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<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Gamlin, Gordon S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td>神戸大学文学部紀要, 38:161-181</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue date</td>
<td>2011-03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Type</td>
<td>Departmental Bulletin Paper / 紀要論文</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Version</td>
<td>publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOI</td>
<td>10.24546/81008291</td>
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<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/handle_kernel/81008291">http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/handle_kernel/81008291</a></td>
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This study employs Reader-Response theory as a framework for analysis and discusses students' reactions to some of Hemingway's "Nick Adams" stories as well as The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber. The basis for this critical inquiry was formed in two comparable courses with identical reading lists, which were taught from April to July 2008 at the undergraduate level at Kobe University and Kyoto University. A close reading of Indian Camp and Other Stories published by Seibido (1979) served to discover the deeper implications of each work. Over the years, this important Japanese edition, which was edited and annotated by Professor Masaru Ohba at Seijo University, has come to shape readers' expectations of Hemingway like no other. Ohba singled out the five following stories: Indian Camp, The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife, The End of Something, Soldier's Home, and The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber. He thus opens his collection with three of the (eighteen) Nick Adams stories. Eight of these stories were printed posthumously (Flora 1982). Considered as a whole, the selection takes readers from childhood to adolescence and on from early adulthood to the prime of life. The stories in the course text were published between 1925 and 1936 and thus also illustrate Hemingway's
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development as a writer over a decade. Above all, these short stories of
Ernest Hemingway make excellent reading within the Japanese
academic context because the surface structure of the texts is readily
accessible to non-native English speakers, and Hemingway's American
perspective on the world provides fertile grounds for intercultural
classroom explorations of history, society, and culture.

In his "Preface to 'The First Forty-nine'" short stories Hemingway
writes:

"There are many kinds of stories in this book. I hope that you will find
some that you like. Reading them over, the ones I liked the best,
outside of those that have achieved some notoriety so that school
teachers include them in story collections that their pupils have to buy
in story courses, and you are always faintly embarrassed to read them
and wonder whether you really wrote them or did you maybe hear
them somewhere, are "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber..."

(Hemingway in Vigia, 3)

Hemingway goes on to list six more stories that are widely antholo-
gized today. The texts found in anthologies that students are required
to buy are again the Nick Adams stories which have enjoyed huge
popularity from the outset, (see Joseph Flora 1982). We might note
that the stories we teach are described as "faintly embarrassing" and
that the author goes on to link them to a larger oral tradition.
Hemingway here emphasizes his role as a reader over time, and he is
all too aware, we can see, that reading, and a reader's reception change
somewhat within an academic setting, especially when compared to the
solitary pleasure reading of a first edition release. As Hemingway's

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reference to the oral tradition suggests, a shift in dynamics occurs because reading in school is often a communal act.

In the case of the sample classrooms in this study, the act of reading is to be taken literal. Thus our meetings would typically unfold as follows.

First, in order to refresh our memories, course participants took turns reading the selected texts aloud at our meetings. Typically we would then take a moment to clarify vocabulary and to gather background information about the story and its context. Much of the content of these miniature lectures was elicited from the students who consulted their electronic dictionaries as needed. In the course of 20 to 30 minutes we thus often arrived at the kind of scholarly information and critical background that these days is considered to be common knowledge thanks to the Internet and sites like Wikipedia.

We then sought to formulate our own response to the text and to bring it alive through a second reading. During these repeated readings we attempted to stage the dialogues whenever possible. Dramatic readings and the staging of selected dialogues naturally provided clarification as well as alternate interpretations, shifts in tone, emotion, and subtleties. The staged readings served to exemplify different emphasis rather than to describe or define them at this point.

Next, the participants often split into groups to examine discrete aspects of the text. A group of three or five students might thus focus on the stories' individual characters or other critical aspects. Thus group discussion topics included some of the tried and true topics such as the role of nature and Hemingway's settings; the function of household objects, knives, bottles, fishing gear, tools, and firearms;
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character development as witnessed through dialogues; character portrayal in terms of gender and social differences; the significance of descriptive passages, the symbolism of food and drink, the role of animals, and other related topics as they would arise specifically to each story. At this stage students started to articulate the sentiments and reactions they had felt earlier during the staged readings in more concrete critical terms.

