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Jeffrey Merrit Carman

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THE CHALLENGES OF AND OPPORTUNITIES IN USING A  
LITERATURE-BASED ASSIGNMENT IN A COMPOSITION CLASS

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition

---

by  
Jeffrey Merrit Carman

June 2002

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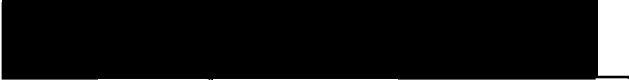
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June 2002

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores issues surrounding the question of using a literature-based assignment to teach composition at the college freshman level. Following a review of the critical debate on the use of literature in the composition classroom, spanning the last five decades, a specific work of literature is used as the basis for a writing assignment to be given to freshman composition students.

The assignment is based on the Ernest Hemingway short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." With the cooperation of the instructor, the assignment was given to a freshman composition class at CSUSB. The student papers produced in response to the assignment are then analyzed in this thesis to see what strategies the students attempted in their papers, what degrees of success they had, how well the prompt for the assignment seemed to work, and where the students had problems, with the stated purpose of contributing to the basic debate over the use of literature to teach composition.

The most important conclusion that is reached in this thesis is that freshman students strongly dislike ambiguity. Their reluctance to deal with the death of Francis Macomber (was it a murder or an accident?) illustrates just how

uneasy they are with subjects that do not have clearly-defined borders. As discussed in this thesis, the students' problems in dealing with ambiguity is related to a specific developmental stage.

The literature-based assignment used in this project led to critical thinking on the part of the students, as well as providing them opportunities for textual analysis, construction of an argument, and exposure to ambiguity. This thesis concludes that the results of this project strongly suggest that literature can have a positive place in the freshman composition classroom.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Among the issues to consider when designing an assignment for a community college-level composition class is the fundamental question of whether or not literature, or more specifically fiction, should be used. Composition theorists are divided on this issue, and points of view are defended passionately. Despite all of the discussion that has taken place over the last forty years or so, the issue remains unresolved. For beyond the theoretical arguments pro and con, the fact is that composition writing projects, even when carefully researched and designed, sometimes have unpredictable results when actually assigned to students.

This thesis will attempt to contribute to the debate by exploring the pluses and minuses of assigning a specific work of literature to a freshman composition class. The project came about for two primary reasons. First, because I am interested in teaching composition at the freshman college level, this seemed to be an ideal topic on which to focus. Second, I was intrigued that after decades of research and discussion, the issue of using literature to teach composition is still unresolved and is still being passionately debated.

The work of literature that is being used as the basis for the writing assignment in this project is Ernest Hemingway's short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," and the assignment based on it was assigned to a freshman composition class at California State University, San Bernardino.

The assignment was given to an existing composition class with which I was not involved. The host teacher agreed to offer it to the class for the purposes of this project, but there was no class discussion about either the assignment or the literature upon which it was based. It was not part of the original class syllabus, but instead was given as a stand-alone assignment near the end of the quarter term. Because the purpose of the project was to explore real-life ramifications of using literature to teach composition, it made sense to come up with an assignment based on an appropriate work of literature, anticipate and control for potential problems where possible, assign it to the class, and evaluate the resulting papers for evidence one way or the other concerning the basic debate.

What I found, as discussed in the "Findings / Conclusions" section of this project, is that despite some unexpected problems, using the Hemingway short story as a



subject for an essay assignment proved useful in the composition classroom. Although certainly there are improvements that can be made in the wording of its instructions and in the way in which it was given to the class, the use of this literature-based assignment offered some unique opportunities that may not have been available with other types of assignments.

And while a single study with a small sampling can not be considered conclusive, the results of this project strongly suggest that literature can have a positive place in the freshman composition classroom. My findings add weight to the side of those who argue that the proper use of literature in the composition classroom can have tremendous value.

CHAPTER TWO  
REVIEW OF EXISTING BODY OF  
PUBLISHED WORK ON THE SUBJECT

In order to have a context from which to see and evaluate what the students did with the "Macomber" story, a brief review of the existing body of work on the subject is useful. My research, covering the last fifty years or so, shows an incomplete record of the debate in the 1950's and 60's. Teaching manuals and study guides of the time, focused primarily on high school but many addressing so-called "Junior College" composition classes as well, take many different approaches, but the published works on the subject are as notable for what is *not* discussed as for what *is*. An example is Tate and Corbett's Teaching High School Composition, a 1970 survey of readings from the previous twenty years. In its collection of thirty-four articles there are many of interest, including articles about rhetoric and linguistics as well as composition. One article advises teachers to "tread lightly" when exploring these fields with young writers (134), six others discuss appropriate assignments for beginning writing classes, none of them involving the use of literature, and one, by Thomas E. Taylor, entitled "Let's Get Rid of Research Papers,"

makes a strong argument against "focusing student attention on research as the basis for their writing," calling such effort "counter-productive to the goals of teaching students to write" (213).

Of the two articles that directly discuss literature and composition, the one by John A. Hart is a lukewarm, unenthusiastic defense of literature. The strongest argument Hart can muster for the use of literature in the teaching of composition is that it can help fight "Dullness in the writing classroom" (207). Pointing out that "the five-paragraph essay has been over-used" (211), Hart makes the rather basic argument that using varied sources of literature can help keep assignments, and therefore student papers, fresh. Missing is any further discussion about the advantages or disadvantages of using literature to teach composition.

The other article that discusses literature use in the writing classroom, Edward Corbett's "A Composition Course Based upon Literature," also avoids discussing the pros and cons of such usage, instead offering practical suggestions to the instructor who has already decided to use literature. A self-described "how-to" text designed to keep the composition teacher "on course" when using literature (187), it offers common-sense suggestions such as "choose a work of

literature appropriate for the level of the class" (189) and "give brief quizzes about the work to make sure it has been read by the students" (193).

Because the question of whether or not to use literature in the teaching of composition is so fundamental, so important, it is surprising that, prior to the 1980's, it is not discussed very much in the body of published work on the subject of teaching composition. Theorists had many other subjects to explore, however, and the debate over using literature in the composition classroom had not yet heated up. Koch's 1978 Stratagems for Teaching the Composition Process, for example, is a self-described "book of immediately useable exercises, unencumbered by lengthy discussions of theory" (xii) to be used in the teaching of writing. Of interest is the fact that none of its exercises involve the use of literature. In fact, what is perhaps most notable about this collection as a whole is that in none of the other readings is the subject of literature in the composition classroom even brought up.

Coming before the explosion of critical theory that has taken place over the last fifteen years, these works still explore many interesting topics, yet they are silent on the subject of the use of literature in the writing classroom. For example, Koch's previously mentioned text emphasizes

"student narrative possibilities" (34). By this Koch means focusing special attention on "what the student is trying to say," and not exclusively on "the way he or she is saying it" (37). While avoiding a discussion of the use of literature in the composition class, Koch perhaps indirectly considers it when he briefly mentions "alternative assignments" without elaborating (46).

Beyond these few mentions of the use of literature in the writing classroom, what was happening with instructors and students? How much literature was being used to teach composition? A few texts provide clues as to what was actually being done in the classroom as opposed to being discussed by theorists. For example, An Introduction To the Teaching of Writing, from 1981, by Stephen N. and Susan J. Judy, explores the need for colleges to take on the task of teaching "elementary" writing skills. Most fascinating is a reference to a 1960's study showing that only 15.7 percent of instructional time in the writing class was devoted to writing, while the rest went to the study of literature (93). In A Teaching Subject: Composition Since 1966, from 1997, Joseph Harris traces a shift in the 1960's away from "analysis of a fixed set of great books" and toward "a concern with the uses that students make of language" (61). While not offering any reasons or

hypotheses for a shift away from literature, the very fact that a shift was noted by Harris suggests the amount of literature usage in the composition classroom of the 1960's.

It is not hard to understand why literature was being used in those writing classrooms. Composition teachers of that era were, first and foremost, English teachers. They had been English majors in college, and this familiarity and love of literature no doubt led to a desire on their part to utilize it in some way in their composition classes.

Assignments based on well-known and well-loved literature made instruction pleasant and familiar for the teacher, and perhaps more engaging and effective for the class. And there may also have been a certain lack of questioning going on, despite the growing debate among theorists. Many generations of teachers had learned to write by studying literature; if it had worked for them, why not for another generation? Although the practice of using literature in the writing environment was being challenged by many new ideas and theories, we can understand why there was still a lot of literature being used in the composition classroom.

However, over the next two decades cultural, political and economic forces produced tremendous changes on the community college campus, and in the writing classroom as well. An influx of students from disadvantaged backgrounds

and diverse cultures, many speaking English as a second language, increased the need to provide basic skills. The failure of many high schools to properly prepare graduates for college-level courses added additional pressures. Challenges by the business community, itself challenged by global competition, led to calls for higher standards in such important skills as writing ability. All of these factors brought increased scrutiny of the status quo in the teaching of composition.

With the rise of Composition Studies as an independent discipline, the use of literature in the writing classroom was increasingly criticized. The basic view against its use is well stated by Erika Lindemann. She sees such a distinction between imaginative literature and academic writing (the kind most theorists believe a freshman composition course should be focusing on) that she feels they should not occupy the same classroom (72). Stating that "literature's place is in the class that is studying literature," she sees no value in introducing "a distraction" to the "stated goal of having students write" (97). Summing up the prevailing viewpoint against the use of literature in the writing classroom, Lindemann states that freshman writing courses, especially, should focus on

*producing* texts, not *consuming* them (81). Many other theorists agree with her.

John H. Bushman, in the introduction to his 1984 work The Teaching of Writing, mentions literature only briefly, dismissing it as "having no primary function here" in his book's focus on and advocacy of the process method in student essay writing (ix). Likewise, in Anne Gene's 1993 work Into the Field: Sites of Composition Studies, which focuses on the relationship of composition to other disciplines, there is a short discussion of literature and composition as "warily coexisting in English departments," with the clear implication that things would be better if literature stayed away from composition (31). Sharing this view, Gesa Kirsch, in her essay in Methods and Methodology in Composition Research, from 1992, approvingly notes "the decline in the use of literature in the writing class in favor of other techniques," such as writing as a form of self-expression (72).

Lindemann, in fact, believes that a focus on literature in the writing class can change the nature of the class itself. After all, if the traditional student assignment in a composition class consists of reading a work of literature and then writing a paper about it, how different is that from an assignment in a literature class (132)? Granted,



the emphasis in the composition class is tilted more toward the writing than what is written about, but the overall difference may be uncomfortably small to some.

Advocates of literature use in the writing class have been aware of this potential problem for years, and have discussed it thoroughly. In Edward Corbett's 1974 article "A Composition Course Based upon Literature," one of the main points is a caution to the composition instructor to steer clear of too much emphasis on the literature being used, in order to avoid turning the student writers into "little literary critics" (196). And while Kathleen McCormick, in her work The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English, from 1994, advocates the student reading of literature in order to write from a "critically literate" perspective, she too cautions against "losing focus" on the central goal--the teaching of writing (54). Likewise, Muller and Williams, in their work Ways In: Approaches to Reading and Writing About Literature, also from 1994, enthusiastically promote using literature to teach composition, although from a distinct, narrow perspective. They advocate using literature as a specific tool, empowering students to see more of what they read, thereby understanding more of what they write (77).

For these and other theorists, literature had been out of favor for so long that it was big news when Gary Tate defended its use and advocated its return in his important 1993 article in the publication College English. While acknowledging that literature has fallen out of favor in part because it was misused in the past, Tate nevertheless believes that omitting literature from the teaching of composition is like "telling music students that they should not listen to Bach or Mahler" (12). Believing that one of the best ways to learn is by example, Tate states that "to take away the example is to take away possibilities for learning" (23). Likewise, the previously cited Muller and Williams believe that when literature exhibits positive attributes that the students can see, grasp, and understand, their own writing will benefit (32). This could perhaps be termed the "contact theory" of learning; when students interact with a properly written piece, it may have a positive effect on what they themselves write.

As these different viewpoints demonstrate, the issue of using literature in the writing class continues to be important. Through the last four decades or so there has been an ebb and flow of acceptability regarding literature use in the composition classroom, and the subject continues as the focus of a rich critical debate. It is because the

using of literature to teach writing remains an open question that I was drawn to it as the subject for this thesis. To this day there are opposing factions on each extreme regarding the issue, with an unclear middle ground in-between. This lack of consensus makes the subject seem like a natural choice in which to conduct further research.

Moving beyond the critical arguments pro and con regarding literature use in the writing classroom, certain questions come to mind regarding the goals of a writing assignment. Whether or not literature is used in a specific assignment, what should the goals of that assignment be? What should a good assignment in a writing class attempt to accomplish? In Teaching Composition, a collection of essays from 1987, Richard Lloyd-Jones offers his thoughts on the subject. Starting with the goals of the teacher, he asserts that "One's principal concern should be helping the student acquire skill and knowledge," then offers advice on "how to keep the writer eager to try again in a never-ending process" (156). Moving on to writing assignments and their assessment, he speaks of "focus on a limited subset of writing skills--most often vocabulary or usage" (162). Referring to writing samples, he states that "one may decide that the quality of a piece of writing is dependent upon the complex interaction of the parts within the situation that

evokes it" (164). He goes on to say that evaluation under these circumstances "must represent what a sophisticated reader interprets as a total effect. This is much more than a 'general impression,' for it implies a complex interpretive act" (164). Basically, what Jones is saying is that a good assignment is one that evokes a response that can be properly evaluated.

But beyond evaluation of basic skills, what should a piece of writing be evaluated *for*? The work Reading-To-Write: Exploring a Cognitive and Social Process, from 1990, offers a solid discussion of what the goals of a Freshman writing assignment should be. Starting with basics such as spelling and grammar and moving on to more complex skills such as sentence and paragraph construction, a good assignment should, according to this work, prompt something more from the student. This work posits that, on close inspection, papers that do not meet both student's and teacher's "expectations" on basic levels nevertheless reveal a process going on (132). This process involves "serious thinking and complicated decision making" (139). A successful writing assignment, therefore, should prompt, should "coax out" (161), "the thinking process that lies behind the student's writing" (179). The work goes on to describe this

process as having value in and of itself, regardless of the overall quality of the writing produced by the student in the paper.

The implications for using literature as the foundation of a writing assignment are clear; the literature used should encourage the students' thinking as they encounter a complex text and develop a viable and persuasive interpretation of that text, and it should also prompt writing from the students that demonstrates the thought processes that they are moving through as they write their papers. While doing these things, the literature should be unobtrusive enough that it does not take over and turn the composition classroom into a literature class.

A literature-based assignment that is able to successfully accomplish these goals would add support to those arguing for the use of literature in the freshman-composition classroom. As shall be seen during the course of this project, although the evidence is not overwhelming, and although there were problems and disappointments with its use in the freshman composition classroom in which it was assigned, the "Macomber" story adds weight to the argument that a properly-designed and properly-implemented literature-based assignment can have a valuable role to play for freshmen in the composition classroom.

CHAPTER THREE  
THE ASSIGNMENT

Having considered arguments for and against the use of literature in a writing assignment, I will now move to the more practical aspects of the discussion: considering a specific work of literature and designing a particular assignment for use in the freshman composition class. As noted earlier, the work of literature that I have chosen to build an assignment around is Ernest Hemingway's short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber."

At first glance, this work would seem to be an ideal candidate for a literature-based assignment given to a writing class at the college freshman level. Short enough to be grasped and understood, it is nevertheless complex enough to support serious discussion, and interesting enough to engage college-level students. Of special interest is the way in which Hemingway leaves the main issue of the story unresolved at the end of the tale.

For most readers, the central issue of the story revolves around the ambiguous circumstances of Francis Macomber's death and the motivation of his wife in pulling the trigger of the rifle that kills him. Hemingway constructs the story to leave open numerous possibilities concerning Margot's intentions. The open-ended nature of

the story's conclusion has been the subject of much discussion over the decades since the story was written and, as will be seen later, is extremely important to the student papers as well.

In choosing the particular work of literature upon which to base my assignment, the "Macomber" story appealed to me for several reasons. First, I thought that a work that was quite clearly open-ended would offer a challenging task for the students and an interesting set of student papers. Second, the story seemed to avoid the pitfalls of many position-paper topics. Issues such as gun control or abortion, while providing ample material for debate, are too polarizing for many students to write about dispassionately. The "Macomber" story seemed to offer possibilities for consideration and discussion of different sides of an issue without getting the student writers too personally involved.

Of great importance are the many layers of meaning in this story. As a source for study, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" gives forth meaning at any level on which it is examined. At a fundamental level it is the riveting story of a hunting safari gone bad. Even if the reader goes no further than this, she has much to consider

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with regard to the story's central issue. Other levels of meaning move far beyond the basic plot movement, but the central issue is still involved.

For instance, at a more complex level lies the issue of narrator credibility. Because the narrator is not a character in the story but an omniscient voice documenting the tale, some will assume that his credibility is not in question, but this has been open to debate. Related to this is the narrator's seemingly clear, but not conclusive, description of the exact moment of Macomber's death. The narrator's straightforward depiction of events gives few clues as to Margot's motivation, or rather it gives many clues but no clear-cut viewpoint or conclusion. As shall be seen later in this paper, this deliberate obscurity in the tale has tremendous implications.

In addition to narrator credibility, there is the issue of the credibility of the characters in the novel. As will be discussed later, the motivations of the three major characters, and therefore their viewpoints and their statements as well, are open to interpretation, and some lively discussions of the story have occurred at this level.

Another level in the story involves the psychological manipulation of the characters *by each other*. More recent examinations of the story have revealed much new material to



explore at this level. Seen from this perspective, each of the characters is a player as well as a pawn in an elaborate chess game whose stakes not only involve personal reputations but the survival of careers, maintenance of lifestyles, marital relationships, and even life and death itself.

At other levels the issues get more complicated and the concepts more obscure. Psychological manipulation of the characters *by the author of the story* is such a complex and difficult concept to grasp that it begins to seem that at these levels the meaning of the story itself can be lost. Difficult issues such as writer intent and unconscious misogyny on the part of the author belong in this category. At such levels, time and additional study may reveal still more meaning to be found, but for now, the levels discussed here are sufficient for almost any researcher. Especially for the freshman students involved with this project, it is best if the discussion stays with the simpler, more easily-grasped levels in the story.

For several decades after it was written, critics focused on the moral character of Margot. Although she had a few, mostly timid, defenders, the prevailing attitude was quite harsh: Margot was a scheming bitch, and very likely shot her husband on purpose. This opinion was thoroughly

laid out by the literary critic Edmund Wilson in the 1930's, and for more than forty years his examination of Margot was the benchmark. Wilson's indictment is straightforward; having seen Francis' newfound courage, and fearful of its consequences for herself, Margot once again displayed the flawed character she had earlier revealed. Recognizing an opportunity in the moment of confusion and crisis when the buffalo charged, she picked up the weapon by her side and solved the problem of Macomber's newfound courage by killing him.

