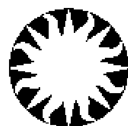
Picturing Hemingway

A Writer in His Time

Four Classroom Lessons on the Writer and His World



Smithsonian
National Portrait Gallery

Picturing Hemingway: A Writer in His Time
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LESSON 1
Hemingway: The Man

Objective: Students will analyze the portraits of Hemingway in this exhibition to see how they reveal both his public,legendary, personality and his private one.

If you're doing Lesson 1 in your classroom, use the following slides/copies/handouts from this packet:

- Slide numbers: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9
- Copy numbers: 1, 2, 4
- Handouts: Data Retrieval Sheet for Lesson 1

Preparation

1. Ask students if they've ever had a portrait of themselves made as a painting or a photograph. (School pictures count!) Ask them to describe how they were posed and what they were doing in the portrait.

2. Discuss the many techniques portraitists use to depict their subject's appearance and character. Explain the following techniques for students. (You may want to illustrate these techniques with examples.)
   - present the subject with a different physical form
   - present the subject in a significant place or doing a significant activity
   - give the subject a different identity to emphasize a specific characteristic
   - include objects illustrating the subject's place in society
   - include symbolic images to describe a person's life
   - surround the subject with real and significant objects from the subject's life

3. Discuss with the class why and when portraits are made. Be sure the discussion reminds students that some portraits flatter the subject and others do not. Some portraits please the subject and others do not.

4. Invite students to "sketch" two portraits of themselves. The first should be a portrait of themselves **as they wish to be seen or remembered (public)**. The second should be a portrait of themselves **as they really are (private)**. For each portrait, students can use some of the portraiture techniques listed in Step 2, above. Students could actually quickly sketch these two self-portraits, but for the purpose of this lesson as a whole, students could write a quick paragraph that describes the imagined portrait.

5. When students are finished writing (or sketching), have them share the portraits with the class. Discuss, or have them write about, how the two portraits differ.

Looking at Images

1. Take students to the exhibition "Picturing Hemingway: A Writer in His Time," either in the museum or online. Explain that the exhibition contains many different kinds of portraits of the famous writer Ernest Hemingway, a person who liked to have portraits of himself made and used these portraits to cultivate his own legend.

2. Give students ten minutes to walk through the exhibition or to click through the online exhibition, just to get a feel for the objects.

3. Have them use the Data Retrieval Sheet to focus on one portrait they find interesting from each of three sections of Hemingway's life: Childhood (through World War I), Adulthood (between World War I and World War II), and Old Age (after World War II.) Students should choose a significant portrait from each section of Hemingway's life, one that interests them or that they think is very revealing of some trait. Students should record information about the portrait on the Data Retrieval Sheet.

Extension

1. Have students discuss the portraits they wrote about on their Data Retrieval Sheets: Why did they choose those portraits? What do those portraits reveal about Hemingway the man?

2. Have them break into small groups to interpret what they have seen:
   - The jacket notes to the catalogue for this exhibition include the statement "Ernest Hemingway created a personal image that made him a legend." Ask students how the portraits they chose might have helped Hemingway build this personal image.
   - What changes do they notice in Hemingway over time? What traits stay the same?

3. As a group, generate a huge list of words about Hemingway, his image, character, or portraits. To generate this list, go around the room and have each student contribute a word or phrase. Tell students that they can't say anything another student has said. Keep going around the room until each student has had at least four turns. (Building a long list will help students think of more unusual or original ways to think about Hemingway's character.) Your list of words/terms should be about 100–150 items.

4. Tell students that they are going to use this list, and any other language they want or need, to write a poem entitled **Portrait of Hemingway**. In the poem, they can describe:
   - an actual portrait of Hemingway
   - a portrait of Hemingway they think should have been made
   - a portrait that reveals Hemingway as he wished to be seen
   - a portrait of Hemingway that reveals his true character

5. Have students share their poems with the class.

Some Things Never Change

1. Just for fun, show students Hemingway's account of a high-school football game and the grade he received on his work from his teacher. Ask students if they can decipher Hemingway's handwriting. What grade would they have given him for this composition? Why?

Data Retrieval Sheet

	Portrait title, date, and artist	Why I chose this portrait	Does this portrait show the public or private Hemingway? What techniques did the artist use to reveal Hemingway's character?
Childhood (through World War I)			
Adulthood (between World War I and World War II)			
Old Age (after World War II)			

LESSON 2
Hemingway: The Writer

Objective: Students will understand how Hemingway's writing demonstrates his "principle of the iceberg" and consider how artists might have used the same principle in portraying him.

