

Enriching student interpretations of Hemingway's 'Cat in the Rain'

An empirical study of teaching literature

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Lukijakeskeisyys on ollut pitkään kirjallisuudenopetuksen keskiössä, mutta esimerkiksi PISA-tulosten mukaan vapaa-aikanaan lukevien oppilaiden määrä on vähentynyt vuosina 2000-2009. Koulut kamppailevat saadakseen oppilaita lukemaan myös luokan ulkopuolella. Cecilia Therman on ehdottanut ratkaisuksi nelivaiheista lukijälähtöistä kirjallisuudenopetusmenetelmää, jota on sovellettu tässä etnografisessa luokkahuonetutkimuksessa. Tutkielma tarkastelee lukion ENA05-kurssin opiskelijoiden tulkintoja Ernest Hemingwayn novellista "Cat in the Rain", tarkoituksenaan selvittää, kuinka tietoa oppilaiden tulkinnoista voitaisiin hyödyntää kirjallisuudenopetuksen tehostamiseen vieraiden kielten opetuksen kontekstissa.

Thermanin menetelmän mukaisesti oppilaat pohtivat ensin omaa tulkintaansa luetusta tekstistä, jonka jälkeen tulkintoja jaettiin luokan kanssa. Menetelmän kolmannessa vaiheessa, Thermanin menetelmästä poiketen, tutkielma pyrki selvittämään oppilaiden tulkintoja Hemingwayn novellista. Menetelmän viimeisessä vaiheessa oppilaille esitettiin taustatietoja luettuun tekstiin liittyen ja pohdittiin uuden tiedon vaikutusta tehtyihin tulkintoihin. Tutkielman keskeisiksi teoreettisiksi kulmakiviksi muodostuivat lukijaresponssiteoria (eng. reader response theory), kirjallisuuden didaktiikka sekä kirjallisuustutkimuksen tarjoama tieto. Lukijaresponssiteoria käsittelee lukijan, tekstin ja kontekstin vuorovaikutusta, ja tutkielman lähtökohtana ovatkin lukijoiden omat tulkinnat, joita pyritään tutkielman metodin avulla rikastuttamaan. Kirjallisuuden didaktiikkaa sekä kirjallisuustutkimuksen tarjoamaa tietoa novellista on käytetty metodin sovelluksessa opetuksen tehostamiseen.

Tutkielman analyysissä on sovellettu sekä kvalitatiivisen että kvantitatiivisen tutkimuksen menetelmiä, sillä oppilaiden tulkintojen laadun ja luonteen tarkastelun lisäksi on ollut tarpeellista selvittää, minkälaiset tulkinnat ovat ryhmässä yleisimpiä, ja minkälaisia tulkinnallisia yhdistelmiä novellin keskeisistä muuttujista tulkinnoissa esiintyy. Tutkimustieto kerättiin oppilailta englannintunnilla opetuksen ohessa kolmiosaisella kyselylomakkeella.

Tutkielmassa oppilaiden tulkinnoista rakennettiin 21 yksilöllistä tulkintaprofiilia, joita käyttäen muodostettiin luokan kollektiivinen tulkinnallinen tietoisuus. Luokan kollektiivisesta tulkintaprofiilista ilmenee, että oppilaat tulkitsivat novellin keskeisiä muuttujia melko pintapuolisesti, vaikka tulkinnoissa esiintyikin muutamia analyttisiä ja syväluotaavia tulkintoja. Vaikka tulkinnoista oli mahdollista nostaa esiin luokan tulkinnalliset stereotypiat, oppilaiden tulkinnat olivat varsin yksilöllisiä. Tuloksista voidaan päätellä, että opetusmenetelmälle, joka pyrki rikastuttamaan oppilaiden omia tulkintoja, olisi varsin runsaasti tilausta.