Critics like Carlos Baker and Theodore Guillard elaborated and refined Wilson's view, and even Margot's defenders spent most of their effort arguing with, attempting to refute, Wilson's thesis and supporting "evidence." The widespread renown and respect that Edmund Wilson had achieved at the time he made his pronouncement on "Macomber" not only strongly established the "Margot is guilty" viewpoint, it also created the platform for debate that continues to be used to this day. For by framing the central question in this "is she or isn't she" format, Wilson shaped the very *boundaries* of the debate. For decades, differing perspectives on the "Macomber" story were still focused through the lens created by Edmund Wilson's central question.

In the 1980's and 90's, the rise of social criticism, and especially the feminist perspective in examining literature, made it perhaps inevitable that "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" would attract new attention. The story, and especially its ending, can be taken not only as an indictment of Margot in particular but, by implication, of women in general. This, coupled with Hemingway's general "macho" (and therefore anti-woman) attitude, has made Hemingway a focal point for those interested in the feminist perspective. As a result, several innovative interpretations of the story have appeared, shedding new light not only on the character of Margot but in some ways actually redefining the dialogue about the central issue in the story.

Nina Baym, in her article "Actually, I Felt Sorry For The Lion," examines the story from a feminist / animal rights perspective, and finds the central issue to be not Margot's moral character but the "trap" she is put in. In Baym's interpretation, Margot is in the same predicament as the lion; each is merely a trophy to be pursued, schemed over, and used for the personal gratification of the two men. Like the lion, Margot is trapped in a foolish male game with its own set of meaningless macho rules.

In Baym's interpretation, Margot is making a valiant attempt to save the life of her husband and is really acting *against* her own interests; thus she is acting in a *heroic* manner. That she is acting against her own best interests is made clear, according to Baym, "when the intended act backfires--one might say literally backfires--in every respect" (119).

Other feminist writers have taken this insight to an even more complex level. In her book Hemingway's Genders, Nancy Comley argues that Hemingway's inherent misogyny dooms Margot to an unsympathetic portrayal. By this interpretation, Margot never had a chance; the problem with the story lies not with Margot and her motivation, but with Hemingway himself (112).

Hal Blythe and Charlie Sweet's article "Wilson: Architect of the Macomber Conspiracy" also offers a more sympathetic interpretation of Margot's shooting of her husband. By closely studying the text and looking for subtle clues, these authors, using a modified form of deconstruction, take minor points in the story and examine them intensely. One of their more interesting conclusions is that Wilson deliberately engineered Macomber's death "as insurance against Margot's revealing his illegal car chase" (Blythe 1). Their thesis proceeds from the recognition

that, as a hunter, Robert Wilson was trained to look for and take advantage of every opportunity in order to stay alive.

Starting with Wilson's "sliding scale of ethics about people," Blythe and Sweet point out Wilson's one consistent value: "his devotion to his trade" (14). In reference after reference, they point out where Hemingway has made Wilson clear about his priorities: his living is predicated on his ability to hunt the most dangerous game. When Margot starts asking pointed questions about the chasing of the buffalo from the car, and whether there could be a problem for Wilson (and his hunting license) should the authorities in Nairobi find out about it, Wilson knows what is going on. This scheming American woman understands power over men and wants the upper hand. She is the most dangerous "game" of all. "Now she has something on you," Macomber tells Wilson, echoing what he already suspects (Hemingway 25).

Using a close-up, psychology-based approach to the characters, Blythe and Sweet re-analyze all of Wilson's moves from the time that he first ascertains Margot's danger to his career. The decision to leave the light, maneuverable gun in the car with Margot, the luring of Francis Macomber to the place of greatest danger (right in front of the buffalo, and in Margot's sights), the taking of only one boy helper (fewer people to get in the way), the telling of

Macomber to shoot at one hundred yards or less, the crouching down of himself so as to present a smaller target--these are all pointed out from an attitude of suspicion on the part of the authors. The results leave Wilson, rather than Margot, looking very bad indeed. He has set the stage for this action to take place, and the tragedy unfolds.

Blythe and Sweet put forth the argument that by setting all the pieces in place, by making the shooting so easy for Margot, Wilson manipulated her into doing something she might otherwise not have done. Wilson in effect "sacrificed" her for his own selfish need--the need to control her in order to keep her silent, thereby protecting his hunting license and his livelihood. By this interpretation, Margot is once again not fully in control of the situation and thus not fully responsible for her actions.

While it is a bit of a stretch to grant Wilson such power to control the many factors that are necessary for success of his "plan," another, less radical, view is that, like any seasoned hunter, Wilson saw an opportunity, and took it, *after* the shooting, to control Margot. His reassurance to her not to worry, that he would declare the shooting an "accident," is actually a veiled warning that he will not stand for any trouble from her.

What these interpretations bring to light is of great interest to the goal of an assignment based on "Macomber." The first thing to notice, once again, is how the many layers of this story will support not only big discussions on the large issues, such as Margo's motivation as revealed in the plot, but subtle, more nuanced examination as well, such as Wilson's need to protect his livelihood. Another thing to notice is that, despite these new interpretations of the story, the basic conversation, the fundamental dialogue among the literary critics, still concerns "Was it an accident or was it murder?"

As a result of such newer interpretations as the revisionist feminist perspective, however, Margot looks better these days than she has historically. Even if a modern reader does not fully accept the arguments of these critics, their new ways of examining "Macomber" reduce the smug certainty of earlier pronouncements of Margot's guilt, and they help to keep discussion of the story fresh. For freshman composition students, this means a greater variety of sources from which to choose when doing research for their own papers.

The question of how deeply these critical sources are searched and how thoroughly they should be used becomes very important when assigning this story as a research project.

Other questions arise as well: What specific assignment should be given? How should the assignment be worded? How thorough a level of research should be recommended by the instructor? Should particular critical sources be suggested?

When planning the assignment, special attention had to be paid to the fact that this project is focused on freshman-level writers. Upper-level undergrads or graduate students, having more educational experience and more practice with college-level writing assignments, could more easily find their way through a poorly-designed or poorly-worded assignment. With Freshman students, my concern was to word the assignment appropriately for the level of their experience and familiarity with research projects, so as to prompt the best possible papers.

In an English 101 Freshman Composition class at California State University San Bernardino, the assignment was as follows:

A central issue in Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" revolves around the cause of his death. Some critics argue that it was an accident, some think that it was murder, and some believe that Hemingway left it open-ended. **Take a position** on this issue. Your paper should include enlightened discussion of important points in the story that favor your position, a consideration of points that are contrary to your position, and a discussion of how your position relates to the larger meanings of the story.



Develop your points based on specific details in the story, and use those specific details to support your position.

Because the need to produce just the right wording for the assignment is of paramount importance, a discussion of that wording is in order. I produced the wording of the assignment in collaboration with instructors and graduate students at California State University, San Bernardino. The instructions in the assignment are quite thorough and very specific in their directions. To begin with, the assignment focuses on the central issue in the story, Macomber's death, rather than allowing student choice of the topic. There are several reasons for this.

First, given the rich layers of complexity in the story, I felt that directing the student papers to this particular area would produce the best results, giving them ample material with which to work and keeping them from wandering off course. Second, focusing on the central issue makes research easier, an important consideration for students without a lot of research experience. Third, since the papers were to be compared and contrasted as part of their evaluation for this project, I thought that having them all focusing on the same topic would make this process more efficient.

Because Freshman students have generally not had a lot of experience with research projects, I deliberately mentioned literary critics in order to steer the students in the direction of the body of literary criticism about the story. As covered earlier in this paper, there is a wealth of opinion, both mainstream and otherwise, about the story that can be accessed by the students as a springboard for their own consideration of the central issue. In order to enhance learning opportunities, specific critical sources were not suggested in the assignment.

Based on the earlier determination that a successful assignment should both encourage and help reveal the process of thinking going on in the writer, the assignment attempts to do this in several ways. First, because Macomber's death is so central to the story, the assignment instructs the writer to take a stand on this issue; note that it directly states in its instructions, in bold type, to take a position. For additional guidance, I also included specific directions to consider points for and against the stand taken in the paper and to use those points to support that stand.

Second, in order to keep the discussion from soaring off into personal opinion, in order to keep the student writer grounded in the piece, I also included instructions

to develop points of argument based on specific details in the story. Third, the additional prompt to the students to relate their position to the larger meanings of the story was included expressly to expand the paper, and the student's thinking, beyond basic considerations. It was hoped that this particular direction to consider larger meanings would also allow additional opportunities for an ambitious writer, although in a paper only three to five pages in length these opportunities would necessarily be limited.

What is perhaps most interesting about the language of this assignment is in its regard for a third option in the "did she or didn't she" debate. By specifically stating that "some (critics) believe that Hemingway left it open-ended," the assignment allows the student writer to consider a middle ground between the two opposing viewpoints on "Macomber." I deliberately inserted this passage to allow the student writers to move their arguments beyond the historical structure of the debate if they so chose. Allowing this option was of concern when initially considered for inclusion in the assignment. Some instructors and graduate students felt that it was a mistake to include it, thinking that the offering of a middle ground between two extremes would be too attractive to unsophisticated

writers. The concern was that such obvious mention of a "safe" alternative would cause everyone to flock to this center, with the result that true consideration of the issue would be thwarted. The resulting effects on the quality of the student's papers, it was feared, could unfairly produce a negative conclusion regarding the use of literature in the composition classroom.

Another issue that can have a dramatic effect on the papers produced is that of class discussion. Interestingly, this assignment was given to the students as a stand-alone take-home research project near the end of the quarter term, and there was no class time devoted to it either before or after it was assigned. What discussion there was in class concerned the requirements of the assignment and did not involve any examination of "Macomber" at all. Because there were no rough drafts collected or examined, there was no opportunity for revision. The papers studied for this project, therefore, are the first drafts produced for this assignment.

There are many variables concerning this assignment, and the way it was given to the class, that would be interesting to adjust. Giving it at a different time in the quarter, varying the amount of classroom discussion, changing the wording in the assignment--these would make for

interesting comparisons to the way the assignment was given for this project. Giving a non-literary writing assignment with an open-ended question would also be interesting for comparison and contrast with the papers produced here. Such variables, however, as useful as they may be, are beyond the scope of this project.

CHAPTER FOUR  
REVIEW AND ANALYSIS  
OF STUDENT PAPERS

When I examined the twenty-two student papers with an eye to the earlier discussion of what a literature-based assignment should accomplish, I found several things of interest. First, it can be seen that this assignment successfully prompts writing that can be properly assessed for skills such as spelling, grammar and punctuation. In these areas, the student writing is satisfactory, although marginally so in some cases. Though they have been written at a sufficient level for the writers' intent and meaning to be understood, in many of these papers there are fundamental errors. Some of them reveal a carelessness that should not have made it into a final draft. Although these errors are unrelated to the question of whether or not to use literature to teach composition, they are important nevertheless, and should be noted.

For example, writer number two opens her paper with the assertion that Margot "shoots her husband and dies," writer number three discusses how Macomber would "were [wear] the pants in the family," and writer number nineteen calls Hemingway's tale an essay. Mistakes in grammar, syntax, and

punctuation--even blatant spelling errors in some of the papers--point to additional work that the students need to do in these areas.

Writer number two, for example, makes reference to Macomber having "past away," while writer number three describes the Macomber's marriage first as "one of convince," later as "one of connivance," and later still as one of "convince" again. Discussing one possible motive for Margot to murder her husband, this writer notes she would be "free from finical problems" if her husband were dead. Writer number twelve twice calls Macomber a "cowered," the second time saying he was "to [too] much of a cowered" for Margot to respect, and going on to ask, "If she had no experience with guns, how could she of shot her husband?" Writer number sixteen makes exactly the same error, noting that Margot "wanted a man who was not a cowered."

What these errors demonstrate is an over-reliance on computer spell-check programs. While they are useful in correcting specific misspelled words, such programs are useless for spotting an incorrect word *choice*. Indeed, in some ways these programs are worse than nothing, for when relied on too heavily they foster a misplaced confidence in them that results in the types of humorous errors that some of these papers contain.

The second major point of interest to be found in these papers is that the writers' presentation of ideas, as well as development of and elaboration on those ideas, are what can reasonably be expected of Freshman writers. Paragraph construction is good; the papers are not polished in these areas, but for the most part they are adequate. There are no two-sentence paragraphs within these papers, nor are there any one-page paragraphs. The flow of words and ideas within paragraphs is appropriate, and both paragraph breaks and transitional techniques are satisfactory. Interestingly, these students appear to have done consistently better at these skills than they did on the spelling and word choice issues mentioned previously. Perhaps not having a computer program to help with such tasks forced the students to be more self-reliant in these areas.

The third thing to be found when examining these student papers is that "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" meets a primary demand that a literature-based assignment puts upon the literature itself. Due to its shortness, its clear narration, and its straightforward plot, this work did not over-burden the students; using it did not turn the writing class into a study of literature. The story was well-grasped by the students, while its exotic locale and exciting storyline seemed to keep them properly



motivated. The students displayed an interest in the story and in the assignment; they took the assignment seriously, and it showed.

The papers display enthusiasm and energy in taking on the story's central issue. The passion with which they discuss Margot's motivation illustrates just how strongly this story engaged them, yet the icy conclusions that most students came to indicate that they kept their emotions in check. Although "Macomber" seemed at the onset to have much potential for success if used in a freshman composition class, it is encouraging to see the story demonstrate so clearly the positive results that can be obtained with a literature-based assignment.

"Macomber" provided ample material for the students to work with, even with their focus narrowed by the assignment's directions to discussion only of the central issue. This focus on the central issue accomplished two of its three stated goals; it kept most students from wandering too far afield in their papers, and it made the papers easier to compare and contrast. However, as for the narrowing of focus to the central issue making research easier for the students, that simply did not happen.

The fourth thing to notice when looking at these papers is that, despite the fact that this was designed as a

research assignment, the level of research in these papers appears to be absolutely zero. None of the twenty-two papers referred to critical sources, and each seemingly relied solely on the writer's interpretation of the story without any outside guidance. While the fact that the students don't cite any critics does not necessarily mean that none were consulted, some assumptions can be made here. First, since critical sources were not only allowed, but encouraged, the students had no reason not to cite any that were consulted. Second, the mostly simplistic, naive arguments and conclusions put forth in the papers support the belief that these students generated their thoughts in a critical vacuum. It therefore appears that the assignment's attempt to steer students to the body of criticism on "Macomber" was completely ineffective.

Although there is specific mention of "literary critics" in the wording of the assignment, it does not directly instruct the students to research and cite the body of literary criticism that exists on "Macomber." Evidently the student writers misinterpreted the assignment's reference to what "some critics" say about the story as a jumping-off point for their own personal opinions, rather

than as an invitation to research the large amount of criticism on "Macomber" more thoroughly themselves and cite it in their own papers.

The decision to not cite specific critics in the wording of the assignment, in the hope of enhancing "learning opportunities," added to the error. Referring to specific critics might have prodded the students to look them up, although there is no way to know this for sure. What is certain is that the assignment should have made it clear that research was an integral part of its completion--it should have given specific directions to the students not only to use research of the body of criticism on "Macomber" to help them form and solidify their own opinions about the story, but to cite that research in their papers. Somehow, in the careful design of the wording of this assignment, the need to emphasize the fact that it is a *research assignment* got missed.

Although the stated goal of encouraging research was not achieved, this assignment did work well for a *non-research* paper. Whether or not a literature-based assignment involves research does not affect its value in helping to answer the fundamental questions regarding its use in a composition class. It was not planned, but the simple mention of the existence of the body of critical views on

"Macomber" was an appropriate lead-in for a non-research assignment. Unintentionally, this mention of "some critics" in the assignment served as an excellent springboard for the students' own discussion of the issues in the story.

In fact, the fifth interesting point to note in examining these papers is that some of these interpretations of "Macomber" are quite good. In light of the fact that no outside critical sources seem to have been used, the students' discussion of "Macomber" is quite impressive. In terms of accomplishing one of the desired goals, that of encouraging demonstration of the thinking that goes on in the writing process, this assignment was effective, and it speaks well for the using of a literature-based assignment to accomplish this goal. Although the thoughts expressed in these papers are not as insightful as it was hoped they would be, one thing that can be said about them is that most likely they were produced by these writers themselves and that they are not merely the repackaged statements of the critics.

Writer number five, for example, gets to the core of the debate early in his paper. Acknowledging the basic ambiguity early on, he says, "Francis Macomber's death is shrouded in confusion and mystery." Moving through the text

in a logical, straightforward fashion, this writer mounts a persuasive argument that Margot murdered her husband.

Pointing out that their marriage was mutually beneficial but did not involve love, this student notes that "They truly loathed each other...as is displayed by him calling her a 'bitch,' and her calling him a 'coward.'

In the next few paragraphs of his paper, writer number five demonstrates not only a good grasp of the story's plot points but the ability to thoughtfully analyze them as well. Reminding us that throughout the story Wilson has been "constantly telling them [the Maccombers] not to shoot from inside the car, that it was unfair, illegal and morally wrong to blast away at a creature unless you were on its level," this writer points out that this is, however, exactly what Margot did. Pointing out that it is a common mistake when using a high-powered weapon to shoot too high, as Francis did, this student points out that Margot, uncommonly, must have shot too low in order to hit the back of Macomber's skull.

In an interesting take on Margot's ability to respond so rapidly to the threat of the buffalo, he asks, "Musn't she also have had the gun ready at the moment when Wilson and her husband went into the grass?" Noting that the day before she had calmly sat in the back seat of the car and

done nothing as her husband bolted from a lion, why, he asks, would she have been so prepared to defend the men from a "dumb beast that couldn't hurt a person unless it fell on them?"

This writer's paper echoes Blythe and Sweet in its detailed analysis of the specific events of Macomber's shooting, and is all the more remarkable considering that it was written presumably without benefit of outside sources. For a freshman student to come up with such a thoughtful, insightful exploration of the "Macomber" tale without any outside help or guidance is an impressive accomplishment, and demonstrates the successes that can be achieved through the use of a literature-based assignment.

Likewise, writer number fifteen has written a thoughtful paper, again presumably without any help from critical sources. After acknowledging in her first sentence that the story "made me wonder if Macomber's death was an accident or murder," this writer goes on to develop a comprehensive exploration of the issue. On the side against an accidental shooting stand the usual details, laid out in a clear fashion. The problematic relationship the Macomers had, Margot's fading looks creating a missed chance for her to leave Francis, her knowledge that "she wouldn't be financially stable on her own if she left him," the lack of

communication in the marriage--these are all noted. Pointing out that deception was another problem with the Macomber's relationship, writer number fifteen notes that Margot's behavior on the night she was with Wilson "supports both motive and reason for the murder of her husband."