If you're doing Lesson 2 in your classroom, use the following slides/copies/handouts from this packet:

Slide numbers: 2, 3, 5, 7
Copy numbers: 3, 4, 5

Preparation

1. Give students copies of Hemingway's 1958 statement about his writing: "I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg. It is the part that doesn't show." Discuss the statement with students. Ask them to speculate about what Hemingway means about his writing when he says "there is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows."

2. Have students search through selections of Hemingway's writing to find passages that illustrate his "principle of the iceberg." If you are already reading Hemingway's fiction, students can look through the novel or story you are working on. The story "Hills Like White Elephants" is a good one to use to discuss Hemingway's principle. The characters in the story discuss and argue about their problem (an unwanted pregnancy) without ever mentioning the problem directly.

3. Ask students to try a writing experiment with the passage of Hemingway's work they found to illustrate the principle of the iceberg. Have them photocopy a short passage, maybe a page of writing where Hemingway leaves much unsaid or unexplained—the "seven-eighths of it under water." Then, in the margins, have students fill in the explanations Hemingway has deliberately omitted. Have students compare their explanations.

Looking at Images

1. If you're in the classroom, give students time to examine the four portraits of Hemingway listed at the beginning of this lesson as slide numbers 2, 3, 5, and 7. If you're in the museum or using the Web site, ask students to find four portraits of Hemingway that interest them.

2. Present students with this idea: Hemingway wrote on the principle that the strongest writing left much below the surface, suggested rather than explained. Suggest to students that perhaps the artists and photographers who portrayed Hemingway worked on the same principle. Perhaps their portraits of Hemingway derive power from what is not shown.

3. Have students choose one of the four portraits listed for this lesson, or one in the exhibition/Web site. (Make sure students choose a portrait, not a candid photo, for this lesson.) Then have students make a

Looking at Images (continued)

list of 7–10 features the artist omitted or obscured in his or her portrait of Hemingway. For example, in Strater's 1922–1923 portrait, the painter omitted one side of Hemingway's face, his gaze, his hands, etc.

4. After they've made their list, ask students to write a paragraph about the effect of the portraitist's omissions. What do the omissions suggest about Hemingway's personality or the portraitist's opinion of Hemingway? To get the inside story on what a portrait might not be showing, read the story of Theisen's portrait of Hemingway with the leopard (at the Web site http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/hemingway/index-late.htm, or in the exhibition catalogue on p. 42).

Extension

1. If your class is reading *A Farewell to Arms* or *The Sun Also Rises*, distribute copies of the two original book jacket designs. Have students answer the following questions:
   - What or who is portrayed on each jacket?
   - What significant theme from the novel does the cover illustration emphasize?
   - What types of readers did the publisher believe this book would appeal to? What do you see that makes you think so?

2. Have students discuss whether they think the original jacket design is appealing. Does it accurately portray the content of the novel?

3. Let students create their own book jackets for the novel they read—one that portrays the way we understand the book today, at the end of the twentieth century.

LESSON 3
Hemingway's Literary Community

Objectives
Students will: • **identify members of Hemingway's literary community**
• **contrast the writing styles of Hemingway and other writers of the era**
• **create a caricature of a writer**

If you're doing Lesson 3 in your classroom, use the following slides/copies/handouts from this packet:

- Slide numbers: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9
- Handouts: First Lines Handout for Lesson 3

Preparation

1. Explain to students that Hemingway got his start as a writer in Paris in the 1920s, a stimulating place and time for American writers. Ask if they know of any other American expatriate writers of that time. (They may know that Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald knew each other in Paris.)

2. Send students on a hunt through the exhibition (in the museum or online) for pictures of writers of the 1920s. They will find these authors in the online exhibition, and others in the museum: Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson, James Joyce, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, and John Dos Passos.

3. Tell students that they will be doing a short research project about another writer of the early 1920s and that the project will have two goals: to discover how this writer's style differs from Hemingway's and to discover how the works might be similar in theme, plot, characterization, or social attitude.

4. To begin comparing styles, give students the First Lines Handout. The handout will give them a quick introduction to each writer's style. After they have read the quotations, have them discuss the obvious differences in these writers' styles: sentence length, word choice, imagery.

5. To answer the second question in item 3—how the works by these authors might be similar in theme, plot, characterization, or social attitude—students will have to read a complete story, poem, or novel by one author other than Hemingway. Complete this step only if you are doing the lesson in the class-room and are willing to spend several class periods on it.

Looking at Images

1. Give students time to examine the three portraits listed at the beginning of this lesson as slide numbers 6 (Gertrude Stein), 7 (F. Scott Fitzgerald), and 8 (Ernest Hemingway).

2. Ask them to list the physical features of each writer that the portrait-maker emphasized.

Looking at Images (continued)

3. Then have them return to their discussion of each writer's style. Ask them if they can make any connections between the writer's style and the features emphasized in the writer's portrait. For example, the brushstrokes in the portrait of Fitzgerald give his portrait a hazy, dreamy look. Is this dreaminess also a part of his writing style?

