

Hemingway excerpt

George Plimpton famously interviewed Ernest Hemingway for the Paris review in 1958 about his influences, his habits, and his writing process. In this interview, Hemingway discusses his book, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and the ways in which his experiences whaling and staying in a seaside town gave the story a richness and a believability, even though he does not detail them directly. Hemingway states:

If a writer stops observing he is finished. But he does not have to observe consciously nor think how it will be useful. Perhaps that would be true at the beginning. But later everything he sees goes into the great reserve of things he knows or has seen. If it is any use to know it, I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it underwater 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. (61-89, Plimpton).

Hemingway's iceberg theory promotes complexity in the development of a character. The character is not explicit and therefore rises above a moralizing or purely emblematic role. This approach allows the character to be more relatable and therefore more sympathetic to the reader or viewer. In spite of the figures' extraordinary circumstances—either recently escaped from a sanitarium, or completely isolated from society in nature—when the iceberg theory is applied to painting, an opportunity for compassion arises. The figures have a depth that make them compelling.