Like writer number five, writer number fifteen also analyzes the specific details of Macomber's death, citing them as strongly influencing her verdict of murder. Pointing out that "the author described Macomber as tall and slender," this writer questions how he could have been accidentally hit in the skull if the buffalo is shorter than him. She also asks why Margot would fire the weapon in the attempt to save her husband if her inability to get a clear shot puts her husband in even greater danger? Such thoughtful consideration of specific points in the story are needed in a thorough discussion of the central issue in "Macomber," and this writer does a good job with the task. Reading a paper that is so well-written without acknowledged help from outside critical sources causes me to wonder what the paper would have been like if they had been consulted and properly employed. This paper, too, demonstrates how literature can have a place in the composition classroom.

Starting her well-written paper with a quote from the text, writer number twenty-two, like writers number five and

fifteen, demonstrates that a persuasive, thoughtful paper can be written in a presumed critical vacuum. Moving briskly in her first paragraph through a series of points leading to her position that Margot acted to "ensure that her husband will not leave her," this writer makes the argument that Margaret, "'a smart woman' has paid close attention to the hunting instructions that Wilson has imparted to her husband." This writer then asserts that it is with these learned "techniques" that Margot is able to accomplish the murder of Macomber.

Building on this point, this student declares that "On the safari, Margaret learned the art of hunting" and "most importantly she knew that the first shot was the one that counts." Taking an interesting view on Margot's asking of Wilson, "You do kill anything, don't you?," the student sees in this question "the first clue that the techniques that Wilson is teaching might at some point be used on a man." Reminding us that when asked by Macomber where to hit the animal to stop him, Wilson replies, "In the neck if you can make it," this writer notes that "This is exactly what Margaret did." Pinning part of her argument on narrator credibility, she asks, "If the murder was an accident, then why is it that Hemingway goes to great lengths to let the reader know that Margot knew all the techniques of hunting?"



Quoting the longest passage from the story of any of the papers studied in this project, writer number twenty-two makes the argument that the Macomers are "stuck" at a certain point--both as a married couple and as individuals. Bringing up the possibility that Macomber is sexually impotent and that this could be a factor not only in his lack of confidence but also in Margot's many affairs, this writer touches upon a point in the story that has been overlooked by critics but is nevertheless quite persuasive.

Unconsciously echoing Blythe and Sweet as well as touching on a psychological interpretation of the story, this student, like the other two discussed previously, has to a remarkable degree come up seemingly on her own with conclusions similar to those of learned literary critics. Writing a subtle, nuanced paper, she makes an argument for murder that is all the stronger for being so carefully backed up with textual references. In addition to this, her paper also makes the argument that the proper literature-based assignment can promote great learning opportunities in the composition class.

The sixth thing to note when examining these papers is that beyond these three student papers, the depth of analysis and exploration of the central issue by the rest of the class is shallow. Presumably having not been exposed to

the vast body of literary criticism on "Macomber," and lacking the innate ability to effectively analyze the text unassisted, the rest of the student writers remain unaware of the many layers of meaning in the story. Left to their own thoughts and analysis, they do a poor job of discussing "Macomber" beyond superficial levels.

A good example of this superficiality is the way that most of the papers present their conclusions regarding the central issue. The majority of the students writers take a stand very early in their paper and then use the rest of the paper to justify the stand taken. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this organizational technique, the writers appear not to have thought much about their stand. Writer number two, for example, states her conclusion in the second sentence of her paper. Stating that Margot kills Francis for his money, this student repeats herself twice more in the paper before concluding that Margot killed Macomber for money, "which leads her to have no husband and his money."

Other writers display similar approaches: writer number three states his conclusion in the first sentence of his paper, writer number six takes a stand in her first paragraph, and writer number eight does not even wait to

begin his paper before making his position clear; he titles his essay "The Short Happy Murder of Francis Macomber."

As discussed earlier, the three most effective papers *carefully considered* the central issue before taking a position. They discussed "Macomber" and weighed evidence, pro and con, regarding Margot's motivations *before* coming to any conclusions. The rest of the papers start out with a definite conclusion already in place, and this destroys the impression of objectivity upon which an effective argument needs to be based. The reader gets the impression that the writer's mind has already been made up, and that genuine consideration of the issue is not taking place in their paper.

In many position papers, it would be possible to write a thoughtful, persuasive "prosecutorial" essay without genuine consideration of opposing evidence. The most effective arguments, however, at least give a nod to the opposing viewpoints before shooting them down. In the case of the "Macomber" story, the evidence for and against Margot's guilt is so evenly balanced that to concentrate exclusively on supporting evidence and ignore opposing evidence undermines the writer's position, and weakens his or her paper as a result.

For example, in her first paragraph writer number nine sums up her position that Margot murdered, then speaks in generalizations throughout the rest of her paper, ending her essay by declaring that Macomber's life "would not have been so short, if it were not for his cruel, cold blooded wife." Similarly, writer number ten declares in his first sentence that "I think that Macomber's death was a murder," moves through a confusing series of assertions about the safari, then concludes by repeating his statements from the first paragraph. Like the others, he states his opinion early and then holds onto it until the very end.

This technique does not make for a very effective position paper. In fact, the very *nature* of the paper changes under such conditions. Rather than demonstrating a fair, if not impartial, examination of the facts leading to an opinion that is arrived at after carefully weighing points of evidence, a quick conclusion so early in the paper suggests a "rush to judgment," and gives the reader the impression that genuine consideration of the issue will *not* be taking place during the course of the paper.

For example, in his third sentence writer number eleven states that "the death of Francis Macomber was plain straight out murder." Citing the standard evidence and repeating his few main points at the end of his paper, this

writer concludes his discussion without persuading the reader that he has truly examined the central issue before arriving at his conclusion. By not fully examining the issue *before* taking a position, this paper, like the others, undermines the impression of thoughtfulness that it is, or should be, trying to convey, and makes its arguments less persuasive as a result.

In most essay writing there is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with taking a position early in the paper. In fact, it is what students are taught to do in English class. It is a basic tenet of the standard five-paragraph essay form that the writer's position should be spelled out early and in no uncertain terms, elaborated on in the body of the essay, and then strongly reasserted in the conclusion of the paper. Implicit in this form is the notion that the student should state her position early, clearly, and confidently and that her position should stay consistent throughout the paper. These students are following the form of essay writing with which they are most familiar, and it is therefore not surprising that their papers are so rigid. Adding to this situation is the fact that, as freshman students, they do not yet know how to let the essay form evolve. The very fact that so many of the papers are similar, that they follow this form so closely, demonstrates

the degree to which these students have learned and adopted these fundamental essay-writing principles. These students are just following the rules for essay writing as they know them.

A problem with this form is that in an assignment such as this one based on "Macomber," taking an early stand weakens the effectiveness of the paper. Stating the conclusion strongly and conclusively in the first paragraph, as the standard five-paragraph form asks the writer to do, compromises the consideration of the evidence that the assignment directs the student to do. This affects the ability of the paper to give the impression that the writer has arrived at a thoughtful, persuasive conclusion. In this particular assignment, the standard five-paragraph essay form works *against* the goals that the paper is supposed to accomplish. But it was used by most of these student writers because it is the form which they know best and are most comfortable with.

In addition to stating their conclusion early and not effectively justifying it, another issue that arises in these papers is in their consideration of opposing evidence. Many of the student writers appear to have stayed in whatever "camp" they started out in; few properly followed the instructions of the assignment to include "a

consideration of points that are contrary to your position." And while a majority of the students (two-thirds) are stubbornly convinced that Margot committed murder, nearly all of their interpretations remain simplistic; they did not entertain contrary arguments, and that seems reflected in their absolutist statements.

Writer number one, for instance, sticks solely to superficial evidence in making her case that Margot committed murder. Disapprovingly noting "the diction and tone of voice used by the wife," this student starts out disliking Margot and cites evidence only of her guilt. Likewise, writer number six, basing her verdict of accidental death on a weak assertion, offers no discussion of contrary evidence. Claiming that since Margot was ashamed of Francis' cowardice, she should therefore have been happy at his new-found bravery, this writer considers no differing views.

Writer number seven, after repeating weak points several times, makes much of Margot's failure to wave back to Macomber when he waves at her for the last time. Having already convicted Margot for wanting Macomber's money, she fails to offer any evidence supporting an opposing view. Writer number eight also fails to consider evidence that disputes his claims. His fantastic assertions of

non-existent conversations and actions involving Margot and Wilson are easily refuted by mere reference to the text but, again, this writer avoids doing this.

Time and again, these papers cite only the evidence that supports the position of their writers, completely ignoring great amounts of contradictory evidence in the story, in direct disregard of the assignment's instructions. Why did this happen? The answer lies with the problem that beginning writers have with ambiguity.

Beginning writers, and indeed freshman-level college students in general, like the feeling of certainty. Ambiguity makes them uneasy. Perhaps this is because in the change from high school to college, the world becomes much larger and less certain than in the past. It is a cliché that the move from high school to college is a rite of passage; the fact that great changes happen on so many levels in such a short period of time makes the impact that much more profound. As a result, freshmen students tend to seek out clarity and certainty, and to grasp it tightly when they find it. This need for certainty makes them respond in a predictable way to ambiguity; they dislike it, and avoid it whenever possible, sometimes to the point of refusing to acknowledge its existence.



Writer number nine, for instance, makes her case with generalizations about Margot that are only rarely supported by specific plot points. There is no discussion of contrary evidence, nor is any awareness of the ambiguity in the story demonstrated. Similarly, writer number eleven also avoids the ambiguity that the story contains. He recites the standard reasons for believing that Margot murdered Macomber: she wants to leave him but is "past her prime"; she is ashamed of his cowardice; she is threatened by his courage. The only consideration of contrary evidence is a brief mention of the fact that the Maccombers have been married for eleven years. Again, the paper avoids any acknowledgment of the ambiguity that the story holds.

This uneasiness about and avoidance of ambiguity by freshman students has been noted in the canon. In her work The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English, from 1994, Kathleen McCormick notes the need for clear and specific directions in assignments in order to "avoid uncertainty" on the part of the students (231). Muller and Williams, in their 1994 work Ways In: Approaches to Reading and Writing About Literature, make note of the freshman student's "uneasiness" when facing unclear assignments and their "desire and need for clarity" in writing tasks (96). Virtually all of the teaching manuals

cited earlier contain cautions of one sort or another to the instructor to make sure that writing assignments are as clear and unambiguous as possible in order to avoid problems.

While the need to avoid uncertainty in an assignment is not precisely the same as a student's general distaste for ambiguity, they are related, and they both have relevance to the characteristics of these particular papers.

The important point here is that whether out of ignorance (they didn't recognize it), fear (they didn't want to face it), unfamiliarity (they didn't know how to handle it effectively), laziness (it was less work to consider only one side of an issue), or some other reason, the freshman students in this project disliked the ambiguity in the story and tended to ignore or avoid it.

This problem that freshman college students have with ambiguity has a psychological component. In an interesting book from 1970, Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years; a Scheme, the psychologist William G. Perry Jr. identified stages in the development of college students. He found that fear of ambiguity defined a specific stage in their cognitive development. Calling this the Retreat stage, Perry says, "[The student] may entrench

himself in the me-they or we-other dualism of the early Positions" that he previously defined in his book. (198)

Perry found "certain structural transformations in outlook through which the students moved from an all-or-none, right-or-wrong construal of knowledge and value to the outlook and skills of contextual relativism." (233) Noting, however, that progress through these stages is not linear and is not the same for all students, Perry describes "the forms of those options through which some students appeared to withdraw or retrench at various points in the development." (233) It is clear from these papers that most of these student writers are still in this stage as described by Perry.

Writers number thirteen and fourteen, for example, present completely one-sided discussions of Margot's actions during the safari. Mistaking conclusions about the moral character of Margot for points in the story that support their positions, these writers are unwilling or unable to truly consider opposing evidence concerning Margot's guilt. Once again, the ambiguity in the tale either eludes them or is avoided.

Writer number sixteen takes a different approach in her discussion of the central issue. Declaring in her second paragraph that "Francis was not murdered consciously," she

makes some confusing assertions regarding Margot's "infatuation" with Wilson before declaring that "Yes Francis was murdered but not consciously."

Seeming to want to have it both ways, this student nevertheless has thought about the central issue, and has touched on the ambiguity that exists at the core of the story. Rather than taking a position early in her paper and then ignoring evidence that argues against that position, like so many of the other students have done, this writer seems to have considered both sides of the issue. Although she argues the point weakly, this student makes the interesting point that Margot could have murdered her husband unconsciously. Elaboration of this point is missing in this student's paper, as is any further discussion of the ambiguity in the tale; still, this writer deserves recognition for trying.

A logical question to ask is, What does ambiguity have to do with consideration of opposing evidence in "Macomber?" While there may be uncertainty in considering what position to take in her paper, once that decision has been made, what further ambiguity is the student attempting to avoid? The answer reveals the degree to which ambiguity makes freshman students uneasy, and the degree to which it influences the way they approach this assignment. For, having taken a

position on the central issue in "Macomber," the student is reluctant to truly consider opposing evidence because she does not want to *introduce* ambiguity into her decision by calling her position into question. Having decided and declared her "verdict" on Margot, she is reluctant to revisit the decision, especially if she had trouble making up her mind in the first place about Macomber's death. Once having decided the central issue of the story in preparation for writing her paper, the last thing that the student wants to do is to find persuasive evidence that she chose the "wrong side" of the issue. The problem increases as the paper grows in length, because she becomes more and more vested in her decision; evidence that the other side of the central issue is a "better" argument, evidence that she should start her paper over with the opposing viewpoint, is not welcome, and therefore is not looked for. Thus each paper's focus is almost exclusively on supporting evidence.

Another problem with these papers seems to be related to the issue of ambiguity. Remember that this assignment made a special effort to open up the debate on "Macomber." In the attempt to allow more options than the traditional "did she or didn't she" choice, a third alternative was included in the wording of the assignment. In addition to noting that "Some critics argue that it was an accident,

some think that it was murder," the assignment also stated "and some believe that Hemingway left it open-ended." As discussed earlier, the inclusion of this option was a cause for some concern; providing this third option, it was feared, would cause everyone to move from the two extremes of the debate and flock to this "safe" middle ground. Yet this did not happen.

If the assignment is looked at from a strictly objective point of view (admittedly, a difficult thing to do), this third option is in some ways the most sensible choice. While choosing it will not inevitably lead to better student papers, this choice seems to have the most going for it. As discussed earlier, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" is rich with meaning arrayed on many different levels. In terms of an accurate assessment of the tale, neither of the options at the extremes can manage to grasp the genuine ambiguity at the center of the story; each looks like a one-sided view that misses part of the picture. The third option has a large amount of the most convincing evidence for its point of view; virtually all of the information imparted in the story is capable of multiple interpretations, providing ample evidence that Hemingway deliberately left the central issue "open-ended." Yet this third, middle position was avoided by all of the students. Why?

The answer again has to do with ambiguity. Taking this centrist position involves looking for, finding and presenting *evidence of ambiguity* in the story. For students who are not comfortable with ambiguity in the first place, choosing a position whose stance involves *concentrating* on ambiguity makes them uneasy. For these students, who are uneasy with ambiguity, this centrist position does not compare favorably with the more established, more familiar positions at each extreme, and so they avoided it. While this action on the part of the writers does not have a dramatic bearing on the ultimate question of literature use in the composition classroom, it certainly affected the papers produced in response to the assignment on "Macomber," and therefore is worth noting.

CHAPTER FIVE  
FINDINGS / CONCLUSIONS

It seems appropriate at this point to return to the original subject addressed by this project to see what findings it can contribute to the long-standing debate regarding the use of literature to teach composition to freshman college students. It certainly seems clear that there is more that needs to be done--with the general question of using literature in the writing class, and with using "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" as the basis of a college-level writing assignment. This project is merely a starting point for additional research and study.

Certainly, one of the appropriate questions is whether or not "Macomber" demonstrates that there is value in using a literature-based assignment to teach composition. Based on the preliminary results of this research project, the answer is yes. It is a qualified yes, however. As mentioned earlier, a comparative analysis would possibly yield additional insights. Having papers from a non-literature-based assignment with an open-ended question to hold up against the papers produced by this project would



likely yield some interesting comparisons and contrasts. As noted earlier, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this project.

Another appropriate question is what could be done to make a "Macomber" assignment produce as much value as possible in its use in the composition classroom. There are some steps that can be taken in future assignments involving "Macomber" that can help in this goal.

As pointed out, this assignment was worthwhile despite the fact that one of its original goals, that of fostering research, was missed. If a teacher in future classes wants research to be part of the students' efforts as originally intended, the first change that should be made is the addition of the following wording to the assignment:

Use research to help in your consideration of the issues, and cite that research in your papers.

This should keep the students on track with regard to this being a *research assignment*. They will understand that they are expected to use research to help them decide the central issue, and that they should refer to it in their papers. It is almost certain that adding this passage will result in research becoming the integral part of the assignment that it was intended to be.

As a learning opportunity, the task of researching the canon on "Macomber" can be tremendously valuable. In addition to familiarizing the students with research techniques that will prove valuable in other classes, the actual research that they will have to do in order to fulfill the assignment's directive will help improve their papers on "Macomber" as well.

Researching the critical sources and surveying the array of opinion on "Macomber" will familiarize students with the many different views that exist on the story. This process has two benefits to freshman students: it opens up their perspective on a story that they were probably initially perceiving as entertaining but quite simple, and it may help them get more familiar with the idea of ambiguity.

This contact with ambiguity may occur in several ways and at different levels. First, after researching the body of existing criticism, the students should clearly understand that ambiguity exists in the question of Macomber's death and Margot's guilt. This understanding is valuable in their consideration of the central issue and in the decision-making process itself. But if they research enough sources, if they are exposed to enough critical discussion of the story, they may come to understand how

ambiguity exists not only in the discussion about "Macomber," but how it goes to the core of the story itself.

Once they have grasped this concept, the benefits to the students can possibly extend far beyond this specific assignment in their composition class. Clearly facing and then understanding the concept of ambiguity may allow the students to make strides in their psychological process as described by William H. Perry, with the result that they can face issues in life with less uneasiness and greater confidence. The benefits of this psychological growth may be considerable, and it is a direct byproduct of their exposure to the ambiguity in the "Macomber" story in their composition class. It is hard to imagine a more powerful argument for the use of literature in the composition classroom.

A second thing that should be changed about the assignment is the sequence of the directions. The assignment should be reworded to include this addition:

Read the story carefully, research what the critics say, carefully consider both sides of the central issue in the story, and then **take a position**. Your paper should include a discussion of the evidence in the story that supports your position and a discussion of evidence in the story that points in other directions.

