

Short Story Writing Exercise #3
Inspired by Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants"

You may write in ANY genre. The focus is on craft and experimentation with story structure.

Step 1. Write a short paragraph ranting about a time you were angry at someone, let down, upset etc. You can also make up two people and an argument. (OR someone you know, OR invent a scenario). The point is to GET angry! Let it out. Swear.

Step 2. Now, keep this angry feeling, this argument in the back of your mind - this feeling will create the sub-text of your draft story - it will imbue your freewrite with tension - which you will never directly mention (like Hemingway). So forget the actual rant in step 1, but stay angry!

Step 3. You need TWO characters – they can be the real people from your rant but change the names, or you can fictionalize these real people exaggerating aspects of the disagreement, or you can invent two people who have a similar problem and make the story up totally.

Step 4. Imagine these two people (real or fictionalized) come together somewhere, maybe years after the 'fight' or 'incident, or maybe the next day, or maybe it's ongoing... where are they when they have this conversation?

Step 5. Now, write a short narrative paragraph using a 3rd person limited observer narrator to describe the scene - like Hemingway does top open his story AND freewrite by hand as much as class time allows (15-20 minutes) to start the story. *Please read below for what you must include / do in this exercise, and what to avoid.*

Step 6. Type and extend the draft to a min. of 400 words. *Keep in mind the constraints listed below.*

Your exercise MUST have:

- A descriptive scene setting for the beginning Using simple syntax such as "They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry"(1)
- Dialogue as the main structural device, try to have them talk like real people in public
- Tension created by no one actually mentioning what the issue really is about
- 3rd person limited narrator

A few things to keep in mind as you do this exercise:

DO	DO NOT
Keep the focus on TWO main characters.	Write too much. (Keep it tight).
Limit the context of your piece like Hemingway – an afternoon waiting for a train.	Describe every detail. (Tell the reader only what they need to know). His Iceberg theory.
Use nature imagery (eg with similes)	Let plot drive the story.
Use active voice	Wrap the story up in a neat little bow.

These exercises count towards the process grade of your final short story. Missed checkpoints can be made up, but ultimately, you'll lose marks on the final product if these exercises are skipped.