survived the war, but in this time of peace, they have lost the meaning of their existence. In order to fully reveal the character of the older waiter, the writer individualizes his speech: I do not want to close the café, because someone might really need it... It is clean and orderly here... The light is bright. The light is large... I am one of those who need the light at night.

This clean and well-lighted café seems to have become a refuge for those condemned to loneliness. Although the story does not explicitly talk about the war, that bright and clean place served as a war-free space for them. These old men struggle to preserve their human dignity. At the very end of the story, the writer describes the psychophysiological state of the old waiter: ‘For some reason the lonely waiter did not like bars and bistros. A clean, bright café — that was different. Now the older waiter, without thinking much, goes home as usual, enters his room, lies on his bed, and finally, when dawn begins to break, falls asleep. In the end, he tells himself that this must simply be insomnia. But sleeplessness is often found only in lonely people.

The older waiter’s insomnia comes from loneliness — that is, from fear of the darkness. Thus, the writer equates loneliness with darkness, with nothingness. For this reason, the bright café carries a symbolic

meaning as a means of escape from darkness and the danger of emptiness. Light, purity, and peace are symbols in Hemingway's works that carry an ideological "burden" in expressing the author's intention. For example, in the story "Now I Lay Me", these symbols are connected with the depiction of a wounded, unidentified soldier recovering in a military hospital in Milan. The story is narrated in the first person — by a character named Signor Tenente. In Italian, this means 'Mr. Lieutenant' or 'Sir Lieutenant'.

There are two characters in the story, and both lie awake at night in the hospital. They listen to the distant sounds of artillery while remaining sleepless. This setting corresponds to the Italian front during the First World War. Signor Tenente is Nick Adams — Hemingway's semi-autobiographical protagonist. Like Hemingway, Nick Adams also joined the Italian army to fight in the First World War. He was seriously wounded in the war — both physically and psychologically. Nick lies in the hospital to recover from his injury, and he fears falling asleep, fearing that his soul might leave his body, because he had experienced such a sensation at the moment of being wounded.

#### CONCLUSION

The exposition of the story is described as follows:

That night we lay on the floor in the room and I listened to the silkworms eating. The silkworms fed in racks of mulberry leaves and all night you could hear them eating and a dropping sound in the leaves. I myself did not want to sleep because I had been living for a long time with the knowledge that if I ever shut my eyes in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my body. I had been that way for a long time, ever since I had been blown up at night and felt it go out of me and go off and then come back. I tried never to think about it, but it had started to go since, in the nights, just at the moment of going off to sleep, and I could only stop it by a very great effort. So while now I am fairly sure that it would not really have gone out, yet then, that summer, I was unwilling to make the experiment. The hero of the story turns to childhood memories in order to avoid falling asleep. The contrast of sounds in the story is meaningful — the artillery fire in the background reminds Tenente of his physical wounds, while the opposite sound of silkworms eating leaves seems to gnaw at his psyche. Tenente struggles against losing strength. John, who lies beside him, also cannot sleep. In the night Signor Tenente and John hold a conversation:

— Tell me, Signor Tenente, what is the matter with you? Why can't you sleep at night? I've never seen you asleep. Since I've been next to you, you haven't slept a single night.

— I don't know, John, I said. Early last spring I fell into a very bad state, and since then I have never been at ease at night.

— Me too, he said. I shouldn't have gone to the war, I'm very nervous.

John is also an American, but an Italian immigrant who had come to Chicago. He too had joined the army. He tells Tenente that in order to recover psychologically, it is important for him to start a family. After recovering, John returns to the Milan hospital a few months later and is angry with Tenente for still not having gotten married. John was convinced that marriage could fix all psychological wounds. But Tenente had grown weak because he had been wounded in the legs and thighs. Ernest Hemingway included this story in his 1927 collection of short stories titled "Men Without Women". In the story, the tragic fate of individuals who, due to war wounds, could no longer find meaning in life, who suffered from loneliness, and struggled to heal their injuries, is depicted.

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