This extremely specific prompt should help make the papers less one-sided. Directing the students to include

discussion of evidence that "points in other directions" should help keep their consideration away from a "right or wrong," "correct or incorrect" frame of mind.

The change in the sequence of instructions should also eliminate the potential problem of students taking the wording of the assignment too literally. Note that a too-literal interpretation of the original assignment could lead the writer to first take a position, *then* to consider points of evidence. As discussed earlier, the taking of a position too early in their papers may have contributed to these students' inability or unwillingness to properly consider other positions as they were writing. This may have been partly caused by the sequence of directions; that is, their action of following the instructions precisely to the letter may have been what got these students into trouble. Telling them to read the story carefully, consider the critics, carefully consider the matter and *then* take a position on the central issue is a positive, more-natural sequence that should be less likely to contribute to one of the major problems in these papers.

Third, in addition to the exposure to ambiguity which the students will experience while doing their research, the assignment itself should attempt to tackle the ambiguity issue with the goal of minimizing the students' adverse

reaction to it. This may be a difficult thing to do, but perhaps a passage like the following would help:

A central issue in Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" revolves around the cause of his death. Because the issue is so ambiguous in the story, critics have been arguing over it for years...

By deliberately confronting it head on, such a passage may help allay the fear with which freshman students face ambiguity. Combined with their experience of researching the subject in the library, such acknowledgment of the ambiguity in the story can build their self-confidence, which they may need after they have first read the story and can't yet make up their minds on the central issue. After reading in the assignment that "critics" have been arguing over the issue for years and then confirming this fact for themselves in their research, the students may feel freer to openly consider all evidence in the story, including evidence contrary to their point of view, without that action introducing the kind of self-doubt that makes them start to question their own position on the issue. Knowing that the issue is ambiguous may help them to get a better handle on it, with the result that not only will they control the discussion of it better in their papers, but also they will learn to feel less self-conscious and fearful

about ambiguity in general. As discussed earlier, the positive benefits of this growth process can be great.

As noted earlier, what goes on in the classroom regarding the use of a literature-based assignment to teach composition can have a noticeable effect on the quality of the papers produced. Discussing the story briefly in class would almost certainly lead to more thoughtful papers than giving the assignment to the students "cold" as was done here. An introduction to the story's many layers of meaning, a short discussion about ambiguity, and a brief examination of the nature of the seventy-odd years of debate over the story would likely yield tremendous dividends without taking up more than one or two class sessions at the most. As noted earlier, this work is clear and concise enough that its usage does not turn the writing class into a literature class, and it seems obvious that if the story is worth using in the class, a brief introduction and explanation of basic issues involving it is appropriate.

It now seems fitting to look for possible conclusions about this assignment and what its use of "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" says about using literature to teach composition to freshman college students. What conclusions can be drawn from the assigning of "Macomber" to this class, and what does this project contribute to the

overall debate on the issue? What does this project indicate or suggest about the direction of future research?

Certainly, the first conclusion that can be drawn is that there can be no final conclusions as a result of this project. Much more data on the use of "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" with college freshman students is needed before any conclusions can be reached about its usefulness in the composition class. These papers suggest some positive trends, but in such a small sampling that is all that they can do. These twenty-two student papers, even when thoroughly reviewed and analyzed as they were here, are not sufficient in number to constitute an adequate body of research, and therefore more samples are needed before this study can contribute very much to the general debate over the use of literature to teach composition.

It would also be valuable to assign other works to the class and compare the papers with those based on "Macomber." Other Hemingway short stories, short stories by other authors, short plays--these all could contribute meaningfully to the dialogue about the use of literature in the writing class. An opportunity to compare and contrast these papers with others could be meaningful. As noted earlier, it could also prove valuable to include a non-literature-based assignment that involves ambiguity..

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" has value as the basis for a literature-based assignment in a college-level writing class. Use of the story was accomplished without turning the writing course into a study of literature. The assignment led to critical thinking on the part of the students, as well as providing them opportunities for textual analysis, construction of an argument, and exposure to ambiguity.

The most important conclusion that these papers point to is just how strongly freshman students dislike ambiguity. Their unwillingness to deal with it, and even their refusal to recognize it in some cases, illustrates just how uneasy they are with subjects that do not have clearly-defined borders. Based on their stage of intellectual development, they are not ready to move without assistance beyond comfortable black and white terrain into the gray area beyond. An assignment such as this one can have great value in helping their thinking evolve to the point that they can see that not all issues are clear and simple; indeed, under the best circumstances, such an assignment can prod them to understand that it is beyond the edges of clarity that the greatest meaning sometimes lies.



The amount of assistance needed is not great. As discussed earlier, simple changes can have beneficial effects. Changes in the wording of the assignment to eliminate its earlier confusion, to enhance student confidence, and to promote research should help alleviate many of the problems that these student papers exhibit. Brief classroom discussion of the central issue and the controversy surrounding Margot's guilt or innocence, as well as a short introduction to the concept of ambiguity, should result in demonstrably better papers without turning the writing class into a literature class.

This project, despite its flaws in construction and implementation, shows that literature can have a place in the composition classroom. While the design and execution of a literature-based assignment can be difficult and its results sometimes unpredictable, the advantages and opportunities in using literature to teach composition, as shown in this project, outweigh the many challenges that must be overcome in its use.

APPENDIX A:  
STUDENT PAPERS

APPENDIX A

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STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 1

Lions and Buffaloes and Murder...Oh My!

There are times in one's life in which something that is too good to be true happens to them, yet is easily taken away. Such was the case in Ernest Hemingway's short story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." For some unknown reason, Francis Macomber, the main character of the story, had been afraid. It took a strange chance of hunting buffalo to change all this. It was through this incident that Macomber had grown free of this fear, and begins to realize how happy he feels knowing he has nothing to fear anymore. Francis Macomber's short-lived happiness is quickly and sadly brought to an end by death. The central issue here is whether Macomber's death was an accident, or if it was murder. After reading the story carefully, evidence such as the diction and tone of voice used by the wife, the verbal warnings of her leaving him, and her fear of losing control of the relationship, suggests to the reader that Macomber's death was of murder. It is also through this story that the idea of a boy becoming a man is portrayed as seen in the character Francis Macomber.

The diction and tone of voice used by Margaret Macomber whenever speaking suggested to the reader that she had something up her sleeve. As Mr. Wilson once thought to

himself, "But she wasn't stupid,...no, not stupid" (248). An example where the diction used by Margaret is somewhat peculiar can be seen when she decides that it is not important whether Macomber kills any lions or not. Margaret comments, "That's Mr. Wilson's trade. Mr. Wilson is really very impressive and killing anything" (248). For a woman such as Margaret to be interested in the subject of killing, is something out of the ordinary. At first Margaret had been appalled by the thought of killing animals, and now she enjoys it. There is something quite odd about the way she brings about the subject. Margaret goes on to ask Wilson, "You do kill anything, don't you" (248)? It is obvious that something is going on inside the head of Margaret Macomber, something sneaky.

On the other hand, one could go on to argue that Mrs. Macomber decides to drop the lion incident realizing that hunting is just not Macomber's trade, but Mr. Wilson's. "She was walking over from her tent looking refreshed and cheerful and quite lovely" (248). As an attempt to just forget whatever happened she changes to a more refreshing mood and continues on with the trip. As for the idea of Mr. Wilson being able to kill anything, Margaret is simply impressed by his abilities.

Another way the story suggests that Macomber was

murdered is by the warnings Margaret gives to Francis of her leaving him. Throughout the marriage there have been several instances where Margaret has been through with Francis, but it never lasts. In this case however, it is apparent that she means it. This is seen when Francis, Margaret and Wilson are having breakfast before going to shoot buffalo. While arguing over a certain incident that happened the night before, Margaret says quietly to her husband, "If you make a scene I'll leave you, darling" (258). Macomber continues to argue that she won't and she replies to him, "You can try it and see" (258). It is suggested through these warnings that Margaret has something in mind if Macomber tries anything. It is also apparent through these warnings that Margaret has some sort of control over her husband.

Because Mrs. Macomber has been known to be through with her husband times before, one could argue that the warnings she gives her husband are just part of her act and are not to be taken seriously. This can be seen when Macomber says to his wife, "You won't leave me" (258). His wife replies, "No, ...I won't leave you and you'll behave yourself" (258). Here, Margaret admits that she will not leave her husband and therefore is just another one of her typical warnings.

Up until the incident where Francis killed the buffalo

realizing the fear was gone, Margaret has sort of had the upper hand of the marriage and control of her husband. Ever since the killing of the buffalo Francis has been a new man and that begins to worry Margaret. From the far corner of the back seat of the car, Margaret observes her husband and Wilson. "But she saw the changes in Francis Macomber now" (263). Margaret then comments on her husband, "You've gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly..." (263). It can be implied through these comments by Margaret that she is afraid of something, or disturbed by this sudden act of confidence by her husband. There is the possibility that she is afraid of her losing control over the relationship and that makes her uneasy. Francis' change scares Margaret a little, and now that he has this confidence about himself he could easily leave her. Margaret must do something.

When Margaret notices that her husband has gotten brave all of a sudden and says so to him, one could argue that she is aware of the changes going on with her husband. When Margaret comments to her husband, "You've gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly," she could merely be upset because of the way her husband is talking to her and telling her what to do (263).

The story of Francis Macomber is not only of a man who hunts a lion and buffalo, but of one who changes from a

"boy" to a "man" through a significant event in his life. In this case it was through the hunting of the buffalo that Macomber overcame his fear and realized what it was like to be "free" of that fear. Macomber says to Wilson, "You know something did happen to me...I feel absolutely different" (262). This is often seen in many young men as they are growing up in life and encounter different challenges that they must overcome. In Macomber's case Wilson reflects, "Beggar had probably been afraid all his life...But over now" (263). Up until the killing of the buffalo Macomber had been afraid of something, but after that event in his life he was afraid no longer. Such are the cases that happen to young men as they are changing from "boys" to "men".

According to the evidence cited throughout the story, it can be implied that Francis Macomber was indeed murdered by his wife. It is often believed that when those who are accustomed to having the upper hand of a relationship lose that control, they end up doing crazy things.



## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 2

### Was it Accident of Murder?

At the end of the story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" by Ernest Hemingway, Margaret shoots her husband Francis and dies. I believe that Margaret shot her husband Francis intentionally. Both the husband and his wife were having marital problems in the past but Margaret never left her husband because Francis was a very wealthy man. This story is relevant in today's society because some married couples do not get along with each other and sometimes lead to arguments.

I believe that Margaret killed him intentionally because Francis is a very wealthy man. Francis knew that because he was wealthy Margaret dare not to leave him. His wife had left him in the past but Margaret always came back. Since Margaret could not leave her husband, she figured if she kills her husband she would be able to keep her husband's money now that he past away.

After Margaret found out that her husband is a coward and Wilson killed the lion, Margaret was interested in Wilson. After Wilson had killed the lion, Francis held Margaret's hand but she removed her hand away because Margaret saw the whole incident of her husband being a coward. When Wilson went inside the car, Margaret gave him

a kiss on the mouth that both Wilson and Francis were shocked.

Margaret was also flirtatious with Wilson. Before the incident with the lion, Macomber's wife would criticize Wilson's face for being so red. At one point, Margaret addresses Wilson as "beautiful red-faced Mr. Robert Wilson." Mrs. Macomber also wants to see Wilson perform again instead of her husband shooting at an animal.

In the tent, Margaret was not in her cot. Macomber figures that his wife must be with Wilson. Wilson and Margaret probably had slept with each other but it does not say it exactly in the story. Mrs. Macomber came back to the tent almost two hours later. The husband asked where his wife was but she claimed that she was too tired and did not want to talk about it. Macomber's tone when he was asking his wife was mad or angry. The wife's response was in a soft friendly voice as if nothing ever happened.

All these reasons above indicate that Margaret was interested in Wilson and to get rid of Macomber, Margaret would have to kill her husband. Since Margaret could not leave her husband, she thought the only best way to get rid of him was to shoot her husband so Margaret can be with Wilson. Since all three of them were hunting, Margaret made it look accidental by aiming for the buffalo but instead

killing her husband intentionally.

However there can be possible reasons that she did not kill her husband intentionally, such as Margaret never left her husband. Margaret never left her husband because she probably loved her husband not the money. There was probably something in her husband that Margaret could never find in another man. Macomber was also a better looking man than Wilson. The only feature that Margaret liked in Wilson was his courage because Wilson killed the lion not her husband.

Mrs. Macomber was concerned about her husband. In the morning before Wilson had killed the lion, Mrs. Macomber noticed there was something wrong with her husband. When questioned about it, Macomber said there was nothing wrong but Margaret insisted her husband on telling her.

Margaret also gave her husband encouragement. When Margaret realizes what is wrong with her husband, Margaret gives Macomber her word of encouragement. Margaret tells Macomber that "you'll kill him marvelously, I know you will..." Since Macomber is nervous about the lion, his wife tries to encourage him that everything will be all right and Macomber will kill the lion.

These reasons may indicate that Margaret did not kill her husband. Macomber and Margaret may have had problems in

the past but they always seem to resolve it or put their troubles behind them. Margaret may have loved her husband because she had her chance to leave her husband but never did. The money may not be the reason Mrs. Macomber does not leave her husband.

This story is relevant today to married couples because sometimes the couples do not get along with each other and sometimes lead to arguments or verbal abuse. Rarely there are perfect married couples who do get along and have no problems. In the story with Macomber and his wife, Macomber argued with his wife because Margaret would not tell her husband where she was during the night. Also when Margaret, Wilson, and Macomber were going to hunt for buffaloes, Margaret and Macomber were arguing and Macomber shouted to his wife to shut up.

My reason to believe that Margaret killed her husband was that she loved Wilson and since she can not leave her husband, Margaret killed her husband so she can be still able to keep the money. She may have loved her husband but what was most important to her was the money. Margaret tried to leave her husband but since Macomber was very wealthy she always came back to him. Since Margaret could not have her way of leaving her husband but still having the money, Margaret pretends to aim for the buffalo but instead

Margaret kills her husband, which leads her to have no husband and his money.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 3

### The Cowardly Lion

It's called murder in the first, or premeditated murder. That is what Margot Macomb would be charged with if she were taken to a court of law for the killing of her husband Francis Macomber. Little did Francis know that the hunting safari he and his wife were on would be his last adventure. Margot, his wife, made sure of this with the mammlincher rifle set besides her on what was to be the last great hunt for both of them.

One could argue that the killing was an accident. That Margot was trying to save her husband from a charging buffalo. That is simply not the case. There was intent to do away with Francis as soon as Margot picked up the gun. The time was perfect for Margot. Her husband, who she really didn't like in the first place, was about to be mauled by an angry buffalo. In order to save him she decided that she was the one who would stop the buffalo, not the three other men with guns who are very aware of how to handle the situation. Margot simply saw this as her chance to do what she had wanted to do for a long time.

The question that would be asked next is, "Why would she kill her only sense of stability?" The answer is an easy one, she was afraid of her stability leaving her.

Francis was know to be a coward. This was evident in the case of the lion. The fear of confronting the lion was not unlike the fear he had in his self confidence and his relationships. Both Margot and Francis knew that neither one of them would leave each other due to the fact of those fears. Unfortunately For Margot everything changed with one shot, not the shot fired by Margot, but the one fired by Francis. By shooting the buffaloes a feeling of "drunken elation" came over Macomber. For the first time in Francis life He had felt totally fearless.

The fearlessness that over came Francis had scared Margot something awful. Evidence of her worries are stated when Margot makes the statement, "You've gotten awfully brave awfully suddenly." In this statement their was something insecure about it. Margot became very wary of her future. What would be left for her if Francis was to go out and get another wife with his new found courage? This courage has the potential to ruin the basis of their relationship. It would no longer be Francis staying with Margot because he couldn't do any better. If the relationship were to continue, that is stay married, then Francis would start to be able to were the pants in the household, doing to Margot what she did to him. This is something that Margot would be looking forward to.

The circumstances in which Margot shot her husband could not have worked out better for her. She would get freedom from her husband and more than likely his money now that he is dead. She would receive all of this with impunity. Due to the way events unfolded and the quickness involved, she would probably get away with her plan. This would leave her in the drivers seat where she likes it, free from finical problems and free from a marriage to person she was with out of convince.

Marriages of connivance are still as common as they were when this story was written. Although there are some differences in the reasoning behind these marriages, they still occur causing great personal strain on the individuals and the relationship. Just as in the case of Francis Macomber, who married Margot that he couldn't do any better, Michael Jackson's marriage to Lisa Marie Presely was one of convince. Jackson needed a wife to stop the rumors so who better to marry than the daughter of the most famous musician in the world. Both of these men married for the same reason, convenience, and both of their relationships didn't last. In Jackson's case he got lucky and didn't get his head blown off.

Marriage for money is also still around today. You always hear men and women saying, "I'm gonna marry me rich



person so I'll be set for life." It doesn't matter whether or not there is a connection between the two individuals. It is a case of financial security. This is no more evident than the marriage of Anna Nicole Smith to a really old but really rich man. There couldn't have been much of a connection between the two except that he had the money and she wanted it. It's funny how these relationships end up, they never last no matter what time they take place in.

Back in Macomber's time a man's bravery and honor were important to how you were looked at by society. Society gave respect to those who were courageous. In Macomber's time killing lions and buffaloes counted as an act of bravery, confronting nature and its inhabitants were courageous. Now days the lions and buffaloes have taken another form. In order to be courageous and gain respect from others one must confront his fears. It could be that a young adult is leaving his home for the first time, venturing into the unknown, or leaving a solid job to start a new business. These fears put a lot of strain on a person. But when you succeed, more and more confidence is gained. This is the case of Francis Macomber.

The murder of Francis Macomber cut short what would have been the best part of his life. By having a sense of self confidence he could have done for the first time what

he wanted to do. This idea was not shared by his wife. She would rather kill him than be left to the life of instability. The times may change but the thoughts and actions of the people in society stay the same, and more than likely it will continue. As a whole, the people need to get relationships that make them happy and the partner happy. Not just jump into what they are unaware of.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 4

### "Whodunit?"

"The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" is a story with hidden meanings and ideas that are universal no matter where you live or what time you are living in. The story deals with a man, Francis Macomber, who was a coward and proved to everyone that he was no longer a coward. His wife was pretty and he was rich, and they were in a relationship where neither had a reason to leave the other. In his quest to prove his bravery, Francis and Wilson, the hunter, go to finish a buffalo that they shot but didn't kill. After being filled with fear when facing the lion, Francis was more anxious to face and kill the buffalo more than anyone. His anxiety became his "tragic flaw" that got him killed.

