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Talk to the Labradoodle... She's in Charge.
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Originally published in 1926, *The Sun Also Rises* was Ernest Hemingway’s first big hit. Less than ten years after the end of World War I, the novel helped define his generation: disillusioned young people whose lives were profoundly affected by the war. Hemingway himself wasn’t a soldier (his vision wasn’t good enough to enlist in the army), but he saw plenty of action through his exploits as an ambulance driver in Italy, where he was wounded and was actually awarded a medal from the Italian government for his valor. Hemingway bore the physical and emotional scars of the war for the rest of his life, just like the troubled characters he created in *The Sun Also Rises*, and the novel expresses the uncertainty and aimlessness of this "Lost Generation" (see What's Up With the Epigraph? for a full explanation of this term).

*The Sun Also Rises* endures as one of the most popular and significant books to emerge from American literature of the 1920s – along with Hemingway’s friend F. Scott Fitzgerald’s masterpiece, *The Great Gatsby* (published only a year earlier in 1925), which examines postwar life stateside, *The Sun Also Rises* is generally regarded as a definitive guide to life in the hedonistic, confusing, and fascinating post-WWI era.
Why Should I Care

Everyone knows the story of Romeo and Juliet, right? The classic star-crossed lovers bit, immortalized over and over again in just about every cultural medium we’ve got? For those of you who either grew up in a black hole or have been struck with a major case of amnesia and aren’t familiar with this story, here it is in a nutshell: Boy meets girl. Boy and girl fall in love. Society intervenes, the lovers are separated, then, through a cruel twist of fate, they die just as they are about to be reunited. The young lovers then become the idealized model for the figure of tragic romance in our modern society. The end.

Well, now imagine this: Romeo and Juliet are reborn a few centuries later, except this time, things are different. The world is different. The classic romance can’t play out the way it should for several reasons. First of all, the lovers are a couple decades older – they’re in their mid-thirties, not mid-teens, and love isn’t quite the same passionate adventure it was the first time around. In the twentieth century, love is a scary, dangerous venture. Secondly, Romeo is impotent (gasp!), and Juliet sleeps around to console herself (gasp gasp!). Thirdly, the possibility of happiness isn’t even on the menu – it’s been smashed to bits by the catastrophic iron fist of the First World War. What do you have then? A disillusioned, cynical post-tragedy, post-romance tragic romance we like to call The Sun Also Rises.

This novel thrashes all the flowery things we’re taught to believe about love and romance, and basically tells us that the world we live in can no longer support these old fashioned ideas – and furthermore, it offers no solutions. The novel attempts, in its way, to answer one of the great questions of life: what is love? If that’s not something to care about, we don’t know what is.
Summary

Brief Summary

Jake Barnes and his expatriate friends live in the topsy-turvy, hedonistic (sensual and self-indulgent) world of post-World War I Paris. There, they occasionally work, but spend most of their time partying, drinking, and arguing. From Jake’s perspective, we meet the cast of characters that populates his story: the most important among them are Robert Cohn, a weak-willed, down-on-his-luck Princeton grad and unsuccessful writer, and Lady Brett Ashley, an exciting, beautiful, and unpredictable British divorcee.

Although Jake and Brett are actually in love, they aren’t together, presumably because a mysterious war wound has rendered Jake impotent. Cohn falls in love with Brett (as everyone does) and, despite the fact that she’s not terribly impressed with him, she secretly goes on a trip with him to the Spanish resort town of San Sebastian. Cohn is infatuated with Brett – he’s completely smitten. We’re talking truly, madly, deeply in smit. Unfortunately for Cohn (and for everyone, for that matter), Brett is engaged to a wealthy, charming, and utterly inept drunkard named Mike. Jake’s whimsical friend Bill returns to Paris from a trip and a plan is born: everyone agrees to decamp to Spain for some fishing and the running of the bulls in Pamplona.

On their brief fishing trip, Bill and Jake have a splendid time communing with nature and with each other, but the relaxation quickly comes to an end. They return to civilization and meet up with Brett, Mike, and Cohn in Pamplona for a weeklong orgy of bullfights, alcohol, and high drama. Jake has a true passion (afición) for bullfighting, but everyone else is simply there to have a good time. Brett begins a rather scandalous affair with a passionate and talented young bull-fighter, Pedro Romero. Jake feels terrible for many reasons – among them is the fear that he has corrupted Romero in some way by introducing him to Brett. Cohn’s thwarted infatuation with Brett leads to arguments with everyone and, finally, he beats the unfortunate Romero to a bloody pulp. As the fiesta winds down, everyone leaves Pamplona in various states of anxiety, depression and frustration.

Jake heads to San Sebastian, where he intends to decompress alone for a while. Unfortunately, desperate telegrams from Brett arrive immediately. He goes to her in Madrid, where she is alone, having sent Romero away. For the first time, we see Brett truly vulnerable, afraid, and guilty. The future looks just as bleak – Jake and Brett agree again that, even though they love each other, they can’t be together.
Book 1, Chapter 1

- The narrator, Jake Barnes, opens with a description of a friend of his, Robert Cohn, whose crowning triumph was being named Princeton’s middleweight boxing champion in his college days. Impressive, right?
- Right. Jake isn’t terribly impressed, either. Though he’s fond of Cohn, he actually sees the other man as kind of a forgettable wimp. So forgettable, in fact, that Jake is stunned that Cohn’s former boxing coach even remembers him.
- Cohn is Jewish, a fact that Jake finds central to his character development. He is innately self-conscious, married young, had an unhappy marriage, and was left by his wife (who he was feebly attempting to leave anyway).
- After his divorce, Cohn moved to California, where he briefly edited a magazine. But, he was too poor to fund the publication and it died – the magazine that is. Cohn’s literary ambitions live on.
- Cohn now lives in Paris with a forceful divorcée named Frances. Jake is his tennis friend, as compared to Braddocks, who is Cohn’s literary friend (an interesting distinction, considering that Jake is also a writer – the difference is that he’s a journalist).
- Cohn is a published novelist, but his writing isn’t highly regarded by Jake or anyone else. Frances, Cohn’s mistress, is a total control freak. In the midst of coffee with Cohn and Frances, Jake’s mere suggestion of traveling with Cohn to visit an American woman earns him a swift “shut-up!” kick from Cohn. Clearly, any mention of other women is strictly off-limits in Frances’s vicinity.
- Jake is bemused by Cohn’s weakness, especially with women.
Book 1, Chapter 2

- The same winter as the shut-up-kick-under-the-table incident, Cohn travels to America and has a book published. After winning a few hands of bridge, having a few women speak to him and the whole book thing, Cohn is a changed man. Basically, he’s full of himself and not as into Frances. Women, beware! Who knows what a few successful hands of bridge could do to your love interest...
- Jake partially blames Cohn’s change of character on a novel he recently read, W.H. Hudson’s *The Purple Land*. Apparently it inspired Cohn to yearn for a romantic new life.
- Cohn interrupts Jake at work (we learn that he, like Hemingway, is a newspaper man) and begs him to come on a trip to South America. Jake says he’s not interested – after all, Paris is great.
- Cohn disagrees – he hates Paris. Notice that almost every other character in the novel at some point has at least one conversation identical to this one with another expatriate living in Paris. More witty banter between Cohn and Jake ensues. Cohn looks pitiful.
- Although it’s the middle of the workday, Cohn and Jake go for a drink. Jake thinks he’ll be able to ditch Cohn after having a drink, but he can’t.
- Jake, Cohn in tow, returns to his office at the newspaper. Cohn falls asleep, and Jake awakens him in the middle of a troubled dream. Cohn admits that he hasn’t been able to sleep lately. We wonder why...
Book 1, Chapter 3

- Jake lingers alone over a drink at the Café Napolitain after Cohn finally bails. He makes eye contact with a girl walking down the street and she joins him. They both order a Pernod (a French liqueur similar to absinthe) and flirt half-heartedly. Though nothing’s said, it’s clear that this young lady is, to put it delicately, a woman of questionable repute.
- Jake and the girl, Georgette, take a horse-drawn cab to dinner. Georgette, assuming that Jake means to… engage her services, attempts to kiss him. He rejects her, saying that he’s sick.
- Once they’re at the restaurant, Foyot’s, Jake is annoyed by his companion and begins to regret his decision to take Georgette to dinner.
- She asks why he’s sick; he responds that he was hurt in the war.
- Fortunately, this lackluster conversation draws to a necessary halt – some of Jake’s friends, Mr. and Mrs. Braddocks, Frances, and Cohn, are at the restaurant. Georgette is introduced as Jake’s fiancée, and puts on a comically provocative and somewhat rude demeanor.
- The crowd agrees to go out dancing. They end up at a hot, unappealing-sounding dance club.
- At the club, a beautiful woman named Brett arrives with a group of homosexual men. Jake, who is obviously familiar with Brett, feels sick and irritated by her companions, and he describes them with disgust. Add “homophobic” to whatever mental image of Jake you’ve got going.
- To cope, Jake drinks more. Mrs. Braddocks introduces him to a young, pretentious American author; Jake is drunk, belligerent, and possibly about to vomit. He leaves rudely, and ends up at the bar with Cohn.
- Brett comes over for a chat with “the chaps.” Cohn is spellbound. Jake describes her beauty for us, his readers – she is as sleek and curvy as a racing yacht, and has a killer fashion sense to boot.
- Jake officially ditches Georgette and leaves some money with the bartender in case she comes looking for him. He and Brett leave together to find a cab.
- Alone in the taxi, Brett confesses that she’s miserable.
In the cab, Jake and Brett kiss passionately, but Brett pulls away. She says she loves Jake but they agree they can’t be together. Love’s too hard and they have a history with one another. Brett alludes to Jake’s mysterious war wound, which is presumably the cause of their separation; he doesn’t want to talk about it.

Jake’s entranced by Brett’s eyes and all that typical stuff.

They agree to go to Café Select for more drinks. Brett asks Jake to kiss her again.

At the café, a Greek dukertist with the improbable name of Zizi introduces Brett, whose formal title is Lady Ashley, to a man called Count Mippipopolous (bet you can’t say that ten times fast.) Brett and the count have the apparently requisite conversation about whether Paris rocks or sucks. We learn that Lady Ashley is British.

Braddock’s gang is also at the Select. We learn that Georgette was thrown out of the restaurant rather spectacularly after Jake and Brett left.

Jake, tired and frustrated, decides to head home. He says his goodbyes to everyone, and agrees to meet Brett the following evening.

Jake picks up his mail and curses people with titles like Lady Ashley, Count Mippipopolous, and Zizi the Greek Duke. He reads a bull-fighting newspaper and gets in bed.

Jake can’t sleep. He’s all worked up about WWI, the injury he sustained in the War and about Brett. We have already guessed that his injury is sexual in nature – he never says the word, but we gather that he’s impotent.

Thinking of his troubles – mostly caused by Brett – Jake begins to cry.

Jake wakes to the noise of a fight outside between Brett and his building’s concierge. Jake lets Brett upstairs. She’s totally wasted. Nonetheless, he pours her yet another drink. It’s after 4 a.m. They chat about the count. Lots of witty banter. After a few minutes Brett leaves and Jake, his guard down, gets a little mopey again.
Book 1, Chapter 5

- Jake has coffee and a brioche and goes to work. Despite his melancholy evening, he feels much better this morning. He works all morning, then chats pleasantly with his colleague, Krum, until Robert Cohn shows up to whisk him off to lunch.
- He and Cohn nag each other about South America over a lunch of beer and hors d'oeuvre. Jake still thinks Cohn’s a pushover with Frances.
- Cohn asks Jake about Brett. He reveals that she is in the midst of a divorce with a British aristocrat (Lord Ashley to her Lady Ashley), and is already engaged to a man with great financial prospects named Mike Campbell. Cohn remarks again that he thinks Brett’s super hot. Jake responds cynically.
- We discover that Jake met Brett when she worked as a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse) in a hospital during WWI. We wonder what the details of their history are.
- Cohn doubts Brett will marry Mike if she doesn’t love him. Not terribly surprisingly, Jake doesn’t agree. He bitterly remarks that she’s done it before. Cohn already has an unrealistically romantic and idealized view of Brett, despite the fact that he really doesn’t know her at all.
- Cohn gets agitated and Jake tells him to go to hell. They reconcile and Cohn admits rather embarrassingly that Jake is his best friend.
Brett unsurprisingly misses her evening date with Jake. He has a few conciliatory drinks and then takes a cab through a part of Paris he despises. He wonders why he hates this particular section of the city so much, then wonders why Cohn seems to despise the whole city so much. He attributes this flaw to reading too much H.L. Mencken, a tremendously popular American writer.

Jake heads to Café Select, where he encounters a very odd friend, Harvey Stone. Harvey, like everyone else, is a writer short on cash, and he wheedles some money out of Jake. The two men have a drink and chat about Mencken, who, they decide, is just sooooo passé.

Cohn shows up. Harvey provokes him and then leaves. Cohn states his dislike for Harvey.

Cohn tells Jake he’s struggling to write.

Jake, attempting to reveal more of the true Robert Cohn to us, remarks that, before falling for Brett, Cohn had been a fairly charming prep boy type, well trained by the women he’d been with. Pre-Brett, he had a kind of simple, cheerful, nice mentality, and was kind of a jack-of-all-trades, master of none type. His passion for Brett, however, changes everything.

Frances shows up at the Café. She’s snotty to Cohn but pleasant to Jake. She asks to speak privately with Jake. She’s all worked up, thinking that Cohn’s going to leave her since he won’t agree to marry her. SO EMBARRASSING!

