In Another Country

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Aside from his critically-acclaimed writing, Nobel-prize winning novelist, short story writer, and journalist Ernest Hemingway is also famed for his adventurous lifestyle that took him across continents, cultures, and conflicts. He was an ambulance driver in Italy in World War I and a journalist covering the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s. As a foreign correspondent during WWII, he witnessed the Allies landing on the beaches on D-Day and the liberation of Paris from Nazi occupation. He moved to Paris in the 1920s with his first of four wives, Hadley Richardson. There he became part of a group dubbed "The Lost Generation," which included the likes of artist Pablo Picasso and writer James Joyce. He divorced Richardson for Pauline Pfeiffer in 1927, whom he left for Martha Gellhorn in 1940. He met his last wife, Mary Welsh, during WWII in London. Hemingway won the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 for his celebrated novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. After sustaining various injuries, including from surviving several plane crashes in Africa, Hemingway retired to Ketchum, Idaho, where he shot himself on July 2, 1961.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

World War I started in 1914 with war declared between the Allies (Britain, France, and Russia) and the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria). According to its alliances at the time, Italy should have declared war against the Allied Powers; instead, the country eventually joined the war in 1915 to fight against the Central Powers, in a bid to gain more territory if the Allied Powers won. Other countries, including the U.S. and Japan, also joined years after after the initial declarations of war. Italy opened another front against the Central Powers to relieve pressure at the Western Front but met with many military disasters and national crises. Italian communists were particularly anti-war because of its financial and human cost, which created significant social and economic pressures, leading to civil unrest after the Armistice in November 1918. Around 650,000 Italian soldiers died in the war and nearly a million were injured.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Hemingway expands on his experiences in a wartime hospital in Milan in his novel *A Farewell to Arms*, drawing from the same autobiographical details that influence "In Another Country." Again, the protagonist—Frederic Henry in the novel—has a wounded leg after serving on the Italian Front in WWI. The novel was Hemingway's first best-seller and delves deeper into the themes of war and loss than this short story. Many of Hemingway's other short stories, such as "Soldier's Home," similarly deal with soldiers' lingering sense of trauma and dissociation upon returning to regular society after war. The protagonist of "In Another Country" is typically believed to be Hemingway's literary alter-ego Nick Adams, who appears in a variety of Hemingway tales including "The Three Day Blow," "Indian Camp," and "Big Two-Hearted River."

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** In Another Country
- **Where Written:** United States
- **When Published:** 1927
- **Literary Period:** Literary Modernism, WWI
- **Genre:** Short story, Modernist fiction, WWI fiction
- **Setting:** Milan, Italy
- **Climax:** The Italian major tells the narrator about his wife's death
- **Antagonist:** Loss, War
- **Point of View:** First person limited

EXTRA CREDIT

Nick Adams. The narrator of the story is often assumed to be Nick Adams, a fictional protagonist Hemingway created to represent himself in his writing. The story was included in *The Nick Adams Stories* collection published posthumously in 1972.

Knee injury. When Hemingway served as an ambulance driver in Italy in WWI he injured his knee, leading to his treatment at a hospital in Milan, just like the protagonist in "In another Country."

PLOT SUMMARY

It is a cold and windy fall in Milan, Italy. Though he is not fighting anymore, the narrator notes that World War I is always in the background. Every afternoon the narrator goes to a hospital where he and the other patients sit in **machines** designed to heal their war-related injuries. The narrator has hurt his knee and his machine tries to get his leg to bend again. Next to him, the major receives treatment for his withered hand. The major listens politely to the doctor as he shows him **photographs** of successful previous cases, but does not hide his skepticism.

There are three other "boys" the narrator's age who also

receive treatment every day at the hospital. Except for the American narrator, all are from Milan, and the four of them stick together as they walk through to communist quarter to the Café Cova. The people in the communist quarter shout anti-military slogans at the officers as they pass by. Sometimes the boy with no nose joins the group as they walk; he wears a handkerchief across his face, and had been injured only an hour into his first battle.

The four officers, not including the boy with no nose, have all received **medals** for their contributions to the war. The boy with three medals had been an elite lieutenant and is distant because of his experiences with death. In fact, all of the officers are "a little detached," and the only thing anchoring them to daily life is their routine at the hospital. They feel like bonded together because other people don't understand what they've been through.

The other officers ask the narrator about his medals, but seeing his papers, they realize he was basically awarded for being an American. The others had performed dangerous, daring feats to earn their medals, and as such no longer really consider the narrator one of them, though he is still "a friend against the outsiders." Sometimes, the narrator imagines achieving the same heights of valor as the other officers. But walking back alone through the cold streets, he thinks he could never be a "hunting hawk" like them. He is too afraid of death, often lying awake at night terrified of returning to the front. He remains friends with the boy with no nose, however, because he had had no chance to prove himself either; they feel comfortable together, neither of them hawks.

The major comes to the hospital everyday even though he does not believe in the machines' ability to heal him, calling it all "nonsense." He teaches the narrator Italian grammar. One day, he asks the narrator what he will do when he returns home. When he says he plans to marry, the major responds angrily, telling the narrator men shouldn't marry as they should not put themselves into a position where they could face loss. Not meeting the narrator's eye, he asserts that if something can be lost then it will be lost, and storms out to another therapy room. Later, he returns to apologize for his rudeness, and explains his wife has just died. Crying yet still refusing to meet anyone's eye, the major walks out of the room, remaining tall and dignified as he does so.

The doctor informs the narrator the major's young wife died unexpectedly from pneumonia. At their next session, the doctor has put up more photographs illustrating the machines' successes. The narrator notes this is odd, as he always thought they were the first batch of soldiers to trial them. It doesn't matter to the major anyway, as he simply stares out the window.