4. Ask students about how they think a portraitist prepares to do a famous writer's portrait. Does the artist read the writer's work? Why? Does the artist read what the critics think of the writer's work? Why?

Extension

Caricature

1. Give students the chance to experiment with caricature. Begin by showing them two images of Hemingway listed at the beginning of this lesson: **Hemingway with the horns of his kudus and an oryx**, 1934, and **Miguel Covarrubias's portrayal of Hemingway the he-man**, 1933.

2. Explain what a caricature is: the distortion of the face or figure for satiric purposes, a comically exaggerated portrayal. (The National Portrait Gallery's Web site hosts an exhibition with text, **Celebrity Caricature in America**, at http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/caricatures/intro.htm. Use the site for your own background or have students visit when you do this activity.)

3. Ask students to isolate which of Hemingway's traits as a person and as a writer Covarrubias is poking fun at and how he exaggerated these traits in his painting.

4. Invite students to make a caricature of the writer, other than Hemingway, whom they've been studying in this lesson. Post the caricatures around the classroom. (Students will have to know quite a bit about the writer they choose to create a caricature of; caricature is an informed art form!)

Literary Friendships

1. Explain to students that Hemingway was part of a close-knit group of writers. He had intense friendships with many of them who helped him a great deal, but many of his friendships soured.

2. If you're doing this extension activity in the museum, have students read the gallery and label text to find out how Hemingway's friendship fared with a variety of writers, editors, and publishers. Have students see if they can find a trend in Hemingway's treatment of his literary colleagues and friends. What did a friend have to do to Hemingway for Hemingway to turn on the friend?

Nobel Prize

1. Show students the photograph of Hemingway receiving his Nobel Prize for literature. Share with them Hemingway's words upon receiving the prize in 1954: "For a true writer each book should be a new beginning where he tries again for something that is beyond attainment. He should always try for something that has never been done or that others have tried and failed. Then sometimes, with great luck, he will succeed."

Extension (continued)

2. Ask students to discover whether the other writers they've studied in this lesson achieved similar success. (Did they too receive the Nobel Prize for literature or other forms of recognition for their writing?) Ask students whether they think Hemingway is a great writer. (Asking this question might launch your class into an interesting discussion of what makes a writer great.)

First Lines Handout

The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.

"Whenever you feel like criticizing any one," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understand that he meant a great deal more than that.

The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway

Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton. Do not think that I am very much impressed by that as a boxing title, but it meant a lot to Cohn. He cared nothing for boxing, in fact he disliked it, but he learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness he had felt on being treated as a Jew at Princeton. There was a certain inner comfort in knowing he could knock down anybody who was snooty to him, although, being very shy and a thoroughly nice boy, he never fought except in the gym.

The Making of Americans, Gertrude Stein

Mostly everyone loves some one's repeating. Every one always is repeating the whole of them. This is now a history of getting completed understanding by loving repeating in every one the repeating that always is coming out of them as a history of them. This is now a description of learning to listen to all repeating that every one always is making of the whole of them.

Winesburg, Ohio, Sherwood Anderson

The Writer, an old man with a white mustache, had some difficulty in getting into bed. The windows of the house in which he lived were high and he wanted to look at the trees when he awoke in the morning. A carpenter came to fix the bed so that it would be on a level with the window.

Quite a fuss was made about the matter. The carpenter, who had been a soldier in the Civil War, came into the writer's room and sat down to talk of building a platform for the purpose of raising the bed. The writer had cigars lying about and the carpenter smoked.

LESSON 4
Hemingway's Era: The Lost Generation

Objectives
Students will: • **understand how historical and cultural events can shape the identity of a generation**
• **learn about the post–World War I "Lost Generation"**
• **identify generation-shaping events for their own age**

If you're doing Lesson 4 in your classroom, use the following slides/copies/handouts from this packet:

- Slide number: 1
- Copy number: 2

Preparation

1. Introduce students to the phrase "Lost Generation" and explain to them why Hemingway's generation was called lost. (American literature and history textbooks will contain information about the Lost Generation for students to read.) Explain that the phrase "Lost Generation" referred to American youth who came to adulthood during World War I. Their experience in the war alienated them from their parents' values and left them directionless. The war caused these young people to become cynical and to search for values to replace the ones they had been taught. In their "search for values" they lived recklessly—drinking, fast driving, jumping in and out of relationships, listening to jazz.

2. Ask students to think of a name for their own generation. They should consider the names the press and media has given them already and discuss whether those names are accurate. (Hippies led to Yuppies led to Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Next.) The class should vote on the name that best represents their generation. They should be able to explain why the name they've picked represents their age.