Frances repeatedly attacks Cohn. She suspects that he’s trying to dump her to enjoy his literary success solo or with a newer model. Jake doesn’t understand why everyone can be such a jerk to Cohn and why he doesn’t defend himself. Disgruntled, Jake heads back to his flat.
Book 1, Chapter 7

- Jake learns from the concierge that Brett and a man stopped by his flat and plan to return in an hour. The concierge, who thought Brett was fairly trashy after her 4 a.m. arrival the previous evening, now speaks highly of her as a woman of class.
- Jake digresses a little, and gives us a brief and hilarious description of Madame Duzinell, the concierge, who seems to think it’s her job to decide who gets to see Jake and who doesn’t. It’s a good thing Brett won her over.
- Brett and the Count show up right as Jake jumps out of the shower. He’s struck once again with love pains and Brett sends the count off for champagne while she comforts Jake. Again, they discuss their love for one another, but agree they can’t be together. Brett admits that he’s her true love, but if they were together, she’d cheat on him all over the place. She tells him she’s leaving Paris for San Sebastian, a resort town in Spain.
- The count returns with champagne. The champagne is really good. They drink (three bottles’ worth) and smoke cigarettes while the count luxuriantly puffs on a cigar. The count, who is something of an odd duck (but a nice one), tells Brett that she’s got class written all over her, even if she’ll lose her title with her divorce. The usual snappy banter ensues.
- They go for dinner and drink some expensive brandy, then head up to Montmartre to dance. Brett and Jake dance while the count watches.
- Brett and Jake discuss her relationship with Mike – even though they’re engaged, she never thinks of him. Brett has a sudden mood swing, and doesn’t want to stay at the club. Jake has major déjà vu – he has the feeling that he and Brett are going to go through something they’ve already been through. The pair take their leave of the count, and Jake drops Brett off before heading home.
Book 2, Chapter 8

- Frances is away and Cohn is out of the country for a few weeks. Jake is happy to have gotten rid of them for a while. Jake plans a trip to Spain with a friend named Bill Gorton at the end of June. Bill arrives and recounts a trip he’s just taken to Vienna and Prague. It seems he was too trashed for most of the trip to remember much except one prizefight. Is anyone surprised?
- Bill and Jake have a drink at a café and chat casually about taxidermy. This is certainly the only mention of stuffed dogs that we can think of in any great work of literature.
- Brett jumps out of a cab, newly returned from her trip. Bill-Brett introductions are made, and they go for a drink.
- Brett leaves to go bathe (which strikes us as kind of like the good ol' "Um… I have to wash my hair" trick, but hey, who are we to judge?).
- Jake and Bill go to eat at a little restaurant Jake knows. Hemingway reinforces the fact that Jake, unlike the majority of his fellow American expats, knows Paris like the back of his hand.
- The two friends consume a yummy-sounding meal of roast chicken, green beans, potatoes, a salad, some apple pie, cheese, and coffee. Man, just thinking about this book always makes us hungry.
- Jake suggests they have a drink but for the first time ever they decide not to have one. We are shocked.
- Bill and Jake meet up with Mike and Brett (who’s now supposedly quite clean and is not wearing stockings…. more scandal) in one of their regular cafés. Mike turns out to be kind of nutty and extremely drunk; he’s taken home by Brett. Jake and Bill go to watch a fight.
Book 2, Chapter 9

- Jake receives word from Cohn that he’s in Spain. Bill and Jake agree to meet Cohn in Bayonne, Spain and travel together to Pamplona. Brett and Mike decide to join the trip to Pamplona. The men want to fish, but Brett wants to party.
- Brett has Jake walk her back to her hotel to bathe again.
- Brett reveals to Jake that she’s been in San Sebastian not with Mike but with Cohn. Sex is implied, but Brett says she finds Cohn dull. Ouch. Brett is worried Cohn will freak out if he comes on the trip, since Brett will be with Mike. Cohn insists on coming, anyway. Jake is sort of disgusted by the whole thing.
- Jake and Bill head for Spain by train. They try to bribe the dining car conductor to seat them for lunch but he refuses – apparently, the train is packed with an American Catholic tour group on a pilgrimage to Rome. Bill and Jake make small talk with an American family to pass the time.
- Since they can’t have lunch, they drink epic amounts of wine. Bill is still mad and badmouths a Catholic priest, demanding to know when the Protestants will be allowed to eat. So not PC.
- They arrive at the station and meet Cohn, who’s a little shy around Bill. Apparently, Cohn has read all of Bill’s books (everyone and their mom is a writer in this book).
Bill, Jake, and Cohn have breakfast and, around about midmorning, start drinking. They rent a car to leave Bayonne for the river to fish. It’s hot out and the landscape is beautiful and distinctly Spanish. We discover that Jake is the only one of the three who can semi-competently speak Spanish. They stop in a small town, find a hotel, and have a lunch of hors d’oeuvres, an egg course, two meat courses, vegetables, salad, desert, and fruit. Oh and lots of wine which is justified as necessary to digesting the rest. *We’re still hungry.*

Cohn is acting super awkward because he doesn’t know if Jake and Bill know that he was in San Sebastian with Brett. Cohn’s Spanish is particularly atrocious. Jake, Bill, and Cohn go off separately for a while. Jake prays (sort of, at least) in the Catholic Church in the square. Mostly he thinks about bull-fights. During dinner, Cohn and Jake leave to check if Brett and Mike have arrived at the train station. Cohn is nervous. Jake, in a particularly nasty mood, lets him suffer, then accuses Cohn of bringing out the worst in everyone. Mike and Brett don’t show up on the train. Jake receives a telegram saying that they have decided to spend the night in San Sebastian. He pulls a catty middle-school-girl maneuver and doesn’t show Cohn the telegram.

Jake’s jealousy has transformed his feelings for Cohn – while he showed fondness for Cohn (albeit condescendingly) in earlier chapters, now he admits that he hates the other guy. Clearly Brett is the cause. Jake buys bus tickets to Burguete, where they plan to fish. Cohn bails, claiming that he should go meet Brett and Mike in San Sebastian. Bill and Jake are both fed up with him, and the nasty strain of anti-Semitism that’s been lurking in the background of the novel all along emerges.
Bill and Jake stock up with loads of wine and get on the bus. The bus is full of Basque peasants going into the hills. Before the bus even leaves, everyone inside is drinking out of large wine skins and bottles. Everyone has a blast.

They arrive at an inn Burguete. The room is nice but pricey. When they learn that wine is included in the rate, though, they aren’t as concerned. Another delicious-sounding meal is had, and they head off to bed.
Book 2, Chapter 12

- Jake wakes up early and goes digging for worms. We’re trying really hard not to make a lame early-bird-catches-the-worm joke. Oops – there it went.
- Jake and Bill eat breakfast and joke wittily about irony and pity. Lesbians, Abraham Lincoln, Robert Cohn, caffeine, and sex obsessions are all discussed… you know, the usual. Both of them are having a fine time, and they’re clearly on the same wavelength.
- Next, the friends hike up to the Irati River to fish for trout. When they get there they chill some wine in the river and go off to fish in different areas.
- Over a picnic lunch of eggs, chicken, and cold, cold white wine, they compare their catches and extemporize on the classic chicken vs. egg debate. Bill and Jake are both in top form – fishing is great! Picnics are great! Nature is great!
- After the wine runs out, a pensive mood takes over briefly. Jake admits that he was in love with Brett on and off for a long time.
- They spend five days fishing, drinking and playing cards with a jolly Englishman named Harris. It’s paradise.
Book 2, Chapter 13

- Jake receives a note from Mike saying that they were delayed in San Sebastian because Brett was feeling ill. They plan to rejoin Jake and Bill in Pamplona. Cohn also wires a snottily short message in Spanish (having apparently learned a very impressive two words) saying he’s coming, too.
- Jake and Bill plan to leave the same night, so they head out and have four bottles worth of celebratory wine with Harris. The men leave Harris somewhat sentimentally.
- They arrive at the Montoya Hotel in Pamplona. There is going to be a massive party and they are enthusiastic (because the level of debauchery has clearly been completely insufficient up until this point). Mike and Brett have arrived. Jake is passionately excited for the bull-fights, as are the owner (Montoya) and the other patrons of the hotel.
- We’re introduced to the concept of *aficion* – passion. Jake is a real aficionado, which means that he has a true understanding and love for bull-fighting. He and Montoya are on a level that the others don’t even come close to comprehending.
- Jake and Bill find Mike, Brett and Cohn at a café. Brett, Jake and Cohn walk down to the corrals to check out the bulls, which is apparently the cool thing to do.
- The bulls are unsurprisingly strong and dangerous. As they are let out into the corral from their cages they gore various steers in the corral. Brett watches intently. Jake’s worried she’s going to get grossed out, but she keeps her cool. Furthermore, she seems to share some of the innate understanding of the bulls and perhaps a hint of the *aficion* that fills Jake and Montoya. Cohn, if anyone, is the wimp.
- They head up to the café and meet Mike and Bill. Mike compares Cohn to a steer, accusing him of following Brett around all day and being a jerk (which, while undeniably mean, everyone agrees is accurate). Mike is drunk and Cohn is really angry. Bill takes Cohn away and Jake listens to Mike and Brett talk about Brett’s sex life. He’s disgusted.
- Jake finds dinner that night with the gang more pleasant, perhaps because Brett looks particularly beautiful. This seems to make Cohn feel better, too.
Book 2, Chapter 14

- Jake can’t sleep because he’s thinking about Brett. Again, he tells us that things are much harder to deal with at night than in the logical light of day. He damns Brett, and women in general, and decides, in short, that in life there is no free lunch. Everything comes with a price.
- He mulls over the meaning of life more broadly and decides, since he’s utterly wasted, that he’s being absurd.
- Everyone’s hanging out in preparation for the gargantuan party that is about to start. We get the feeling that this is the calm before the storm.
- Brett wants to go to hear Jake confess at the Catholic Church. Jake tells her it’s both impossible and dull, so she gets her fortune told by gypsies instead.
It’s party time! More specifically, it’s the Fiesta of San Fermin: seven wild days of sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll. Well, sorta – make that sexual tension, alcohol, and bullfighting. Jake observes that the streets are full of dancers, musicians, and a group of workers carrying a sign reading "Hurray for wine! Hurray for the foreigners!"

Jake is pushed from the streets into a wine shop along with Brett and Bill. Jake runs down the street to buy a big leather wine bottle. He comes back with two, one of which can hold over a gallon. Within minutes, they’re both filled and put to good use. He finds Brett, Mike, and Bill singing loudly in Spanish, eating, and generally living it up.

Cohn has passed out in the back of someone’s shop. Party foul! Fortunately, in a few hours he recovers.

After dinner and some more seriously hardcore partying, Jake crashes in Cohn’s room (since he’s cleverly lost his room key). He wakes up to the sound of the bulls being released at 6 AM to run from their corrals through Pamplona and into the bull ring. Jake watches the bulls from the balcony until the rest of the gang gets home. They all crash until noon.

The gang seat themselves for the bull-fight. Everyone tells Brett how to avoid freaking out about the gore, but the real wimp is obviously Cohn. He acts super macho and says he’s only concerned he’ll be bored, but he’s not fooling anyone. Bill seizes the opportunity to make some signature anti-Semitic remarks about Cohn.

Montoya introduces Jake and Bill to Pedro Romero, an up-and-coming young bull-fighter. Romero’s nineteen. He’s also super hot, and everyone knows it.

Bill and Jake go to their front row seats, and are terrifically impressed by Romero’s performance. Mike, Brett, and Cohn are sitting further from the ring, and they’re obviously keyed up, as well.

After it’s over, they retreat to the café for absinthe and post-fight discussion.

Brett, we learn, loved both the bull-fight and Romero… particularly Romero. She even comments on his green pants and insists on sitting closer for a better view (of the pants, and presumably the bulls, as well) during the next fight. Cohn is accused, as usual, of being a big wuss.

During the next fight, Jake describes the technicalities of Romero’s fighting to Brett. She sees and understands what’s going on in the ring. She’s even more into Romero now.

The next day’s bullfights are not as good, but the fiesta plows on all day and night.
Book 2, Chapter 16

- A few days later Jake chats with Montoya about Romero while he shaves before dinner. Montoya has a dilemma: he’s received a telegram inviting Romero to go and hang out with the American ambassador and his bevy of dissolute friends. He’s worried that Romero will fall in with the wrong crowd and it’ll ruin his fighting. He and Jake agree not to tell Romero about the invitation.
- Jake heads to the café to meet his friends, but they’re well ahead of him with their drinking and he feels sober and awkward. There, he runs into Romero who introduces him to a Spanish bull-fighting critic, and the three get into a deep aficionados-only discussion of the art of the bull-fight. Brett hassles Jake for an introduction, and he reluctantly gives in.
- Jake plays translator and frequently edits the drunken commentary of his friends for Romero and the critic. Romero and Brett flirt over drinks.
- Montoya comes in, sees what’s happening, and leaves without a word – he clearly feels betrayed by Jake, especially after their earlier discussion about Romero.
- After Romero and the critic leave, drunken Mike takes another jab at Cohn. Cohn perversely enjoys the heroism of the situation – to him, there’s something romantic about this drama over his affair with Brett. Everyone else is a little sickened. Jake thinks fast and grabs Cohn away before a fight breaks out.
- Soon they reunite and meet up with a woman Bill met in Biarritz. Mike wants to go watch the English tourists (being Scottish, he professes to hate the English).
- Bill, his lady friend, and Mike go off to "festa the English," whatever that means. Brett tells Cohn to leave and then complains about him to Jake. Jake tries to act all noble and suave and say the right thing. As they leave the bar for a walk, Cohn is loitering outside. Suspicion confirmed: total stalker.
- Brett asks Jake if he still loves her. He says yes. In the very next words that come out of her mouth she tells to Jake that she’s in love with Romero. Bad timing. She asks for his help in finding Romero.
- They locate Romero sitting at a café with a table of other bullfighters. Jake watches Brett and Romero flirt. They’re going to hook up, and everyone knows it. Jake leaves briefly, and when he returns, his companions have deserted him. The bullfighters at the other table regard him menacingly as he leaves alone.
Book 2, Chapter 17

- Having been dumped by Brett, Jake meets up with Mike, Bill, and Bill’s friend from the last chapter, Edna. They were kicked out of a pub by the police after fighting with some British patrons. The English, previously the pinnacle of hilarity, are now loudly denounced as scoundrels.
- A long discussion ensues regarding Bill and Mike’s relative bankruptcy. Everyone, it seems, is in debt. The general feeling is that this is outrageously funny.
- Cohn shows up at a café where Jake, Mike, Bill, and Edna are sitting and demands to know where Brett is. Jake won’t tell him. In a fit of rage, Cohn denounces Jake as “a damned pimp.” Mike cynically comments that Brett’s off with Romero on their “honeymoon.”
- Cohn knocks Jake and Mike out cold. It’s payback time!
- Jake makes it back to the hotel in a daze. Cohn’s boxing, it appears, finally paid off.
- Cohn feels guilty, cries and asks for forgiveness. All Jake can think about is taking a bath. Cohn announces he’s leaving in the morning. Jake couldn’t care less, but forgives him because it’s too much trouble not to. Then Jake goes to bed.
- In the morning he wakes late and makes it just in time to see the running of the bulls. A man is badly gored and dies. Jake has a coffee and the waiter expresses disgust that people are being killed for kicks.
- Jake’s jaw hurts. He denounces Cohn for believing that his love for Brett will conquer all despite the obvious reality that she couldn’t care less about him.
- Jake runs into Bill and Mike. He learns that the previous evening Cohn found Brett with the bullfighter, beat him up, and then asked for forgiveness and didn’t get it. He hired a car and left. Brett’s off caring for Romero. Mike and Bill head to bed.
Book 2, Chapter 18

- It’s noon on the last day of the fiesta.
- The gang is enjoying shrimp and beer at a café when Brett shows up and reports on Romero’s condition. Mike has a fit of somewhat childish rage and tips over the table. We can’t blame him – Brett is supposedly his fiancée, after all.
- Brett asks to speak with Jake privately. She’s quite happy with herself and asks Jake to keep his eye on Mike. She disappears into Romero’s room.
- Mike crashes. Bill and Jake go to lunch, taking a jab at the hotel’s hoity-toity German waiter on their way out.
- Bill, Jake, and Brett head to the bullfight. The matadors enter the ring and Romero has his cape passed up to Brett. He looks noticeably battered from his fight with Cohn.
- Jake gives his semi-professional diagnosis on the other bullfighters in the ring, Marcial and Belmonte. Neither of them can equal Romero – Marcial is a “decadent,” show-offy fighter, while Belmonte’s past greatness has faded with time. Romero, on the other hand, possesses a true talent and grace. Jake can see Romero’s love for the bulls, for the fight, and for Brett in the young matador’s movements.
- Romero successfully kills both of his bulls. He chops off the second bull’s ear and gives it to Brett as a kind of trophy.
- Bill and Jake are exhausted, but rather than sleeping, which would be far too mundane, they go for a few rounds of absinthe.
- Jake tells Bill that he feels like hell, and they agree that the week was a wonderful nightmare. Jake feels drunker than he’s ever been. He stops to talk to Mike on his way to bed and finds out that Brett has left town with Romero.
- Jake naps briefly, then goes down to eat with Bill and Mike. Now that it’s just the three of them, it feels as though a whole lot of people are missing.
The fiesta is over.