CHARACTERS

The Narrator – An American soldier injured in World War I, the unnamed narrator—widely accepted to be Hemingway's autobiographical alter ego Nick Adams—is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Milan. Before the war he used to play football, but no longer can due to his leg injury. He spends every afternoon at the hospital in the **machines** that are meant to heal him and the other officers seeking treatment, although he doubts their effectiveness. While at the hospital he also learns Italian grammar from the major, but worries about sounding foolish when he cannot get it right. Though largely isolated from the foreign environment surrounding him, the narrator does manage to befriend four other military officers his own age who are also seeking treatment at the hospital. The narrator has earned a **medal** for his contribution to the war, though the other boys have earned their medals for more daring acts, causing him to feel insecure about his own courage. Though they drift apart, the narrator remains friends with the boy with no nose who was injured only an hour into his first battle, as he feels more comfortable with someone else who has also not proven their bravery.

The Major – Previously the greatest fencer in Italy, the major's hand has shrunk down to the size of a baby's following a wartime injury. He receives treatment from the **machines** next to the narrator. Though the major humors the doctor's optimism about his chances for recovery, he confesses to the narrator that he has no confidence in the machines' ability to heal him. He also tells the narrator he does not believe in bravery and teaches him Italian grammar so that he can communicate more naturally. Later, after his young wife dies suddenly of pneumonia, the major angrily tells the narrator not to marry, and that men should never put themselves in a position to lose anything. Afterward, he apologizes for his rudeness and bears his tears with "soldierly" dignity. He spends his subsequent treatment sessions staring out of the window.

The Doctor – The doctor oversees the officers' treatment in the **machines** at the hospital. The doctor is always optimistic about the machines' ability to heal the soldiers' physical wounds. He brings in **photographs** of the machines' alleged previous successes, although the narrator notes he always thought he and his comrades were meant to be the first test subjects. Later, it is the doctor who tells the narrator the details about the death of the major's wife. After her death, the doctor frames the photographs next to the major's machine, but the major doesn't look at them at all. The doctor's optimism borders on naivete, and suggests the medical community is not adequately prepared to deal with soldiers' psychological trauma.

The Boy With No Nose – An officer the same age as the narrator, he was injured in his first hour in battle after joining the military fresh from the academy. He came from an

"old"—meaning from a wealthy, high-class—family, and the hospital could never recreate the noble nose of his forbears. Later, he moves to South America, likely because of the shame of losing his inherited features. He and the narrator remain good friends, the narrator says, because neither of them had proved their bravery on the battlefield, and as such feel comfortable together.

The Boy With Three Medals – The narrator describes him as a tall boy from Milan with a "very pale face" who had been awarded three **medals.** He had served as a lieutenant in the Arditi, an elite force in the Italian army during World War I, but planned to be a lawyer. The narrator says he has become a "little detached" as he "had lived a very long time with death."

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

ISOLATION

As a wounded American officer receiving medical treatment in Italy during World War I, the unnamed narrator of "In Another Country" is an outsider in terms of his nationality, class, and wartime experience. Despite developing a certain kinship with other wounded Italian soldiers receiving treatment in the same hospital, the narrator—widely accepted to be Hemingway's autobiographical alter ego Nick Adams—remains deeply isolated from the people and world surrounding him. Hemingway explores the nature of belonging throughout the story, ultimately suggesting that people shun that which they do not understand, and that meaningful connection requires, above all, empathy.

Various details indicate and reinforce the narrator's status as an outsider in a foreign land. Most obviously, as the story's title declares, the narrator is an American in another country. Though the narrator bonds with some Italian officers at the hospital over their shared wartime experiences, his nationality remains a barrier to more genuine friendship. The other men specifically believe that he has received special treatment and commendations solely by virtue of being from the U.S.: after learning of his foreign origins the other soldiers' "manner changed" toward him, the narrator notes, adding, "I was never really one of them." What's more, the narrator struggles to master Italian grammar, making communication—and, it follows, connection—in this environment all the more difficult. When referring to an Italian major recuperating in the same hospital, for instance, the narrator notes, "I was afraid to talk to him until I had the grammar straight in my mind." He worries about meeting the major on his level and cannot be comfortable until he can perform adequately.

Although, perhaps irredeemably, a foreigner in others' eyes, the narrator still finds some semblance of connection with the other officers on the basis of their similar social status and experiences during the war. The other patients the narrator befriends are also officers, and they are drawn together by this distinction as a defensive reflex: the narrator notes, "We walked the short way through the communist quarter because we were four together. The people hated us because we were officers." Italian communists—who in these streets would be largely working class—were anti-war during WWI, marking the passing military officers as enemies because of their different social status and values. The four officers, although different themselves in terms of nationality and military distinction (one has three **medals,** for example), thus find themselves belonging together as friends "against the outsiders."

The officers "were all a little detached" from everyday life following their encounters with death, the narrator further explains. Their friendship centers on their daily visits to the hospital, where the officers' experiences have isolated them from the majority of society that has not seen such suffering. They thus seek comfort in the company of those who know their struggle first-hand. Again, despite their efforts to return to normal daily life, those who cannot share or understand their viewpoint ostracize them.

Through the officers' shared isolation from civilian society, Hemingway shows it is really understanding that determines belonging. Indeed, the men feel "held together by there being something that had happened that they, the people who disliked [the officers], did not understand." The public's lack of understanding drives animosity and division, furthering the officers' detachment from the rest of society. Hemingway suggests, by highlighting its absence, that empathy could help heal the officers' emotional suffering. Instead they are isolated due to others' ignorance, as the author condemns humanity's propensity to shun, rather than embrace, the unknown.