Depending on the actual story, more creative approaches also enjoyed some popularity with the students.

More creative exercises included a mock trial by jury of Ms Margaret (Margot) Macomber, and the writing of a short story in honor of Hemingway. Throughout, our aim was to identify the central conflict of each story and its related issues through open class discussion. As might be expected, we also considered Hemingway’s economy of style, use of understatement, and ellipsis.

These activities sparked discussions which in turn culminated in a host of successful essays where students shared their insights and voiced their concerns. Hemingway’s universe and the struggles of the people in it prompted a number of unique inquiries from a contemporary intercultural perspective. In terms of gender, most female students focused on the women in our stories, while the male students concentrated on the men. However, the interpretations and assessments about the characters varied widely from one student to another. To illustrate the range of discussion, selected participants’ quotes are listed throughout this inquiry. They form a chorus of voices from the classroom that echo observations that may have been made before about these texts. Still, they allow a current unique perspective on the works and
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demonstrate their universal appeal. Students' interpretations are also interesting to compare when grouped by gender as the differences are often pronounced. We are thus allowed to see Hemingway's women through the eyes of the students, even as we find out more about the male characters at the center of his stories.

Interestingly enough, the students' interpretation of the works changed considerably over time. Typically, during their first reading students appeared a little unsure of their opinions. They would arrive at the initial meeting with a vague apprehension that they may have missed something important in the story because of a simple lexical or cultural misunderstanding. Consequently, it was rather difficult for students to voice this indistinct sense of uneasiness. After all, it takes some courage to formulate a question about something entirely unknown. Students at this point are unaware that they share this predicament with all other readers that have come before them because no one will ever be sure to have a definitive interpretation of a text. Even if such an interpretation existed momentarily, time would erode it quickly. This particular sense of ambiguity is an integral part of the act of reading. Once the conversation started to flow, however, students noticed the possibility of different interpretations. At times they were puzzled to find that different readings could be equally valid or true. It may be more important to notice that something like a communal interpretation with variations emerged at the end of the meetings. This kind of shared interpretation was only partly shaped by the professor's focus and emphasis since independent class discussions (in Japanese) arose as well. By abandoning the traditional lecture format during these meetings, and by substituting guided close readings and selected
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critical quotes, students were invited to engage in the process of meaning making and the resulting shared academic discourse more actively.

In the short answer and essay writing that followed, students were surprisingly willing to make rather harsh moral pronouncements on the characters they had encountered in the course. Strong condemnation came from all sides but the points of view and focus differed. For example, Student 'A,' a female student opens by quoting Nick: "Do ladies always have such a hard time having babies?" Nick asked (Indian Camp 6). She then develops her analysis of Nicks first encounter with birth and death. Her initial focus on childbirth is both telling and fitting and introduces her chosen topic in pointing immediately to the text's central issue.

Student 'B,' also concentrates on the Native American woman's ordeal as she speculates about the child's father and tries to come to terms with all of the characters she encountered in various stories: "The women are described in obscure ways and constantly change their character. For the most part the women are viewed critically and described negatively. In Indian Camp the Indian woman is a killer in a sense if one allows that her child is illegitimate" (Student 'B'). However this student stops short of suggesting an alternate biological father for this story.

One of the male students, Student 'C,' on the other hand, had fewer qualms about pointing the finger, albeit by reducing the suffering woman at the center to a mere instrument of revelation:

I liked the story "Indian Camp" because the story includes many
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interesting suggestions that aren't stated clearly. For example, Uncle George was injured by an Indian pregnant woman. It is not written in the story, but we can guess that the Indian woman was raped by Uncle George. Still, he is a white landowner in power and she can do nothing about her plight. Her Indian husband killed himself because of shame and sorrow. So she attacks and injures Uncle George in a fit of blind anger.