Was it murder or was it an accident? Did someone set him up to get killed, or did he get himself killed? Wilson warned him about how to and where to shoot the buffalo when it came charging. His wife did not tell him to go out there and prove to her that he was not the coward he showed against the lion. The gun bearers did not kill him, and no one had a strong enough motive or intent to kill the man. The evidence seems to point to the fact that this was an accident, because the evidence for murder is too weak or insufficient. Wrapped in all this, however, is that if he

was secure with himself, he would not feel a burden to prove anything.

First thing that seems to say this was an accident is that he was the one with so much anxiety to face the buffalo, everyone was shocked how the coward became a warrior so fast. When his wife kept trying to make passes at Wilson, even when Wilson told her to change the subject, and when she came to the tent late one night, he felt he had to prove to her and himself that he was as brave as Wilson. He didn't stand up to his wife in the story until he confronted her about where she was all night. From then on he had so much courage you could tell he was headed towards trouble. When they went to face the buffalo, he was so brave, courageous, and anxious that he couldn't think straight. He did not duck or move to the side, like Wilson and the gun bearer, when the buffalo came charging at him. He just stood in one spot and fired and fired until him or the buffalo went down.

Some could say that his wife drove him to this by calling him a coward when he confronted her about her whereabouts, but he has to take responsibility for his choices. Just because someone says I don't have the courage to kill someone doesn't mean that I will kill a person to prove this person wrong, no matter who it is. Others will

say that Wilson caused this by giving him an alcoholic drink before they left camp to finish the buffalo. He was already drunk, and I believe Wilson did that to help keep his courage and to keep him from panicking when they faced the buffalo.

Second, no one had motive to kill Mr. Macomber. His wife knew that he would not leave her, because she was pretty. There was one point in the story where she said she was not worried about him cheating on her. Their relationship was based on convenience not love, and this was convenient for her. Wilson had no motive, because he was the hero in the camp. He did not envy Mr. Macomber or have reason to kill him. In fact, he was trying to cover up the fact that he did act like a coward, when facing the lion, by saying that the lion was a damned fine lion. He never insulted Mr. Macomber's courage in front of anyone in the camp.

Now that we have discussed the evidence and weighed their projected influence on the outcome of the story, the death of Francis, we have no choice but to come to the conclusion that this was an unfortunate and horrible accident. No one in the camp had a motive close enough to be considered a reason to kill, and there was not evidence pointing to anyone or all of the members of the camp. No

one drove him to do what he did, and no one forced him to face the buffalo. He let his adrenaline and emotions get in the way of his reasoning. His idea was greater than what he could handle, and he paid the consequences dearly. This is the result of an insecure man trying to gain acceptance.

Hidden in this tragedy is the fact there is a lesson to be learned from this. Out of this story, it can be learned that one must be secure with his or herself, and one also has to know his or her limitations. If you feel you have to do something that is beyond your limit or something you don't feel comfortable doing, don't do it, because you are the one who is going to pay the consequences. Don't let people push you into doing something outside your comfort level. Most of all be secure enough to know that you are equal to all people, and you should not have to prove anything to anybody. We are all humans and are created equal in the eyes of the Creator. No man is greater than you and no man is beneath you. If there are those that do not accept you for your true colors, then they do not deserve your acquaintance. Believe in yourself and respect others and you will feel secure with who you are and how you see everyone else.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 5

Francis Macomber's death is shrouded in confusion and mystery. With the chaos that preceded his demise, being almost gored by a buffalo and then being shot by his own wife, I think that it is clear that anger motivated Mrs. Macomber to take the shot that she knew she had no business taking in the first place. The facts, coupled with the insinuated hatred she displayed for her husband during the story, lead me to believe that she knew very well that it would be Mr. Macomber who took the bullet and not the buffalo. There was no love in the relationship between Margaret and Francis except perhaps the love consummated by Wilson and Margot on the night before the unfortunate death of Mr. Macomber. The events of this essay are still an issue today. While the line between accidental death and murder can be sorted through forensics and science in a much more efficient way that we are allowed to delve into within this analysis, the fact that the hostility was there in a person to kill their spouse is constantly of relevance in the present. We, in our society, over the last three years have been very interested in the murder of a spouse or an ex-spouse in the case of O.J. Simpson.

The innuendoes throughout the tale gives the reader a sense of Margot's hostility towards her husband, and a

desire to escape from the trap she seems to believe her marriage to be. This is the case when Francis so curtly asks his wife to "Let up on the bitchery," and Margot responds "I suppose I could, since you put it so prettily." It is later implied, when Margot returns from her presumed affair with Wilson, that this is not the first time she has cheated on her husband. "You said if we made this trip that there would be none of that. You promised." said Francis Macomber. For her to have promised not to have an affair, it seems likely that this problem has been plaguing them for quite some time. Then she implies that that his cowardice is what drove her to it by saying that the whole trip was spoiled yesterday.

It is also stated in the story that they married for many reasons and stayed together for a mutually beneficial relationship but that love was never a factor in any of this. Francis married her for her beauty and he would be a fool to separate from her on account of that reason. Margot married him for the wealth that he had. His money supported her lazy lifestyle and she wouldn't dream of divorce. They truly loathed each other though, as is displayed by him calling her a "bitch," and her calling him a "coward."

An interesting fact arises in the message overlaid in much of the story by Wilson constantly telling them not to



shoot from inside the car, that it was unfair, illegal and morally wrong to blast away at a creature unless you were on its level. However, despite these warnings, the car is the spot from which Margot shot her husband. It must also be considered that the man who was most capable of saving Macomber's life did nothing to stop the charging buffalo. Wilson dove to get a side shot at the beast but then what? We hear nothing more about the great hero.

It was also interesting that while Francis had a horrible time in aiming too high, as displayed by chipping away at the buffalo's horns instead of its head, Margot seemed to aim miserably below. With a rifle of the caliber used to hunt buffalo, it is much more common mistake to shoot too high than it is to aim low as she must have done as she pierced the back of Macomber's skull. One would have to consider Margot's thought also in shooting at the difficult target around her husband.

Mustn't she also have had the gun ready at that moment when Wilson and her husband went into the grass to find the buffalo that most of the men presumed to be dead? The day before, when faced with the horribly ferocious lion, she had calmly sat in the seat of the car and done nothing but watch her husband bolt. It is an interesting thought that she would have the gun and the ability to shoot the animal that

she had heard described as nothing but a dumb beast that couldn't hurt a person unless it fell on them.

It might be said that it was the chaos of the moment that propelled the action, and that Margot was acting in the rush to save her husband's life. I suppose this idea is possible but not likely. Her husband was between her and the buffalo. She had to know, even if she were acting in haste, that the shot aimed for the buffalo had a good chance of going through her husband. Margot was described as a strong woman who never let them see her lose her composure and I find it odd to think she would do something as irrational as this without enough forethought to know what she is doing.

The line between accidental death and murder is a thin variance that is often indecipherable. Earlier in this essay I compared the untimely death of Francis Macomber to that of Nicole Brown Simpson. The motives can only be guessed at from what people know of the history of the relationship in judging whether or not the individual had a motive to kill. With all murders, it is the path more taken to accuse the most likely suspect and make biases based on what we know. It is, however, stated in the constitution of the United States of America that all individuals are innocent until proven guilty. It would be wrong, then, to

say that we can now conclude this essay by saying that Margot Macomber killed her husband will willful intent. I believe that, while the evidence we have been given nudges the reader in the direction of Margot's guilt, to conclude her liability or absolution we would need to know more. Perhaps Hemingway knew that it was a problem with no definite solution when he wrote the story. Such as the old tale of "The Lady or the Tiger," this is a story that can only leave you wondering.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 6

### The Accident?

"The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," a short story written by Ernest Hemingway has given way to much controversy since it was first written. What is all the upheaval about? It seems that the question in everyone's minds is whether or not Mrs. Francis Macomber intentionally killed her husband. It is the opinion of this writer that Mrs. Macomber shot her husband unintentionally without malice. This and other ideas from the story that are relevant today will be analyzed.

Although this story was written over half a century ago the modern mind relates to and struggles with many of the same idea's. The assumption that a real man equals a brave man is still very alive today. Even in this liberated age where traditional male and female roles are seeming to become less defined, I know of very few women who would consider "Mr. Right" to be a coward. No, a "knight in shining armor" is still thought of as a "lion killer." Another idea weaved into Hemingway's story is the struggle with infidelity in a marriage. Unfaithfulness in America, sadly enough, is almost becoming as common as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. The old fashion notion of being faithful "till death do us part" is almost preposterous

these days. I think it has to do with the fear of the unknown which is also an idea underlying this story. Not the fear of a physical object, like that of coward as I mentioned above, but rather one who fears change, someone who fears the unknown, the fear of a break from the routine. This idea is all too relevant in our society today. Not just in marriage and relationships, but it is even played out in deciding what kind of food to order at a restaurant or who to elect for president.

Although nothing as significant as the election of a president took place in this story, to Mrs. Macomber, the safari that her and her husband were on showed to be a life changing experience. In the matter of a few short days, life as she know it was completely destroyed, never to return. It began with her husbands outward display of cowardliness when confronted by a charging lion and ended with his death by the hands of his own wife, Mrs. Macomber.

Mrs. Macomber was a very hard, cruel and beautiful woman. She had married Francis Macomber perhaps once for love but now the only thing that kept her from leaving him was his money. Whether Mr. Macomber had always been a passive timid man is not known. What is known is that Mrs. Macomber was embarrassed and ashamed by his lack of courage. In the beginning of the story she looked at her husband as

if she doesn't know him and ends up leaving the table crying and very much distressed by the events that had taken place earlier that day. Humiliation was nothing new for the Macomers, it seems that the Mrs. had a habit of punishing Francis's weaknesses by assuming the role of the power holder, it was Mrs. Macomber that "wore the pants in the family," by doing this she was able to have certain liberties that other married women do not have. When Francis developed a new found courage, it is no wonder that Margaret became a little uncertain of her role in her the marriage. This change in attitude taken on by Mr. Macomber, is in no way evidence to support the idea that perhaps Margaret spitefully and intentionally shot and killed her husband, in fact I think it its evidence to support the contrary.

I stated earlier that Margot was unhappy being married to a coward. So when Francis finally found some courage I think Mrs. Macomber was in shock. This new side to her husband meant a total role reversal in her marriage. Near the end of the story Margaret says to her husband, "isn't is sort of late," referring to his new found bravery and cockiness. I think she was feeling resentful, because over eleven years of marriage she was never able to change him no matter what she did, and now out of the blue he decides to

disrupt her routine. This may be a reason to be angry, frustrated, and to throw a tantrum, but is it really a motive for murder? I don't think so.

But she was afraid he was going to leave her, some may refute. Perhaps, but she was feeling many things, a loss of power was probably the deepest loss, because it was what she clung to so tightly. It was the only thing she had. By killing her husband she would gain no power, only a police record and possibly a jail sentence. On the other hand, saving Francis from death, by shooting a charging buffalo, would maybe give her some power back. She could have thought that Francis wouldn't leave her if he felt he owed her something: his life.

Taking in all the details we as readers are given in the story, I think that it would be hard to convict Mrs. Macomber of murder. You could perhaps convict her of resentment, bitterness, anger, and fear but not cold blooded manslaughter. By shooting her husband's gun she was only trying to save Francis and possibly sustain some power.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 7

### Wrong target?

Ernest Hemingway's "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" short story describes the African hunting expedition of the Macomber couple, Margot and Francis, accompanied by Robert Wilson, an English professional hunter they hired. During this trip Francis got shot by his wife exactly at the point when he overcame his double-face fear, physical, of the dangerous animals he hunts, and psychological, of Margot. Although some readers may consider his death as an accident, the nature of the couple's relationship, Wilson's reflections, and some remarks of the characters themselves clearly indicate that Francis Macomber's death was a premeditated murder. The ideas of apparently ideal couples and of how a "real" man should be, implied in this story, are still relevant today.

Margot definitely didn't love her husband ("He knew...about sex in books, many books, too many books"), but she loved his money: "...Macomber had too much money for Margot ever to leave him." If she could find somebody richer than Francis to marry her, she would surely divorce, but she couldn't afford the risk to try it because "she was not a great enough beauty any more at home to be able to leave him and better herself and she knew it...." Since she



couldn't divorce him, there were only two alternatives left for her to take advantage of his money and still be the one who makes the rules in their couple. She could chose to completely dominate him by fear, humiliation and a permanent inoculation of a guilt feeling, or to kill him and have all of his money.

As Wilson remarked too, and called him "poor, silly beggar" who "had probably been afraid all his life", Francis was an immature, psychologically insecure person in his relationship with Margot. He was always begging her attention even though he knew that she would humiliate him any time she could. "I suppose that I rate that for the rest of my life now," Francis said to Wilson. Margot dominates within their couple by taking advantage of her beauty which subjugated Francis, and of him not being mature and "man" enough to take a position against her behavior. Her attitude toward him is like that of an authoritative mother to a child whose personality is restrained by a permanent threaten with punishment: "'No,' she said, 'I won't leave you and you'll behave yourself.'"

The first alternative, intimidation, worked for Margot until a certain moment, when, during a buffalo hunt, Francis lost his fear, achieved his moral manhood and escaped her domination. That was the moment when the second alternative

had to come into action, and since Margot had such a good opportunity to kill him and make it seem like an accident, she did it. Their last exchange of remarks proves that she perfectly understood that Francis found his way out of her authority, and was really scared about the perspective of a divorce, because it was "too late" for her for a more advantageous marriage, but not "too late" for him.

"'You've gotten awfully brave, awfully suddenly,' his wife said contemptuously, but her contempt was not secure. She was very afraid of something.

Macomber laughed, a very natural laugh. 'You know I have,' he said. 'I really have.'

...'Isn't it sort of late?' Margot said bitterly.

'Not for me,' said Macomber."

Margot Macomber praised her husband's money, but valued more the influence and power she had on him. In one last desperate attempt to stop him from achieving his "manhood," she wanted to minimize Francis' merits in order to discourage him from undermining her power. "Just because you've chased some helpless animals in a motor car you talk like heroes." Because she failed in this attempt, she decided to kill him.

Maybe the murder was even more premeditated, because she subtly announced Wilson that she would blackmail him if

he wouldn't be on her side. "What would happen if they heard about it in Nairobi?" she said. "I'd be out of business." Wilson replied.

At the end of the story, Wilson's words and Margot not contesting his accusations are very relevant for her real intentions when she shot toward Francis. "'That was a pretty thing to do,' he said in a toneless voice. 'He would have left you too.'" "Why didn't you poison him?" To assume that she killed Francis by accident would mean to doubt Wilson's sense of observation, which was surely sharp since he was a professional hunter.

When Macomber left and looked at her for the last time, he waved to her, maybe like a sign of reconciliation. She wasn't willing to assume the risk to let him lead the game, and she didn't wave back as if she wanted to lose any personal contact with her imminent victim. Maybe she tried to consider him as any other animal she was used to killing.

Although the author and the two men in the story called her a "bitch," maybe some of the readers aren't willing to think that she went that far with her "bitchery" and kill her husband. They might say that she wasn't that awfully cruel because she seemed to suffer and cry because of her husband's humiliation of running away scared by a lion. Actually, she used Francis' embarrassment to mock and

further humiliate him, and as a pretext to cheat on him again.

Other readers may take her part and make her look as a victim of her husband's lack of courage, because "she had done the best she could for many years back and the way they were together now was no one person's fault." It is not clear what "her best" could be thus we really shouldn't rush to feel sorry for her as an innocent victim of Francis' moral weakness. Francis Macomber was a sincere, tolerant, pretty intelligent person. He was always faithful to her. By contrast, she was "the hardest and the cruellest" as Wilson could see, and one of the women that have "their men softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened."

Even though this story was written a few decades ago, many of the ideas implied are still relevant today. People still look at famous or rich couples, like movie stars, and think they have the perfect romance. The facade misguides the large public, make people desire and envy what the ideal-presented couples seem to have, even if behind the social appearances there is a real mess of cheating, frustration for one partner or domination from the other, like in the Macomers situation. The society columnist wrote that "they were adding more than a spice of adventure to their much envied and ever-enduring *Romance* by a

*Safari...."*

The whole idea of how fearless a real "man" should be is still very actual. The way people see this concept of traditional manly qualities today doesn't differ too much from the way Wilson's character saw it: "Fear gone like an operation. Something else grew in its place. Main thing a man had. Made him into a man. Women knew it too. No bloody fear." Men only changed the way to prove they are "veritable men." Although men still go in the army, or hunting and show their courage in confrontations, they also invented things like sport extreme to show they are fearless.

The discussion whether Francis Macomber's death was an accident or a premeditated murder is not closed, but, from all the evidences that the narrator and the characters themselves provide, it would be more likely to accept the second version. Even though Macomber wasn't morally strong enough to take a position against his wife's domination, neither her nor anybody else wouldn't have had the right to kill him for his weakness and "sinister" tolerance.

**The Short Happy Murder of Francis Macomber**

Francis Macomber's death was obviously murder on behalf of his wife, and I shall list evidence to support my claim that his wife is guilty of his death. Macomber underwent a metamorphosis during the story from a naive, scared somewhat unsure gunman to a strong, steadfast hunter. In a way, this may have been a transformation which was provoked in him to aid in his killing. This is my theory on the death of Francis Macomber. In the beginning of the story Francis' wife, Margot, seems to take interest in Wilson right off the bat. Wilson catches her staring at him, as though she were plotting something she wished him to do or wished to ask him to do. I feel that Francis' death was already going through her mind at this point in time. Her insistence to go with them on the hunt only further supports this claim.

In the beginning of the hunt, Francis Macomber is unsure of himself, and a little unsure of Wilson's skill. This makes him aware of his surroundings, noticing any slight sound which might arise. He is fully aware of what is going on around him, keeping an eye out for anything which might pose danger to him. Wilson on the other hand, is confident and knowledgeable about the hunt. In a way, I feel that Margot was very attracted to this. She seems

to flirt with Wilson's confidence, knowing Wilson is so much more of a man than her husband. This is what persuades her to go to Wilson's cot during the night. There, in his tent, she tells him of her intent to kill her husband. She explains to him that Francis is a very rich man. This is stated later in the story by Francis himself. She tells Wilson that she will inherit her husband's great wealth, and reward Wilson greatly if he were to help her. Wilson agrees, and they begin to plot the death of Francis Macomber.

She states to Wilson that she wants it to look like a hunting accident, however the blow to her husband must be fatal. She suggest perhaps a maverick bullet strikes her husband in the head, a bullet meant for prey, but unseemly striking Francis dead. Wilson argues the fact that Francis is unsure of himself right now, so his senses are heighten, thus allowing nothing to surprise him. With this; he would never allow a gun to be pointed any where near him. So, they begin plotting a scheme to swell Francis' head, giving him the confidence he needs to dull his senses and allow a fatal mistake to happen.