Avainsanat: kirjallisuuden opetus, vieraiden kielten opetus, Hemingway, lukijaresponssiteoria, lukutaito

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1 Introduction

This study originated from a wish to explore the application of reader response in a living, breathing classroom. In an article published in *AVAIN*-magazine Cecilia Therman (2011, 55) proposed a method of teaching literature that held student interpretations as its starting point, and combined the multiplicity of literary interpretations of a text with knowledge from literary studies. As Therman had not yet tested the method in 2011, it formed the basis of the methodology of this study, and was modified and supplemented with reader response theory and its practical applications. In the methodology of the study knowledge of literary pedagogy, reading, and Hemingway criticism were applied. The result was an ethnographic case study of an upper secondary class of students and their interpretations of Hemingway's short story "Cat in the Rain". The study draws from a number of fields of expertise in an effort to explore how knowledge of student interpretations of literature can be used to enhance teaching literature in the realm of upper secondary foreign language education.

The study hopes to address the trend according to which steadily fewer students read for pleasure, as has been demonstrated by the recent PISA-results. The results indicate that the number of students who read for pleasure has diminished by eleven percent during 2000-2009 (Sulkunen 2012, 27). Sari Sulkunen (2010, 167) notes that although 5-7 percent of Finnish 15-year-olds with a poor reading proficiency is a seemingly small number, this still translates to thousands of young people in practice. Already in 2002 Sisko Nampajärvi noted that "[l]iterature has become, for many, a difficult and confusing subject area, which offers neither joy nor pleasure" (Nampajärvi 2002, 49; my translation). The trend has become increasingly prevalent in the past decade. Reading proficiency is a skill that encompasses almost all facets of life, to say nothing of its role in foreign language learning. This is why the decreasing number of students who read for pleasure needs to be addressed. Thus foreign language learning, literature and reading proficiency formed the three most important fields of research for this study.

The purpose of this study became then to empirically explore a method of teaching literature which would motivate students to read by enriching their interpretations of the short story, and

would result in more active, committed readers in the foreign language learning context. The research questions the study sought to answer were:

1. How do the upper secondary school students interpret “Cat in the Rain”?
2. How can knowledge of student interpretations be used to teach this story in a way that enhances the students’ reading?

In the study I will first discuss the relevant aspects of reader response, theories of teaching literature, reading and criticism regarding Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain”, and then explicate the methodology of the empirical section. The data and its analysis are elucidated in chapter seven, and my discussion of the results and the conclusions follow in chapters eight and nine respectively.

2 Reader response: Louise Rosenblatt and the transactional theory of the literary work

In the 1920s the scientific method begun to influence humanist subjects, including English, causing I. A. Richards to propose that the study of English should be much more than “aestheticist chit-chat” and that therefore English, too, should be the object of scientific study (Eagleton 1983, 44). I. A. Richards’ work was one of the earliest to focus on the reader’s activity whilst reading (Cuddon 1998, 726). According to Terry Eagleton (1983, 45), Richards sought to “lend [the study of English] a firm basis in the principles of a hard-nosed ‘scientific’ psychology”.

Meanwhile in the United States the New Critics developed what came to be called a *close reading* of the text, which J. A. Cuddon (1998, 142) defines as a “detailed, balanced and rigorous critical examination of a text to discover its meanings and to assess its effects; [the term being] particularly used in reference to the analytical techniques developed by I. A. Richards”. Richards had long analyzed readers’ interpretations of literature, and had come to the conclusion that there were several, specific difficulties of which the reader might suffer, which cause him or her to fail to do justice to a text (Rosenblatt 1994, 144). One of these difficulties was the “susceptibility to mnemonic irrelevances”, which in other words is the reader’s inclination to connect the work to his or her own life experiences (ibid.). Rosenblatt (1994, 144), however, argues that it is specifically

these types of “mnemonic *relevances* [italics Rosenblatt’s] that make it possible for us to have a literary experience at all”.