Of course, this pattern also manifests among the officers themselves. The narrator prefers to spend his time with the boy with no nose, who was injured an hour after joining the war, because neither of them have proven their courage in battle as the other officers have: "But I stayed good friends with the boy," the narrator says, because he "could never be accepted either." The officers themselves drift apart, with those who earned medals for acts of bravery on one side, and those who didn't on the other. Even among those who draw together in defense against the public's lack of empathy, then, find themselves divided, underlining how instinctively people separate themselves from the unfamiliar.

In exploring and contrasting the characters' interwoven layers of belonging and isolation, Hemingway ultimately highlights

that understanding allows people to bond, while ignorance divides. In exposing this tendency to shun the unknown, Hemingway further advocates greater empathy for veterans' suffering and detachment from society. They have become outsiders on their own streets, and that is a hurt the hospital's **machines** working to treat their physical injuries cannot heal.

LOSS, WAR, AND TRAUMA

Set on the side-lines of World War I, many of the characters in "In Another Country" are recovering from both physical and mental injuries sustained amid the horrors of the battlefield. But while undergoing a sort of physical therapy treatment in Milan, the narrator discovers that emotional trauma, too, persists long after the fighting has ended, and that loss is an inevitability not experienced solely within the arena of warfare. The sudden death of the Italian major's wife, in particular, proves perhaps more psychologically unsettling than battle itself—a fact that imbues everyday life at once with a sense of dreadful unpredictability and immense value. The irony, of course, is that the soldiers have ostensibly fought to protect civilian life, yet it here proves something distinctly out of their control. By presenting the trauma of war alongside more mundane—yet acute—civilian pain, Hemingway underscores the universality of loss and the inherent, unavoidable fragility of life itself.

The officers in the hospital in Milan are treated on a daily basis for various physical injuries from the war, and their wounds are a visible reflection of the scars that battle has left on their lives. The narrator loses the use of his knee, the major's hand has shrunken to the size of a baby's, and there is a boy with no nose. They are each left with wounds that impair their physical abilities and leave them marked men, whose scars bear permanent witness to the horrors of war.

Each of the patients' bodily losses further reflects their lost hopes, callings, and/or social status. The narrator, for example, is a former football player. The major had been "the greatest fencer in Italy" before the war but can no longer even wield a sword. The boy who lost his nose "came from a very old family," and the fact that the doctors "never get [his reconstructed] nose exactly right" suggests an irreparable break in that esteemed lineage; the shame the boy feels at no longer fitting in among the higher classes, Hemingway implies, later drives him to live in South America. The war has thus taken away many identity-defining characteristics from the soldiers, leaving a lasting impact beyond mere physical inconveniences.

While visible injuries change the course of the officers' lives, their emotional suffering causes them to lose sight of who they once were altogether. The narrator describes an elite officer who had been awarded three **medals**: "He had lived a very long time with death and was a little detached. We were all a little detached and there was nothing that held us together except that we met every afternoon at the hospital." After their time in battle, it seems, the officers find themselves unable to slip back into their previous lives; they have lost their sense of how to interact on a day-to-day level after the horrors they have witnessed have so thoroughly detached—or distanced—them from everyday life. Their new daily routine offers them a semblance of normality that keeps them going, but their treatment schedule does nothing for their psychological suffering and they remain disconnected from society.

Toward the end of the story, the Italian major's young wife dies from pneumonia. Previously, the major had been shown to take his physical impairment with good grace, teaching the narrator Italian grammar during sessions and humoring the doctor's optimism. However, dealing with the loss of a loved one leaves him changed in a way that losses experienced during the war apparently hadn't. He warns the narrator angrily never to marry, as a man "should not place himself in a position to lose," and he spends his subsequent treatment sessions staring out the window. With no resolution offered, Hemingway leaves the major alone in the (probably useless) machine, engaging with nothing at the end of the story.

The major's impossible instruction to the narrator—to never to place himself in a position to lose anything—further presents loss inevitable both on the battlefield and in everyday life. The question is not whether something will be lost, then, but whether it is worth opening oneself to greater suffering by embracing temporary connection in the first place. The major asserts that if something can be lost, then it will be lost: "'He'll lose it,' he almost shouted. 'Don't argue with me!'" While portrayed as melodramatic and overly pessimistic because of his grief, the major's words hold weight. War and the sheer unpredictability of life can bring all things to an end, and that is a risk that everyone—soldier or not—faces. It is impossible to insulate oneself from loss, however, which is something Hemingway ultimately presents as a universal fact of life. Yet read optimistically, the major's powerful response to his wife's death can be taken as an implicit admission of the incredible value of loving human relationships—which are, in many ways, what the soldiers sacrificed so much to protect in the first place.

COURAGE

"In Another Country" takes place on the fringes of World War I, during which some of the characters earned **medals** for bravery. The narrator feels insecure about his own courage, however, as it has largely been untested; his medals were awarded for being wounded and "an American," and he is not accepted by those who earned theirs for more daring feats. Though he draws a line between those he sees as bold "hunting-hawks" and those, like himself, who are more timid and afraid of death, Hemingway shows that this rigid conception of bravery is both misguided and damaging. Instead, the story presents courage as something exemplified

not just by feats of daring, but by the continued decision to hold fast to hope in the face of suffering.