Wilson and Margot go about two totally different ways in extracting the hunter out of Francis. After the kill of the lion, Wilson praises Francis, telling him he his a

wonderful shot. In the case of the buffalo, he even states that he (Wilson) only helped the buffalo go down faster, and that it was really Francis' shots which killed them. This adds to the hunter in Francis in a positive way. However when Margot decides to act, it is with a negative charge. Margot fights with Francis, almost using reverse psychology. Francis becomes upset of what she says, and storms off with a ragging madness which overthrows his fear.

When Wilson states that the Buffalo is down in the brush, Macomber, enraged with fury and confidence, wants to charge into the thicket and finish off the buffalo. He does not really weigh the dangers which might arouse. This is what Wilson and Margot were waiting for. Wilson sends a native down in the thicket to decipher wether it is safe to pursue the buffalo. The native response with a "No it is not safe." Wilson, the only one who speaks the native tongue, purposely misinterprets this statement and tells Francis that the buffalo is dead. This does two things. First, it raises Francis' confidence one more level. Second, it throws Macomber off his feet, allowing him to relax and become taken by surprise.

When the buffalo charges, Francis is not prepared. He begins to shoot at the animal, only to hit its horns, causing little damage. Wilson is on the side, shooting at



the buffalo. I believe that he skillfully misses a real solid shot, wanting to give Margot time to make her move. Wilson is built as an expert hunter. His precision with the rifle is great. Yet, he cannot place one good shoot to weaken the buffalo enough to cease its charging? This does not sound logical. No, Wilson was skillfully aiming his shoots to where it would hit the buffalo and not cause serious harm. This gives Margot enough time to pull out a nearby gun and shoot her husband in the head. Margot inherits the money, and lives an exciting life with Wilson, always having admired his courage and confidence.

One might say, how was she able to place such a fatal shot into her husband's skull? To that I say that Wilson had showed her how to fire a gun, and that it was just a bonus that the shot landed so close to home. I feel that Margot's job was just to let Wilson know when the time was right, firing one shot at her husband, and letting Wilson finish the job.

Another argument in favor of innocence would be that of the end scene where Margot cries over husband's dead body. I feel that she was somewhat upset over her husband's death, but I say most of the crying was done for the simple fact that she had killed. This was a new feeling for her. She had never anticipated what it would feel like to take a

life. This made her terrible upset.

In conclusion, I feel that the death of Francis Macomber was no accident, rather a skillfully plotted murder by his wife and for his money. I have given ample evidence to support this claim. I feel that if one keeps this evidence in mind while reading this short story, one will clearly see that this is a very possible conclusion of *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 9

### Sex, Lies, and Safari

Have you ever felt that one moment of your life was going in the direction you wanted it to go and you were the happiest you ever been? Then in an instant, that happy moment vanished. Well, that happened to Francis Macomber. He was the happiest he had ever been in his whole life and as quick as a trigger could be pulled, his wife, Margaret (Margot) Macomber, murdered her own husband in cold blood.

The Macomber's marriage was obviously rocky. Considering that Margot Macomber did not care for Francis Macomber at all. She always make an effort to put him down. Especially at Macomber's most embarrassing moment.

On his first hunting trip, Macomber chased down a lion. When it was time to check on the lion, to see if he killed the animal, the lion charged at the men. During this fearful circumstance, Macomber ran away in fear, like any other normal person would do on their first hunt. Instead of consoling her husband, to make him feel better, she let it be known that Macomber was a coward and she was embarrassed by him. Margot let the readers know this by saying it was her face that was red while she, Macomber, and Robert Wilson were on the subject of red faces.

This brings up the fact that Margot was complimenting

Wilson's beautiful, red face right in front of her husband. She enjoyed talking about Wilson's good qualities so much that she did not want to change the subject. It was very obvious that Margot took a liking to Mr. Wilson. She showed that she did not have any respect for her husband by expressing her thoughts about Wilson right in front of Macomber.

Margot did not mind that her husband was sitting right in front of her because she knew he would not do anything about it. She knew he was not the kind of man to speak his mind. In her eyes he was a coward. She also knew he would never build up the courage to leave her; and she would never leave him because he had all the money. Margot probably thinks that if anything ever happens to Macomber, she will inherit all of his fortune and pursue her faithless life style.

Margot was a very faithless wife. In the past, she had numerous affairs with many other men. Before Macomber and his wife went on this safari, she had to promise him not to cheat on him while they were on this safari. The same night the lion incident happened, Macomber wakes up around three o'clock in the morning. He learns that his wife is not in the tent and waits for her return. When she returns, a couple hours later, he asks her where she has been. She

replies casually that she stepped out for a breath of fresh air. Macomber mentioned that was a long breath of air, if you call it that. He tried to get an explanation from her, but all she wanted to do was sleep. Macomber even accused her of having an affair with Mr. Wilson through innuendo, but she did not seem to care. She just went to sleep and blocked out her husband.

The next morning, before they go out for the next hunt, Margot mentions to Macomber that if he makes a scene in front of Wilson, she will leave him. She also has the nerve to tell him to behave himself, when she is the unfaithful wife.

Somehow Macomber pushed all of this behind him so he could concentrate on the buffalo. Something very strange happened to Macomber. He had gained the courage and strength he had been longing for. He seemed fearless. Margot could sense the drastic change in her changed husband. She seemed afraid that he had finally found some courage and now probably had the guts to leave her.

When Macomber and Wilson went after the buffalo, the same thing happened as if the lion incident was being repeated. They thought the buffalo was dead, but out of nowhere, the buffalo came charging for Macomber. Right then and there, Margot had a thought. This was a good chance to

get rid of her husband before he gets rid of her. It was all so simple. She would make it look like an accident. The buffalo is charging at her loving husband, she grabs the gun to aim for the buffalo, and shoots the sucker (her husband) right in the back of the head. If she misses, she will also be in the clear, because no one would know that she was shooting at Macomber. It was all so perfect.

Of course if Margot was aiming for the buffalo, which is very unlikely, there is no way she would have had a clear shot. Macomber was in the middle of them both, Margot and the buffalo.

It is very upsetting to see that for once in his life, Macomber was a happy man. It is even more upsetting that someone so selfish would want to take a person's life, there own husband's life, to make happiness of their own. I really do believe that the short, happy life of Mr. Macomber would not have been so short, if it were not for his cruel, cold blooded wife.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 10

### Francis Macomber's Death

I think that Macomber's death was a murder. I have some reasons that made me come up with the idea. First, Macomber's wife, Margaret, had a relationship with Wilson. Second, both Margaret and Wilson kept calm when Macomber was killed. There are some points that made me think it was not just an accident.

In the case of Macomber, I assume that he was murdered by Margaret and Wilson. Considering that her husband was died, Margaret kept calm. She was a little upset, but still she knew what she had done, which killed her husband. Wilson also was not disturbed in the situation of Macomber's death. He cared about the rifle and the witness, and he knew what he had to do at that time as if he expected the situation. Wilson mentioned that there was the testimony, and Margaret should have been all right. Macomber's death was a murder, and this was why Wilson confirmed the safety of Margaret. It seemed like Margaret and Wilson planned to kill Macomber.

Before he shot the lion, he was scared of many things such as the lion, the buffalo, and his wife. He was kind of the man who was just wealthy. Since he shot the lion, he became confident. He changed and started having an attitude

to Wilson and Margaret after the event of shooting the lion. When Macomber was killed, Wilson told Margaret, "that was a pretty thing to do," and "he would have left you too," with a low voice. It implied that Margaret had worried about her marriage after he changed. She was scared because she did not want to lose his money. She was not so young that she thought she could not find new man who had so much money like Macomber did.

Wilson was jealous of Macomber because Macomber had a beautiful wife and money. But Macomber had a weak personality and it was the only thing that made Wilson feel better. Since he became a stronger person due to the event of killing the lion, Wilson became really jealous. He did not want Macomber to be happy.

Wilson and Margaret have a deeper relationship than just partners of hunting. On the other night, Margaret was not in the cot. Macomber suspected that his wife was with Wilson. The conversation between Wilson and Margaret implied that Margaret had an affair with Wilson. I did not think that they loved each other. But I was sure that they had one thing in common, which was that they did not want Macomber to be happy. They might have planned how they killed Macomber at the night. Margaret did not want Macomber to leave because of his large amount of money. She



thought that if she killed Macomber as if it was an accident, she would not need to be scared of losing him and could have his wealth.

One more thing that I was concerned about was that when Wilson and Macomber went to the brush to check if the buffalo was dead, the gun bearer said something in Swahili and ran forward. It did not mention what the gun bearer said. However, I suspect that he said something to warn Wilson and Macomber because the gun bearer found out that the buffalo was still alive. Only Wilson understood what the gun bearer said. Wilson knew that the buffalo was still alive and he should have run away to save them from the danger of the buffalo's attack. If they had stayed away from the buffalo earlier, the accident might not have happened. Wilson expected the risky situation and planned to kill Macomber as if it was an accident.

The other people might say that Macomber's death was just an accident. Because Macomber and his wife had been married for eleven years. It is considered to be a long time for today's couples. Even though Macomber's wealth was part of the reasons, Margaret did not want to divorce her husband.

The buffalo is an animal. Even Wilson, an expert hunter, could not know that the buffalo was still alive and

ready to attack them. Both Wilson and Macomber believed that the buffalo was killed, and they did not expect the buffalo's attack. Wilson tried to shoot the buffalo to save Macomber and his wife also tried to save him. However, unfortunately, Mrs. Macomber shot her husband. If both Wilson and Margaret did not try to kill the buffalo, Macomber would have been gored and killed by the buffalo. Therefore, there was no way to save Macomber at that time.

In today's society, I sometimes see the news of a sad murder. A wife kills her husband to have his wealth. Like Margaret, money was the major reason for her to be married to Macomber. Some married couples lack love. The unexpected and thoughtless marriages, and the lack of morality and communication between the couples are the cause for spoiling married life. Some people want to divorce, but they cannot do that because of their kids and money. The only connection of the relationship among some of the married couples is money and it is not love. Some people plot the murder of their husband or wife to have their partner's money. Some greedy people want their all dreams to come true, and they lose their morality and commit anything to get their wants.

In the case of Macomber's death, I think that he was murdered by his wife and Wilson. If his death was just an

accident, Margaret could not manage herself in the situation. Also she was scared of him leaving because she did not want to lose Macomber's wealth. Wilson envied Macomber and did not want him to be happy. It was a miserable story. The story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," suggested that people can be greedy and lose their morality to own anything they want, due to murder.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 11

### The Mysterious Accidental Murder

In the story of "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" there is a death at the end of the novel. With the death is the question of whether it was accidental or murder. In my opinion, the death of Francis Macomber was plain straight out murder. Some reasons that I have for thinking that the death was a murder and not accidental was the circumstances that led up to the murder.

In the beginning of the story the Macomers and their white hunter guide Robert Wilson are in a safari in Africa. The reason that the Macomers are on the safari is because Margaret, Francis's wife, wanted to go. To understand the circumstances of the murder the reasons of why the Macomers are together must be known. The reasons why that Francis and Margaret are still together are many. First of all Margaret is past her prime so to speak, because she is not the raving beauty that she used to be she cannot leave behind Francis and so she stays with him. Margaret had a chance long ago to get away from Francis but missed out on the opportunity. Another reason that she stays with Francis is that of the fact that he is very rich and she really cannot survive without his money. The reason Francis doesn't leave his wife is that he is not really good around

women. If he understood women better he would have probably left his wife a long time ago. So the couple stays with each other because they cannot or would not go and find another to stay with.

While on the safari hunting for big game, Wilson and Francis hunted a lion. Instead of staying to shoot the lion, Francis runs away out of fear and so Wilson had to finish off the lion himself. The next day on the safari the hunter, Wilson, starts to despise Francis for being a coward. With the discovery of another lion to hunt Francis sets off with Wilson to prove himself not a coward and a real man. This leads up to one of the main points of the murder. With the death of the second lion showing Francis as a big coward his wife despises him and kisses Wilson on the mouth. That same night Margaret had an affair with Wilson the hunter. Margaret had the affair thinking of Francis as a coward and thought of Wilson as a real man. Also that Francis would never leave her helped her in her decision. Francis gets really upset over the fact that his wife had an affair and so is in a bad mood the next day. During the day they happen to spot three old buffalo bulls trotting off to the swamps. As they give chase in the cars and shoot at the bulls, Francis started to change. I think that all the adrenaline and excitement of chasing the bulls

in the car and shooting them made Francis come alive. The change was noticed by both Wilson and Margaret. With the change Margaret felt scared and didn't like the change that Francis was going through.

With the shooting of the bulls, Francis became a whole new man. He was not scared anymore and wanted to go and shoot another lion, and this time he was not going to be a coward. The moment of the change to me started off the thought of desperation within Margaret. The reason I think so is that Francis only stayed with Margaret because he was afraid and didn't understand other women. With the change I think that nothing would make Francis afraid again in his life. Margaret then realized that her husband would not be dependent upon her anymore and with the affair from the night before he would eventually leave her soon. Margaret also knew that she was dependent on Francis for financial reasons. So when Francis, Wilson, and Margaret went to go search for the bull that was still alive, I think that Margaret turned into a desperate woman. When Francis was in front of the charging bull, I think that Margaret picked up the gun left behind and deliberately shot Francis in the head. With the shot seemingly to be an accident since the bull was very near Francis before it died, Margaret would be the sole beneficiary of all of Francis' estates leaving her

as a rich widow.

All the circumstances leading up to Francis' head getting blown off points to Margaret's desperation. With Francis being a changed man nothing would have stopped him from leaving Margaret and getting another woman. So Margaret decided to kill Francis in an accidental way so that she would benefit from his wealth and be done with him forever. The buffalo incident just happened at the right moment and helped her in her plans. So in the end a murder happened in my eyes but in such a clever way that it seemed accidental.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 12

### The Death of a Happy Man

The brutal killing of the lion and the three buffalo were senseless, just like the death of Francis Macomber. Francis Macomber's death was no accident. I feel Margot Macomber had every intention of killing her husband. Margot had several motives for killing her husband. Margot's motives for killing her husband are the same motives people have today. People kill each other for money and kill out of hatred.

Margot and Francis had an odd relationship. Margot did not love or care about her husband. All Margot cared about was Francis Macomber's money. They were together for all the wrong reasons. Margot was married to Francis because he had money and because she was able to do what ever she wanted. Francis was married to Margot because she was a very beautiful woman and he thought he could not get anyone better. There was a lot talk between the two about leaving each other, but neither of them actually did it. Margot stayed for the money and Francis stayed because he was a cowered. There was no love between the two.

Margot Macomber was a wicked woman. She was a greedy and unethical woman. She was unfaithful to her husband and didn't care about him. Margot was the kind of woman who



cared only about herself. I have no doubt that Margot killed her husband. Margot Macomber was a woman who killed out of anger.

Francis Macomber was a wealthy man and cowered. Francis showed he was a cowered during the incident with the lion. Francis was full of fear and everyone around him knew it. He tried to be brave but he was much to afraid. Francis was as afraid of the lion as he was of Margot. Margot came in the tent late one night after having sex with Wilson, the expert hunter. Francis knew she slept with Wilson but he did not do a thing about it. Francis wanted to talk to his wife about it but she just blew it off like it was nothing. Any other man would of left his wife. Francis was to much of a cowered to do anything about it, but all that changed during the hunt of the buffalo.

During the killing of the buffalo Francis got a whole new look at life. When hunting the buffalo Francis no longer had the fear he had when he was hunting the lion. Francis was full of excitement and happiness. Francis felt a happiness he had never felt before. Francis' fear was gone and now was a brave man. When Margot saw her husband she knew he was a changed man. Margot started to think about what could happen. She knew she would no longer be able to push Francis around. Margot hated the idea that her

husband was happy.

There are several reasons Margot killed her husband. Margot killed her husband because she was enraged by how happy he was and because she was afraid. Margot realized Francis was not going to put up with her attitude any more. Margot was afraid because she knew Francis was going leave her. Margot couldn't stand the thought of losing the life of luxury. Margot was angry because she hated to see her husband so cheerful. When Francis told his wife that he is now a brave man, she realized it was all over. Margot asked Francis, "isn't is sort of late," and Francis replied with "not for me." I believe that is when Margot snapped.

When Francis and Wilson were shooting at the charging buffalo, Margot saw her chance. Margot picked up the rifle aimed it at her husband and pulled the trigger. Margot shot her husband in the head because she was aiming at him. I believe Margot had full intention of killing her husband. She had no intention of shooting the buffalo. Margot was full of rage and she knew Francis no longer needed her. Margot ended the short happy life of Francis Macomber. Francis never got the chance of living the life of a brave man.

Some people may argue that it was just a tragic accident. How can a beautiful woman be so evil? The

buffalo was about to strike Francis so maybe she was trying to save her husband. She saw the charging buffalo so she picked up the rifle, aimed it at the buffalo and accidentally shot her husband by mistake. But then again, what kind of experience did she have with guns. I doubt she was experienced enough to actually hit a charging buffalo. On the other hand, if she had no experience with guns how could she of shot her husband in the head from such a distance? When Margot shot the rifle she had two intentions, either to kill her husband or kill the buffalo. I believe she rather shoot her husband than shoot the buffalo. Another good reason it was an accident is the charging buffalo. If the buffalo was about to strike Francis, she had no reason to shoot. The buffalo would of probably killed Francis on impact or would of severely injured him.

Some people may argue she had no reason to kill her husband. She was a beautiful women, she could of easily found another wealthy man to marry. Why would she kill Francis just because he was going to leave her? Why would she kill her husband simply because he was no longer a cowered? I think she was jealous of her husband. In the end Francis had it all, he was wealthy and he had the courage of a lion. Its a shame he was not able to enjoy his

new life.

To many people die for the wrong reasons. Today, we hear more and more about people hiring other people to kill their spouses. In this situation Margot did it herself. People begin to get too greedy and love money more than they do anything else. It is hard to believe people marry just for the money. What joy is there if you can't spend money on the people you love. In today's world, people kill their spouses for insurance money or because they are afraid of their spouses leaving them. People have become too materialistic and base their love on money or on material. It is a shame people's lives are taken for these reasons. It doesn't matter where you are in the world, you will always find people like Margot Macomber.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 13

### Nice Shot

When a marriage goes sour sometimes the people involved feel like killing their spouse. They may seriously want to kill their spouse, but realistically it would be very hard to get away with. The consequences are too great if caught killing someone. The perfect opportunity arose for Margaret Macomber to kill her husband Francis Macomber. I believe that Margot did murder her husband.

