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## Hills Like White Elephants by Ernest Hemingway: Communication – the Strength of the Bond Between Two People

In relationships, countless factors determine the strength of the bond between two people. A major factor is communication. Author Ernest Hemingway utilizes this theme in his short story, "Hills Like White Elephants." The story features a couple who appear to be having a conversation; Hemingway gives few details about the background of the characters but provides the audience with a vivid insight into their troubling conversation and poor communication skills. Communication has a direct influence on relationships; positive communication results in a successful relationship while negative communication results in an unsuccessful relationship. Lack of communication between the American man and the girl is a problem. A main theme in the story is talking versus communication. The couple is technically talking but they are not actually understanding each other. This poor communication between them causes frustration that is seen the moment the characters are introduced. "

'They look like white elephants...' 'I've never seen one...' 'No, you wouldn't have.' 'I might have... just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything'" (Hemingway 635). The man appears to be hostile towards the girl, especially when she tells him that he has never seen a white elephant before, causing him to become defensive. The tension can be felt and the audience quickly learns that the couple is not truly discussing the main issue that is going on; just like a "white elephant in the room" is something that no one wants or wants to address. "And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?' 'I love you now. You know I love you'" (Hemingway 637). In this example, the man is pushing an operation on the girl that he wants her to have; which is believed to be an abortion. The poor communication leads to the man saying anything to convince the girl to have the procedure. He does not seem to genuinely mean any of the things he is saying; instead, he is just saying the things that he believes the girl wants to hear. His persistence, combined with her indecisiveness, almost leads to the girl having the abortion just to shut him up. "I'd do anything for you. '

'Would you please... please stop talking?'" (Hemingway 638). Both characters struggle with expressing themselves which leads to them both never saying anything meaningful and constantly dancing around the main problem ("the white elephant"). The poor communication in their relationship is their biggest issue, which is seen throughout the story's dialogue. The couple's future looks troublesome because they are about to make a life-altering decision without sincerely expressing themselves or understanding one another.

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The lack of communication is a continuous problem that occurs throughout "Hills Like White Elephants." The downfall of the main characters solely comes from their failure to comprehend each other; this leaves them both uneasy and frustrated when discussing a major decision. Due to the characters' inability to truly understand and express themselves, the audience witnesses the effects of poor communication in a relationship. From all aspects of a relationship, communication is "important and essential" and proves to be a thriving factor behind successful relationships by "making it easier to deal with conflict and by building a healthier partnership" (Brook 1). This statement reiterates the direct influence between communication and relationships.

Researcher William B. Gudykunst defines communication as "a process involving the exchange of messages and the creation of meaning" (Gudykunst 56). The man and the girl in the story exchange messages between each other but never create meaning. They willingly only tell each other what they think they want to hear in order to put the conversation to rest. The man being overly chivalrous is a great example of this; there is no meaning behind any of the positive things he says, only empty compliments to swing the disagreement his way. As a result, the troublesome future ahead of the couple is a great example of the impact communication has on relationships.

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