

Characterization

Review the following pieces of dialogue, and determine what the dialogue says about its speakers.

American: Do you want it with water?

Jig: I don't know. Is it good with water?

American: It's all right.

Jig: Yes, with water.

American: Well, let's try and have a fine time.

Jig: All right. I was trying. I said the mountains looked like white elephants. Wasn't that bright?

American: That was bright.

Jig: I wanted to try this new drink. That's all we do, isn't it – look at things and try new drinks?

American: It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig. It's not really an operation at all.

The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on.

American: I know you wouldn't mind it, Jig. It's just to let the air in.

The girl did not say anything.

American: you've got to realize that I don't want you to do it if you don't want to. I'm perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you.

Jig: Doesn't it mean anything to you? We could get along.

American: Of course it does. But I don't want anybody but you. I don't want anyone else. And I know it's perfectly simple.

Jig: Yes, you know it's perfectly simple.

What does the American want?

How would you describe the American's personality?

What does Jig want?

How would you describe Jig's personality?

Imagery

The landscape of this story is “a line of hills. They were white in the sun and the country was brown and dry” (1).

Below, draw the hills. Then, answer this question: in what way do the hills enforce the “hidden meaning” of the story? (Hint: think about their shape.)

Read the descriptions of the landscape on page 1.
Then, read the description of the landscape on page 2.

1. How do these two different views of the landscape contrast with one another?

2. What could these two different views symbolize? (Hint: think about the choice that the American and Jig are making.)

Symbolism

The train station that they are sitting at “was between two lines of rails” (1). Consider the fact that the American and Jig are waiting between these two lines while talking about an important decision. What could the two lines of rails represent?

Explain the symbolism for these two events:

- the girl reaches out and takes hold of two strands of the beaded curtain
- the man carries “two heavy bags” to the other side of the tracks

Icebergs

Eventually, we piece together that the topic of the conversation is abortion. Comb through the text and find at least three pieces of evidence that show this to be true. After each piece of evidence, explain how that evidence indicates abortion.

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

5.)