Margaret obviously disliked her husband Francis. She was always trying to put him down. After the lion incident when her husband ran away due to the fearful circumstances, she rubbed it in that he was a coward instead of consoling him. She implied that she was embarrassed of Francis when she said it was her face that was red today.

Margaret also made it known to both Robert Wilson and her husband that she found Wilson attractive. She called him the beautiful red-faced Mr. Wilson in front of Macomber. She also complemented Wilson that he was a very impressive killer and that she wanted to watch him kill buffalo because he was so lovely when he killed the lion. It was very obvious that she had a liking for Wilson and she didn't have enough respect for her husband to keep it to herself. On the ride back to the camp from the lion kill,

Francis did not speak or look at Macomber. She was too embarrassed of her coward husband. Macomber who needed a little support tried to hold his wife's hand, but she pulled her hand away. She put her hand on Wilson's shoulder and gave him a kiss on the mouth right in front of her husband. That is not something that a loving, caring wife would do to another man in private, let alone in front of her husband.

Macomber knew that the only reason his wife was with him was because he had a lot of money. He knew she would never leave him because of that. Maybe she was hoping to one day inherit all of that money if something ever happened to her husband.

Macomber knew that his wife had numerous affairs with other men. She promised him that before they left that she would not cheat on him while they were on the hunting trip. The night of the lion incident Macomber woke up at three o'clock in the morning. He laid awake for two hours with the knowledge that his wife was not in the cot next to his. She finally came into the tent and when Macomber asked her where she had been she just told him that she went out to get a breath of air. That was a pretty long breath of air she went to go get. She knew that her husband knew that she had sex with the beautiful red-faced Wilson. When Macomber confronted his wife about where she had been, she just wanted

to go to bed. She called him a coward and she told him that he'll take anything. She had no respect or morals towards her husband. Macomber tried talking to her about it, but she just went to sleep. She truly was the bitch that Macomber called her.

The next morning before they went to go hunt buffalo, Margot told her husband that she would leave him if he made a scene with Wilson. She had the nerve to tell him to behave himself when she was the one sleeping around.

During the buffalo hunting trip something happened to Macomber. He had gained some courage and seemed fearless. It was a total hundred eighty degrees from the day before. His wife sensed this new found courage. She was probably afraid that he would have enough courage to leave her.

When the bull started to rush Macomber it was running straight towards him. That's when Margot saw her chance to get rid of her husband before he left her money less. Obviously she had no shot at the bull because Macomber was between her and the bull. There was no way in the world she could get a clear shot at the bull, but she had a nice clear shot at her husband. She could make the murder of her husband look like an accident and she could probably get away with it. If she missed him, he wouldn't have known that she was shooting at him. Either way she knows she gets

away free.

She shot her husband in the back of the head knowing that everyone would think she was scared and was shooting at the bull. It was really good thinking on her part in such short notice. She obviously wanted her husband dead. She had the opportunity and she took it. Now she doesn't have a husband to deal with and she will probably be left with his money.



## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 14

### Mystery in the Jungle

In Ernest Hemmingway's short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber, young Francis Macomber was murdered by his wife. She shot him in the head. Mrs. Macomber was surely to gain a lot of money from his death. Hemmingway doesn't mention anything about them having kids, so more than likely she stood as a major beneficiary of the wealthy man. She was also extremely disappointed with him for backing down from the lion. Francis Macomber's wife had a lot to gain from his death and little to gain with him being alive.

A major reason Margaret, Macomber's wife, shot her husband was because of the wealth. He had a lot of money and from the looks of things she stood to have a big chunk of it if he died. She didn't love him. Both Francis and Margaret knew it. In fact, she tried to leave him on many occasions but was unsuccessful. In her hayday Margaret was a stunningly beautiful woman, capable of getting any man she wanted. At the time of Francis' death she was still pretty, but she could not nearly catch a bigger fish than her husband. It seemed as though the only thing Mrs. Macomber was interested in was the money. Throughout the story she seemed a cold bitter woman, unhappy about the life she was

leading with her husband. It makes complete sense that Margaret would kill her husband for the money.

Margaret also seemed disgusted to find out that her husband was a coward when he ran from the lion. She couldn't even talk to him when they got to camp. She spent a lot of time talking to the professional hunter and guide Robert Wilson. He was the one that shot the lion down after Francis ran away. She seemed interested in the big burly red-faced man. Later on that night she snuck to his tent. Francis knew about it and Margaret knew that he knew. When they went hunting the next day the two were constantly bickering with one another. She seemed almost in a crazed state. She mocked Francis' every movement. Even Wilson told Margaret to calm down. Margaret was capable of doing anything out there. What she did was shoot her husband in the head. Not only for the money, but because he wasn't man enough for her. She wanted a guy like Wilson with money. Francis' had the money. What he lacked was Wilson's courage and wit. For that Mr. Macomber was killed by Mrs. Macomber.

In conclusion, some may think that Margaret was trying to save her husband from the buffalo. That is exactly why she killed Francis when she did. It was the perfect time. A time when she could get away with it. No one can prove

anything in that situation. Not only was she crazy, she was smart. She didn't plan the murder. But when the chance presented itself she took it. Margaret wanted Francis' money but without Francis. She was tired of him. He just wasn't man enough for a woman like Margaret. At least in her eyes.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 15

### Accident or Murder?

Hemingway's story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," made me wonder if Macomber's death was an accident or murder. As I read the story, more of the evidence pointed toward Mrs. Macomber purposely murdering her husband. In this essay I will point out the evidence in the story that led me to this belief. I will also indicate evidence that supports the opposing side and discuss the ideas in the story that remain relevant today.

The story revealed that Mr. and Mrs. Macomber's relationship with each other had many problems. Mrs. Macomber was very beautiful and a great beauty in Africa. In the past, she had always wanted to leave her husband. She may have had career opportunities because of her looks. However, she missed the chance to leave her husband and start a career before her beauty started to fade away. She knew she wouldn't be financially stable on her own if she left him, so she stayed.

Mr. and Mrs. Macomber did not communicate with each other. For example, in line nine on page 246, his wife did not speak to him when she saw him. Sometimes they used harsh words toward each other when they did speak. On page 249, line thirty, Mr. Macomber said to his wife, "Why not

let up on the bitchery just a little, Margot." This illustrates the use of harsh words between them.

Deception was another problem with their relationship. For instance, Mr. Macomber woke up one night and found that his wife was not laying next to him. When she came back to bed he confronted her asking where she had been. She told him she went out to get a breath of air. In reality she was out having an affair with Wilson. He knew she was lying and he kept pressing the issue. She then got angry and told Macomber she was very sleepy and didn't want to discuss the subject anymore. In addition to the deceit, this again demonstrated lack of communication with each other and supports both motive and reason for the murder of her husband.

Mr. and Mrs. Macomber also did not have positive emotions and feelings toward each other. Mrs. Macomber felt that her husband was a coward. She was very upset when she saw her husband running from the lion. Mrs. Macomber thought of him as not being very courageous, but as weak and incapable of killing the animal. She was tired of their marriage and didn't respect her husband. She wanted out, but stayed although she was miserable.

The story didn't reveal much about Mr. Macomber's feelings toward his wife. However, it was obvious he didn't

get along with her. Once they argued and he called her a "bitch." In the story, there is no mention of affectionate display between them. In addition, there was not one instance in the story of them showing love to each other.

Aside from the ill feelings, negative emotions, and their strained relationship, there were two other major issues that strongly support my belief that Mrs. Macomber deliberately killed her husband. One is the money issue. Mr. Macomber was very wealthy. Mrs. Macomber may have killed him because it was a way to get his money and not remain with him since she was unhappy in the marriage. She may have known that if he were dead she would inherit his estate and money.

The last issue that stands out is at the very end of the story. If Mrs. Macomber was trying to shoot at the buffalo, why would the bullet hit Macomber in the skull? Earlier in the story the author described Macomber as very tall and slender. The buffalo probably wasn't taller than Macomber. So my point is how could she possibly have been aiming for the buffalo. Furthermore, why would Mrs. Macomber fire the weapon, putting her husband in danger, if she couldn't get a clear shot at the buffalo. This is the primary evidence leading me to believe Mrs. Macomber is a cold blooded murderer.

The opposing side has evidence which could be used to dispute my opinion. The opposing side could say that she had already been married for eleven years. Why would she kill him now? I think she killed him because she couldn't take him any more. She was tired of him and didn't want to be with him anymore. Also, she saw a way to rid herself of him and still have his money.

The opposing side might also say Mrs. Macomber did care for her husband since she was almost in tears for him and verbally defended him. Therefore, she would not murder him. In my opinion, Mrs. Macomber may have been in tears for herself and not for her husband. She may possibly have been embarrassed to hear that her husband was a coward. In addition, Mrs. Macomber may have defended him because she was tired of him not speaking up for himself.

Mr. and Mrs. Macomber were known as a happily married couple. But through out the story there were instances of arguments and situations depicting them conflicting against each other. The story said Mr. and Mrs. Macomber always made up. I think they may have been happy at first, but the more they knew about each other, the further they grew apart and disliked each other.

The opposing side doesn't have much evidence to support Mr. Macomber's death as accidental. More evidence points

toward my belief that Mrs. Macomber deliberately shot Mr. Macomber. That is why I strongly believe that it was murder.

This story contained some ideas that are relevant today. One idea is the greedy and money hungry aspect of people. I think Mrs. Macomber was greedy and selfish and wanted all of her husband's money, but not him. This occurs with many people today. They want another person's wealth and will kill to obtain it. It may be difficult for a wealthy person to trust anyone because of the fear that others only want them for their money.

The relationship between married couples is another idea relevant today. Some marriages today lack positive and constructive communication. This is damaging to the marriage. Lack of communication can lead to lack of understanding between a husband and wife. Without communication and understanding, each may look outside the marriage resulting in extra marital affairs. Ultimately, because communication and understanding are non-existent, divorce results.

In conclusion, in today's society it is very difficult to find the right person. Mr. and Mrs. Macomber had a bad marriage and now Mr. Macomber is dead. That is why it is best to really know a person well and respect the person



before you marry. Take some time to think about who you are before you decide to get into a relationship with a person. It may mean saving your life.

STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 16

To Kill Without Murder

"The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" Written by Ernest Hemingway, is a story of life and death. Mr. Francis Macomber and his wife, Margot went on a hunting safari. On the safari they learn much about life and death. This story is also about being afraid. Francis and Margot are both afraid of what will happen if they leave each other. Francis also realizes what it is to be afraid for his life. This story is also much about love and hatred. Francis did not love his wife but he could not leave her because she was very beautiful and he knew that he was unable to find someone with such beauty. Margot was also scared to leave Francis because she was in love with his money not him. She was unable to find someone with that kind of money besides Francis. Even though this story was set in the 1940's or 1950's it can apply to the 1990's. the cheating on loved ones and the marriage for wealth and beauty happens all the time in today's world. My point is that Margot Macomber did not consciously murder her husband but deep down inside she was glad it happened. Even today we see people marry others for wealth or beauty and these marriages end up in disaster like this one. Francis was not murdered consciously. Margot did not really

want to get rid of her husband. The love and support that he could not give, she received from other men that she slept with. The thing with Margot was that she loved all the money. She could not just leave the money even though she would be happier without it. The problem with the whole marriage was the mental abuse. The only thing I could think of would be that the mental abuse was bad enough to drive her insane, but I don't think so. Francis was for the most part an honest man. He never physically hurt his wife and he gave her everything she wanted except for what mattered most, love.

Margot had a problem, she loved men. Once she saw Francis chicken out on the lion hunt she became infatuated with Wilson. Margot became engulfed with anger towards Francis. At the same time she became filled with a deep passion for Wilson. Inside, Margot was very confused she wanted the money but her feeling for Wilson were great. I guess the only way she could get what she wanted was through killing her husband. The only thing is that the story does not say anything about an insurance policy. After Francis ran for the second time Margot could not even bare to look At him. She had lost every last feeling for Francis. She became even more in love with Wilson. She wanted a man who was not a cowered.

We live in a very egotistical society. People today have forgotten what it means to be married. Like in the story people today are getting marry for the wrong reasons. Money is one of the main reason that people get married. The only reason that Margot married Francis was because he had a lot of money. People in today's society don't think about love when they get married. People only think about financial security. The other reason people get married is for physical beauty. People for the most part are attracted to only the physical beauty of others. Just like with Francis. He was only with his wife because she was very beautiful. Francis, like most people today did not love his wife but he could not leave her because he was afraid the he could not get anyone as pretty as Margot. People in the world today don't love each other but still get married for stupid reasons like wealth or physical beauty. If "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" had been written with a different setting we, the reader, would think that this story was written in the 1990's. the story really applies to the people look upon marriage in the 90's.

Yes Francis was murdered but not consciously. The poor lives of Francis and his wife Margot were very messed up. It seemed to me that they had nothing but problems. The two of them were always fighting about something.

Subconsciously Margot knew that the only way that she could be truly happy was if she could have the money without Francis. The only way that this could happen was if she was to kill him. When the time came to save Francis's life consciously she was aiming the gun at the buffalo but subconsciously she was aiming for Francis. This is a tragic result that comes from a husband and wife that cannot stand each other not having the strength to leave each other. If this outcome did not occur the two of them would have gone crazy because a marriage like theirs is not good for the human psyche. This must have been a trend in which Ernest Hemingway had noticed. Hemingway must have seen people starting to marry for reasons other than love and this inspired him to write this story. He hit the nail on the head with this story. This story reflects the way people are today.

STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 17

What Is The Right Answer?

In the story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," which was written by Ernest Hemingway, the main character whose name was Francis Macomber was dead. He was shot by his wife, Margaret Macomber, who had lived with him for eleven years. Throughout some evidence, I think that Macomber was murdered by his wife because she saw some changes in Macomber that can affect her life. She saw that he would get divorced with her, and she would loose everything. There were also some other evidence. which showed that Macomber's death was an accident. Margot was crying hysterically a the end of the story right after she shot her husband. The story seems to suggest that sometimes a couple stay with each other because they are forced to, or like in this case, they stay with each other because of materialism.

The marriage between Macomber and Margot was not a stable relationship. They stayed with each other for eleven years, but it did not mean anything to them. Margot told Macomber many times that she wanted to leave him, but she always turned out staying with him. He could not leave her because she was a beautiful women. She did not want to leave him because he had money. They did not love each

other very much and did not really care about each other. She kissed another guy in front of her husband. She had an affair with the professional hunter, Robert Wilson, who she had just met for the first time. She had the affair because she was so disappointed in her husband. She saw how coward he was, and at the same time, she was admiring Wilson because of his courage. She was embarrassed by her husband. Their marriage was broken up so easy because they did not love each other anymore, but they just wanted to take advantages from each other.

Macomber was murdered by his wife because of only one reason which was she was afraid that he would get divorced from her, and she would loose everything. The murder was shown by many different evidence. After the affair, Margot thought that her husband would not do anything, but he told her that it had not been so late for him. This scared Margot and made her feel not secure. At one point, Wilson was thinking that she was so quiet that morning. Almost at the end, before Macomber went in with Wilson, he turned back and waved to his wife, but she did not response. These two incidences showed that she was thinking about something. She was not focused that morning. At the end, when she was crying, Wilson said that she had done a good job. At first, she was yelling at him, but when

he said that he was through, and he started to like Macomber, she did lower her voice. She showed that she was afraid of Wilson because of something. Another evidence which showed that she meant to do this was she knew it was illegal to shoot from the car. She had already asked Wilson about whether it was legal or not, and he said it was not. The most important point was that she seemed like she wanted to help, but he actually did not need any help from her. He was with the professional hunter and the two gun-bearers. She knew that he would leave her anyway, so she went a head of him. She did not give him a chance to leave her.

On the other hand, there were some evidence which could prove that Macomber's death was accident. At one point, after being in the tent by herself for awhile, Margot came out and said that she was not upset with her husband anymore, and she would except him for who he was. She knew that he was not good in hunting. Another thing was she was not a good shooter, and the shot was only fifty inches away from her target. This could prove that she missed her shot because she was scared and nervous to see the buffalo was targeting her husband. At the end of the story, she was crying and telling Wilson to stop suggesting. She did not show any sign that she wanted to kill her husband or anything.



The story itself did not state anything about the death of Francis Macomber. It gave some evidence to prove that he was murdered by his wife. At the same time, the story also gave some evidence which could prove that his death was an accident. I could see the reason that caused the murder and some evidence that could back up my case. I could see that Margot was scared and surprised by the changes in Macomber. She could see what her husband would do, and she was upset. She had done something that maybe she could not believe herself.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 18

### Dreadful End of Macomber's Happy Life

In his short story "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Ernest Hemingway shows that many relationships are just based on money and need rather than the love that usually is the strength of any relationship. In his story, he shows this type of relationship through his two characters of the story. Francis Macomber and his wife Margot Macomber represent this type of relationship that is based on money and need of a beautiful wife rather than love. The reason they have been living together for quite a long time isn't love, for Francis Macomber, it is Margot's beauty that kept him with her that long, and for Margot, it is Macomber's money that has kept her with him. Interestingly, when, at one point, she realized that she is about to lose the wealth she has spent quite a long time of her life to earn, she murdered Macomber. There are many evidences that prove Macomber's death was murder which his wife, Margot, tried to make it appear as an accident.

There are many facts that show that there never existed any love between Macomber and his wife, rather there were other things that kept them together. One fact was that even though they were married for eleven years, they didn't have any children. One may argue that they might not want

to have a child. However, the fact that they were sleeping separately, for sure, explains what type of relationship they had. A relationship which just existed for it will give benefit to each of the partners in a different way. If there was other way for Margot to get Macomber's wealth she wouldn't have married Macomber at all because it seemed that Margot wasn't interested in Macomber but was interested in his money. It is pointed out in the story that Macomber was getting even richer that made it hard for Margot to leave him.

In addition to not having good relationship with Macomber, Margot's behavior of having affairs proves that she didn't love her husband at all. The fact that Margot was having affairs with others, as with Wilson, in Macomber's knowledge proves that to Macomber it didn't matter as much as it should have been to a husband who dearly love his wife. If, on the other hand, their relationship was based on love, Macomber would have done something effective to stop Margot from having affairs. He would have, divorced her because of her characteristic. Nevertheless nothing like this happened between these two because the relationship was an agreement between them to stay married and that is all that mattered to both, for Macomber he had a beautiful wife and for Margot she had his

money.

Altogether this weak relationship and the fact that Macomber was changed at one point of the story lead Margot to shoot him to death. When Macomber was changed suddenly from a coward to a brave man that is when Margot realized that she was about to lose something she has always wanted: Macomber's wealth. At this point, Macomber was no longer afraid of anything. Margot sensed that now he wouldn't even be afraid of losing her. For some reasons, Macomber used to have his wife involved with other men, and he never took action for her this type of behavior. However, this was the time when Macomber has changed and this change could even make Macomber get rid of Margot by getting a divorce. She knew it to by the way he was talking to her and by the way he was ready to face the wounded bull. One can sense this by the way things were going which is why Wilson, the hunter, said at the end that if Margot hasn't killed him, he would have left her. She knew Macomber will no longer take anything from her anymore as he used to.