(Student 'C')

The conjecture is intriguing, but so is the student's chosen focus on Uncle George and his minor injury, all the while the woman in labor next to him has been in agony for countless hours and is struggling for life. He further supports his claim by citing the exchange between the Indian and the white uncle and by the ritualistic smoking of cigars before he shifts his critical attention to the power imbalance that perpetuates the suffering of indigenous peoples everywhere to this day. Notably, his focus remains on Uncle George, even while he sides with the indigenous people.

We may consider another example by Student 'E' to illustrate the students' gendered perspectives and to illustrate a common way of reading in Hemingway studies. In contrast to the aforementioned female course participants, this male student concentrated on the relationship between father and son in Indian Camp, which naturally led him to include in his essay Fathers and Sons, and along with it, the young Native American girl with the German name of Trudy. When asked what it was like living with the neighboring Ojibwa people we learn an important bit of information from Nick: "It's hard to say," Nick Adams said. Could you say she did first what no one has ever done better...?" (Vigia 375). The student goes on to point out that few
human experiences are as critical as a first sexual encounter. Signifi­
cantly, Nick's first carnal knowledge is of a girl outside his own white
middleclass dominant culture. To look back in life so much later and to
declare “no one has ever done better” is to have harbored a lifelong
romantic feminine ideal that no mature white woman could ever match
(Student 'E'). While this is certainly a valid speculation about the
romantic model of Nick Adams, it would be inviting but somewhat
erroneous to transfer the same observation to Hemingway himself. The
passage just quoted may illustrate how such a transfer from Nick
Adams to young Ernest may be set into motion.

Another example to illustrate how readers tend to jump quickly
from textual personae to real-life figures comes again from the female
point of view of Student 'B':

In “The Doctor and The Doctor's Wife” I thought that the woman was
very mysterious. She was written so obscure, and each person in my
group had a different image or opinion of her. One thought she was so
kind and warm to think about her husband, but the other one thought
she looked dark and dismal because she retired into her house, and her
words were not for her husband but for herself in order to pretend to
be a good person (Student 'B').

The student clearly accepts the multiple readings of her peers as
equally valid and even manages to sum them up in her own interpreta­
tion. In her very next sentence she then continues: “I think Hemingway
felt that women were like devils. Anyway, if he would have gotten
married very happily, then the stories would have been different, but
his married life was the result of his character, so I think that
Hemingway spent a very hard life” (Student 'B'). Here we can witness
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the exact point at which readers' responses culminate in one interpretation and then suddenly shift to consider the author's life instead. We even get a glance at the works Hemingway might have written, if only he would have married the "right sort" of woman. No one will deny, of course, that Hemingway's life was not always easy and that it ended sadly. Still, it was also filled with immense joy and triumph. If Hemingway can be charged in this respect, it is for living a great boy's adventure and writing about the historical verisimilitude he recognized as reality, while other writers were living their daily routines and merely writing about the great boy's adventure. Regardless, autobiographical information about Hemingway will always seep into the discussion because students need a cultural, historical, and social context for the stories. As we talk about Hemingway's pastoral childhood idyll and the exploratory life that followed, it is all too inviting to blur the author with his fictional creations.

The idyllic pastoral childhood begins to fade in The End of Something. "It isn't fun anymore. Not any of it" (End 20), Student 'A' quotes. Then she gives the following interpretation: "The reason why Nick broke up with Marjorie is because he was displeased with her because he felt she knew all of what he knew." Thus, in her interpretation the breakup is a result of the fishing trip when it becomes apparent that "Marjorie knew all of what Nick knew" and is thus clearly his equal. The student points out: "That fact damages Nick's pride," and Nick attempts to overcome his sense of insecurity by lashing out at Marjorie and destroying their friendship (Student 'A'). Thus the female student pins the breakup on misguided male pride.