Jake decides to spend a week alone in San Sebastian for some serious detox. Bill plans to head back to Paris, then home to New York. Mike will be heading to San Jean de Luz. Basically, everyone’s sick of each other – that end-of-a-week-long-road-trip-crammed-with-your-screaming-little-sibling-in-the-back-seat-of-a-way-too-small-car kind of sick of each other. They agree to share a ride out of Pamplona.

The three stop for one last drink, and roll dice to see who will pay. Mike loses, but can’t pay up – he is completely broke, so Bill and Jake cover the cost of whiskey and the car. Bill and Jake drop Mike at his new hotel, then drive to Bayonne. Bill hurries to catch his train after a quick good bye.

Alone, Jake stays the night in Bayonne. He eats and enjoys the companionship of a nice bottle of wine and a few more drinks.

Jake is relieved to be back in France, where things seem more familiar and less wild. He half-wishes he’d gone back to Paris with Bill, but the thought of more fiesta-ing is too much to handle.

Despite his frustrations with Spain, Jake heads back immediately. In the morning, he leaves for San Sebastian where he intends to be alone, read, and swim. First he sleeps, and then swims, listens to music and drinks. He chats with some men in a bike race at his hotel. Everything is pleasant and restful – suspiciously pleasant and restful. We know something’s coming.

Jake receives two telegrams from Brett asking for help. He books the next train to Madrid to meet her. He’s neither irritated nor surprised that his solo vacation has gone down the tubes.

He arrives at Brett’s hotel in Madrid the following morning. Brett tells Jake that she’s finished with Romero; she finally realizes that he was too young (and perhaps too good) for her. Brett plans to go back to Mike. She’s an emotional wreck, and can’t stop rehashing her guilt about Romero. Jake, ever faithful, comforts her.

Brett and Jake have lunch. Brett begs Jake not to get drunk this once – but he keeps drinking anyway. They perfunctorily decide to go for a ride to see the city and, in the cab, Brett regretfully laments the idea that the two of them could have had a good time together. Jake, uncertain and cynical, simply responds that it’s pretty to think so.
Themes

Dissatisfaction

People have fun in this book, but that’s about it – what’s missing is a lasting sense of contentment or satisfaction with life in general. The cause of this is the massive social upheaval caused by the First World War; after the war, nobody seems to care about the things that used to be important, and the whole world has to re-define itself. Hemingway’s characters all struggle to discover their individual brands of happiness, but none of them succeed in doing so. The implication is that the postwar world is so disorderly and unstable that it’s impossible to just settle down and figure everything out. This is understandable – heck, it’s hard enough to do that when everything’s peaceful, much less in the aftermath of a catastrophic global event.

Questions About Women and Femininity

1. Do any of the characters in the novel actively try to seek a more satisfying existence?
2. Is the dissatisfaction of Hemingway’s characters emblematic of a more broad-sweeping social phenomenon?
3. Are there any truly happy people in this book?
4. Is dissatisfaction simply a symptom of the expatriate?

Chew On This

The pervasive sense that contentment is no longer possible in the postwar world means that The Sun Also Rises is doomed to end unhappily from page one.

Dissatisfaction fuels Jake’s productive working life, and therefore his discontentment is indispensable to him.
Identity

This novel is just jam-packed with people who think they have their public images worked out, but really are just big old messes on the inside. Hemingway’s characters make a big show of being confident and witty, but we quickly realize that they’re just frontin’ – nobody is really that confident, and nobody is entirely true to themselves. Even our protagonist, who is one of the novel’s more grounded characters, faces deep anxieties about his beliefs and the ways in which his actions correspond with them. All of this has to do, of course, with the destabilizing trauma of the war; just as nations have to rebuild themselves after the war, so do individual people.

Questions About Women and Femininity

1. Why do Jake, Brett, Bill, and Mike reject Robert Cohn’s code of ethics?
2. In the newborn modern, postwar world that Hemingway depicts, what kinds of things do people use to define themselves?
3. Brett’s character is often referred to as an example of the "New Woman." How conscious is she of her groundbreaking role in society?

Chew On This

The characters of The Sun Also Rises are all marked by the impossibility of claiming an identity, rather than by a clear understanding of themselves.

The postwar society Hemingway reveals in the novel is one in the midst of a universal identity crisis.
Men and Masculinity

Masculinity is somewhat problematic in the world of this novel. The insecurity of the central male characters produces an atmosphere of competition, rivalry, and mutual harassment, and we constantly witness petty arguments that are rooted in this sense of challenged masculinity. The novel revolves around several male characters and their various relationships with each other, and with one central female character; Hemingway plays up the tensions of competition and jealousy to demonstrate just how uncertain his male characters are. The shared sense of insecurity among many of the book’s central male characters suggests a redefinition of masculinity post-WWI; particularly notable is the fact that the protagonist’s impotence is caused by a wound he sustained in the war.

Questions About Women and Femininity

1. In what way does WWI seem to have shaped the masculinity of the men in The Sun Also Rises?
2. Compare Jake’s sense of insecurity and emasculation with Mike’s and Cohn’s. How are they the same? How are they different?
3. How does Brett’s non-conformity to traditional female norms (for example her cropped hair, open sexuality, use of the word chap in reference to herself, etc.) impact the masculinity of the men that surround her?

Chew On This

While most of the men in The Sun Also Rises are insecure because of their shifting roles in a modern and alienating society, Pedro Romero’s youth and proximity to nature produce his sense of identity and confidence.

Because Cohn unsuccessfully clings to pre-war notions of honor and masculinity, his masculinity is targeted as a clear example of weakness in the post-war world.
The characters in *The Sun Also Rises* are serious drinkers – they drink like it’s their job. Actually, alcoholism practically is a profession for one of the characters (Mike), a slacker whose major distinguishing factor is his ability to get drunk and stay drunk for days, possibly years, on end. Alcohol provides a much-needed escape from the realities of the world that Hemingway’s characters move through; it allows them to push away their personal doubts and fears, as well as renounce responsibility for their actions. Drinking is a largely ineffectual coping mechanism for this group of aimless, uncertain, and irresponsible people.

**Questions About Women and Femininity**

1. Is alcohol an effective mode of escapism in this novel?
2. Does the constant drunkenness of all, or most, of the characters in the novel detract from the seriousness of their conversations? Do we/should we believe what they say?
3. How does Robert Cohn’s reaction to drunkenness (he passes out) reflect on his character?

**Chew On This**

The characters in *The Sun Also Rises* attempt to use alcohol as an anaesthetic, to avoid the pain of dealing with their various identity crises.

Different characters have different uses for alcohol in the novel; while Mike uses drunkenness as an escape mechanism and an excuse for his outrageous behavior, Jake and Bill are both able to use alcohol productively to stimulate creativity.
Love

Ah, l’amour, l’amour. Of course a novel set in Paris (city of love, duh), involves love. However, don’t forget that this is not exactly the romantic, sentimental Paris we usually imagine – Hemingway’s Paris is an ailing, disillusioned postwar city, and therefore Hemingway’s love is also a special kind of ailing, disillusioned, postwar love. The novel lacks a single substantial example of mutually shared and consummated romantic love. While some characters struggle with an outdated definition of love, for others, the prospect of love seems entirely subjugated to other concerns and realities. Love, when mentioned at all in *The Sun Also Rises*, is usually only brought up in the context of accusations or fights, or at best surrounding discussions of sex.

Questions About Women and Femininity

1. Why are the romantic relationships portrayed in *The Sun Also Rises* all so unsuccessful?
2. Consider the relationships between Brett and Mike, Brett and Jake, Brett and Cohn, Brett and Romero, Cohn and Frances, and Bill and Edna. What does this suggest about expatriate life in the post-WWI world?
3. At different times in the novel, Brett indicates that she feels she would destroy either Jake or Romero, the two men she truly loves, if they were to be together. Why? Are Brett’s fears realistic?
4. Contrast the count and Cohn’s understandings of love and honor with those of Jake, Mike, Brett, and Bill. Is there a pattern? If so, what does it suggest?

Chew On This

Although Brett and Jake love one another, Brett’s prioritization of sex and independence above love, and Jake’s physical limitations, prevent them from being together.

Robert Cohn’s unrealistic and outdated understanding of love renders him the perfect scapegoat for Mike, Brett, and Jake, each of whom are insecure in their own love lives.
Man and the Natural World

There is an overwhelming sense that the modern world that Hemingway shows us runs the risk of drifting dangerously far from the natural world. The author sets up a clear-cut opposition between the decrepit urban space of Paris and the rejuvenating, healthy realm of Nature. Furthermore, many of the characters are divorced not only from capital-N-Nature, but from their own natural states; the perpetual drunkenness and self-imposed oblivion that dominate the book remove characters from their true thoughts and emotions. Our protagonist and a few other characters share a profound appreciation for nature, and in it they are able to take refuge from the negative effects of an unsatisfactory, unhealthy society.

Questions About Women and Femininity

1. How does nature serve as an escape and form of relaxation for Jake? What is he trying to escape?
2. What characteristics do the characters that most appreciate nature (Jake, Bill, Harris, and Romero) share?
3. In what ways do the natural environments in *The Sun Also Rises* reflect the storyline?

Chew On This

During Bill and Jake’s fishing trip, their profound experience of the natural world creates a sense of authenticity that is lacking in the rest of the novel.

The most grounded characters in *The Sun Also Rises* share a sense of appreciation and an innate understanding of nature.
Exile

Nationality is a funny thing in *The Sun Also Rises*. While all of its characters are defined partially by their roots, there is an overwhelming sense that national boundaries are no longer satisfactory in the aftermath of the Great War. The community we encounter in the novel is one of American and British expatriates living in France, in self-imposed exile from their respective homelands. The pressing need for escape, self-invention, and individuation from one’s country plays into the choices of the characters Hemingway shows us, as well as the fractured and unstable image of society he portrays.

Questions About Women and Femininity

1. Do we have a sense of where Jake really calls “home?”
2. Is Jake’s identity as an American something he is proud of at all?
3. Jake and Cohn are both Americans in Paris – but for very different reasons. What are their reasons for being there?

Chew On This

Hemingway’s expatriates are responding to the unsettling sense that the old order of the world no longer applies in the wake of the First World War.
**Warfare**

World War I is the elephant in the room that nobody wants to mention (yes, it occurred to us that this is probably the only time anyone has ever compared World War I to an elephant). When the war *does* come up, characters attempt to make flippant comments about it, but there’s a lingering sense of uneasiness – the experience of war is still too fresh in people’s minds to even seriously discuss it. Our protagonist suffered a physical wound that left him impotent as a result of the war; the other characters’ wounds are mental and emotional, and society as a whole is scarred by this global event.

**Questions About Women and Femininity**

1. We know that Mike was something of a joke in the army – but what do you think Jake’s experience of the war was like?
2. Brett was also involved in the war, as a V.A.D. nurse in Italy. Though she never voices her experience, how is that experience significant to her character?
3. France was one of the nations most heavily impacted by the First World War. Do we see evidence of this in Paris of the 1920s as depicted by Hemingway?

**Chew On This**

The rupturing event of World War I makes it impossible for Jake to return to America, since he only feels comfortable in a community that shared the traumatic experience of the war first-hand.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, the central conflict (the impossibility of Jake and Brett’s relationship) is caused by a war-inflicted wound that renders Jake impotent; one might therefore say that the war itself is the main cause of conflict in the novel.
Dissatisfaction Quotes

Quote:

"Listen, Jake," he leaned forward on the bar. "Don't you ever get the feeling that all your life is going by and you're not taking advantage of it? Do you realize you've lived nearly half the time you have to live already?" (2.7)

Thought:

Here, Cohn brushes upon something resembling an early mid-life crisis. His realization that he hasn't done anything significant with his life motivates his desire to act upon something – it ends up being his infatuation with Brett.

Quote:

[Georgette] looked up to be kissed. She touched me with one hand and I put her hand away. "Never mind."

"What's the matter? You sick?"

"Everybody's sick. I'm sick too. " (3.4)

Thought:

Everyone we encounter in the urban space of Paris is sick with something – mostly with the general sense of malaise that appears to be symptomatic of the postwar condition.

Quote:

I told the driver to go to the Parc Montsouris, and got in, and slammed the door. Brett was leaning back in the corner, her eyes closed. I sat beside her. The cab started with a jerk.

"Oh, darling, I've been so miserable," Brett said. (3.40)

Thought:

Despite Brett's earlier show of high spirits, she can admit her misery to Jake; their intimate relationship allows her to let down her guard and reveal her feelings to him.
Quote:

I lay awake thinking and my mind jumping around. Then I couldn’t keep away from it, and I started to think about Brett and all the rest of it went away. I was thinking about Brett and my mind stopped jumping around and started to go in sort of smooth waves. Then all of a sudden I started to cry. (4.15)

Thought:

In this rare moment of release, Jake breaks down and gives in to his despair about his hopeless relationship with Brett.

Quote:

It is awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing. (4.25)

Thought:

Again, Jake emphasizes just how difficult it is to stay tough and rational at night – when we’re alone in the dark, it’s hard not to think of the things that make us unhappy.

Quote:

"Have any fun last night?" I asked.

"No, I don’t think so."

"How’s the writing going?"

"Rotten. I can’t get this second book going."

"That happens to everyone."

"Oh. I’m sure of that. It just gets me worried, though." (5.7)

Thought:

This exchange between Robert Cohn and Jake reveals Cohn’s increasing anxieties about his writing and his general uncertainty about everything, even how much fun he had the previous night. His arrogance is beginning to falter as writing grows more and more difficult.

Quote:
“Oh darling,” Brett said, "I'm so miserable."

I had that feeling of going through something that has all happened before. "You were happy a minute ago." (7.30)

Thought:

Brett’s misery is never too far beneath the surface. Every time she’s with Jake, his mere presence seems to remind her of her feelings for him, and the impossibility of their situation.

Quote:

But I could not sleep. There is no reason why because it is dark you should look at things differently from when it is light. To hell there isn’t! I figured that all out once, and for six months I never slept with the electric light off. That was another bright idea. To hell with women, anyway. To hell with you, Brett Ashley. (14.2)

Thought:

Left alone for the night, Jake's problems all emerge in full force. He's definitely right – something about the night time makes us all a little too introspective at times. Despite his efforts to brush them off, his emotional issues can't be ignored forever.

Quote:

That was morality; things that made you disgusted afterward. No, that must be immorality. That was a large statement. (14.6)

Thought:

In his late night musings, Jake stumbles upon the idea that morality is signified by things that disgust you after you've done them (or perhaps it’s immorality). Either way, this statement provides us with a definition of a moral code that only functions through the negative reinforcement of guilt or dissatisfaction.

Quote:

"Come on," she whispered throatily. "Let's get out of here. Makes me damned nervous."

Outside in the hot brightness of the street Brett looked up at the treetops in the wind. The praying had not been much of a success.

"Don't know why I get so nervy in church," Brett said. "Never does me any good." We walked
along.