Indeed the New Critical approach, though popular for several decades from the 1930s to the 1950s, had several considerable shortfalls (Eagleton 1983, 46). Elaine Showalter (2003, 23) summarizes the biggest problem of all as the fact that the “New Critical close reading isolated the text from historical contexts and subjective interpretation, and offered a tough-minded quasi-scientific methodology that gave literary study some parity with the sciences as an academic principle”. Terry Eagleton’s (1983, 44) explanation regarding the core problem with close reading amplifies the issue: close reading implies that “any piece of language, ‘literary’ or not, can be adequately studied or even understood in isolation”. Another problem with Richards’ close reading approach to literature was that it “naively assumed that the poem was no more than a transparent medium through which we could observe the poet’s psychological processes: reading was just a matter of recreating in our mind the mental condition of the author” (Eagleton 1983, 47). Eagleton (1983, 48) underlines that should literature be studied in this manner it would reduce “all literature to a covert form of autobiography”. Nowadays, of course, English students are warned to be aware of the instances in which they perform a biographical reading, and are certainly not encouraged to aspire to recreate “the mental condition of the author” (Eagleton 1983, 47).

While the New Critical manner of approaching literature largely meant ignoring the reader, another angle of approaching the reader, the text and the context arose in the 1920s, which avoided seeing either the text or the reader as the center of focus in literary study (Rosenblatt 1994, 4). This was reader response criticism. Louise Rosenblatt (*ibid.*), whose lifework has concentrated on the transactional theory of the reading process, points out that reader response rose mainly out of the objection to the sociopolitical implications of New Criticism rather than its aesthetic theory .

Marlene Asselin (2000, 62) crystallizes the varying points of view in the field of reader response criticism by explaining that “[t]heorists identify three aspects of this [reader response]

process: the reader, the text and the context. The different relationships that are possible between these components define the different perspectives of reader response”. J. A. Cuddon (1998, 726) points out that reader response theories came into being as a reaction to the earlier “text-oriented theories of Formalism and New Criticism, which [tended] to ignore or underestimate the reader’s role”.

The main difference between various reader response critics is in the way they characterize the relationship between the reader and the text. Steven Mailloux (2010, 94) argues that there are three ways this relationship can be characterized: the reader can either be seen as being *in the text* (the intended reader of the text), having dominance *over the text*, or existing in active interaction *with the text*. Patricia Harkin (2005, 411) notes that Louise Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of the reading process can be said to belong to the last group, as does Rosenblatt’s contemporary’s, Wolfgang Iser’s, phenomenological approach to the reading process. Iser’s phenomenological approach to reading and Rosenblatt’s transactional theory both came to be academically recognized in the 1970s, although Rosenblatt’s theory had been maturing for decades prior to this recognition (ibid.).

Rosenblatt (1994, 12) argues that the poem (a term by which she calls all literary texts) is in fact an event, due to the fact that each reading of any given text is always unique. What this means, is that no poem can ever be read for the first time twice; that the circumstances a person reads in, and what a reader brings to the text, change invariably (Rosenblatt 1994, 14). “A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change any of these, and there occurs a different circuit, a different event—a different poem” (ibid.). The metaphor of a circuit works very well in demonstrating the transactional nature of the reading process as Rosenblatt presents it.

A valid question, which is often presented when the unique nature of each reading instance, each poem as an event, arises here. David Bleich (1986, 137) formulates this core problem of reader response as follows: “How shall subjective feelings and motives be converted into publicly

negotiable issues, and what knowledge does this conversion yield?”. Indeed, Rosenblatt (1994, 53) highlights that the “quality of language – essentially social yet always individually internalized – makes the literary experience something both shared and uniquely personal”. This has been a point of divergence among reader response critics. For example, Norman Holland’s work has revolved around the uniqueness of responses, while Stanley Fish’s concept of interpretive communities looks for shared ground in literary interpretations (Harkin 2005, 412).

Formulating an interpretation of a literary work is anything but the “aestheticist chit-chat” which Richards feared (Eagleton 1983, 44). Rosenblatt (1994, 14) highlights that although in her transactional theory of the reading process meaning occurs between the reader and “what he sees the words as pointing to,” the reader should be careful not to project ideas that have no connection within the literary work. Rosenblatt (1994, 71) depicts the issue further in discussing the openness and the constraint of texts. The openness and constraint of literary texts refers to the degree to which the text limits the reader’s interpretive possibilities.