The narrator sees bravery as an innate characteristic that comes naturally to certain people, and this simple, black-and-white approach pushes him to cast all men as either courageous or cowardly. The narrator specifically describes the three other officers who received medals as "like hunting-hawks," and this use of natural imagery suggests their bravery is instinctive and something that separates them as a higher breed of man. The narrator then asserts he could never be as brave as these "hawks": "I knew that I would never have done such things, and I was very much afraid to die." He sees his fear as a defining characteristic, which he places in opposition to the other officers' natural courage. He knows he is not naturally a hawk and thinks the other officers gradually shun him because they see this weakness. Such a rigid conception of bravery, then, only serves to create insecurity on the one hand and superiority on the other. What's more, this reductive idea of courage creates an impassable boundary between bravery and cowardice; one can never try or learn to be brave if bravery is something one either is born with or not.

Hemingway presents an opposing viewpoint through the Italian major that receives treatment alongside the narrator, challenging the medal winners' perspective. The major in fact does "not believe in bravery," despite his high rank in the military and his successful career as "the greatest fencer in Italy." Fittingly, the major's main act of bravery in the story is decidedly quiet. After telling the narrator his young wife has just died, "carrying himself straight and soldierly, with tears on both his cheeks and biting his lips, he walked past the **machines** and out the door." He makes a choice to continue with dignity in the face of terrible loss. The major's courageous response to his devastating news may not be rewarded by a medal of valor, but it is an example of genuine bravery—that is, enduring in the face of great suffering.

Indeed, this has been the major's general approach to his post-war life. He doubts the machines' ability to heal his hand, calling the whole endeavor "nonsense," yet still diligently attends his daily therapy. After his wife's death, he still decides to continue with the potentially pointless therapy, although he admittedly seems to have even less hope than before. Through this, Hemingway suggests the major's grit and persistent determination in the face of near-certain failure as an act of courage as laudable as any on the battlefield.

Considering this new, broader idea of bravery prompts a reassessment of the narrator's viewpoint. For one thing, the "hunting-hawks" are hardly impervious to pain and fear. The narrator notes, "We were all a little detached," because of their familiarity with death. The other soldiers' thus still bear emotional scars despite their bravery, and their continued anguish—much like the major's—again demonstrates that courage is not a one-time occurrence. Instead, their persistent struggle against their suffering, physical and psychological, is a choice, rather than an innate instinctual reaction, and *that* is what reveals their true courage.

Speaking of his fellow soldiers, the narrator further notes, "there was nothing that held us together except that we met every afternoon at the hospital." This reveals that, again like the major, the officers continue to attend their physical therapy sessions—effectively choosing hope over giving in to despair or resignation, despite the fact none of them believe in the therapy machines' ability to heal them. Hemingway shows their long road to recovery as a battle in itself, one that requires relentless bravery, a type that anyone can achieve if they set their mind to it.

Through the officers, Hemingway also shows the value of community in helping the men stay on that path to recovery. They draw courage from one another, finding support through their shared understanding and experience. This fact makes any divisive concept of bravery seem all the more counterproductive. Hemingway thus challenges the black-and-white notion of courage as a natural instinct, a latent virtue waiting to be proven. Instead, he shows bravery is a constant choice made in the face of hardship—a choice that is open to anyone.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

MACHINES

"In Another Country" takes place during World War I in Italy, where the narrator receives hospital treatment alongside other battle-scarred officers. The narrator describes how they are treated in machines "that were to make so much difference," his ironic tone revealing the soldiers' disbelief their injuries can ever be healed. Through their ineffective treatment, the machines represent early 20th-century society's lack of appropriate methods to heal the officers' war wounds, both physical and psychological. The machines fail to bend the narrator's knee, for instance, and flap the major's shrunken hand about almost comically. The wounded men's lack of progress chips away at any latent faith in the machines to help them; the narrator notes, "There was a time when none of us believed in the machines, and one day the major said it was all nonsense." Beyond being ineffective at treating physical injuries, the machines do nothing at all to address the officers' emotional suffering. The doctor's insistent faith in the power of the machines feels especially misguided given the soldiers' clear psychological turmoil. They have become "detached" after experiencing the horrors of battle, and the narrator notes "there was nothing that held us

together except that we met every afternoon at the hospital." It is the communal activity and daily routine that keep the men going, rather than trust in the system, as embodied in the machines, to restore them.

MEDALS

The narrator and three Italian officers his age have all received medals for their exploits during World War I, but the inflexible and misguided concept of bravery that the awards symbolize drives them apart. Although proud of his medal, the narrator says the related papers "really said, with the adjectives removed, that I had been given the medals because I was an American." This drives a wedge between him and the Italian officers, who "had done very different things to get their medals." The other officers feel superior to the narrator because their medals commemorate daring feats, while the narrator feels insecure for his lack of proven bravery; as such, they drift apart. The medals, then, represent a rigid notion of courage that separates the "hunting-hawks" from purportedly timid men who are fearful of death. What the medals don't reflect, Hemingway shows, is that their wartime experiences of death plague all the young men; nor do the medals commemorate the soldiers' valiant efforts to overcome those fears and heal their scars, both physical and psychological.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs makes a brief appearance at the end of the story and symbolize meaningless wartime propaganda. While undergoing treatment at a hospital in Milan, Italy, the doctor shows the major photographs of other injuries that **the machines** have (allegedly) already healed—injuries that are similar to the major's own withered hand. However, the doctor's attempt to convince the major that he can make a successful recovery fall flat, reflecting Hemingway's own scornful view of wartime propaganda. The major politely humors the doctor's optimism, but remains openly skeptical. The narrator also sees through the doctor's pretense, as he notes he and the other officers were "the first to use the machines," and so doubts the photographs' authenticity. In the last line of the story, after the major's young wife has died, the narrator says the photographs (now hanging on the wall) "did not make much difference to the major because he only looked out of the window." Ultimately, the doctor's efforts to motivate the major fail because they are irrelevant to the root cause of his suffering, a direct critique of misguided wartime propaganda.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scribner edition of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* published in 1987.