3. In the 1920s, many young artists and writers of the Lost Generation made Paris their home and there they created a generation-defining art scene. Hemingway was part of this group of artists and writers: some were his mentors, some were his friends, and some became his enemies, as the exhibition shows! Ask students to think about where the generation-defining art scene is happening for their own generation. Have students think about the writers, artists, and musicians of their generation who they will look back on fifty years from now as generation-defining. Where do these writers and artists live?

Looking at Images

1. Show students the copy of Hemingway's passport. Talk about the passport as Hemingway's ticket to join the Paris art scene. For some young people of his era the passport could be considered a symbol of their generation, as a ticket to leave America or to explore beyond the boundaries of their parents' values.

Looking at Images (continued)

2. Have students make a passport for themselves, even if they have a real one at home. Have them design the passport so it is visually attractive and contains all necessary information about them, including a photograph.

3. Though Hemingway was not an expatriate, many of the American artists and writers in Paris in the 1920s were expatriates. (Hemingway insisted that he was never an expatriate, only a writer living cheaply in Paris.) Ask students whether they would consider becoming expatriates, consider leaving their country and their culture to understand it better. Where would they go to gain a new perspective on their own country? What experiences would they seek to help them gain self-knowledge and insight into their generation and their country?

4. Ask students to imagine that it's ten years from now and they have traveled abroad or become expatriates for some time. Have students complete their passport to reflect where they have been on their journey of discovery. Have students write a short essay describing what they did along this journey.

Extension

1. Whether in the museum or looking at the "Picturing Hemingway" exhibition online, have students look for images that shaped the generation, ones that show WHY or HOW Hemingway's generation was considered "lost." For example, the photograph of Hemingway trying bullfighting in Pamplona is part of his generation's desire to live fast and hard; the photograph of Hemingway in his ambulance driver's uniform (slide number 1) reminds us of the war, and why his generation seemed lost. Students can create a list of 5–7 images and explain why they chose those in particular.

2. Then have students look through newspapers, magazines, their own collections, and the Internet to find images of historical and cultural events or people that have shaped their generation.

3. Use these images to create a classroom exhibition about the students' generation. Use the name they chose for their generation as the exhibition title. Have students vote on which images to display.

4. Students should then write labels for each of the images they display. The labels might require some library or Internet research. They should explain:
    - what or who is depicted in the image
    - when the event happened
    - why or how the event or person helped shape their generation

5. If students would like to go beyond what has already happened, have them create images that they predict will shape their generation in the future. These images should have the same kinds of labels as the real ones.

List of Slides

1. **Hemingway in his ambulance driver's uniform of World War I**
Gino-Fish studio of Chicago (active circa 1920), print made from original, circa 1918
Image courtesy Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts

2. **Image from the series of photographs taken by Helen Breaker in March 1928**
Helen Breaker (circa 1895–circa 1939), gelatin silver print, 1928
Image courtesy Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts

3. **Hemingway with the horns of his kudus and an oryx**
Unidentified photographer, gelatin silver print, 1934
Image courtesy Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts

4. **Miguel Covarrubias's portrayal of Hemingway the he-man**
Miguel Covarrubias (1902–1957), gouache on board, 1933
Image courtesy Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

5. **Hemingway with dead leopard**
Earl Theisen (1903–1973), gelatin silver print, 1953
Image courtesy Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts. Copyright © 1998 Earl Theisen Archives

6. **Gertrude Stein (1874–1946)**
Jo Davidson (1883–1952), terra-cotta, 1922/1923
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

7. **F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940)**
David Silvette (1909–1992), oil on canvas, 1935
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

8. **Henry Strater's first portrait of Hemingway**
Henry Strater (1896–1987), oil on panel, 1922/1923
Image courtesy Permanent Collection, Ogunquit Museum of American Art, Maine; gift of the artist

9. **Hemingway being awarded the Nobel Prize in literature**
Unidentified photographer, gelatin silver print, 1954
Image courtesy Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts

List of Copies

1. **Young Hemingway's account of a high-school football game**
   Image courtesy Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts

2. **Hemingway's passport**
   Image courtesy Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts

3. **Early edition of The Sun Also Rises**
   Image courtesy Archibald S. Alexander '28 Collection of Hemingway, Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey

4. **Hemingway likeness that appeared on the jacket of The Sun Also Rises**
   John Blomshield (circa 1895–after 1940), pencil on paper, 1925
   Image courtesy Ernest Hemingway Collection, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts

5. **First edition of A Farewell to Arms, 1929**
   Image courtesy Archibald S. Alexander '28 Collection of Hemingway, Rare Books Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey