The Cat In The Rain Essay, Research Paper

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In the short story the "The Cat in the Rain" by Ernest Hemingway, the cat is a symbol around which the story revolves. As a central symbol, the cat reveals the psychological state and emotional desires of the American wife.

When the cat is first observed it is "crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on."(56) Even though the wife is standing to far from the cat to determine its gender, it is described as "she." This choice of words helps to make a connection for the reader between the wife and the cat. The woman sees the cat in a treacherous enviorment trying to make it through a storm without drowning, and decides to go and rescue it. From the moment she leaves the room to get the cat, she is told repeatedly not to get wet, but she doesn?t care. Her only concern is to get the cat out of rain. Getting this cat is important to her because she empathizes with the it. "It isn?t any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain."(57) Before she even has a chance to step into the rain, the hotel keeper has sent out the maid with an umbrella to shield her from getting wet, showing the reader he cares. As she walks with the maid holding the umbrella over them, she is suddenly disappointed to see the cat is gone. When the maid finds out what she was looking for she laughs. The wife is not at all amused, "Oh I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty."(57) She is feeling so sad and depressed making us wonder why this cat is so important for her to have. "We must go back inside, you will be wet." "I suppose so" says the American girl, as if her emotions are not drowning in turmoil with the life she is currently leading. It soon becomes clear to the reader why the woman probably feels like a cat drowning in the rain.

Her husband is the source of her emotional despair. He leaves her drowning in a storm of indifference and lack of affection. When she goes back to the room she begins to look at herself in the mirror studying her profile feeling unwomanly with short hair. She feels this causes the lack of physical and emotional attention from her husband. When she tells him of all the things she desires, he merely tells her to "shut up." He really doesn?t care about her concerns. She doesn?t defend herself from her husband?s verbal abuse but rather begins to pout like a little girl saying, "I want a cat, I want a cat now. If I cant have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat."(pg57) Suggesting that her husband will not allow her to have long hair or any fun. She wants this cat so bad, in order to hold it, pet it, and love it, symbolizing what she wants physically, to be held and touched, and emotionally, to be loved and cared for.

When she finally gets the cat, it is the hotel keeper who has responded to her needs, rather than her husband. The hotel keeper causes her "a momentary feeling of supreme importance"(pg.57) in which she admires the way he wants to serve her. The hotel keeper has provided both symbolic and literal cats from the rain. Without the presence of the cat much of the story would lose it?s significance. The hotel keeper has provided the woman with the attention she is not getting from her husband, at least in the emotional sense.