In Another Country Quotes

"In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more.

Related Characters: The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 206

Explanation and Analysis

The opening line of the short story provides useful context not only for the setting, but also the narrator's perspective and mindset. This is a first-person account from someone involved in an ongoing war—World War I, later context reveals—although the story will not take place on the battlefield itself. Nevertheless, the war has clearly left indelible scars on the narrator; that it is "always" there suggests that, regardless of his distance from the fighting, the war has become the context against which the narrator categorizes place, person. and purpose. Meanwhile, the use of "we" builds anticipation as to the other characters in the story and his connection to them.

"Beyond the old hospital were the new brick pavilions, and there we met every afternoon and were all very polite and interested in what was the matter and sat in the machines that were to make so much difference.

Related Characters: The Narrator

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 206

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator describes his daily routine of going to the hospital, where he meets others that participate in the same therapy sessions as him. His tone here is ironic—"were all very polite and interested," "were to make so much

difference"—and introduces the idea that however dutifully these men attend their therapy sessions, these hospital visits are utterly ineffective. This is also the first time the narrator introduces the machines, which perform the soldiers' therapy and thereby are linked to and representative of this notion of ineffectiveness. Though they are located in a "new" area beyond the "old" hospital, these machines, for all their supposed technological savvy, do not address the soldiers' underlying psychological trauma—and as such, cannot heal them or make a meaningful "difference."

> We walked the short way through the communist quarter because we were four together. The people hated us because we were officers, and from a wineshop some one would call out, "*A basso gli ufficiali!*" as we passed.

Related Characters: The Boy With Three Medals, The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 207

Explanation and Analysis

After their therapy sessions, a group of officers around the same age as the narrator often walk together to the Café Cova. Because they are in a group, they can take the short cut together through the communist quarter, where the people are hostile toward them. During WWI, Italian communists were anti-war because of the social and economic fallout of joining the chaos. The officers represent the military to the communists, and so they consider them enemies and outsiders. The slogan they shout means "down with the officers." The locals' hatred of these men causes the soldiers to draw together, seeking safety in numbers as well as connection with those who share experiences similar to their own. This introduces the tension between of isolation and belonging, an ongoing theme in the story.

> He had lived a very long time with death and was a little detached. We were all a little detached, and there was nothing that held us together except that we met every afternoon at the hospital.

Related Characters: The Boy With No Nose, The Boy With Three Medals, The Narrator

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 207

Explanation and Analysis

One of the officers who is treated alongside the narrator has received three medals for acts of bravery during WWI. Despite this public recognition of courage, however, he has become detached from normal daily life after the horrors he experienced in battle. In fact, all of the officers are "a little detached" for the same reason, and it is precisely this sense of detachment that draws them together. They can be comfortable in each other's company, knowing their comrades are sympathetic to their condition as they have been through the same thing. Indeed, the narrator notes it is the communal aspect of their hospital trips that keeps the men going rather than the treatment itself. It is thus people's understanding and support that can help the soldiers heal their war wounds, not physical therapy and awards for bravery from a public that simply doesn't understand the trauma of warfare.

> [...] we felt held together by there being something that had happened that they, the people who disliked us, did not understand.

Related Characters: The Boy With No Nose, The Boy With Three Medals, The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 208

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator and other young officers attending physical therapy stick together even outside the hospital because they share the same horrific experiences from the battlefield of WWI. Despite being outsiders in society, they feel that they belong together because of their common understanding of the horrors of war. Civilians, meanwhile, simply cannot fathom what these men have been through. In this way, Hemingway shows the importance of shared perspective when it comes to building a community, and by extension, that ignorance and lack of empathy divide people. He also demonstrates the human tendency to find and cling to community wherever one can find it. This is a survival instinct, but also crucial to the soldiers' psychological

recovery. The story thus ultimately advocates greater compassion for and patience with veterans to enable them to return to normal life as a part of everyday society.

> I was a friend, but I was never really one of them after they had read the citations, because it had been different with them and they had done very different things to get their medals.

Related Characters: The Boy With Three Medals, The Narrator

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 208

Explanation and Analysis

Four of the officers have received medals for their acts of bravery on the battlefield during WWI. One has even been rewarded three. But the narrator's papers reveal that his medal was mainly given to him for being an American volunteer, while the Italians performed far more daring feats to earn theirs. This creates a rift between the officers, as the three other soldiers now consider the narrator an outsider, less similar to them than they had previously thought. The medals, and their inflexible concept of bravery, divide the soldiers, creating a hierarchy of courage that belies the inglorious, horrific experience of war. Not only are the veterans left with physical and psychological scars from their time in battle, they are also set against one another by rigid notions of heroism and their own rank within that system.

> The three with the medals were like hunting-hawks; and I was not a hawk, although I might seem a hawk to those who had never hunted; they, the three, knew better and so we drifted apart.

Related Characters: The Boy With Three Medals, The Narrator

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 208

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator feels inferior to the Italian officers he knows from the hospital because they have received their medals for acts of bravery, while his is essentially a reward for volunteering to serve in WWI as an American. He sees their valor as an innate, natural gift that he simply does not possess. This rigid notion of courage divides the group, even as the story elsewhere points to their shared community is the only thing keeping these battle-scarred men going. Other examples of valor in the story challenge this perspective, pointing to bravery as a consistent choice in the face of suffering rather than a moment of apparent battlefield heroism. The story thus argues the medals have been awarded for the wrong reasons and celebrate uninformed and damaging concepts of bravery.

> The major came very regularly to the hospital. I do not think he ever missed a day, although I am sure he did not believe in the machines. There was a time when none of us believed in the machines, and one day the major said it was all nonsense.