Yet the same scene looks slightly different from the male
perspective of Student 'E'. This student, too, speculates about the reason for the teenage couple's breakup in *The End of Something* as revealed by the lengthy fishing scene and its implication that “there are more fish in the sea” for Nick to catch. “In short, it wasn't fun anymore being with Marjorie. The reason I can think of is the inevitable marriage ahead of them. Nick did love her once until their balanced relationship shifted under the weight of the idea of a shared future” (Student 'E'). The idea of a continued life together arises in Nick as the various routines that make up a successful catch are applied through the motions by the couple. The repetition conjures up images of household chores and other daily routines ahead, and Nick panics at this specter. “He was still young and needed more experience. There was no way he would marry and accept many consequential kinds of responsibilities. He thought more of himself and his freedom than of his girl” (Student 'E'). This student, too, finds Nick's character flawed. However, he chooses selfishness rather than pride. “The title word ‘something’ points to Nick's happy time with Marjorie, free from social constraints. While silence marks the time Marjorie innocently enjoys fishing with Nick, it is also the time Nick suffers” (Student 'E'). Thus this student creates empathy with Nick the sinner while he sees “Nick's girl” in a state of “blissful ignorance.”

The pastoral ideal is never fully regained, and as the students encounter the next protagonist, Harold Krebs, in *Soldier's Home* things have fallen apart that the center could not hold. Again some students turned to descriptions of Harold's mother when they spoke about the story. “The description of Krebs' mother and her worries expresses the cruelties of war, and we see a soldier's wounds never to heal” (Student
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Her classmate did not take such a kind view of the mother figure: "I noticed that women play important roles in Hemingway's stories," Student 'G' begins. Then she makes this strong statement: "I think that Hemingway writes mostly about nasty women. For example, I wrote about Margot who is the wife of Francis Macomber. I think she is nasty. In Soldier's Home, I considered, who has the role of a nasty woman? I think Krebs' mother does" (Student 'G'). The repeated use of the adjective "nasty" is not accidental as students consulted their electronic dictionaries and chose their words carefully. The student is thus unlikely to mean "nasty" in the sense of "disgusting" or "unpleasant" but rather in the sense of exhibiting "malice" or "ill-nature." It is also conceivable, that the student borrowed the term from contemporary American pop culture where it simply stands for "non-conformist" and "deliberately offensive." She goes on to explain that "the tragedy of Soldier's Home is that the story is written about a returned soldier, Krebs, who cannot adapt to peaceful daily life. But I think the tragedy is strengthened by his mother who forces him to adapt and to return to society" (Student 'G'). Significantly this student reads the mother as an important powerful agent whose impact on the life of Krebs is second only to that of the combined horror of war. She goes on to say: "In a certain sense his mother is one of the tender mothers who wish their children's happiness. However, I think she becomes a nasty woman because of her insolence of forcing her values onto him and requires him to live under her standards under the name of love" (Student 'G'). While she sympathizes with the mother who only wants the best for her child, she also draws the line at parental control, and points out: "Here we see an unconscious desire of controlling others. I think the
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desire for control is the characteristic of the typical nasty Hemingway woman" (Student 'G'). Further study is likely needed into Hemingway's "typical nasty women" but for now we can let the student's strong claim stand as a genuinely felt response. More importantly, we can see how the reading of one short story shapes the reader's expectation of another as she actively seeks out villainous female characters in her interpretation.

As we turn to the final story, *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*, we should note that students unanimously agreed this to be their favorite. Some of the endorsements were rather glowing: "I like *The Short Happy life of Francis Macomber* best because all main characters are very attractive. Margaret expresses woman's cleverness, coolness and liberty" (Student 'F'). Although Margot Macomber may not be first on everyone's list of inspiring role models, the student's description of her as "attractive, clever, cool, and free" is supported by the text. She then goes on to say that "Macomber is described as a coward, but finally he came to face the beast bravely. Wilson represents a human's innermost self. His emotions are shared by all people who watch Macomber grow. That's why I love these three characters" (Student 'F'). Rarely do we find such a cheerful reading of this story.

