The Role Of Ernest Hemingway in American Literature

Most fiction novelists write the type of novels that one would read in order to escape the realities of life. Ernest Hemingway's writing, however, is fiction but the type of fiction that parallels the cruelty of life. This writing style paralleled his own life; beautiful, challenging, no-frills, and a sad ending. Hemingway's stripped-down, modernist prose set him apart from the romantic, dreamy writers of the time like F. Scott Fitzgerald. His writing encapsulated an era of wonderful American talent. A complicated man with a very uncomplicated way of writing beautifully. Pulitzer and Nobel prize committees were correct in awarding Ernest Hemingway with the prestigious accolades. Hemingway is one of the most widely read authors in history and each of his works proves him to be the most influential, significant American author.

The Sun Also Rises was Hemingway's first published novel, and it set the precedent for who he was as an author. This is also the novel that made Hemingway the voice of the Lost Generation. They were ruined as a generation by the first World War and lost all potential to live their lives fully. The novel itself may seem like wealthy dilettantes moping around Europe ordering fancy food, but it is deeper than that. As a whole, the story is beautifully tragic. It focuses not on love lost, but the pain associated with a failed or impossible relationship. The novel also focuses on religion, injuries sustained during the war, and socioeconomic differences of the time. This is the story that established Hemingway as one of the greats, and for good reason. The entire plot is a perfect allegory for the Lost Generation, in that because of circumstances they cannot control, they will never be happy for fulfillment. Hemingway was able to give a voice to those without; a crucial steppingstone for making him the most significant author in American history.

One thing that sets Hemingway apart from his fellow authors is his ability to not go into detail about the protagonists. Hemingway has a slow-build type of writing because he is presenting his story in a particular way, stripping a lot of narratives and internal commentary. Although his works are fiction, they often speak truths about life and humanism. His works explore human emotions like fear and pride without going into too much detail on the actual character. The feelings of these characters slowly take shape throughout the bookmaking them extremely realistic. For Whom the Bell Tolls is the most poignant example of these characteristics, and the novel shows what can happen to literature in the hands of a master. Hemingway's writing is the finest example of stream-of-consciousness writing ever encountered. Other authors, like Faulkner, rambled in their pursuit of prose while Hemingway wields it like a sword.

Hemingway's influence on modern literature looms large. As an author, he focused more on nouns and verbs instead of overtly descriptive language. This paved the way for future authors to stray from using excessive descriptions and allowed them to focus on the realistic aspects of their stories. The ability for authors to be concise without being dull was created by Hemingway. Hemingway's work lacked a lot of dialogue and adjectives, but the reader could still grasp the human emotion in the novel. Gone were the Mark Twain days of utilizing adjectives to achieve a higher word count. Authors now had the ability to focus on getting the point across in the Hemingway style; blunt, precise, no-frills, and still able to be captivating.

Hemingway's creative process was also profoundly different than his predecessors. Hemingway did not sit in a room being a tortured soul throughout his career. Yes, his life

ultimately was not one that should be recommended for children to aspire to be when they grow up. There was alcoholism, rampant affairs, bullfighting, but ultimately Hemingway lived his life descriptively so he could write concisely. He fought in the war, went to bullfights, galivanted across America and Europe, and endured the beautiful hardships of life. This Hemingway lifestyle created a new creative process for future writers- one must live the experiences they wish to convey. Of course, many authors drew their artistic inspiration from their own experiences, but Hemingway did more than make his experiences into stories; he made them into characters. Hemingway knew what Paris was like in the 1950s, what it took to capture the big fish, and the emotion of experiences. One could argue that few authors understood the bitterness of warlike Hemingway did. Those experiences in the war allowed him to create A Farewell to Arms, one of the greatest literary masterpieces of all time. There was no author of that era that could transform experiences into simple, psychologically compelling characters. This change in the author's lifestyle was something never seen before, and it created a new way of life for modern writers.

Hemingway understood his influence and the influence of the authors in his time. In Death in the Afternoon, Hemingway stated, “Every novel which is truly written contributes to the total knowledge which is there at the disposal of the next writer who comes, but the next writer must pay, always, a certain nominal percentage in experience to be able to understand and assimilate what is his birthright and what he must, in turn, take his departure from” (Hemingway, p.152). This understanding of the power of literary mastery led to Hemingway being the greatest mind of his time. Hemingway understood the responsibility of being one of the greatest minds of his time and carried the burden of being famous. Though, it seems at the time of the quote Hemingway did not quite see himself as being as influential as he would turn out to be. Hemingway has anxiety about his literary influence but acknowledges that he does influence future writers. This viewed responsibility led Hemingway to resent his fame. Much like his work, Hemingway preferred to be understated. This lack of wanting to be in the spotlight set Hemingway apart from his fellow authors of the time and gave him the ability to stray from the elaborate prose of his generation’s authors.

Hemingway was not only the master of the long yet simple novel. His short stories transcended anything that had been seen before. Repetition of words, few complicated words, and the ability to create art that was masculine. The talent Hemingway held created an entirely new genre of literature. The short stories written by Hemingway influenced prose forever. His minimalist, bare-bones approach allowed for gripping stories to be created without boring the audience. These works created a minimalist movement in American literature by creating a new rhythm of writing. Beyond writing, Hemingway’s style changed the way future generations would speak and think about literary art. The world around them remained complicated, but people were able to reflect psychologically on Hemingway’s works instead of being told how the mindset of the characters was. People were suddenly able to make their own interpretation of a character’s feelings due to the lack of descriptive language. This style removed the barrier of being told how to think. Hemingway's fiction ultimately changed fiction forever.

The Hemingway corpus has enough in common to aggregate an entirely new style of literature. This simplistic style of writing that was popularized by Hemingway is still seen in authors today. The writing is like an iceberg, there is not much at the top but as the reader continues deeper the iceberg grows larger. This journalistic approach created a Hemingway style unlike any other. There is a Hemingway style that is often mimicked, but it is not heard of for other authors of the time to be mimicked. It would not be common for one to say an author has a Steinbeck style or

even a Fitzgerald style. The authentically nonconformist way of Hemingway resonated with people for centuries and created one of the most influential writing styles of American history.

The Old Man and the Sea was the book that won Hemingway the Nobel Prize for literature, the style was minimally different than the styles of the works before. The theme of physically destroying a man, but never defeated him. Sadly, it was also Hemingway's last novel before succumbing to suicide and hemochromatosis. Hemingway's life work and literary accomplishments truly made him the most influential, significant master of literature of American history. He removed the need for ultimate formality in writing and created a poetically simplistic way of expressing one's self that had never been done before. He created drama by omission, significant connections between characters, and meaning beneath the surface of short sentences. Hemingway did to American literature what Shakespeare had done for world literature. Although his personal life may not be one to look to for inspiration, he single-handedly created an entirely new way to write books, short stories, and prose. Ernest Hemingway's continued presence in today's pop culture is a testament to how truly profound and influential he was.