Moreover she had gone too far to act like she loves him. There was no other way to stop Macomber from leaving Margot now. He would leave her anyway. So Margot thought the best way to avoid the future consequences of Macomber's changed personality and to end her unhappy life in which she

had to stay with someone whom she didn't love, is to kill Macomber in a way that can appear as an accident.

Just before Macomber's death, the way Margot behaved shows that Macomber's death was planned. When Macomber talked to his wife how he was feeling brave, she admits from his behavior that he actually did have changed, also it was pointed in the story that she was afraid of something. Even though she was not satisfied with her husband, she has no problem living with him and enjoying her life by his money with other men. Now, she knew that either she will not be able to have affairs, or either she will not be able to get his money. This thought put her in the situation in which she started to think of a way to face this new change. Probably the way she came up with was Macomber's death. This idea might have given her the feeling of frightened which is why she didn't wave back to him when Macomber waved her at the last time.

This was the only possibility why she didn't wave back to him because that was the time she supposed to be excited, for her husband was acting like a brave man rather than a coward. Throughout the story, it was shown that the main reason for Margot to be upset with Macomber and to have an affair with Wilson was because she was disappointed in him for acting like a coward. Interestingly, her looks didn't

show she was pleased with the fact that her husband no longer was a coward. The truth was that meanwhile she was planning his murder when he waved to her. One may think she tried to save Macomber by trying to shoot the bull. Nonetheless, Macomber already had shot the bull in his nose, by the time Margot took an action of saving her husband. The evidence that the bull was dead when Macomber died proves that Macomber already had shot the bull before he got shot. In reality, she shot then, so that she could give this incident the name of an accident in which she attempted to save her husband but accidentally shot him.

Macomber's death was a murder by his wife. It is really easy for someone like Margot to kill Macomber because she had no feelings for him. She was spending her life with him just to get his money, and once it seemed impossible for her to get her husband's wealth, she went ahead and killed him so that she can get all of his fortune. If we think about it, money was the only reason that kept her with Macomber for whole eleven years. Otherwise, Who would be willing to spend life with someone he or she doesn't enjoy being with. In this situation, Margot's desire, for which she had ruined her life, was enough to get to her kill her husband.

Moreover, when Margot shot her husband, she shot him

with a very well organized plan that not only made the murder seem an accident, but it also would have given Margot an opportunity to save her dreams of staying rich. If she had, for some reasons, missed her husband when she shot, she then would have pretended to show her true love, which never existed, for Macomber. Hence, her unreal attempt of saving him could have made Macomber believe in her. As a result, he would not have divorced her, and she wouldn't lose the wealth she always wanted.

STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 19

Analysis of a Short Story  
Francis Macomber--Murder or Accident?

The story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" by Ernest Hemingway clearly depicts the views of the three main characters namely Francis Macomber, Robert Wilson, and Margot Macomber and how such innermost thoughts lead to the turn of events that led to Francis Macomber's death. The cause of his death is not clearly mentioned in the story; nevertheless, it can be detected that the author led his readers to perceive it as undoubtedly caused by murder.

A considerable amount of evidence can be seen throughout the story that will lead a reader to come to the conclusion that Francis Macomber was murdered. First it should be helpful to analyze some of the minute instances that show the possibility of otherwise, that it was an accident, but it can be further observed that these are simply outweighed by the evidence proving that Francis Macomber was murdered. One thing that this is the case is shown in the last portion of the essay where Margot is crying over her husband's (Francis) death repeatedly claiming that shooting him was unintentional. Before Margot's shooting the rifle, it was purposely shown how she may have shot only as a means to protect, but it this simply



a means of the author to keep his reader focused on the story. It can also be subtly observed that the author also in an unusual way, initially describes the two other characters Margot and Robert Wilson. Hemingway describes Margot as a wife despite of her well-toned beauty has remained married to Francis for eleven years. This at first, makes the reader come to the impression that she a loyal wife that is not much of a bad character that would be capable of murdering her husband but as the story progresses, her true character prevails showing that "there is more that meets the eye" to Margot. As for Robert Wilson, the author talks of him in the first part of the story as if he was a "no-nonsense" type of character that will perform his job as a professional hunter that would not do any harm with any of his clientele. Aside from that, none of the turn of events show that the cause of death was an accident.

In order to prove that Francis Macomber was murdered, it is essential to show how Hemingway throughout the essay projects each of the characters. The readers would see that there are many consistencies favoring Francis Macomber as the protagonist of this story. He is led by the author's description to be a good natured wealthy man, that is incapable of doing much violence, who can never show

dominance over Margot because of his cowardly nature. This realization made Margot even more confident about her capability of being able to control her husband especially in a psychological aspect. Anything that would endanger this made Margot feel that she was losing her domineering nature. She would go through many means that would hinder this from occurring and one way of doing such was by turning to the third main character of the story: Robert Wilson. The first revelation of her dark intention towards her husband was when she, in reference to Wilson, states, "Mr. Wilson is very impressive killing anything. You do kill anything, don't you?" Being a professional hunter himself, the initial thought of the reader would be that Wilson will turn out to be an accomplice to Francis Macomber's murder. The response to Margot inquiry later reveals Robert Wilson's character. Wilson is revealed by the author's choice of words, to be a man who despite his knowledge towards Margot Macomber's unpleasant sentiments towards her husband and her tendencies of being a woman that can never be told off, which he later fallaciously generalizes all women to be of that manner, still physically desires the woman. Margot is aware of this fact uses this a means of creating friction towards her husband and Wilson. An affair between Margot and Wilson emphasizes the fact that Margot does not take her

husband's point of view into consideration.

The conflicts in the story also play an important role in the story because it finally mold into shape the reason on why such led to the tragic turn of events. First, it can be seen that Francis Macomber is in conflict with his own cowardly nature. His inability to sleep the night in which he heard the lion roar showed how if he would only be able to face his fear, he would be able to show some sort of authority with his wife. The turning point of the story depicts Francis as finally being able to kill a bull which gave him the courage to face his fear by trying once again to kill the lion. This is important because it created some unsureness with Margot who believed that this would endanger not only her authority towards her husband, but also will lead Francis Macomber to end their marriage altogether. This also resolves the tension between Francis with his wife but by Macomber's conflict with Robert Wilson. Some tender aspects of Wilson was shown when he was thinking to himself on how this change with Francis Macomber will finally enable Macomber to take control of his life.

Many things can be observed that prove some general aspects to humanity. For one thing, it is shown that the setting and time frame prove to be very relevant to what led Margot to have some insecurities. When one is the only

woman in a territory known to be dominated by a men alone especially during the time frame, a woman would feel some great accomplishment with herself to show that she has an overpowering authority with her husband. A woman's capacity should not be underestimated but at the same time, abuse of this freedom led her to commit a crime that no matter how one sees it can never be excused. As for Robert Wilson's character, the last part of the story shows how he was able shown his unconcern for the murder and how he exactly knew what Margot really felt toward her husband. Lastly, Francis Macomber showed how anyone is capable of overcoming a fear.

The circumstances clearly show that Francis Macomber was murdered. The circumstances, the perspective of each character concretizes this. Ernest Hemingway's ingenuity in revealing each of the character's innermost thoughts help maneuver one to lead to this conclusion. It is clearly seen that Margot did shoot Francis Macomber and the events prior to this occurring simply reiterates that she did kill him.

STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 20

The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber

Francis Macomber was a very tall man. He was well built because of the court games he played, and he had some fishing records. Macomber was also rich, and therefore had respect amongst his rich kind. And that is the reason why he asked Wilson to not speak about his cowardliness he showed that day when they were hunting lions. And for this Wilson started to dislike him, but he did not show it. Wilson and Macomber were hunting for buffaloes, but they also shot two lions, one was to save Macomber, and the other lion because he was getting near to camp.

Towards the end of the story Macomber and his wife have an argument and Macomber calls his wife "a bitch", because Macomber thinks that his wife and Wilson are having an affair. His wife does get mad at him at a couple of instances towards the end of the story.

Wilson is also mad at Macomber in the beginning, because Wilson saves Macomber's life and Macomber wants Wilson to be quiet about the lion incident, where Macomber acted as a coward and could not shoot the lion. Macomber is also mad at Wilson because he thinks that Wilson and his wife are having an affair.

In my opinion, Macomber's death was an accident.

Macomber was shooting at the buffalo, and his wife tried to save Macomber's life by trying to kill the buffalo from the car, as she had a gun. But she does not aim properly and shoots her husband, instead of saving his life she takes his life.

Margot Macomber had almost no experience in hunting. As a matter of fact she did not even like hunting but acted as if though she was very interested in hunting. When Wilson and Macomber came to the car after killing the buffalo, they were talking about how they killed the buffalo. When they approached the car, Mrs. Macomber also involved herself in the conversation and started to ask if hunters were allowed to shoot from their cars. Wilson told her that no one shot from the car and that they had given the buffaloes a running chance. To this Mrs. Macomber replied "It seemed very unfair to me, chasing those big helpless things in a motor car." This statement just shows that she had no liking to this sport, and was just pretending to like hunting.

The way she talked just showed that she did not love this sport and she had almost no knowledge on handling guns. All the more reason that Margot did not kill her husband. She was trying to shoot at the buffalo but missed. "...like hitting a slate roof, and Mrs. Macomber, in the car, had

shot at the buffalo with the 6.5 Mannlicher as it seemed about to gore Macomber and had hit her husband about two inches up and a little to one side of the base of his skull."

Another piece of evidence, which might be stretching it a little bit, is that the word gore means: to pierce with or as with a horn or tusk. So when the buffalo hit Mr. Macomber, the bullet that was meant for the buffalo, hit Mr. Macomber.

But there is also evidence that supports the murder of Mr. Macomber. One reason for killing him could be that Mrs. Macomber did not like when her husband called her "a bitch." Mr. and Mrs. Macomber were not getting along very well, and the proof of that is "Macomber, looking back, saw his wife, with the rifle by her side, looking at him. He waved to her and she did not wave back."

Mr. Macomber knew that Mrs. Macomber would not leave him because of two main reasons: the first reason was that Mr. Macomber was rich, and second because she had passed the age when guys would think that she was pretty. Pretty in the sense that she could get out, and guys would ask her if she would like to go out on date, even though Wilson thinks she is pretty. And because she had passed her time, she would not leave Francis. Margot knew this and maybe she got

mad that he was so positive that she would not leave him that she got mad, and maybe that is why she killed him. The following paragraph shows that Francis had knew his wife would not leave him "His wife had been through with him before but it never lasted. He was...and better herself and she knew it and he knew it."

Both sides of the argument have been given, and it is up to the reader to decide which side they would like to take.



STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 21

Francis Macomber's Death: Murder???

In this essay, I am supposed to take a position on whether Francis Macomber's death was an accident or a murder. I am taking the position that says that his death was indeed an accident. Throughout this essay I will attempt to prove that it was an accident by pulling various types of evidence from the story and I will also consider the evidence that could be used against and maybe outweigh my position.

I understand that Mrs. Macomber was always mad at Francis for some reason or another, but that was no reason to kill him. If anything, Francis had more of a reason to kill Margaret than she did to kill him. Margaret was the one always doing Francis some kind of wrong, he was more often than not the innocent one in the relationship.

In the story, Margaret was very unpredictable, because her emotions toward Francis were always changing. One minute she loved him and the next she hated him. In the beginning she was mad at him and embarrassed for him because he was given the reputation of a coward, because of the incident with the lion.

Margaret ended up messing up even more with Francis, because she had an affair with Mr. Wilson, the safari guide.

I believe that that incident was more that reason enough for Francis to leave her, but for some odd reason they wouldn't separate from each other. He needed her and she needed him. Even though Margaret was a little on the crazy side. I don't think that she shot him on purpose because she wouldn't make it very far without his money. Francis gave her a chance to leave but he knew that she wouldn't budge just because of the money and all of the other riches that he had.

I know that Francis' death doesn't seem like an accident, because at the time of the shooting or slightly before, he and Mr. Wilson went into the field to see if the bull was dead, Margaret was angry with Francis, yet again, for reasons unknown. I think that even though she was mad at him, she was trying to protect him or his money, if you will, from the rushing bull, and the first thing that came to her mind was to shoot it.

The story doesn't give any indications that Mrs. Macomber knew how to handle, let alone, shoot a gun, so I believe that maybe her aiming was a little off when she was trying to kill the bull. So therefore, I believe that Francis Macomber's death was an accident. I seriously doubt that anyone, in their right mind, would kill the one person that they need in life, on purpose.

We all know that death is death any way you put it, and we all know from the information given in the story, that Francis Macomber was a good guy and didn't deserve to die. Even though I believe that Margaret was trying to protect him, she still had no business firing that gun if she didn't know what she was doing, but then again, Mr. Wilson shouldn't have left her with a gun in the first place.

In this essay I have presented the information that I thought necessary to prove that Francis Macomber's death was indeed an accident. I know that there is an ample amount of evidence and information that could easily sway one in the direction of believing that Francis Macomber's death was a case of murder, but I am sticking with my previous decision of it being an accident.

## STUDENT PAPER NUMBER 22

### How Fear Can Control One's Life

"Margot was too beautiful for Macomber to divorce her and Macomber had too much money for Margot ever to leave him." The couple is bound together not by love, but by need. A-once-in-a-lifetime safari provides Macomber with an opportunity to move beyond his "boy-man" state and discover what manhood and bravery feel like. Margaret, having for years taken full advantage of her husband's insecurities, is deeply unsettled by the change in Macomber. She realizes that this change will ultimately put to an end their mockery of a marriage. Margaret, "a smart woman" has paid close attention to the hunting instructions that Wilson imparted to her [Margaret's] husband, and uses those techniques to ensure that her husband will not leave her.

On the safari, Margaret learned the art of hunting. She knew that it was illegal to shoot from the car and most importantly she knew that the first shot was the one that counts. The narrator gives us the first clue that the techniques that Wilson is teaching might at some point be used on a man. When Margaret says, "You do kill anything, don't you?" Hemingway is suggesting that these skills may be used to kill something other than big game. While preparing for a hunt, Macomber asks Wilson "If I get a shot, where do

I hit him, to stop him?" Wilson's response is as follows "In the neck if you can make it. Shoot for bone. Break him down" (250). This is exactly what Margaret did. The bullet pierced Macomber's body "two inches up and a little to one side of the base of the skull" (264). If the murder was an accident, then why is it that Hemingway goes to great lengths to let the reader know that Margot knew all the techniques of hunting?

It is clear to the reader from the beginning of the story, that the love, if it has ever existed between Margaret and Macomber, has died. Hemmingway reveals to the reader a couple that is basically stuck. Margaret, though considered beautiful in Africa "was not a great enough beauty any more at home to be able to leave him [Macomber] and better herself (256). She apparently had that opportunity earlier in their marriage, but "had missed the chance" (256). Margaret repeatedly pushes her relationship with Macomber to the edge taunting him with illicit affairs and making it sound to others as though she holds the power in the relationship. Even though Margot is unhappy, she cannot walk away from her husband's wealth.

Macomber is stuck as well, although we learn that he is a handsome man and can brag of numerous achievements and attributes:

He was very wealthy, and would be much wealthier, and he knew she would not leave him ever now. He knew about that, about motorcycles...about motor cars, about duck-shooting, about fishing, trout, salmon and big sea, about sex in books, many books, too many books, about all court games, about dogs, ...about hanging on to his money, about most of the other things his world dealt in...(256)

He clearly had difficulty "with women" (256). Hemmingway seems to suggest that Macomber's lack of confidence is revealed in his sexual impotence--he knows about sex in books, many books, too many books (256); his wife has affairs with "many" men, men who Macomber later hated (257); and Margot knows too much about him to worry [about his becoming interested in other women] (256). Each of these passages supports the premise that there were sexual problems in the Macomber's marriage. Rather than confront this demon, Macomber stays in a marriage where he and his wife sabotage each other's happiness. Macomber's newfound confidence would free him from needing his wife and would allow him to look for someone who he could love.

Margaret's smart, she likely realizes that Macomber's impotence is based on fear and a lack of confidence. Once

her husband conquers fear, she realizes that the balance of power in their marriage will shift as Macomber's opinion of himself as a man can now be based on bravery and not on his sexual performance. Even if having a beautiful woman at his side says something positive about Macomber's attractiveness to women, he has now found something even more powerful.

When Macomber says to Wilson "Something happened to me after we first saw the buff and started after him. Like a dam bursting" (262) it's clear that Macomber has turned a corner in his life and nothing will be the same. Hemmingway lets the reader know through Wilson's thinking, "Women knew it too. No bloody fear" that Macomber conquering his difficulty with women seems inevitable (263). This of course, is what Margaret fears the most as she questions Macomber about it perhaps being too late to find bravery. She knows now that her days as his wife are numbered.

Some readers may see the death of Macomber to be an accident, but they are only fooled. While some argue that Margaret's shot was to protect her husband from the charging bull, there is no previous evidence that suggests that she does not feel anything but contempt for her husband. When Wilson accuses Margaret of killing her husband, Margaret repeatedly tells him to "stop it", but does not once counter his accusations.

The Macomber's safari ends a poisoned relationship. As Macomber begins to discover his true self and breaks free from his wife's hold on him, Margaret panics and takes Macomber's life. Ironic as it may seem Macomber ended his life finally free. The tragedy is that if this couple had faced their fears earlier in marriage, Macomber's death could have ultimately been prevented. Although many of our fears and insecurities are not as crippling as the Macomers, we all suffer when we let our fears control our lives.



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Winterowd, W. Ross. A Teacher's Introduction to Composition in the Rhetorical Tradition, Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1994

Straightforward introduction to major ideas in the field, with the goal of personal enrichment of the teacher as well as the increasing of teaching effectiveness. Brief discussion of trends in the 1960's that led to "teachers bringing their new insights directly into the classroom without the benefit of reflection."



Witte, Stephen P. and Faigley, Lester. Evaluating College Writing Programs, Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983

Draws distinction between evaluating student writing and evaluating the writing program itself. Advocates the need for common assumptions, stability, and long-term thinking for their positive influences on student writing. Reviews major evaluation studies and advocates asking basic questions concerning what is known and what is still needed to know.

Young, Art and Fulwiler, Toby. Writing Across the Disciplines, Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton / Cook Publishers, 1986

Collection of essays showing careful study of Writing Across the Curriculum as representing "substantial changes in the ways faculty conduct their courses and the way scholars conceive of knowledge." Emphasizes need for collaboration among faculty from various disciplines.