"I'm damned bad for a religious atmosphere," Brett said. "I've the wrong type of face." (18.14)

Thought:

Brett can't take the contemplative atmosphere of the church – her own demons make her too nervous in such a setting. The "nervy" feeling she gets in church probably has more to do with her denial of her own unhappiness than with anything else.
Identity Quotes

Quote:

*I mistrust all frank and simple people, especially when their stories hold together [...]. (1.2)*

Thought:

In a world of liars and cheats, of course Jake mistrusts people who are up front, since they seem too good to be true!

Quote:

*So there you were. I was sorry for him, but it was not a thing you could do anything about, because right away you ran up against the two stubbornesses: South America could fix it and he did not like Paris. He got the first idea out of a book and I suppose the second came out of a book, too. (2.8)*

Thought:

Jake comments upon Cohn’s easily impressed mentality; Jake looks down upon this aspect of his friend’s personality.

Quote:

*[…] as all the time I was kneeling with my forehead on the wood in front of me, and was thinking of myself as praying, I was a little ashamed, and I regretted that I was such a rotten Catholic, but realized there was nothing I could do about it, at least for a while and maybe never, but that anyway it was a grand religion, and I only wished I felt religious and maybe I would the next time […]. (10.21)*

Thought:

Jake, attempting to find some kind of genuine connection to his spirituality, realizes that despite his longing for faith, he’s not a proper Catholic. His desire to “feel religious” here is understandable – after all, religion explains the mysteries of life, which Jake is certainly, well, mystified by.

Quote:

*Montoya could forgive anything of a bull-fighter who had aficion. He could forgive attacks of nerves, panic, bad unexplainable actions, all sorts of lapses. For one who had aficion he could forgive anything. At once he forgave me for all of my friends. Without his ever saying anything*
they were simply a little something shameful between us, like the spilling open of the horses in bull-fighting. (13.24)

Thought:

For Montoya, *afición* is the only element of identity that matters. Since Jake has it, Montoya’s willing to overlook all his flaws – even his friends.

Quote:

"How did you go bankrupt?" Bill asked.

"Two ways," Mike said. "Gradually and then suddenly."

"What brought it on?"

"Friends," said Mike. "I had a lot of friends. False friends. Then I had creditors, too. Probably had more creditors than anybody in England." (13. 31)

Thought:

Mike admits to his own helplessness; his descent into bankruptcy was apparently totally beyond his control. This reflects upon his lack of control with regards not only to his business matters, but to his life in general.

Quote:

*Romero never made any contortions, always it was straight and pure and natural in line. The others twisted themselves like corkscrews, their elbows raised, and leaned against the flanks of the bull after his horns had passed, to give a faked look of danger. Afterward, all that was faked turned bad and gave an unpleasant feeling. Romero’s bull-fighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time. He did not have to emphasize their closeness. (15.52)*

Thought:

Romero’s natural talent reveals a pure and genuine kind of honesty that we don’t see in any of the other characters – the purity of his style in the ring reflects upon the authenticity of his character, as well.

Quote:

*Also Belmonte imposed conditions and insisted that his bulls should not be too large, nor too*
dangerously armed with horns, and so the element that was necessary to give the sensation of tragedy was not there, and the public, who wanted three times as much from Belmonte, who was sick with a fistula, as Belmonte had ever been able to give, felt defrauded and cheated, and Belmonte’s jaw came further out in contempt, and his face turned yellower, and he moved with greater difficulty as his pain increased, and finally the crowd were actively against him, and he was utterly contemptuous and indifferent. (18.30)

Thought:

The crowd can sense Belmonte’s inauthenticity, and knows that he is only imitating himself. His performance has become a parody of his past identity.

Quote:

During Romero’s first bull his hurt face had been very noticeable. Everything he did showed it. All the concentration of the awkwardly delicate working with the bull that could not see well brought it out. The fight with Cohn had not touched his spirit but his face had been smashed and his body hurt. He was wiping all that out now. Each thing that he did with this bull wiped out a little cleaner. (18.42)

Thought:

Romero, unlike any of the other characters, is able to heal himself. The purity of his passion for the bullfight allows him to re-center himself spiritually through the act of fighting, despite the physical damage he sustained in his brawl with Cohn.

Quote:

"You know it makes me feel rather good deciding not to be a bitch."

"Yes."

"It’s sort of what we have instead of God."

"Some people have God," I said. "Quite a lot." (19.55)

Thought:

After leaving Romero, Brett finally feels as though she’s done something right, even if it makes her miserable; this gives her a sense of some kind of spiritual wholeness for the first time, which she puts in the place of God. Jake, whose faith perseveres throughout the novel, corrects her when she implies that nobody believes in God in their world.
Quote:

"I'm thirty-four, you know. I'm not going to be one of those bitches that ruins children." (19.49)

Thought:

Brett’s affair with Romero (who’s only nineteen) has forced her to confront her conscience for the first time – yes, she actually has one! Her obsessive wondering in the last two chapters about whether or not she is a "bitch" reaches its culmination here, where she has apparently made up her mind not to be one.
Men and Masculinity Quotes

*Quote:*  
*I watched him walk back to the café holding his paper. I rather liked him and evidently she led him quite a life.* (1.10)  

*Thought:*  
Cohn is a likable but emasculated character when we first meet him – Frances has him totally whipped.

*Quote:*  
[Cohn] had married on the rebound from the rotten time he had in college, and Frances took him on the rebound from his discovery that he had not been everything to his first wife. He was not in love yet but he realized he was an attractive quantity to women and the fact of a woman caring for him and wanting to live with him was not simply a divine miracle. (2.2)  

*Thought:*  
Cohn’s subjugation by women is at a breaking point here – he realizes in a somewhat dangerous fashion very late in life that it’s not a “miracle” for a woman to be attracted to him, and that he can use this to his advantage.

*Quote:*  
One of them saw Georgette and said: “I do declare. There is an actual harlot. I’m going to dance with her, Lett. You watch me.”  

*The tall dark one, called Lett, said: “Don’t you be rash.”*  

*The wavy blood one answered: “Don’t you worry, dear.”*  

And with them was Brett. I was very angry. Somehow they always made me angry. I know they are supposed to be amusing, and you should be tolerant, but I wanted to swing on one, any one, anything to shatter that superior, simpering composure. (3.22)  

*Thought:*  
The homophobia that emerges here can be somewhat jarring to contemporary readers (as is the anti-Semitic strain that runs through everyone’s treatment of Cohn). In this scene, Jake is disturbed and angered by the homosexual friends that Brett arrives with – “they” are discussed
as though they are all the same (and Jake doesn’t like any of them). He portrays the gay men as effeminate, somewhat alien, and totally devoid of masculinity.

Quote:

“When I think of the hell I’ve put chaps through. I’m paying for it all now.”

“Don’t talk like a fool,” I said. “Besides, what happened to me is supposed to be funny. I never think about it.”

“Oh, no. I'll lay you don’t.”

“Well, let’s shut up about it.”

“I laughed about it too, myself, once.” She wasn’t looking at me. “A friend of my brother’s came home that way from Mons. It seemed like a hell of a joke. Chaps never know anything, do they?”

“No,” I said. “Nobody ever knows anything.” (4.4)

Thought:

Brett sees Jake’s ordeal as a punishment for her own mistreatment of men (rather a selfish way of approaching it). She admits that even she has laughed about a similar situation before it affected her directly – emasculated men are "supposed" to be comic figures, rather than tragic ones.

Quote:

My head started to work. The old grievance. Well, it was a rotten way to be wounded and flying on a joke front like the Italian. In the Italian hospital we were going to form a society. It had a funny name in Italian. I wonder what became of the others, the Italians. That was in the Ospedale Maggiore in Milano, Padiglione Ponte. The next building was the Padiglione Zonda. There was a statue of Ponte, or maybe it was Zonda. That was where the liaison colonel came to visit me. That was funny. That was about the first funny thing. I was all bandaged up. But they had told him about it. Then he made that wonderful speech: “You, a foreigner, an Englishman" (any foreigner was an Englishman) "have given more than your life." What a speech! I would like to have it illuminated to hang in the office. He never laughed. He was putting himself in my place, I guess. "Che mala fortuna! Che mala fortuna!” (4.78)

Thought:

Jake’s impotence is apparently worse than death, if we are to believe the very serious Italian
colonel. This says a lot about the expectations of men at the time; even though Jake presents this humorously, it’s clearly disturbing to him.

**Quote:**

*Cohn smiled again and sat down. He seemed glad to sit down. What the hell would he have done if he hadn’t sat down? "You say such damned insulting things, Jake." "I’m sorry. I’ve got a nasty tongue. I never mean it when I say nasty things."

"I know it," Cohn said. "You’re really about the best friend I have, Jake."

*God help you, I thought. (5.10)*

**Thought:**

Cohn’s guileless admission of friendship sets the scene for a man-to-man moment of honest affection – but instead, we (like Jake) just feel embarrassed that Cohn has put himself out there.

**Quote:**

"You’re awfully funny, Harvey," Cohn said. "Some day somebody will push your face in." (6.8)

**Thought:**

The violent tension that runs just below the surface of all of these male relationships slips out here, in Cohn’s obvious dislike for Harvey Stone.

**Quote:**

"Never be daunted. Secret of my success. Never been daunted. Never been daunted in public." (8.10)

**Thought:**

The undaunted party here is Bill. Here, he succinctly and jokingly outlines the number one rule of masculinity in Hemingway’s world – never be daunted in public.

**Quote:**

*Why I felt that impulse to devil [Cohn] I do not know. Of course I do know. I was blind, unforgivingly jealous of what happened to him. The fact that I took it as a matter of course did not alter that any. I certainly did hate him. I do not think I ever really hated him until he had that*
little spell of superiority at lunch – that and when he went through all that barbering. So I put the telegram in my pocket. The telegram came to me, anyway. (10.28)

Thought:

The competition between Jake and Cohn reaches its first peak here, without Cohn even knowing. Jake’s resentment of his former friend is kicked off by the double whammy of Cohn’s trip with Brett (and their sexual relationship) and by Cohn’s assumption that he knows Brett better than Jake does. Both of these things threaten Jake’s already shaky sense of his own masculinity.

Quote:

"It’s no life being a steer," Robert Cohn said.

"Don’t you think so?" Mike said. "I would have thought you’d loved being a steer, Robert."
"What do you mean, Mike?"

"They lead such a quiet life. They never say anything and they’re always hanging about so." […] "Is Robert Cohn going to follow Brett around like a steer all the time?" (13.48)

Thought:

Mike uses one of the oldest insults in the book here. His taunt that Cohn is like a steer (a castrated bull), implies that Cohn has no… well, you know.
Drugs and Alcohol Quotes

Quote:

I was a little drunk. Not drunk in any positive sense but just enough to be careless. (3.25)

Thought:

We’re not exactly sure what the "positive sense" of drunkenness is that Jake refers to, since people just seem to get into more trouble when they’re drunk in this novel, but we have a feeling it refers to the sense of carefree creative flow that emerges later in the scenes between Jake and Bill. Drunkenness in the wrong social context, however, as in this scene, leans more towards destructive rather than creative.

Quote:

"Mr. Barnes," the count poured my glass full. "She is the only lady I have ever known who was as charming when she was drunk as when she was sober." (7.18)

Thought:

The "she" here is Brett – of course, we’ve already established that Brett is charming in any situation, but this seems like a particularly interesting and rather unusual comment from the count. Brett doesn’t seem to undergo any real change between drunkenness and sobriety, which is kind of an alarming idea, if you think about it.

Quote:

Under the wine I lost the disgusted feeling and was happy. It seemed they were all such nice people. (13.57)

Thought:

Here, drunkenness is actually an effective mode of distraction for Jake – the language in this quote emphasizes the artificiality of this distraction. It "seems" that everyone’s nice, but we know that when Jake’s sober again, he’ll remember what his friends are really like.

Quote:

Mike was a bad drunk. Brett was a good drunk. Bill was a good drunk. Cohn was never drunk. (14.6)

Thought:
This concise quote sums up the difference between Cohn and the rest of the crowd (Jake included – we might as well add "Jake was a good drunk" to the list). Cohn, unlike everyone else, never surrenders himself to the experience of drunkenness, either because he can’t or he won’t.

**Quote:**

> The fiesta was really started. It kept up day and night for seven days. The dancing kept up, the drinking kept up, the noise went on. The things that happened could only have happened during a fiesta. Everything became quite unreal finally and it seemed as though nothing could have any consequences. It seemed out of place to think of consequences during the fiesta. All during the fiesta you had the feeling, even when it was quiet, that you had to shout any remark to make it heard. It was the same feeling about any action. It was a fiesta that went on for seven days. (15.8)

**Thought:**

The fiesta and its requisite state of constant drunkenness is a time of "unreal" events and chaos – a time in which our characters let go of any sober sense of right and wrong they might still possess.

**Quote:**

> "I'm rather drunk," Mike said. "I think I'll stay rather drunk. This is all awfully amusing, but it's not too pleasant for me. It's not too pleasant for me." (17.42)

**Thought:**

Mike finally articulates something we’ve all been wondering about – he’s perfectly aware of his own abuse of alcohol and its psychological reasons, and consciously chooses to continue it.

**Quote:**

> "You wouldn’t believe it. It’s like a wonderful nightmare."


> "What’s the matter? Feel low?"

> "Low as hell."

> "Have another absinthe. Here, waiter! Another absinthe for this señor."
"I feel like hell," I said.

"Drink that," said Bill. "Drink it slow."

It was beginning to get dark. The fiesta was going on. I began to feel drunk but I did not feel any better.

"How do you feel?"

"I feel like hell."

"Have another?"

"It won't do any good."

"Try it. You can't tell; maybe this is the one that gets it. Hey, waiter! Another absinthe for this señor!" (18.53)

Thought:

Following the Brett-Romero-Cohn drama, the only thing Jake can fall back on is alcohol—however, this time even booze doesn't do the trick. What he needs, clearly, is something to cure rather than simply cover up his problems.

Quote:

I drank a bottle for wine for company. It was a Château Margaux. It was pleasant to be drinking slowly and to be tasting the wine and to be drinking alone. A bottle of wine was good company. (19.14)

Thought:

After the fiesta, Jake returns to alcohol, but it’s different—there’s something less alarming to him about drinking alone, at his own pace, and without the complicating factors of his friends.

Quote:

"It’s funny what a wonderful gentility you can get in the bar of a big hotel," I said.

"Barmen and jockeys are the only people who are polite anymore."

"No matter how vulgar a hotel is, the bar is always nice." (19.53)
Thought:

Brett and Jake hang on to an old-fashioned idea of gentility associated with hotel bars (and curiously enough, horse racing) – in this scene, the hotel bar is a place of refuge from the pressures of the outside world and the consequences of Brett’s actions.

Quote:

"Don’t get drunk, Jake," she said. "You don’t have to."

"How do you know?"

"Don’t," she said. "You’ll be all right."

"I’m not getting drunk," I said. "I’m just drinking a little wine. I like to drink wine."

"Don’t get drunk," she said. "Jake, don’t get drunk." (19.58)

Thought:

For the only time, Brett actually begs Jake to stay sober; she doesn’t want to drink herself, and needs him to stay with her in her state of honesty and unhappiness.
Love Quotes

Quote:

*For four years his horizon had been absolutely limited to his wife. For three years, or almost three years, he had never seen beyond Frances. I am sure he had never been in love in his life.* (2.1)

Thought:

Despite the fact that he’s been tied to certain women, Jake suspects that Cohn has never really been in love with them – Cohn doesn’t have an understanding of what love really is, beyond obligation.