Related Characters: The Major, The Narrator

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 208

Explanation and Analysis

The major undergoes physical therapy in the machine next to the narrator's. His determination to hold onto hope in the face of near-certain failure is the kind of bravery the story commends. Every day, the major makes a choice to persevere, representing a truer form of courage. The major's courageous approach to life inspires the narrator, in contrast to the misplaced glorification of battlefield valor elsewhere that causes division and insecurity among the group of officers.

The narrator continues to present the machines as ineffective, as all the officers doubt the treatment's ability to heal their war wounds. Their doubts relate to their physical rehabilitation, but also symbolize their struggle to overcome the psychological scars from the WWI. However far technology has progressed, society so far has not

provided reliable means to help the soldiers recover from their trauma.

> If he is to lose everything, he should not place himself in a position to lose that. He should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose.

Related Characters: The Major (speaker), The Narrator

Related Themes:

Page Number: 209

Explanation and Analysis

After the narrator announces his hope to one day marry, the major rants against opening oneself up to the pain of loss. What the narrator does not yet know in this moment is that the major has just unexpectedly lost his young wife to a short battle with pneumonia. Fueled by this sudden pain, the major angrily insists that men should not put themselves in a position to lose anything—which would mean effectively cutting themselves off from the joys of the world. The irony is that these men have ostensibly fought in the war—damaging physical and emotional parts of themselves in the process—specifically to protect those joys. It is impossible to entirely avoid being in a "position to lose," the story shows, because loss is an inevitable part of life—whether on the battlefield or not.

> He looked straight past me and out through the window. Then he began to cry. "I am utterly unable to resign myself," he said and choked. And then crying, his head up looking at nothing, carrying himself straight and soldierly, with tears on both his cheeks and biting his lips, he walked past the machines and out the door.

Related Characters: The Major (speaker), The Narrator

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 209

Explanation and Analysis

After explaining to the narrator that his young wife has unexpectedly died from pneumonia, the major breaks down, overwhelmed by his grief. He cannot look at the narrator, with whom he has been talking, or anything else in this moment. His anguish separates him from others, turning his mind inward as he instinctively, protectively isolates himself from the world and all its potential for loss.

Hemingway's point, though, is that everyone must "resign" themselves to the fact that loss is an everyday, inevitable reality. Here, the major makes his first steps on the long road to recovery, choosing to persevere with all the dignity he can muster. Hemingway presents the major's approach to overcoming suffering as a greater example of bravery, one that is not instinctive—as with the "hunting-hawks"—but rather an active choice to endure. It is his own mental fortitude, not the machines, that will see the major through to the end, questioning and challenging the rehabilitation options offered to soldiers during and after WWI.

> When he came back, there were large framed photographs around the wall, of all sorts of wounds before and after they had been cured by the machines. In front of the machine the major used were three photographs of hands like his that were completely restored. I do not know where the doctor got them. I always understood we were the first to use the machines. The photographs did not make much difference to the major because he only looked out of the window.

Related Characters: The Doctor, The Major, The Narrator

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 210

Explanation and Analysis

The major returns to the hospital after the death of his young wife, wearing a black armband and not engaging with anyone or anything around him. The doctor, meanwhile, has placed photographs around the treatment room to encourage the soldiers, but his propaganda attempt falls flat. The soldiers easily see through the patronizing deception—the narrator notes the impossibility of the images, considering they've been told they are the first group to use the machines; the doctors were either lying then or are now. What's more, the propaganda does not even address their central concerns—a direct reflection and critique of wartime propaganda.

The major's heartache is his biggest wound, something the machines and hospital staff do not even attempt to address,

let alone cure. His grief, which no one can share with him, leads to his isolation, as he turns inward, wrapped in his own painful thoughts. In the final moments of the story, then, Hemingway shows how wartime rehabilitation efforts often failed to address soldiers' psychological wounds and inability to engage with society when plagued by the trauma of war.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

The war is happening nearby, but the (unnamed) narrator does "not go to it anymore." The fall in Milan is cold. The dark comes early, but the streets are pleasant once the electric lights come on, with game hanging stiff and empty outside the stores, buffeted by the wind. Snow settles in the foxes' fur and birds are blown about by the wind. The cold wind comes down from the mountains.

WWI is a constant, looming presence behind the events of this short story. Although the characters are no longer fighting on the front line, their struggle follows them back to their everyday lives. The narrator reflects their helplessness in the bodies of the meat hanging outside the shops, emptied out and beaten by powers larger than themselves.

The narrator makes his way to the hospital every afternoon. There are various ways to go, but each approach crosses the canals over bridges. On one of the bridges a woman sells roasted chestnuts that warm up his pockets. The hospital itself is old and beautiful, with courtyards from where funerals start. The narrator heads back to the new brick pavilions, where he meets others. They are all very polite to and interested in one another and sit in **machines** that are meant to make a big difference.

Now the reader understands why the narrator is no longer on the front lines of the war: he is receiving a somewhat mysterious treatment for an injury. Yet he is still independent, making his own way to the hospital as an out-patient. The group of soldiers seeking treatment at the hospital have begun to form a supportive community, although the ironic language used in reference to their manner, as well as the machines treating them, reveals the narrator's skepticism they can really connect or be healed.

The doctor comes up to the narrator's **machine**. He asks him what he did before the war, and what kind of sports he played. The narrator tells him he played football, to which the doctor responds he soon will be able to play again, "better than ever." The narrator's knee does not bend anymore, and there is no calf below it. The machine is meant to bend the narrator's knee for him, moving it like on a tricycle, except it lurches when it gets to the actual bending. The doctor says, "That will all pass," and that the narrator is fortunate, as he'll play football again "like a champion."