Other students were a little more cautious with their praise and even detected a jealous streak in the woman who barely misses her rightful title as the story's heroine: "At first, both Wilson and Margot look down on Francis Macomber. Through the hunt for the buffalo and Macomber's strenuous efforts, however, Wilson came to form a better opinion of him. Now, there was a bond between the men who fought against the buffalo, but Margot stood alone" (Student 'H'). Male
bonding through the shared hunt evolves into a threat to Margot who has romantic claims on both of them. She then continues, "because Margot couldn't join the men she lost her dominant role, and she became jealous of the men (Student 'H'). Still, Margot's crime here is no worse than jealousy and the wish to control her men. Other students went a little further and labeled her as "nasty" as we remember. Still others were morally outraged: "I was surprised that Margaret kissed Wilson in front of Macomber. It is incredible" (Student 'B').

At the same time, Student 'A' read the story as emblematic of the author's life: "In this story Hemingway wrote about the notion of women. Margaret married Francis although she didn't love him at all because he was rich. She often flirted with other men and she knew Francis would not be strong enough to blame her for her affairs" (Student 'A'). Although she does not add any moral condemnation, this student's arrangement of the facts needs no further explanation. She then tries to pin Wilson’s interior monologue on the author: "Wilson's attitude towards women obviously describes Hemingway's own opinion: "They are, he thought, the hardest in the world; the hardest, cruelest, the most predatory and most attractive and their men have softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened" (Seibido 43). We might note in passing that the meaning of the qualities here listed may be very different in the African wilderness when compared to the ballrooms of the moneyed elite. She goes on "Hemingway was fascinated by women but he was also scared of them as every man is. I think it is natural for a man to have such feelings towards women" (Student 'A'). The student here seems to suggest a Jungian reading of the text. In
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the meantime, biographers may need to take another look at Hemingway's fear of women and his equally strong fascination for them.

At this point we may return to the male view for a moment: "But the story I like best is The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber. "I like this story because it is very well written and describes the differences between women and men" (Student 'C'), the student begins. "The men are interested in hunting but the wife hates hunting. She is interested in looking good and having fun with strong men. She has a secret love affair with their guide. The guide feels pity for Macomber, but he also thinks that it's Macomber's own responsibility to hold on to his own things, including his wife" (Student 'C'). The student goes on to make a common association between the characters and Hemingway, but then he goes much further and includes himself!

Hemingway's interpretation about men and women fits nicely for me. I always understand Hemingway's men. They always want to protect their rights and obtain good results. They quickly get angry and like fighting. It applies to me too, and girls react like the characters in Hemingway's story. So I feel great sympathy with this story and I also like this story best. (Student 'C').

In this extreme case, the reader's reception of the text thus matches his understanding of his own personal history and reality. One would not readily expect a Japanese undergraduate student in 2008 to identify so completely with the writings of an American in Africa in 1935. Incidentally this student sees the texts also as valuable parables and finds that misogyny is not the way to a woman's heart.

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One of the groups of readers, may also have been influenced by a similar critical perspective cited in class: Christopher Ondaatje situates *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* within the corpus of Hemingway's other “African” works, primarily *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, and *Green Hills of Africa*. Ondaatje maintains that *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* deals primarily with the subject of fear. “Hemingway was fascinated by fear all his life... (Ondaatje 83). He quotes Hemingway: “In the war I was frightened, mechanically, enough times to understand fear and to realize its importance in life” (*Selected Letters* 432). The uneasiness that arises on safari when one is actually faced with a lion is further described by Hemingway in his second “Tanganyika Letter” first published in *Esquire*: “As the car starts to move off you have a very different feeling about lions than you have ever had when you saw them from the motor car” (*Esquire* 19).

According to Ondaatje, the plot of *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* is modeled after the fate of J.H. Patterson, a “ruthless railway engineer” (Ondaatje 84). Patterson guided the Honourable Audley Blyth and his wife on safari, but Blyth died under mysterious circumstances, and Patterson married the newly widowed wife shortly thereafter. Audley Blyth was to have committed suicide in a fever. However, his wife was rumored to be present in their tent when the fateful shot was fired. He was buried on the spot where he remains. Patterson later moved to Los Angeles where he died in 1947. According to Jeffrey Meyers, Hemingway heard this story from his guide Philip Percival in 1934. “Hemingway, like everyone else in Kenya, must have been fascinated by the story of a beautiful wife who fell in love with a
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The question of Margot Macomber's role in the death of her husband arose naturally. Thus one of the final class discussions turned into a mock trial. The class consisted of twelve participants on that day, and hence the students were invited to assume the role of twelve jurors in an American-style court proceeding. The question put to the "jury" was simple enough: "Is Margot guilty of the her husband's death?" The same exercise was conducted with two groups (in Kobe and Kyoto) and the outcome was identical. A "hung jury" resulted in both cases with an even six to six split. Students seemed quite content with this balanced outcome, which is a fair assessment on the whole, and simply underlines Hemingway's masterful rendition of the story and its underlying issues. However, one student pointed out that according to the Japanese legal system, Margot is clearly responsible for her husband's death because she did shoot him, after all. Deciding on her fate in light of the fact is a different issue. Another more creative exercise involved the writing of original short stories in the spirit of the readings. In their stories, students typically illustrated one of the themes they had encountered such as the cruelty of adolescent love relationships, or the social plight of Native American people, for example.

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Conclusion:

As we have seen, the students' readings and responses of Hemingway's stories anthologized in the Seibido 1979 edition of *Indian Camp And Other Stories* vary considerably. To this date, a whole generation of Japanese undergraduate students has encountered Hemingway's short stories, often for the first time, through the aforementioned collection. Teaching and lecture styles and critical approaches must have varied considerably over this time period. Similarly, the readings and opinions of the texts would have changed over time. If the responses of today's readers are any indication, the remaining constant throughout must have been their continued relevance to our ongoing lives, their aesthetic value as artistic works, and the many inner truths that lie deep within the stories. While the selected Nick Adams stories served as an initial introduction, they prepare the stage for the historic jump to *Soldier's Home* and on into the thicket of the African bush. By accident of location, *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* received most of the readers' critical attention, perhaps because students had invested a large amount of time in reading the story. And although the students grappled with the different society, historical period, and culture they read about, they became primarily interested in the relationships between the characters they encountered. Thus they went straight to the most universal aspects of the stories. Perhaps it is not surprising to find that these readers' individual focus varied according to gender, and that students thus concentrated on the story's female and male characters respectively. Ultimately, their readings of the characters' predicaments were not always sympathetic, yet their opinions were always strong.
and honest throughout, and always well put.

Appendix: Students respond to the works creatively by writing their own short stories in homage to Hemingway.

As previously mentioned, the course also included a creative writing option, which was attempted by some. Thus we may compare two sample short stories. The first story entitled The End of Her World was written on the last day of classes, and was obviously inspired by The End of Something. On her request, the author remains anonymous.

"The End of Her World" by Student 'J'

Two boys and a girl were going down the river in a boat. It was hot and they were sweating. They were going to the point to set lines for rainbow trout. Soon the boat touched the shore. So they got off.

"I want to catch fish in our boat," said the girl.

"I see, Mary. Do you mind if I go with you?" one boy answered as he smiled at Mary. She hesitated a little. Then she smiled.

"Not at all, Jonah".

Robert was watching Mary and Jonah silently. He began to prepare their rods. Mary and Jonah also started preparing. About three minutes later the boat left shore. Robert was watching their backs silently.

"May I help you?" Jonah asked.

"No, thank you. I can do it myself," replied Mary. Then she dropped the line and watched the bait go down into the water. Jonah also dropped the line a little carefully not to disturb her line. Both of them were silent for a few minutes.

"How are things going recently?" asked Jonah suddenly.

"I have been enjoying my life very much," Mary replied promptly but cheerfully.

"How about you? Jonah."

Jonah didn't reply to this question. Instead of it, he asked her again.

"What's wrong? You seem to be worried."