Quote:

"*You’re getting damned romantic.*"

"*No, bored.*" (3.35)

Thought:

This brief interchange between Brett and Jake (Jake is the bored one) cancels out the possibility of real romance – it’s just something to pass the time.

Quote:

"*It’s funny,* I said. "*It’s very funny. And it’s a lot of fun, too, to be in love.*"

"*Do you think so?*” her eyes looked flat again.

"*I don’t mean fun that way. In a way it’s an enjoyable feeling.*"

"*No,* she said. "*I think it’s hell on earth.*" (4.4)

Thought:

Brett can’t handle her feelings for Jake – she wants him but can’t have him, which creates the sensation of “hell on earth” for her. Jake, on the other hand, experiences a kind of simultaneous pain and pleasure in seeing Brett.
"Couldn’t we live together, Brett? Couldn’t we just live together?"

"I don’t think so. I’d just tromper you with everybody. You couldn’t stand it." (7. 7)

Thought:

Jake attempts to find some kind of unconventional solution to their no sex problem, but Brett knows herself too well to accept it. Her statement that she’d just tromper (cheat on) Jake with everyone is true, and both of them know it.

Quote:

“He calls her Circe,” Mike said. "He claims she turns men into swine." (13.52)

Thought:

Cohn’s association of Brett with Circe, a seductive enchantress of Greek mythology, is fairly accurate – she reduces the men who love her to a kind of animal-like state of worship and abjection.

Quote:

Women made such swell friends. Awfully swell. In the first place, you had to be in love with a woman to have a basis of friendship. I had been having Brett for a friend. I had not been thinking about her side of it. I had been getting something for nothing. That only delayed the presentation of the bill. The bill always came. That was one of the swell things you could count on.

I thought I had paid for everything. Not like the woman pays and pays and pays. No idea of retribution or punishment. Just exchange of values. (14. 4)

Thought:

Love and friendship here are depicted as "exchange of values," reflecting Jake’s cynical view of relationships between men and women. The "bill" that always comes is steep – in transactions like this, someone always ends up paying with unhappiness.

Quote:

Cohn sat at the table. His face had the sallow, yellow look it got when he was insulted but somehow he seemed to be enjoying it. The childish, drunken heroics of it. It was his affair with a lady of title. (16. 32)
Thought:

Cohn’s love for Brett is more like the idealized notion of love – at this stage, he’s in love with the concept of an "affair with a lady of title," rather than Brett herself.

Quote:

"Do you still love me, Jake?"

"Yes," I said.

"Because I’m a goner," Brett said.

"How?"

"I'm a goner. I'm mad about the Romero boy. I'm in love with him I think."

"I wouldn't be if I were you."

"I can't help it. I'm a goner. It's tearing me all up inside." (16. 48)

Thought:

Brett expresses a marked sense of resignation here; she recognizes that her feelings for Romero are actually love, or something akin to it, at least, which she links to death ("I’m a goner"). This reiterates Brett’s earlier claim, in relation to Jake, that love is hell on earth.

Quote:

That seemed to handle it. That was it. Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him, now go and bring her back. And sign the wire with love. That was all right. (19.37)

Thought:

After everything’s over, Jake sardonically reflects upon the shameful role he played in the drama of Brett, Cohn, and Romero – he clearly feels guilty about his intervention, but is also resigned to it.

Quote:

"Oh, Jake," Brett said, "we could have had such a damned good time together."
Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.

"Yes," I said. "Isn’t it pretty to think so?” (19.60)

Thought:

This line gets us every time. As the novel closes, Jake doesn’t even have the energy to imagine a happy ending – he knows that he and Brett can’t be together, and now that this possibility has been irrevocably cancelled out, he recognizes that it could never have happened, even in the past. The idea of their relationship is simply a pretty but impossible dream.
Man and the Natural World Quotes

Quote:

"No, I don’t like Paris. It’s expensive and dirty."

"Really? I find it so extraordinarily clean. One of the cleanest cities in all Europe."

"I find it dirty."

"How strange! But perhaps you have not been here very long."

"I’ve been here long enough." (3.14)

Thought:

This catty little exchange between Frances and Georgette again raises the issue of the dirty or decrepit condition of Paris – Georgette, like Jake, has the sense that there is something wrong with the urban space.

Quote:

In the Basque country the land all looks very rich and green and the houses and villages look well-off and clean… the houses in the villages had red tiled roofs, and then the road turned off and commenced to climb and we were going way up close along a hillside, with a valley below and hills stretched off back toward the sea. (10.4)

Thought:

Doesn’t this just sound like paradise? The closer Jake gets to the real country, the happier he is. Hemingway indulges in lengthy (and for him, rather lush) descriptions of the Basque countryside to help his readers appreciate it as much as Jake does.

Quote:

It was a beech wood and the trees were very old. Their roots bulked above the ground and the branches were twisted. We walked on the road between the thick trunks of the old beeches and the sunlight came through the leaves in light patches on the grass. The trees were big, and the foliage was thick but it was not gloomy. There was no undergrowth, only the smooth grass, very green and fresh, and the big gray trees well spaced as though it were a park.

"This is country," Bill said. (12.19)
Thought:

Bill’s simple statement says it all. He and Jake have no need for discussion – they have found what they’re looking for.

Quote:

As soon as I baited up and dropped in again I hooked another and brought him in the same way. In a little while I had six. They were all about the same size. I laid them out, side by side, all their heads pointing the same way, and looked at them. They were beautifully colored and firm and hard from the cold water. It was a hot day so I slit them all and shucked out the insides, gills and all, and tossed them over across the river. I took the trout ashore, washed them in the cold, smoothly heavy water above the dam, and then picked some ferns and packed them all in the bag, three trout on a layer of ferns, then another layer of ferns, then three more trout, and then covered them with ferns. They looked nice in the ferns, and now the bag was bulky, and I put it in the shade of the tree. (12.29)

Thought:

Jake is totally satisfied with the simple chore of packing up his catch – he has the same aura of focus and straightforward pleasure that we saw in his work at the newspaper office.

Quote:

Bill took a long drink.

"Utilize a little, brother," he handed me the bottle. "Let us not doubt, brother. Let us not pry in to the holy mysteries of the hen-coop with simian fingers. Let us accept on faith and simply say – I want you to join with me in saying – What shall we say brother?" he pointed the drumstick at me and went on. "Let me tell you. We will say, and I for one am proud to say – and I want to say with me, on your knees, brother. Let no man be ashamed to kneel here in the great out-of-doors. Remember the woods were God’s first temples. Let us kneel and say: ‘Don’t eat that, Lady – that’s Mencken.’" (12.39)

Thought:

All of this "utilizing" business is silly and fun, but there’s also an edge of something real beneath it. Out in nature, Bill and Jake have an exuberant sense of liberty and exhilaration. Bill’s mock-sermon encourages his audience to utilize the products of the earth and celebrate them, and even while he’s mocking organized religion, he’s setting up the idea that we should worship nature instead of any manmade gods.

Quote:
We stayed five days at Burguete and had good fishing. The nights were cold and the days were hot, and there was always a breeze even in the heat of the day. It was hot enough so that it felt good to wade in a cold stream, and then the sun dried you when you came out and sat on the bank. We found a stream with a pool deep enough to swim in. In the evenings we played three-handed bridge with a man named Harris, who has walked over from Saint Jean Pied de Port and was stopping at the inn for the fishing. He was pleasant and went with us twice to the Irati River. There was no word from Robert Cohn nor from Brett and Mike. (12.48)

Thought:

This is an idyllic break from everything that stresses Jake out; he’s in the country, living the simple life with pleasant companions. The lack of correspondence from Cohn or Mike is the icing on the cake.

Quote:

We walked back down the road from Roncesvalles with Harris between us. We had lunch at the inn and Harris went with us to the bus. He gave us his card, with his address in London and his club and his business address, and as we got on the bus he handed us each an envelope. I opened mine and there were a dozen flies in it. Harris had tied them himself. He tied all his own flies. "I say, Harris – " I began.

"No, no!" he said. He was climbing down from the bus. "They’re not first rate flies at all. I only thought if you fished them sometime it might remind you of what a good time we had." (13. 69)

Thought:

The strong bond that we see between Bill and Jake in their time in the country is also reflected in their relationship with Harris. Even though they don’t know each other very well, all three clearly feel that a true friendship has emerged in their common appreciation for the country life – here, Harris touchingly expresses his gratitude for this in the form of flies (hilarious, but genuinely sweet, in our opinion).

Quote:

It was a good morning, there were high white clouds above the mountains. It had rained a little in the night and it was fresh and cool on the plateau, and there was a wonderful view. We all felt good and we felt healthy, and I felt quite friendly to Cohn. You could not be upset about anything on a day like that. That was the last day before the fiesta. (14. 12)

Thought:

Jake’s mood is influenced by the beautiful weather; as we’ve noted before, his feelings are
often connected to his environment.

**Quote:**

_in the morning it was raining. A fog had come over the mountains from the sea. You could not see the tops of the mountains. The plateau was dull and gloomy, and the shapes of the trees and the houses were changed. I walked out beyond the town to look at the weather. The bad weather was coming over the mountains from the sea._ (16.1)

**Thought:**

Yet again, the weather signals a change that is to come – the fog is coming, and with it a whole lot of negativity.

**Quote:**

_i undressed in one of the bath-cabins, crossed the narrow line of beach and went into the water. I swam out, trying to swim through the rollers, but having to dive sometimes. Then in the quiet water I turned and floated. Floating I saw only the sky and felt the drop and lift of the swells…. The water was buoyant and cold. It felt as though you could never sink._ (19.28)

**Thought:**

Alone in San Sebastian, Jake can commune with nature and recuperate. The sensation of never sinking that he experience is one of tranquil hopefulness. For poor Jake’s sake, we wish this could go on for longer…
Exile Quotes

Quote:

"Listen, Robert, going to another country doesn’t make any difference. I’ve tried all that. You can’t get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. There’s nothing to that."
(2.7)

Thought:

Jake opens up inadvertently here – we learn that he went through a stage of wandering simply to escape himself, also.

Quote:

We ate dinner at Madame Lecomte’s restaurant on the far side of the island. It was crowded with Americans and we had to stand up and wait for a place. Some one had put it on the American Women’s Club list as a quaint restaurant on the Paris quais as yet untouched by Americans, so we had to wait forty-five minutes for a table. (8.21)

Thought:

Jake’s disgust with his compatriots and with their rather sheep-like adherence to travel guides emerges here – he sees himself as totally different from the American tourists.

Quote:

"You’re an expatriate. You’ve lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You’re an expatriate, see? You hang around cafés."

‘It sounds like a swell life,” I said. "When do I work?”

"You don’t work. One group claims women support you. Another group claims you’re impotent."

"No," I said. "I just had an accident." (12. 13)

Thought:

Bill’s diatribe against expatriates (in itself a mockery of the typical American perspective), touches upon all of the stereotypes of expat life – it’s a caricature that’s recognizable, and, like so many things, it’s funny because it’s true.
Quote:

"Hurray for Wine! Hurray for the Foreigners!" was painted on the banner.

"Who are the foreigners?" Robert Cohn asked.

"We’re the foreigners," Bill said. (15.6)

Thought:

Cohn, with characteristic confusion, doesn’t get that they are the outsiders in Spain – his self-centered vacation mentality is that Spain is there for their use.

Quote:

"They’re a fine lot," I said. "There’s one American woman down here now that collects bull-fighters." (16.8)

Thought:

Again, Jake separates himself from the other Americans – he’s not limited to their view of the world. If anything, he’s disgusted by it.

Quote:

Big motor-cars from Biarritz and San Sebastian kept driving up and parking around the square. They brought people for the bull-fight. Sight-seeing cars came up, too. There was one with twenty-five Englishwomen in it. They sat in the big, white car and looked through their glasses at the fiesta. (18.1)

Thought:

Jake feels alienated from the tourists who come to watch the bull-fights from a distance; this difference makes it impossible for him to identify with them.

Quote:

The Biarritz crowd did not like it. They thought Romero was afraid, and that was why he gave that little sidestep each time as he transferred the bull’s charge from his own body to the flannel. They preferred Belmonte’s imitation of himself or Marcial’s imitation of Belmonte. (18.36)

Thought:
The American tourists visiting from the resort town of Biarritz are laughable in their misinterpretation of Romero’s style, and Jake can’t contain his disdain for his fellow countrymen yet again.

**Quote:**

*I hated to leave France. Life was so simple in France. I felt I was a fool to be going back into Spain. In Spain you could not tell about anything.* (19.17)

**Thought:**

France, for Jake, is a safe place – after the botched fiesta and Jake’s role in getting Brett and Romero together, perhaps France is a refuge simply because it’s free from these guilty associations. We wonder if that’s how he ended up in Paris in the first place.
Warfare Quotes

Quote:
"I got hurt in the war," I said.

"Oh, that dirty war."

We would probably have gone on and discussed the war and agreed that it was in reality a calamity for civilization, and perhaps would have been better avoided. I was bored enough. Just then from the other room someone called: "Barnes! I say Barnes! Jacob Barnes!" (3.9)

Thought:
The banal discussion of the war that Jake and Georgette narrowly escape is one that’s unsatisfactory and not comprehensive. We get the feeling that there’s a lot more to be said about the war, but nobody knows how to communicate it yet.

Quote:
"When did she marry Ashley?"

"During the war. Her own true love had just kicked off with the dysentery."

"You talk sort of bitter."

"Sorry. I didn’t mean to. I was just trying to give you the facts." (5.8)

Thought:
A lot of things happen in wartime that should not otherwise come to pass – in this case, the marriage of Brett to Lord Ashley. We have to wonder if Jake’s telling the whole truth... we know that he is in fact Brett’s "own true love" (in her words and his) and that she can’t marry him because of his handicap. Hmm...

Quote:
"My dear, I am sure Mr. Barnes has seen a lot. Don’t think I don’t think so, sir. I have seen a lot, too."

"Of course you have, my dear," Brett said. "I was only ragging."

"I have been in seven wars and four revolutions," the count said.
“Soldiering?” Brett asked.

“Sometimes, my dear. And I have got arrow wounds. Have you ever seen arrow wounds?”
(7.18)

Thought:
The count’s definition of "seen a lot" is associated with war – as though war is the only real experience a man can have.

Quote:

"What times we had. How I wish those dear days were back."

"Don’t be an ass."

"Were you in the war, Mike?" Cohn asked.

"Was I not."

"He was a very distinguished soldier," Brett said. "Tell them about the time your horse bolted down Piccadilly." (13.28)

Thought:
Mike’s questionably sarcastic wish that the war was back is telling. Can it be that the war gave him a sense of purpose that he’s now lacking?

Quote:

It was like certain dinners I remember from the war. There was much wine, an ignored tension, a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening. (13.57)

Thought:
Obviously, the feeling of warfare (now psychological) carries over into this postwar period; now that the actual fighting is over, the battles are on the emotional level.

Quote:

Mike started toward him around the table. Cohn stood up and took off his glasses. He stood waiting, his face sallow, his hands fairly low, proudly and firmly waiting for the assault, ready to
do battle for his lady love. (16.32)

Thought:

Cohn, who never experienced the real horror of war, still clings to the romantic notion of chivalrous battle, a concept that World War I destroyed for everyone who participated in it.

Quote:

"The bulls are my best friends."

I translated to Brett.

"You kill your friends?" she asked.

"Always," he said in English, and laughed. "So they don’t kill me." (16.57)

Thought:

Romero voices an idea that runs through the entire novel – his relationship to the bulls is a parallel to the relationships of Jake and his friends. Everyone is engaged in a constant state of barely-disguised warfare.

Quote:

"[...] Ashley, chap she got the title from, was a sailor, you know. Ninth baronet. When he came home he wouldn’t sleep in a bed. Always made Brett sleep on the floor. Finally, when he got really bad, he used to tell her he’d kill her. Always slept with a loaded service revolver. Brett used to take the shells out when he’d gone to sleep." (17.46)

Thought:

Brett’s ex-husband, Lord Ashley, was clearly driven to madness by the war… though she never talks about him. This is just another way in which Hemingway shows us the impact of the war on every individual life it touched.
Characters

Character Roles (Protagonist, Antagonist...)

Protagonist

Jake Barnes

Jake is the living, beating heart of this novel. Sorry, that was a little gross, but you get the idea – Jake is what makes this story feel personal to us. This is partly due to the fact that he’s our narrator, and our experience is mediated by his own. Narration aside, though, Jake is also at the center of the network of tangled relationships depicted in the novel. The central overarching conflict of the book is simply that Jake and Brett cannot be together – we keep hoping that this will change but, like these star-crossed lovers, we know that it’s impossible. This sense of yearning makes us truly sympathetic to Jake and, every time Brett has a new boy toy in tow, we feel Jake’s pain.

Antagonist

Robert Cohn

Cohn isn’t the antagonist in the classic sense of the word – he’s hardly villainous, and he’s certainly not out there plotting to destroy everyone else and take over the world. Amazingly, we don’t even exactly dislike him – it’s more like we feel pity for him, rather than sympathy. He’s a nice guy, in his way, but his flaws are overwhelming: he’s weak, ineffectual, and arrogant, a deadly combination for Hemingway, who liked his protagonists strong, principled, and active. Hemingway sets Cohn up in opposition to Jake via their relationships with Brett; both are desperately in love with her, but can’t successfully create a lasting romantic commitment with her. Cohn does manage to run off with Brett for a weekend in the novel’s early chapters, after which Jake’s attitude towards his former friend takes a steep downturn.

Guide/Mentor

Montoya

Montoya, the Spanish hotel owner, is the Mr. Miyagi to Jake’s Karate Kid. Montoya is an old school aficionado of bull-fighting; he’s seen matadors come and go, and he knows the sport better than anyone else. Jake, a young aficionado, shares a true understanding of the sport with Montoya, as well as a genuine love for it. Jake and Montoya have a real respect for each other because of their common passion for bull-fighting. In the end, though, the student betrays the master; Jake lets Montoya down by introducing Romero
to Brett, thereby corrupting the talented young matador.

Foil

Mike Campbell

Mike and Jake have many things in common, among them their wartime experience at the front, and their attachments to Brett; however, they respond to these similarities very differently. While Jake throws himself into his work and his life in Paris, Mike apparently is a huge slacker, unable to commit to a job or stable living situation. Mike is just waiting for his inheritance to come through (some day he’ll be very wealthy), but in the meantime, he lives mostly off the kindness of his friends and fiancée. The war is still very much on Mike’s mind; as with Jake, we get the feeling that it was the great event of his life, and he’s still trying to recover from it. He just can’t get his act together, so he stumbles through his life in a fog of alcohol and debt.

Companion

Bill Gorton

Bill and Jake are a perfect match. They’re equals in everything: they’re both American veterans of the war, both productive writers, and both have a true sense of passion and adventure – Jake compliments Bill by telling Montoya that Bill’s a real aficionado. In the immortal words of Jay and Silent Bob, they’re hetero-lifemates. Bill and Jake’s escape to nature (their fishing trip to Burguete) is the one scene of true contentment and relaxation in the novel; together in nature, Bill and Jake can truly be themselves and not worry about the external frustrations imposed on them by the other characters, and by society as a whole.

Romantic Interest

Brett Ashley

Brett is everyone’s romantic interest. All of the men in the novel are attracted to her, whether or not they act on their attraction. Her mere presence (that of a seductive and irresistible woman in the midst of an otherwise all male crowd) creates conflict and jealousy wherever she goes, and the novel’s action is set into motion by her arrival. If you strip away all of the external drama of the book, the driving force of the plot is really who Brett will and won’t (or can and can’t) sleep with.

Muse

Pedro Romero

Okay, so this sounds really cheesy, but Romero totally serves as a muse to those
who can appreciate him. Montoya, Jake, and Brett all have a true understanding, whether learned or instinctive, of bull-fighting, and the three of them understand that Romero is something remarkable. Montoya and Jake both see that he is different from the other bull-fighters – he possesses a pure, genuine talent that stands out in a sport gradually being taken over by drama queens and fakes. Romero’s performances in the ring inspire Jake/Hemingway to write some of the novel’s most exuberant, vibrant, and passionate prose. Brett, the fledgling aficionado, is also inspired by Romero, but not to create art – he instead inspires true feeling in her. With Romero, we see Brett lose herself in passion for the first time in the book; instead of being the manipulator and enchantress of men, she is reduced to simply being a woman in love. He also inspires her to do the first and last decent(ish) thing she does in the novel – leave him. Brett realizes that she and Romero shouldn’t be together, and despite her feelings for him, she asks him to leave.
Tools of Characterization

Direct Characterization

Since we see everything through Jake’s perspective, it’s pretty easy to figure out his opinions on the other characters. He is very up front with us about everyone, and often tells us directly (and sometimes in great detail) what he knows about his friends. A good example is Robert Cohn: from page one, we are immersed in a lengthy description of Cohn’s characteristics, good and bad. Jake is careful to at least try and give us a fair and objective portrait of Cohn in these first pages; once, he even stops himself (“Somehow I feel I have not shown Robert Cohn clearly”) and starts over again to get the facts right. In these early chapters, we come away with a picture of a harmlessly irritating guy whose main flaw is that he’s kind of a dupe. Even though Jake can’t entirely contain his disdain for Cohn’s weakness, we know that he likes Cohn despite his flaws (something that will change soon enough).

Actions

As a narrator, Jake is very into showing us exactly what happens in the course of the book – if he has a meal, he tells us exactly what it is, and, if he has a conversation, it’s recounted faithfully in the text. The same is true of significant actions taken by the characters. The perfect example is Pedro Romero’s performances in the bull-fights. Romero’s fighting style reflects upon the purity of his character, and, to help us understand what the young matador is like, Hemingway describes every movement he makes in the ring with incredible detail.

Another character whose actions, though not always shown, comment upon her personality is Brett. She comments constantly about her need to bathe, often in the imperative (“Must bathe”), which reveals to us her hidden fear that she’s unclean and needs to be purged of her sins.

Sex and Love

The convoluted network of sexual relationships of the characters plays into our understanding of them. First of all, Jake, who is excluded from sexual relationships, dwells upon the affairs that Brett embarks upon, and his bitterness increases because of his inability to be with her. Brett’s various liaisons with Cohn, Mike, and Romero all create conflict between those characters, and the men in her life all demonstrate their jealousy in different ways. Their ways of dealing with their unhappiness reflect their various backgrounds and personalities. Mike, for example, throws himself into an even deeper pit of drunken bad behavior, and refuses to take responsibility for himself, while Cohn, clinging to his outdated notions of chivalrous love, retreats into juvenile violence.
Jake Barnes

In an alternate universe in which World War I never happened, Jake would be a total stud. It’s like what they say about James Bond: women want him, men want to be him. Unfortunately, in our world (and that of Hemingway’s novel), World War I most certainly did happen, and left an ugly scar upon everyone it affected. Jake is no exception – his scars are not only mental, they’re physical. He has a frequently mentioned but somewhat mysterious war wound that renders him impotent, which explodes the image of him as a hero. Even though women do want him, they can’t have him; while men admire and respect him, they certainly don’t want to be him.

So what is Jake’s deal? He’s a hero who’s not a hero, a man who can’t perform his… er, manly duties, an American in self-imposed exile from America. What does all this add up to? The perfect embodiment of the Lost Generation, mentioned in the epigraph by Gertrude Stein. Jake represents the aimlessness and perpetual dissatisfaction of the post-World War I era; he was permanently marked by the war, and he’s just one of the thousands and thousands of young men damaged by it. Jake is an emblem of an entire generation damaged by the trauma of a war of global scale, the likes of which had never been seen before.

But Jake isn’t as straightforward as he seems. He’s both a typical and atypical representative of the Lost Generation. We quickly discover that he is different than the novel’s other main characters; he possesses genuine passion and afición, which allow him to gain some distance from the dissolute and cynical world he dwells in. This shines through in his love of bull-fighting, fishing, and the natural world. It is this difference that allows him (and us, his readers) to see through the fragile relationships and disingenuous attitudes of the people around him. Jake has a sense of something greater – he is a somewhat confused Catholic, but a Catholic nonetheless, and is the only character that has anything resembling real religious faith. He’s also one of two characters in the novel that’s actually active and productive at work – Jake is a successful newspaper man, while Cohn is a failed writer and Mike and Brett appear to have no careers to speak of. Bill is the other productive character (we know that he’s a published author), but we only see him on vacation here. All of these differences make Jake the ideal narrator; he’s both outsider and insider, and he allows us to view the world he lives in from its center, but with some degree of objectivity.

Jake Barnes Timeline

- Jake describes Cohn, then, over some midday drinking, is harassed by Cohn about going to South America.
- He does a little work at his newspaper office.
He has a drink with a prostitute named Georgette before meeting friends including Cohn, Frances, and a couple named Mr. and Mrs. Braddocks at one of their favorite cafés.

Brett shows up with a group of gay male friends at the bar where the gang’s dancing and Jake feels annoyed and sick. He ditches Georgette and goes off with Brett.

Jake and Brett discuss the complications of their relationship. He takes her to Café Select, where they encounter Duke Zizi and Count Mippipopolous (best name ever). He starts feeling lousy again and heads home.

After finally falling asleep, Jake wakes up to the noise of a fight. He discovers Brett arguing with the concierge, and he lets Brett upstairs. They chat and within a few minutes she leaves to meet the count.

Cohn meets up with Jake at the newspaper office. They go to lunch and almost get into a fight over Brett.

The following day, Brett misses her engagement with Jake and he decides to take out his bad feelings on Paris, as in the "city of," which didn’t do anything last time we checked.

Jake runs into a friend named Harvey Stone and they drink. Cohn shows up and drives Harvey off.

Jake can’t stand listening to Frances humiliate Cohn so he leaves. He goes home and showers and then sees that Brett and the count have shown up. He gets dressed but feels depressed, so he talks privately with Brett. They talk about their love for each other but agree again that things can’t work out.

The trio heads to dinner and dancing. Jake takes Brett, who isn’t feeling well, home.

Jake meets up with his friend Bill and they plan a trip to Spain for fishing. They go out for drinks and they run into Brett just home from her trip. She joins them briefly before going home to bathe.

Brett informs Jake she’s had an affair with Cohn.

Jake takes the train to Spain with Bill where they meet Cohn.

Jake, Bill, and Cohn drive to Bayonne where they intend to fish. During dinner, Cohn and Bill go to the train station to see if Mike and Brett have arrived. They haven’t. He receives a telegram from Mike saying they’re coming late but doesn’t show it to Bill and Cohn.

The following morning, once Bill and Jake have arrived in Burguete, the hike up to the Irati River to fish for trout. They drink lots of wine and have a pleasant time. They stay for about a week and in the evenings hang out with a cool British guy named Harris.

Jake learns that Mike, Brett, and Cohn plan to meet him and Bill in Pamplona. Everyone meets and drinks voraciously.

Jake, Brett, and Cohn check out the bulls while Mike and Bill hang out at a café.

The following day the fiesta has begun with a bang. Jake is shoved into a huge crowd. He purchases leather wine vessels for the festivities.

Jake parties hard, looses his room key, and crashes on Cohn’s hotel room floor.

A few days later, after having been introduced to Romero and seen a few bull-fights, Jake runs into Romero at a café. They have some drinks and chat. Jake introduces Romero to Brett.

Jake intervenes in a fight right before Mike has the opportunity to hit Cohn.

Jake listens to Brett whine about Cohn. Brett asks Jake if he still loves her. He says yes.
Then she announces she’s in love with Romero and begs Jake to help her find him. He does. Brett and Romero hook up and Jake gets ditched.

- Jake finds Mike and Bill with a girl named Edna. They’ve been thrown out of a bar.
- Cohn shows up and demands to know where Brett is. Jake won’t tell him, so Cohn knocks him and Mike out. Cohn then begs for forgiveness. Jake grants it because he simply can’t be bothered not to. He goes to bed.
- The following day, Jake, Bill, and Brett go to see the final bull-fight. Jake shows his aficion in his impassioned description of the three matadors, Marcial, Belmonte, and Romero.
- The following day Jake drops off Mike and Bill and heads for San Sebastian. He plans to rest, detox, swim, and read.
- Quickly, however, he receives word from Brett asking for help. He meets her in Madrid and learns she has sent Romero off and plans to return to Mike. She’s emotional and he comforts her.
- The pair reflects one last time that their love was a nice idea but could never have worked.

Lady Brett Ashley

Brett Ashley is hot stuff. She’s gorgeous, seductive, smart, and has a fashion sense that eats you for breakfast. How could anyone resist her? All of the male characters in the novel – and by that we mean almost all of the characters period, since Brett is the only significant woman in the book – are in love with her to different degrees. At one point, Mike compares her to Circe, a famous seductress of Greek myth, whose schtick was luring men to her island and turning them into animals. She does have a certain power over men – their feelings for her are so strong that they create conflict. Instead of sticking together, Jake, Cohn, and Mike are set in opposition to each other because of their jealousy and anger over Brett’s infidelities.

Engaged to Mike, in love with Jake, disgusted by Cohn, and infatuated with Romero, Brett’s feelings are often masked by her debonair exterior. She often acts as though she has these men and their relationships under control, but the cracks in her shell reveal that she’s just as vulnerable as they are. Her relationship with Romero shows us that she is capable of real emotional depth – she actively tries to avoid it most of the time, but sometimes her true feelings emerge.

Lady Brett Ashley Timeline
Brett shows up and sees the gang at one of their usual cafés. She leaves with Jake and tells him that she’s miserable. On the way to Café Select, she and Jake discuss their thwarted relationship. At the café she schmoozes with the count and the duke. After Jake goes home, she kicks it with the count. She gets completely trashed and around 4am shows up at Jake’s apartment since she feels like chatting with him. She ends up arguing with the concierge, who is skeptical about letting her up to see Jake. Jakes hears her and lets her inside. They talk briefly, then she leaves to go to breakfast with the count. Brett and the count drop by Jake’s apartment to see him, but he’s not home. They tell the concierge (on whom Brett now makes a much better impression) that they’ll be back in an hour and to give Jake the message. Brett and the count return. Jake is sad, so Brett sends the count for some champagne while she comforts him. They talk about their love for one another, but agree again that it won’t work out. The trio goes out for dinner and dancing. They have fun, but Brett’s mood changes for the worse. She has Jake take her home and informs him that she’s leaving town the following day. Brett returns from her trip and has drinks with Jake and Bill. She goes back to her hotel to bathe. Later that night she heads to a café for drinks with Mike, who has joined her in Paris. They briefly see Bill and Jake before Brett leaves to take Mike, who is very drunk, home. Brett and Mike decide to go with Bill and Cohn fishing and then to Pamplona. Brett tells Jake that she’s been in San Sebastian with Cohn, not Mike. She’s worried Cohn will freak out on the trip to Pamplona, since Mike will be there and she doesn’t want their affair to continue. Brett, Mike, and Cohn arrive in Pamplona. Jake, Brett, and Cohn check out the bulls while Mike and Bill hang out at a café. That night everyone parties hard. The following day the gang heads out to watch the first bull-fight. Brett doesn’t mind the gore and actually kind of likes it. Brett thinks Romero is sexy and seems entranced. She’s particularly into his pants. A few days later, Jake introduces Brett to Romero at a café. They flirt – we see Brett in full-blown seductive action. Man, is she good. Brett complains to Jake about Cohn over coffee. She announces that she’s in love with Romero and begs Jake to help her find and hook up with him. Jake agrees. Brett hooks up with Romero. That night, Cohn shows up and beats up Romero. Brett tells Cohn off and cares for Romero. That afternoon, Brett goes with Jake and Bill to watch the final bull-fight. Romero sends his cape and the bloody ear of a bull he kills up into the stands for her. She is infatuated. After the fight, she leaves Pamplona with Romero. Brett ditches Romero in Madrid and contacts Jake. She’s very upset. Brett tells Jake about her experience with Romero. She wistfully muses about the idea
that she and Jake could have been good together, but he reminds her that it’s an impossible dream.

Robert Cohn

Robert Cohn is the first character we meet in the novel, even before we get to know Jake. We immediately find out everything we could possibly want to know about Cohn – we learn about his family, his school years, his failed marriage, and his half-hearted ambitions to become a successful writer. But what does this accomplish? One would usually reserve this sort of treatment for the novel’s hero – but Cohn is certainly not our hero. If anything, he’s the opposite of what an ideal Hemingway hero should be (strong, opinionated, knowledgeable, and brave, among other things – in other words, like Jake, minus the whole impotence thing). However, Robert Cohn is the character that sparks the whole plot of the book. It’s his affair with Brett and its fallout that sets off the whole chain of jealous explosions that pepper the novel and fuel its action. While he’s not the hero, or even a particularly sympathetic character, he is central to the novel’s plot.

Jake comments early on that Cohn brings out the worst in people – and lo and behold, he consistently does. Discussion about Cohn brings out nasty dark sides to characters that we are sympathetic towards, like Jake and Bill, who both show alarming anti-Semitic tendencies in their put-downs of Cohn. Cohn is also marked as different from Jake, Bill, and Mike in a very significant way – he alone of all these men didn’t fight in the war. He has a kind of curiosity about the war, but still hangs on to outdated notions of love, chivalry, and battle that none of the other men believe in. This clash of values is one of the major sources of conflict between the male characters. In all of these ways, Cohn serves more as a catalyst than an actor, since he provokes situations, but doesn’t follow through with action.

Robert Cohn Timeline

- Jake opens the novel with a brief but pithy description of Robert Cohn’s past and present. We get to know his character before we even meet him. A brief history of Cohn’s life: Cohn goes to Princeton and becomes a boxing champ. He graduates, "is married" by the first girl that comes along, is left by said girl, and becomes a kind of literary type. He picks up a new lady friend, Frances, moves to Paris, and attempts to be a writer.
- At dinner, Cohn kicks Jake under the table for mentioning another girl, revealing above all else that Frances has him totally whipped.
- Cohn goes to the US, has a book published, and turns arrogant.
• He reads W.H. Hudson and hates Paris.
• Cohn has coffee with Jake and they argue again about South America. Cohn asks Jake about Brett. He takes offence at Jake’s declaration that Brett doesn’t love Mike, her fiancé. Cohn has the hots for Brett, and gets in a tizzy when he thinks Jake has insulted her (even though he’s just telling the truth).
• The next day, Cohn runs into Jake and Harvey. He irritates Harvey, who then leaves. Cohn has coffee with Jake and tells Jake that he’s struggling to write.
• Frances shows up at the café and berates him.
• Cohn goes out of the country for a few weeks.
• Cohn sends Jake word that he’s in Spain and agrees to meet Jake, Bill, Mike, and Brett in Bayonne to travel together to Pamplona for the running of the bulls.
• Cohn meets Bill and Jake at the train station.
• Jake, Bill, and Cohn drive to Bayonne. Cohn acts really awkward because he’s not sure if Bill and Jake know about his affair with Brett.
• During dinner, Cohn and Bill go to the train station to see if Mike and Brett have arrived. They haven’t. Cohn announces he’s going to stay in Bayonne and wait for them to arrive.
• Jake, Brett, and Cohn check out the bulls while Mike and Bill hang out at a café.
• Upon their return, Mike calls Cohn a cow. Cohn is offended and sulks off.
• The following day, Cohn parties hard! Jake finds him passed out in someone’s shop. He parties all night with the gang and watches day one of the bulls running at the crack of dawn.
• Cohn is a little freaked out about the gore at the first bull-fight.
• A few days into the fiesta, Mike attacks him again. Jake grabs him and they walk off before things get worse.
• Brett and Jake are chatting and she tells Cohn to go away so they can talk alone. Cohn grudgingly leaves but loiters outside the door of the café.
• Cohn shows up at a café where Jake, Mike, Bill and Edna are sitting and demands to know where Brett is. Jake won’t tell him. In a fit of rage, Cohn hits Jake and Mike.
• Cohn feels guilty, asks for forgiveness, and announces he’s leaving in the morning. In the meantime, he finds Brett in bed with Romero and he beats up Romero.
• Mortified, Cohn leaves in shame.

Bill Gorton

Bill is one of the most sympathetic characters in the novel; since he and Jake have a close bond, we in turn see him in a friendly light, despite some of his unsavory tendencies. He, like Jake, is a productive working man; he writes books that are apparently somewhat successful (his European trip follows on the heels of a financial windfall from his last book). He’s sort of a mirror image of Jake – they have many similarities, such as their war experiences and their dedication to work, but Bill is also Jake’s opposite in that he emerged physically unscathed
from the war, and chose to return to America, rather than stay in Europe. On the outside, Bill seems like a stereotypical hard-boiled, witty Hemingway stock figure, but once he and Jake leave the boundaries of the city, we begin to see him in a different light. He shares a profound appreciation for the natural world with Jake, and their friendship is depicted as one of the only genuine relationships in the novel. The scenes of their idyllic trip to Burguete, where they meet another like-minded outdoorsman, Harris, are the most contented moments we witness in the novel. After the fiasco of Cohn, Brett, and Romero plays out in Pamplona, the only truly stable relationship that emerges unaffected is that of Bill and Jake. Bill is a faithful standby, a true companion and loyal friend.

**Bill Gorton Timeline**

- Bill meets Jake in Paris after returning from a trip to Vienna and Prague. They plan a trip to Spain to go fishing. Jake and Bill head out for drinks and they run into Brett, just home from her trip. She joins them briefly before going home to bathe.
- Bill and Jake head for Spain by train. Bill makes some very un-PC jokes, revealing his abrasive side. They meet Cohn at the station.
- Jake, Bill, and Cohn drive to Bayonne, where they’re stopping on the way to Burguete where they intend to fish.
- The following morning, once Bill and Jake have arrived in Burguete, they hike up to the Irati River to fish for trout. They drink lots of wine and have a pleasant time. They stay in Burguete for about a week and in the evenings hang out with a hilariously awesome British guy named Harris.
- Jake, Brett, and Cohn check out the bulls while Mike and Bill hang out at a café.
- Mike and Bill have been doing some hardcore partying and chasing after women. They run into Edna, a friend of Bill’s from Biarritz.
- Bill, Edna, and Mike get thrown out of a bar because of Mike’s bad credit.
- Bill attends the final bull-fight with Brett and Jake. Afterwards, Bill and Jake go drink absinthe. They’re both exhausted.
- Bill, Mike, and Jake have one last drink, then part ways. Bill returns to Paris, en route to New York.

**Pedro Romero**

Pedro Romero is the great white hope of this novel. He preserves a kind of instinctive sense of honor and purity that Jake and Montoya recognize as the mark of the true bull-fighter. Brett is also drawn to him, but her admiration is both spiritual (she also recognizes his talent) and
sexual. Unlike Mike, Jake, Bill, and Cohn, Romero is young and virile; at nineteen, he is too young to be damaged physically or psychologically by the war, since he was only thirteen when it ended. Romero is a symbol of all that is still healthy and good in the world — he is totally dedicated to his craft, and he loves it more than life itself. However, the introduction of Brett into his world throws all of this into question. As a result, Jake, who is culpable in the affair of Brett and Romero, feels incredibly guilty for thus endangering everything Jake, a true aficionado, holds sacred.

**Pedro Romero Timeline**

- Pedro Romero is introduced by Montoya to Jake. They chat briefly.
- Romero is seen in the bullfight — his talent is immediately obvious.
- A few days later Romero runs into Jake at a café. They share some drinks along with a bull-fighting critic and talk bulls.
- Brett and Jake track Romero down in a café after Brett informs Jake she’s in love with Romero. Brett and Romero flirt. They leave, presumably to go... get acquainted.
- Cohn storms into Romero’s room in the night, finds him with Brett, and beats him up. Brett cares for him and he rests for his upcoming fight.
- During the fight he performs with grace. He has his cape and the ear of a bull he kills passed up into the stands to Brett.
- After the fight he leaves with Brett. He asks Brett to change for him, but she refuses. Within a few days Brett asks him to leave.

**Mike Campbell**

Mike is that guy we all know who’s really rude and usually totally inappropriate, but still a lot of fun to be around. Yes, he always says the wrong thing. No, he has no verbal filter whatsoever. Perhaps he doesn’t even have a conscience. Despite all of these things, Mike is still entertaining and even somewhat sympathetic.

We know that Mike is a veteran, and that he’s due to come into a large inheritance one of these days. Until that happens, he’s just aimlessly drifting through life in one long offensive, sometimes comic, sometimes tragic, drunken binge. He has no apparent employment, and simply lives off the allowance his family grants him, as well as the kindness of his friends. Unlike Bill and Jake, he never moved past the war, even on a superficial level — he occasionally relates stories about his ridiculous exploits as a comically inept soldier. We get the feeling that Mike’s lack of focus in life relates to both his background as the scion of a
wealthy family, and the sudden disappearance of any sense of purpose once the war ended.

Mike Campbell Timeline

- Mike joins Brett in Paris. They go out for drinks, he gets drunk, and Brett takes him home. The following day he doesn’t remember having seen Bill and Jake.
- Mike and Brett decide to go to Spain with Jake, Bill, and Cohn.
- Mike and Brett are “delayed” in San Sebastian. Cohn meets them there. They arrive in Pamplona and Mike chats with Bill while Cohn, Jake, and Brett check out the bulls.
- Upon their return to the café, Mike calls Cohn a cow and offends him. Unsurprisingly, Mike is drunk.
- Mike and Bill party hard.
- A few days into the fiesta, Mike takes another jab at Cohn. Jake restrains him before he’s able to take a swing at Cohn.
- Mike and Bill party hard and chase women around the town. They get thrown out of a bar because Mike has a fight with some British guys he once borrowed money from.
- Cohn shows up at the café where Mike, Bill, and Jake are sitting and demands to know where Brett is. Jake refuses to tell him so Cohn knocks Jake and Mike out. Mike claims that he wasn’t knocked out – he was just lying there.
- The next day Brett drops by and reports to Mike and the gang on Romero’s condition (he’s been beat up by Cohn in the night). Mike is enraged and knocks the café table over. He’s drunk, and he keeps repeating a somber refrain: Brett had a Jew, and now she has a bullfighter. We see that his earlier bravado was really hiding his real insecurities and unhappiness about Brett’s unfaithfulness.
- The following day Bill and Jake drop Mike off in San Jean de Luz.

Montoya

The proprietor of the Hotel Montoya in Pamplona, Montoya is the ultimate aficionado. He is the Yoda to Jake’s Luke Skywalker, and he has a true fondness for his young padawan. When Jake and his friends arrive in Pamplona, Montoya gives Jake the benefit of the doubt, and forgives him from his crummy taste in companions. Only one thing is sacred to Montoya: afición. He has a true belief in the purity of the art of the bull-fight, and he can forgive aficionados and matadors anything if they really have passion for the fight. What he can’t forgive, however, is Jake’s eventual betrayal – he witnesses Jake introducing Romero to Brett. This comes on the heels of a discussion the two of them had about the corruption of young bull-fighters; Montoya turns his back on Jake once
the latter enables the corruption of Romero.
Plot Analysis

Initial Situation

Life in Paris is happening as usual for our group of expatriates: lots of drinking, eating, and a little bit of working.

As the novel opens, we meet our expatriate friends in their adopted home of Paris. They all have different feelings about the city; Jake clearly relishes his life there, despite his general sense of dissatisfaction. He seems to know, like, *everyone* in the city of Paris (or possibly in France), and it an expert at everything from picking the right restaurant to schmoozing with Parisian hookers. We get the feeling that Jake could fit in wherever he goes. Robert Cohn, on the other hand, isn’t comfortable anywhere.

Conflict

Jake wants Brett. Brett wants Jake. Brett and Jake can’t be together.

This is a totally classic set-up. The relationship between Jake and Brett presents itself as the primary source of tension and anxiety in the novel. Although both Jake and Brett have romantic feelings for one another, Jake’s impotence is an insurmountable barrier for Brett. Throughout the rest of the novel, we are consistently reminded of the impossibility of their relationship.

Complication

Cohn has an affair with Brett in San Sebastian. Cohn, Mike, Bill, Jake, and Brett spend a week together in Pamplona.

Jake’s discovery of Cohn’s affair with Brett frustrates his already difficult relationship with her. Because Mike, Cohn, and Jake each have strong feelings for Brett, their mutual presence in Pamplona intensifies everyone’s anxieties. Brett doesn’t help matters by failing to acknowledge the havoc she is wreaking – she doesn’t take responsibility for her actions (kind of a theme with this bunch of people).

Climax

In a fit of rage, Cohn beats up Jake, Mike, and Romero, then leaves Pamplona.
Cohn’s attack of Jake, Mike, and Romero reflects the culmination of his anger about Brett and her liaisons. It embodies in a very physical manner the frustration and disillusionment experienced by all of the novel’s main characters. His departure from Pamplona signals the beginning of the end for everyone. When the fiesta’s officially over, it’s a relief to all of them – and, frankly, to us.

**Suspense**

Jake’s gang leaves Pamplona with no resolution regarding the relationship between Brett and any of the men in the novel. Jake heads to San Sebastian to rest and recuperate.

When the gang departs from Pamplona, nearly everyone is dissatisfied. Cohn has disappeared, Mike is bankrupt and in emotional disarray, Jake is in need of some major alone time, and Brett has left with Pedro Romero, leaving us to question the nature of the novel’s central relationships. Things are even less certain at this point than ever before, and in their last couple of days together, Bill, Jake, and Mike have the sense that a whole lot of people are missing.

**Denouement**

Brett contacts Jake for help; Jake returns to meet her in Madrid. Brett informs Jake that she has sent Romero away.

After only a brief respite, Jake learns that Brett has sent Romero; she telegraphs him urgently in San Sebastian to come and help her. The incident renews the question of a potential relationship between Brett and Jake. We hope against hope that something can work out, but by this point in the novel, we should really know better. Jake himself is cynical and resigned to his guilt and unhappiness with regards to Brett.

**Conclusion**

Brett and Jake decide again that they cannot be together.

Brett is left at a crossroads – she has made the right decision in letting Romero go, but now has nowhere to go herself. She eventually decides to go back to Mike, who is "so damned nice and... so awful," and is the kind of guy she can handle. In a final resolution to the central conflict of the novel, it is decided that Brett and Jake could never be together. While this was Brett’s decision earlier in the novel, Jake is the one who finally decides that they never really had a chance.
The Sun Also Rises is a somewhat untraditional narrative. Only a few pages into the first chapter, the book’s conclusion is revealed: Jake and Brett cannot end up together. The book is propelled much less by plot than character development. For these reasons, we have found it difficult to classify the novel into one of the seven basic plots of literature; however, it seems to come closest to the “Voyage and Return” plot.

Anticipation Stage and ‘fall’ into the other world

Jake and Bill travel to the Irati River and Pamplona.

Okay… so Jake doesn’t really ‘fall” into an entirely new world in an Alice in Wonderland sense, but he does take a trip which introduces a fairly dramatic change of scenery. He doesn’t feel that the trip will change him or make him happy in the way that Cohn does, but nonetheless he welcomes it. He hopes that getting away from Paris will be good for everyone. Little does he know what’s coming…

Initial Fascination or Dream Stage

At first, the trip is idyllic.

Jake and Bill find escape and relief fishing on the Irati River. We see their common bond with nature, and witness their genuine friendship. Unfortunately, change is coming – they are aware that the experience will come to an end when they go to Pamplona to meet the rest of the gang.

Frustration Stage

Cohn’s proprietary attitude towards Brett disturbs everyone – including Brett.

What had been a relaxing vacation is complicated by the myriad of complicated relationships between Brett and the central male characters. Mike, Bill, and Jake are sick of Cohn’s superior attitude with regards to Brett. Tensions build as the fiesta explodes into drunken being.

Nightmare Stage

Irritation with Cohn turns explosive.

Mike finally lashes out, distraught by Brett’s affairs with Cohn and Romero. Cohn, desperate, angry, and pathetic, beats up Jake, Mike, and Romero. Everyone is exhausted and ready to get away from each other. Cohn departs in shame, and Brett absconds with Romero. Mike, Bill, and Jake are left alone in Pamplona.
Thrilling escape and return

Jake leaves Pamplona.

Here’s where the voyage and return analysis gets a little fuzzy. While Jake does leave Pamplona for San Sebastian, it’s hardly an escape. Though he has a couple of days on his own to try and process the catastrophes of the trip, within days he’s drawn back into Brett’s destructive orbit, and he goes to meet her in Madrid. Nevertheless, his voyage has changed him – he is even more disillusioned than he was when the voyage began.

Three Act Plot Analysis

This follows the structure of the novel very closely – Hemingway himself divided it into three "Books."

Act I

The cast of characters is introduced. Jake and the crew hang out in Paris. Cohn struggles with Frances; Jake and Brett discuss their relationship. Everyone is ready for a vacation, so they plan a trip to Spain.

Act II

Act II concludes with the end of the fiesta. Exhausted, miserable, and uncertain, the gang parts ways. Cohn leaves earlier, after attacking just about everyone else, Brett runs off with Romero, and the three men, Jake, Bill, and Mike, are left to console each other. As Jake plans for some alone time to recover in the relaxing natural setting of San Sebastian, we are left unsure of how everyone’s relationships will pan out.

Act III

In the novel’s last chapter, Jake is called away from his peaceful recuperation by the seaside by Brett, who needs him once again. The book concludes with a final emphasis on the impossibility of their relationship – all avenues to happiness appear to have been closed. The novel ends on a wistful but negative note, with Jake rejecting the possibility that he and Brett could ever have been together.
Study Questions

1. In what ways are the male and female characters in the novel similar? How are they different? What might Hemingway be saying about sexuality and love in the post-war world?

2. Compare and contrast Cohn, Mike, and Jake. Consider their wartime experiences, relationships with women, etc. How are they similar? Different?

3. Is Brett a sympathetic character?

4. Is it possible to generalize about whether the characters that served in WWI (Jake, Bill, Mike, the Count, Brett) are different from Cohn, who did not?

5. How would *The Sun Also Rises* be similar or different if narrated by a character other than Jake? How would Cohn tell the story? Brett? Mike?
Symbolism, Imagery, Allegory

Bulls and Bull-fighting

Bulls and bull-fighting are the two most critical symbols in *The Sun Also Rises*. The bulls symbolize passion, physicality, energy, and freedom. As a combination of these factors, in their interactions with the bull-fighters, they also come to symbolize the act of sex. Each bull-fight involves seduction, manipulation, maneuvering, and penetration by the bull-fighter of the bull. It is significant that, of all the characters, Jake, Brett, Romero, and Montoya are the most stirred by bull-fighting.

Romero’s status as bull-fighter suggests that, unlike the novel’s other male characters, he is capable of passionate love and sex. Although Cohn clings to an illusion of love for Brett, he is repelled initially by the bull-fights as boring, then later as gruesome. Brett is undisturbed by the gore of the bull-fights and, like Jake, is entranced by the interaction between bull-fighter and bull. After watching the bull-fights, Brett is determined to be with Romero. Jake, it seems, strives to experience sensuality vicariously through the bull-fights, as he is unable to have sex himself. As an aficionado, Jake recognizes and loves the passion of bull-fighting, suggesting that he, too, is a passionate man. Jake’s knowledge of bull-fighting empowers him to authoritatively describe the bull-fights to Brett. Although we do not learn much about Montoya’s personal life, it is apparent that he views bull-fighting as the highest, purest art form, one that exceeds all else in love, beauty, and passion. As discussed briefly in the above character analysis, the bull-fights can also be read as paralleling the characters and events of the novel. During the running of the bulls, to take just one example, a man is gored and killed the same day that Cohn leaves Pamplona.

Water

Water appears on multiple occasions as a symbol of purification and relief. On Jake and Bill’s fishing trip, water seems to have the therapeutic effect of soothing Jake. While the men drink loads of wine while fishing, they first chill it in the river. This seems not only to cool the wine’s temperature but its effect; rather than creating a sense of drunken chaos, the wine rejuvenates them and stimulates Bill’s creativity (which he expresses verbally at a breakneck pace). When Jake leaves Pamplona for San Sebastian, he wants nothing more than to swim in the ocean. The water relieves and strengthens him, and he feels buoyant and supported. Finally, Brett is always going off to bathe, signifying her own innate desire to purify herself and perhaps disassociate herself from her actions.

Color
Hemingway’s descriptions of the natural world are boldly sketched out in bright, clear colors. White roads, green fields, and the red tiled roofs of villages fill out the idealized landscape of Bill and Jake’s trip to Burguete, in contrast to the largely colorless, dimly lit interiors of Paris. This symbolizes the reawakening of the senses that Jake experiences as he leaves city life behind him, and heads toward the rejuvenating milieu of the country.

Setting

1924: Paris, France; Burguete, Spain; Pamplona, Spain; Madrid, Spain

First, let’s tackle Paris: the first few chapters of the novel take place in a loosely fictionalized version of the famous community of expatriate writers and artists that Hemingway really lived in during the 1920s. After the war, Paris became a mecca for English and American writers, including Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson, T.S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, among others. Jake and his friends move through the same world that Hemingway did, and they frequent the same bars, cafés, and nightclubs. Hemingway depicts the atmosphere in Paris ambivalently: it’s exciting but exhausting, simultaneously clean and dirty, thrilling and banal, and filled with a sense of unease and illness. Jake’s refuge is his newspaper office, where he can shut out the world and focus on his work.

Next up: Spain. We move through three locations in Spain, with varying degrees of country and city. First, Bill and Jake go to Burguete, a small country town where they fish and enjoy nature. This section is significant for its difference from the rest of the novel – the purity of the landscape, combined with their escape from the other characters, makes the fishing trip an exhilarating experience for both men. They soon move on to Pamplona, a small city famous for its bull-fights, where they meet up with the rest of the gang for the fiesta of San Fermin. The transition from countryside to fiesta is like Mike’s fall into bankruptcy: gradual, then all at once. When the fiesta really gets going, with its continual drunkenness and sense of lawlessness, the setting takes on an almost nightmarish quality. Finally, after a brief stop to recover by the seaside at San Sebastian, Jake is drawn back into the nightmare urban space of Madrid, where he goes to comfort Brett after she ends her relationship with Romero. He experiences a kind of emotional numbness in this other city, caused by his own guilt over Brett and Romero’s affair. It’s important that Hemingway returns us to a purely urban setting for this last scene – its bleakness is emphasized by the distance from nature.

Narrator Point of View

First Person

Jake is a classic First Person narrator. We see everything as he does, and the only thoughts
and commentary we get are from him. Our understanding of the other characters, events, and relationships is limited to Jake’s own. We don’t see anything that happens when Jake’s not around, but we certainly hear about everything from his talkative friends. This perspective allows us to stay really close to Jake, our protagonist, and feel as though we’re intimately connected to his fate.

Genre

Romance (thwarted), Modernist Novel

First of all, this book should be a romance – we have a dashing hero and a gorgeous heroine who are terribly, terribly in love. However, the intervention of World War I spoiled this ideal romance. With this party pooper in the equation, the focus ends up being on the "terribly" part, rather than the "in love" part. The Jake-Brett relationship can never happen, due to Jake’s war wound, so the rest of the novel attempts to create other relationships to replace it (Brett-Cohn, Brett-Mike, Brett-Romero), but it never works out.

The book can also be defined as a Modernist Novel. It’s not as classic an example as, say, Ulysses, but it’s still often lumped in this genre. Hemingway made a conscious move away from the conventions of the nineteenth century novel, attempting to create a new voice for the new world of the postwar twentieth century. We think he succeeded – what about you?

Tone

Increasingly cynical, though often comic

You get the feeling that the comedy of this book is there to mask what Hemingway himself called "a damned tragedy." Its characters engage in witty, often hilarious dialogue, but underneath their wisecracking shells lie vulnerable and discontented real people, disillusioned by the world around them. The tone of the book plays upon both of these aspects of our characters; as the novel approaches its end, the disillusioned side emerges more clearly. An increasing sense of cynicism and plain old exhaustion builds up during the days of the fiesta, as everyone drifts apart and some relationships disintegrate, perhaps beyond repair.

Writing Style

Terse, Economical, Journalistic
These three words are often used to describe Hemingway’s distinctive prose style. He turns away from the lush, rich style of his precursors, or even of some of his contemporaries (contrast *The Sun Also Rises* to his friend Scott Fitzgerald’s book *The Great Gatsby*, published a year earlier). Hemingway learned a lot from his brief time as a journalist, and he introduced elements of newspaper style into the genre of the novel. *The Sun Also Rises* was the first serious work to really introduce Hemingway’s trademark voice to the world at large, and he immediately earned both praise and condemnation for it. In this novel, we see Hemingway employ short, simple sentences and snappy, realistic dialogue to create a novel that moves quickly and practically – we can actually feel the action of the text as it happens.

**What’s Up With the Title?**

Like so many great catchphrases, this one comes from the Bible. More specifically, it can be found in the passage from Ecclesiastes quoted in the second epigraph (see "What’s Up With the Epigraph?"). Basically, the title concisely reaffirms the statement made in said passage: in a nutshell, humans are just a small and ephemeral part of a larger world. We come and go, but the earth always remains (remember, this was written in the days before global warming). The sun will keep rising and setting long after all of us are dead and gone. Cheery, huh?

**What’s Up With the Epigraph?**

*You are all a lost generation.*
– Gertrude Stein in conversation

*One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever… The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose… The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to its circuits… All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come thither they return again.*
– Ecclesiastes

Do the words "Lost Generation" sound familiar? Gertrude Stein coined this name, which applies to the young people who grew up in the shadow of World War I (1914-1918). In terms of pop culture, the images that usually spring to mind of this group are those of the Roaring Twenties: fast cars, flappers, and wild parties. Historically speaking, the First World War – also known as the Great War – was a kind of breaking point for the people of Europe and America. Nobody had ever imagined that a global event so apocalyptic would possibly happen, and when it did, it changed everything; suddenly, the beliefs and practices of the pre-war world no longer seemed adequate.
On top of that, the beginning of the twentieth century was a time of profound technological change (Airplanes! Cars! Gee, whiz!)... suddenly, the world seemed like a much more accessible place. The Lost Generation is commonly characterized by the figures of Hemingway himself and his famous pal F. Scott Fitzgerald, who both partied hard, traveled incessantly, but were never quite happy.

Okay, on to epígrafe numero dos (that is, epigraph number two). This quote from Ecclesiastes, a book of the Old Testament, basically reminds us that nature is a constant, while we (humans, that is) are not. Generations come and go, but our measly lifespans are all insignificant compared to the eternal cycle of sunrise and sunset, the movement of rivers into the sea and back again, and the movement of the wind around the earth. Hemingway himself noted that he included this bit to balance out the somewhat melodramatic nature of Gertrude Stein’s statement.

What’s Up With the Ending?

Best. Ending. Ever. Seriously, guys. In the last words of this novel, Hemingway delivers a memorable and hard-hitting diagnosis of his generation: “Isn’t it pretty to think so?” The speaker, Jake, is referring specifically to the idea that he and Brett, his romantic interest, could have had “a damned good time together;” more generally, however, Hemingway expresses the sense of hopelessness and resignation that he sees in the world around him. Basically, it’s saying that everyone has their hopes and dreams – but they can’t be fulfilled. The best anyone can do is wistfully (or cynically) indulge in the fantasy that these dreams could have been possible in some alternate universe.
Did You Know

Allusions

Literature, Philosophy, and Mythology

W.H. Hudson, *The Purple Land* (2.3)
Horatio Alger (2.3)
H.L. Mencken (6.2, 12.39)
A.E.W. Mason (12.31)
Circe, character in Greek mythology (13.52)
Ivan Turgeneff, a.k.a. Turgenev, *Sportsman’s Sketches* (14.1, 14.7)

Historical References

Most importantly, the specter of World War I is always lurking beneath the surface of this novel – references are made to it throughout.

Marshal Michel Ney (4.10)
Voluntary Aid Detachment, WWI (5.8)
William Jennings Bryan (12.36)

Steaminess Rating

PG-13

*The Sun Also Rises* is extremely charged with sexual tension – if you’re on the lookout for it. Sex is always something implied, something that everyone knows about but no one discusses. We know that Brett gets it on with Cohn, Mike, and Romero in the course of the novel, but it’s never overtly stated; the only person we even witness her *kissing* is Jake, and we know that their relationship can’t ever be consummated.

Speaking of Jake, our narrator’s sexual impotence certainly plays into the lack of open sexuality in the novel. Jake’s war wound prevents him from getting, shall we say, involved with any of the ladies in the novel. He even picks up a prostitute, Georgette, but abandons her at a nightclub. The central problem of the entire book is, in some ways, Jake’s inability to have sex – if he *weren’t* impotent, he and Brett could be together, and we’d have a *very* different novel on our hands. For now, though, sex is something that happens behind closed doors, out of sight of both us and Jake.