The cause of the narrator's cynicism becomes clear: the machines has so far made no progress, despite the doctor's suspiciously eager optimism. The Italian front was a brutal battlefield during WWI that saw little success but many casualties. and the doctor is a sort of stand-in for the hidden officials running the chaotic war—determined to save face despite the obvious lack of progress and responding with overdone positivity when no results have yet been seen. His encouragement to the narrator feels patronizing, indicating Hemingway's view of how soldiers were treated during the war.

In the **machine** next to the narrator is the major, whose hand has shrunk to the size of a baby's. The major asks, winking to the narrator, if *he* will play football again too. He had been Italy's greatest fencer before the war. The doctor retrieves a **photograph** from his office. It shows a withered hand, like the major's own, which after treatment was a little larger again. The doctor explains the hand in the image was injured by an industrial accident. The major is interested, but says he still has no confidence.

The major's physical injury has changed his life for good—completely undermining his fencing career. His good humor in the face of such troubles reveals his strength of spirit. The doctor's photographs, meanwhile, can be seen as a kind of propaganda. He seeks to reassure the major but also to bring him in line with the program. The major listens politely, demonstrating his still intact social awareness (unlike some other injured soldiers), but maintains a healthy sense of skepticism.

Three boys the same age as the narrator also go to the hospital every day to receive treatment. They are all from Milan, and want to be a lawyer, painter, and soldier, respectively. After they finish with the **machines** they walk together to the Café Cova next to the Scala. They can take the short cut through the communist quarter because there are four of them. The people in the quarter, meanwhile, hate them because there are officers, shouting at them in the street as they pass.

These four officers have bonded because of their shared experiences. First, they are all the same age, showing similarity is a key factor in building community. That Hemingway describes them as "boys" implies they are too young to be dealing with the suffering they have gone through. Facing hostility from anti-war communists, they stick together for safety, demonstrating another basic condition of belonging as the outsiders draw together naturally.

Sometimes a boy with no nose walks with them. He wears a handkerchief over his face because it hasn't been reconstructed yet. He had been injured within an hour of joining the front line, having come straight from the military academy. They eventually do the reconstruction, the narrator, looking back years later, recalls, but it never looks quite right. Later the boy, who comes from an old family, moves to South America to work in a bank. The narrator points out that they don't know any of this at the time; back then, in Milan, they don't know how it will turn out later. All they know is the war is always there, but they're "not going to it anymore."

Because the fifth young officer comes from a high-class family, losing his nose—an emblem of his noble roots and a literal loss of face—causes him so much shame that he later moves to another continent, the implication being that he feels he no longer belongs in the world he was a part of before the war. His experience illustrates the tension between society's expectations of the glory of warfare and the realities on the battlefield. Young men do not come back from the front line whole; they lose a part of themselves and cannot be reconstructed. In the immediate aftermath of their wartime experiences however, the boys do not know they will never be whole again. In this moment, they are simply relieved only to not be in the crosshairs again, at least for a short while.


All of them have **medals**, except the boy with no nose because there was no time for him to earn any. The boy with three medals is tall with a very pale face. He wants to become a lawyer and served as a lieutenant in the Arditi. He was had been very familiar with death for a long time and comes across as "a little detached." In fact, they are all a little detached. The only thing that keeps them together is that the go to the hospital every afternoon. When they all walk together to the café, avoiding the crowds that block the sidewalk in the tough part of town, they feel like they all belong together because they share something that those people who don't like them don't understand. The officers all understand the Cova though. It's warm and comfortable, and the girls are patriotic. They are still patriotic, the narrator believes.

The medals represent society's misguided view of bravery. They celebrate heroics that glorified sacrifice, rather than recognizing or alleviating the psychological trauma that comes with such acts. This scene also emphasizes that the officers are held together by their shared routine and perspective—that it is the support of this sympathetic community that keeps them going. The officers feel like they belong together because they understand one another, in direct contrast to the ignorance of those who hate them. Hemingway thus advocates empathy for veterans as the only way to help them rehabilitate and reenter society, from which they often become "detached" following the trauma of war. Ironically, then, the medals undermine this connection, creating rivalries and insecurity in its stead. The reference to the Arditi here also confirms the war as WWI, as the group was an elite force within the Italian army during the conflict.


At first the other boys are polite about the narrator's **medals** and ask what he did to earn them. He shows them the papers, which, despite their fancy wording, essentially reveal that he was rewarded for being an American. After that the other men treat him differently, as they did very different things to earn their medals. The narrator is still a "friend against the outsiders," but he is never really one of them again. After all, his wound was only an accident. Still, the narrator is not ashamed of his ribbons.

The narrator's medal was awarded because he volunteered to join the war, while the other boys earned their medals through acts of valor. While Hemingway does not disparage their courage, he does challenge the rigid notion of bravery that the medals represent. The officers ostracize the narrator as they deem his sacrifice to be beneath theirs, thus creating division where previously there was supportive community. The narrator remains a friend "against the outsiders," though, showing isolation and belonging as many-layered concepts.

Sometimes, after drinking cocktails at the café, the narrator imagines himself doing all the same things the other men did to earn their medals. But when he's walking out in the cold alone, he realizes he could never have done those things. He is very afraid of dying, and often lies awake at night, fearful of death and of returning to the war. He sees the three men with the medals as "hunting-hawks." He is not a hawk, although he might seem like one to outsiders. But the other three know better and as such the group drifts apart. The narrator stays good friends with the boy with no nose, however, because he thinks he is not a hawk either, and they'll never know how he would have turned out in battle as he sustained his injury too soon.