"Nothing. I'm perfectly all right," said Mary.

"I see."

Jonah was thinking about something for a short while. Mary heard him muttering to himself with furrowed brows.
"What are you thinking about?" asked Mary.
"I would like to tell you something," said Jonah.
Mary was a little confused. Why was he so serious? What was he about to say?
"Of course you can tell me. What is it?"
Jonah opened his mouth. He moved his lips slightly. But Mary didn't hear a word.
"I didn't hear. Tell me once more."
Jonah said the same words again. This time Mary understood what he had said.
They were silent for a long time. Then Mary let out a whimper.
"Why is that coming from you? Why did you use those words? Do Robert and you want to torture me?"
"Did Robert tell you the same?" Jonah was shocked and surprised.
"Yes. I owe him an answer but I haven’t decided yet. I need some time alone," said Mary, crying.
Jonah turned his head and saw Robert at the shore.
"We three are friends... good friends! That is all I wish for. I don’t want to change our relationship," Mary covered her face with her hands: "Why can’t we be so?"
Jonah couldn’t say anything. He felt as if she said she didn’t want to be an adult, but he knew that everyone must grow up. He was standing still, clenching his fists.

**Grizzly Hammer by Jack Griffith**

Derek came from Maryville to hunt grizz. He brought his axe, fish-hooks, hacksaw, tobacco pipe, knife, and shotgun. In his right hand, he always held the Grizzly Hammer.
His Indian guide was setting a trap.
"There's a damn sight. That's supposed to catch grizz?"
"I'm setting it for boars. We need meat."
"We have meat."?
"It's spoiled."
Derek opened the pouch sitting near the tree and smelled. The food inside was beginning to turn.
"We didn't finish it off in time."
"We've been out here too long. And still no sight of the grizz."
"It's been over a week; just a little longer, and we'll see it," said Derek. He stood
there, brow furrowed, palms calloused, lips curled, hoping he was right. Money was running out.

He climbed a tree to get a better view of the river. Downriver were the bear caves.

“We better find the grizz soon, or we’re going to have to raid the caves.”

The Indian guide’s hands were trembling. Vultures were circling overhead, and the frogs were silent.

“I’m not going into those caves.”

“What? You agreed to.”

“I didn’t think we would go through with it. I’m sorry.”

“You agreed to.”

“I’m sorry.”

Derek descended the tree in a fury. He could hear the Indian’s scared breathing over his huffing, and the sudden rage was nauseating.

“We’re not going back without the grizz.”

“I can’t go in those caves.”

“We’re going.”

“Not me.”

Derek was a professional mountain man, but this was unfamiliar territory, and he couldn’t find his way back alone. He was lost, and he needed the guide.

Derek frowned, baring fangs and braying hard. “If you won’t stare down the grizz, you better be ready for the Grizzly Hammer, son.”

The Indian’s eyes flared with terror, and he ran. The river was near. Derek did not want to kill a man with the Grizzly Hammer, but he had no choice. He ran down the Indian to the pebbly riverbank and blew off his leg with the 12-gauge double-barreled shotgun. The Indian screamed.

“No! If you kill me, you’ll never find your way back!” He rolled in pain like a dying dog.

“You know what they say happens when you get killed by the Grizzly Hammer? ...It turns your soul into a grizzly bear.”

“Oh My God.”

Derek plunged his whole body downward with the swing and scattered the Indian’s brains into the pebbles.

The two short stories are a study in contrast. Both are clearly inspired by Hemingway’s texts. One story was written by a Japanese female student. The
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other story was written by an American (white) male student who joined our course as part of his exchange program. The Japanese student adhered closely to her model The End of Something and employed Hemingway's techniques with great insight to elucidate her female protagonist's predicament. The American student publishes frequently online and here drew from several stories to parody Hemingway's themes. He ends his story with a violent gesture. Still, the Grizzly Hammer is a great original creation, and just may be the Nintendo generation’s answer to Pete Seeger’s Hammer Song.

Bibliography:

Works Cited: