

Ernest Hemingway's Trademark Style

Hemingway was deliberate in his writing and revised and revised and revised, usually cutting as many words as he could. Before he became a novelist, he worked as a newspaper journalist.

Here is one of his shortest (fictional) stories.

For sale: baby shoes, never used.

Style

Short, tight sentences (no poetry, no fluff, few adjectives and adverbs)

Short, tight paragraphs

Active verbs, straightforward diction, straightforward grammar

Repetition and polysyndeton: Hemingway often will use the same word or two frequently within a paragraph; polysyndeton is the stylistic use of conjunctions (usually "and") in a sentence or series of sentences.

Content

Iceberg principle: only a little of the story is there – the rest is beneath the surface

In other words, what is left unsaid is monumentally important

Machismo: Hemingway was a macho macho man and many of his male characters exemplify manliness.

Femme fatale vs. the all woman:

Hemingway's heroines almost always personify the physical appearance of the ideal woman in their beauty. But in their personality they appear as two types: the all-woman who gives herself entirely to the hero and the femme fatale who retains herself and prevents the hero from possessing her completely. The all-woman is acceptable in Hemingway view because she submits to the hero. She wants no other life than with him. By succumbing to the hero, she allows him to dominate her and affirm his manhood. The femme fatale is usually a more complex character than the all-woman (Lynn 98). While she may or may not be nasty, she does not submit to the hero and wounds him and all the men around her primarily because they cannot manage her and thus cannot assert their manhood through her. But despite Hemingway's portrayal of women, he usually has them fall into the same basic category as the men. The heroine, like the hero, obeys the Hemingway Code. She sees life for what it is even as she longs for something more. She is basically courageous in life, choosing reality over thought, and she faces death stoically. In practically every case there has already been in her life some tragic event-the loss of a lover, violence-which has given her the strength to face life this way (Lynn 102).

Cooper, Michael. "The Writing Style of Hemingway." *Writing and Public Speaking*.
ESL Teachers Board, 2006-2008. Web. 4 October 2011.