The glory the medals bestow makes the narrator wish he had shown the same kind of bravery that earned the other officers their ribbons. While he is beside his comrades in the café he feels that he could achieve their daring feats, but when walking alone his courage fails him, and when alone in bed he fears death too much to sleep. Here Hemingway illustrates the necessity of a supportive community to help the soldiers to overcome their psychological trauma. Isolation makes recovery harder as one's morale weakens. Picturing the other officers as hawks further suggests that the narrator sees them as innately, naturally braver than he is, an idea both created by and propelling his insecurity. This is why he remains comfortable with the boy who had no chance to prove himself—again demonstrating that understanding and shared experiences are key to belonging.

The major does not believe in bravery. He spends a lot of time teaching the narrator Italian grammar as they sit next to each other in their **machines** at the hospital. He compliments the narrator on his Italian. Though the narrator says he finds it easy, once he starts learning the proper grammar, it suddenly becomes very hard. The narrator is now worried about getting the grammar right in his head before he talks to the major.

The major does not buy into the black-and-white concept of bravery touted during the war and represented in the medals. Yet, his stoic determination to overcome his sufferings reveal a sense of courage that Hemingway shows is often overlooked. He also teaches the narrator Italian grammar to help him achieve a greater sense of connection in Italy. But the narrator still finds it hard to communicate because he feels his grammar is inadequate, demonstrating how strict social rules can be a barrier to belonging.

The major goes to the hospital very regularly—in fact, he never misses a day even though he doesn't believe in the **machines**. At one point none of the men believe in the machines, and the major even calls them nonsense. The machines are new, and the men are meant to be the ones to prove that they work. The major says the machines are an idiotic idea like any theory, then turns on the narrator, calling him a "stupid impossible disgrace" because he cannot learn his grammar. He then calls himself a "fool" for bothering to try to teach the narrator, while staring straight ahead as the machine slaps his hand around.

The soldiers' skepticism about the machines' ability to heal them reflects their lack of faith in the system. The wider implications refer not only to the doctors' inability to treat their physical wounds, but also to the psychological scars left behind from warfare. Nevertheless, the major, the most vocal disbeliever, still dutifully attends his therapy sessions. This is not simply out of obedience, but is an exercise in hope, as he takes every opportunity available to recover even if it seems beyond his grasp. This is a kind of bravery all the officers show—continuing in the face of doubtful success. But the major's good humor seems to have finally run out as he turns on the narrator, and the reader questions what could have happened to change him so drastically.

The major asks the narrator what he plans to do when he returns home after the war, if it finishes. He demands the narrator speaks grammatically. The narrator informs him he'll return to the States, and on the major's further questioning, adds that he hopes to be married. The major calls him a fool, asserting that a man must not marry, because he must not place himself in a position where he has something to lose. Instead, he should find things that cannot be lost. The major doesn't look at the narrator throughout the exchange, staring straight at the wall as he speaks "angrily and bitterly." The narrator isn't sure if the major is right, but the man shouts this point again and tells the narrator not to argue.

The fact the major does not look at the narrator throughout this exchange shows that something is wrong, as in previous exchanges he had winked and joked. As the major isolates himself from direct interaction by avoiding eye contact, the reader notes he must be facing some new trauma, highlighting the correlation between human connection and recovery.The major's subsequent assertion is an impossible task, as evidenced within the story itself by all the characters' deep sense of loss. Instead, his point underlines the inevitability of loss. Everything is only temporary, so the question arises how much one is willing to embrace in the knowledge it will all one day be gone.

The major calls for an attendant to turn off the **machine**, which is still bashing his hand around, and he storms out of the room into the massage treatment room. The narrator hears him ask the doctor if he can use the telephone. Later, the major returns to the narrator, who is now in another **machine**. Wearing his cape and cap, the major apologizes to the narrator for being rude, and explains that his wife has just died. The narrator feels sick with sympathy, and says he is "*so* sorry." The major says it is "very difficult" and he cannot "resign" himself. He chokes. Crying, biting his lips, the major walks "straight and soldierly" out of the room, not looking at anyone or anything.

For the first time, the major cuts his therapy session short. When he returns later, he is still unable to look the narrator in the eye, his grief continuing to isolate him. But as the nature of his loss becomes apparent, understanding draws the two men together and the narrator's sympathy allowing him to forgive instantly. Meanwhile, the major's determination to remain dignified despite his distress is the greatest act of courage in the story. Biting his lips to hide they are trembling, he walks out with his head held high, believing he can overcome his grief, which is a key step to accepting his loss. Hemingway shows the major's tears do not detract from his bravery, as his spirit remains strong and stoic amid his suffering.

The doctor explains to the narrator that the major's wife was very young, and he had delayed marrying her until his injury took him away from the battlefield. She had only been sick for a few days and no one had expected her to die. The major returns to the hospital after three days, wearing a black armband over his uniform. The doctor has placed framed **photographs** of wounds the machines have successfully healed on the walls of the treatment room. The narrator cannot think where the doctor got them, as they were meant to be the first to use the machines. The major does not notice them at all, as he just stares straight out the window.

That the major's greatest blow takes place away from the scene of battle reinforces the universality of loss, especially given the irony that his wife and their loving relationship are most likely what he was fighting for in the war. The doctor again misunderstands the major's greatest needs, as his wounded hand is now the least of his concerns. The major stares past the deceitful propaganda, out into the wide, cold world, unable to engage with anyone as his scars are too painful. Hemingway ends on a sorrowful note. Loss leaves the major a changed man, and the story leaves the reader wondering whether the major can heal from his heartache when all society presents him are ineffective machines to treat his bodily wounds.

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