To begin with, the interpretive possibilities are largely determined by the stance adopted by the reader (Rosenblatt 1994, 75). If the reader opts for an efferent stance in his or her reading, they are looking to carry information away from their reading, while if they choose to read aesthetically, their attention is on the experience reading offers them (Rosenblatt 1994, 24-25). The text at hand will offer its reader clues as to which stance to adopt (Rosenblatt 1994, 77, 81). While Rosenblatt (1994, 72) notes that in looking at words alone some words carry more emotive potential than others (for example *mother* vs. *hypotenuse*), there are also other clues which indicate the stance that is more fruitful. Non-verbal and socio-physical clues may include events such as going to a play, or the circumstances under which we have begun to read (*ibid.*). Verbal clues pertain more to the text, and can include, among other things, the printed form of the text, rhyme, rhythm, special diction, unusual syntactic patterns, and, in theatre, the proscenium arch on the stage (*ibid.*). The difficulty in teaching literature, however, lies in the fact that, to interpret a text, a “reader must bring with him

more than a literal understanding of the individual words. He must bring a whole body of cultural assumptions, practical knowledge, awareness of literary conventions, readiness to think and feel” (Rosenblatt 1994, 88). A number of weak readers, such as those Sari Sulkunen (2010, 167) refers to in her article, will have trouble building an interpretation, when their basic decoding skills in reading are weak. It falls, then, to the teacher to be able to elucidate and instruct readers in matters such as literary conventions, cultural assumptions etcetera to help students formulate an interpretation of the text. Rosenblatt (1994, 85) highlights that a number of interpretive possibilities are inherent in texts, and that a reader may entertain a number of interpretations at once. This is an ideal scenario for the classroom. To bring this about, it is important the teacher be aware of the number of interpretive possibilities regarding the text at hand. A literary text could be compared to a kaleidoscope, where, depending on the type of reading (symbolic, feminist, autobiographical, environmental, structuralist, etcetera) and interpretation the reader arrives at, slightly different segments of the text are key in supporting each interpretation (Therman 2011, 61; chapter 4 of this study). Thus, it is my assumption that the various readings of a text can also, in theory, be categorized according to what they have in common. I will return to discuss this matter in the analysis section of my thesis.

3 Literature in the classroom

Literature in the classroom has much to offer, but it seems that in Finland bringing literature into the foreign language classroom is somewhat challenging, due to the numerous other demands on the teachers’ time. In Finland teachers have the pedagogical freedom to vary their teaching techniques and materials used as they see fit, which means that in upper secondary school the amount of literature used during English lessons depends on the teacher. On the upper secondary level The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools mandates that students study six courses of foreign languages which they have started to learn in 1st–6th grade, as well as two optional courses (Finnish National Board of Education 2003, 102-103). English has typically been one of these

foreign languages. Of the six mandatory courses only one course mentions the use of literature specifically, which falls under the umbrella-topic of culture on the broader scale (ibid.). This is not to say, however, that literature could not be brought into the other courses as well, as literature permeates practically all facets of life.

3.1 Why teach literature

Cecilia Therman (2011, 54) summarizes well the rather common phenomenon in today's educational practice: although teaching literature in the classroom has much to offer, the practice of teaching has been seen as alienating literature from the academic life. In her research Pirjo Linnakylä (2004, 171) has found that 67% of Finnish 15-year-olds are rather set in the genres they read and do not venture to read longer texts, and prefer to read magazines and comics. Reading little and from a narrow selection of available texts is unfortunate, as David E. Eskey (2005, 563) points out that

students who read frequently acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called "language skills" many people are so concerned about. They will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers.

The same conclusion has also been reached in Finland. Finnish researchers (Linnakylä and Malin 2007, 305; Pahkinen 2002, 12; Linnakylä and Malin 2004, 221) emphasize the selfsame benefits of reading: students who read actively for pleasure create independent learning opportunities for themselves, which support their studies in school as well as offer them information on things that may not be covered in school, or information that may equal years of academic learning. While numerous things affect a student's reading habits (see Linnakylä and Malin 2007; Linnakylä, Sulkunen and Arfman 2004), teachers have an excellent opportunity in encouraging students to read by using literature in the foreign language classroom. In their studies Linnakylä and Malin (2007, 305) have demonstrated that commitment to active reading habits is connected to the interaction between the reader and the text. It is this interaction between the reader and the text, as is above

described in relation to the work of Louise Rosenblatt, that Aino-Maija Lahtinen (2008, 262) argues can function as a source of psychological strength. A considerable amount of research seems to demonstrate that making literature a stronger presence in the foreign language learning environment would likely enhance learning.

Pirjo Linnakylä (2004, 181) stresses that reading short texts like articles, comics and magazines will not develop students' reading literacy as much as literature does. This is because literature offers numerous opportunities for developing one's cognitive skills, emotional life as well as one's world view (ibid.). According to Linnakylä (ibid.), reading literature enriches the reader's imaginative and creative capacities, offers refreshing and exciting experiences and conveys historical and current events, while predicting the future from a humane point of view. Literature offers tales of heroism which support the growth of identity and develop the reader's values (ibid.). Linnakylä (ibid.) observes that literature connects timeless questions and issues to the present. Linnakylä (2004, 182) echoes Rosenblatt (1992, 81) in underlining that literature invites the reader to employ their previously acquired knowledge, experiences, emotions and values in interpreting and creating meanings. In essence, using literature in the classroom offers comprehensive education of the entire student, as opposed to offering a sliver of information on a specific field of knowledge.

3.2 Teaching literature

In approaching the subject of the theories of teaching literature Elaine Showalter (2003, 21) begins by pointing out that the teacher should define the concept of literature for themselves, for this definition will affect their teaching. How a teacher defines concepts such as literature, the idea of man and the learning process, as well as the teacher's values, all affect the practice of teaching. In addition to these concepts, it is also important that the teacher reflect on how he or she interprets the text at hand. In choosing literary texts to be read and taught, the texts should be chosen with the reader in mind. Depending on the students' age and language aptitude, the teacher may choose,

recommend or let students choose the texts to be read. For the purposes of this study Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain" seemed most adequate a text to use, as it was a short story classic used in upper secondary and higher education level language studies, and offered ample material for interpretation (See for example *Culture Cafe* textbook, 2004).

Showalter (2003, 42-87) proposes several ways of approaching the teaching of literature, such as lecturing, leading discussions, modeling and employing modern technology for learning purposes. In the process of this study I employed a brief lecture, a short discussion and the use of a document camera in teaching. According to Showalter (2003, 27), teaching literature, like teaching any other subject, can be subject-, teacher- or student-oriented, or it may consist of a variety of theories about teaching. In order to be able to study the student responses, the students were asked to respond to questions regarding "Cat in the Rain" individually on paper. Under normal teaching circumstances it would be most advantageous to let the students discuss the text in small groups (see for example Fish 1986).

According to Heleena Lehtonen (1998, 8-18), in teaching literature, attention to students' reading proficiency and the process of reading is as important as attention to interpretive skill. Attention to reading proficiency is a fundamental part of teaching literature, because good reading proficiency allows for room to make interpretations while reading: Eero Herajärvi (2002, 21) and Lehtonen (1998, 25) both highlight that while swift reading speed is not an end in itself, being able to take in larger segments of text helps the reader use more of their mental capacity for interpreting. Lehtonen (1998, 26) notes that when instructing students on the subject of reading and literature, the instruction should contain information on both the content and method, although Husu (2002, 99) warns of a situation where interesting content steals the students' attention away from practicing the actual reading skill. That is to say, the students should be taught about the text, as well as, for example, how to approach a text of the given type. Students could also be reminded of the existing variety of reading skills (Lehtonen 1998, 8).

There are several ways of classifying different reading skills: technical, functional and experiential reading skill (Lehtonen 1998, 8). In this study the students were assumed to have a standard level technical reading skill, as the students participating in the study were in upper secondary school. This is why during the lesson the subject of functional reading skills were only briefly touched upon before reading the short story. The main object of study were the students' interpretations of the story, which pertain to the area of experiential reading skill (Lehtonen 1998, 7). Lehtonen (1998, 29-32) underlines that students should be taught to read creatively, as opposed to repetitively. Creative reading originates from active readership, which is something the teacher can direct their students toward (Lehtonen 1998, 22-24).

In preparing for the empirical section of this thesis the likelihood of finding passive readers in the classroom seemed like an indisputable fact, for which reason, and for future replications of this method, it is worthwhile to understand how active reading and passive reading work, and how to encourage passive readers to actively engage themselves in the reading process (Lehtonen 1998, 23). Pre-while-post reading exercises have been in use for years, and theoretically these types of exercises which prompt the student to reflect on the text before, during, and after reading are exceedingly effective, but they are only effective if the student really commits to the exercises. Many teachers may attest to the fact that this is not always the case. Passive readers present a challenge to using literature in the foreign language classroom, as to them reading under any circumstance is a much greater obstacle than may often be presumed. Heleena Lehtonen (1998, 23-24; my translation) describes passive readers comprehensively as follows:

Passive readers do not ask why they read or what they intend to use the read material for. They do not take notice of the type of text they are reading or the purpose of the text, nor do they anticipate the text's content. A passive reader does not relate their own, earlier experiences or knowledge of the world to the text . . . During reading a passive reader does not follow their own performance as a reader, they do not know if they have understood what they have read . . . They have an underdeveloped metacognition. They do not ask, comment or reflect upon how the content of the text fits into their own experiences or knowledge of the world.

Though passive readers indeed present a challenge to using literature in the foreign language learning environment, there are a number of activities a teacher may use to engage their students in the reading process, and help them commit to the act of reading. In addition to the aforementioned pre-while-post exercises, Herajärvi (2002, 29) presents a number of ways students' reading comprehension can be guided toward a more profound level of understanding. These activities include reviewing the text's vocabulary and attempting to anticipate what the text will be about—both of which took place in the process of this study (ibid.). Interestingly, Herajärvi (ibid.) suggests that students would benefit from background information about the text prior to their reading, which in light of this study and the theory involved is in fact less advisable. However, Herajärvi (ibid.) also underlines the importance of acknowledging student interpretations in encouraging students to commit to the reading process. In what follows I will describe some applications of reader response into the teaching of literature, which have been found effective in helping students formulate their own interpretation of a text.

3.3 Applying Reader response into teaching literature

Helena Linna (1999, 10), teacher of literature and teacher trainer at the University of Helsinki, has been incorporating Louise Rosenblatt's reader response strategies into her comprehensive school teaching in Finland over her 25-year-long career. Linna (1999, 16) maintains that while effective learning requires that the learner be active and considers the activity aimed at learning agreeable, the teacher has a key role in either encouraging or discouraging their students from reading.

One effective method of helping the students along the path of formulating their own responses is to demonstrate by thinking out loud how the teacher might approach the text (Linna 1999, 21). This is something Linna (ibid.) has successfully used in her own teaching. The teacher may use a short text to be read and modeled to the class, which would be different from the text the students are reading to avoid modeling what the students might conceive as "the correct" response to the text. In seeking how to best teach the short story at hand, Linna's (1999, 26) work made it

apparent that in order for a teacher to best direct students toward better reading comprehension, the teacher must understand what reading comprehension is essentially about. Linna (1999, 28) underlines the value of Rosenblatt's work regarding the teaching of literature, as Rosenblatt has been widely acknowledged for her theories regarding teaching literature, which have been implemented into the didactics of literature as well. Linna (*ibid.*) notes that Rosenblatt's work has been considered to have influenced the practices of teaching literature probably more than any other theorist .

Patricia Ross French (1987, 28) has also applied reader response in the classroom, and recounts that “[i]n the spring of 1985 I abruptly abandoned a traditional New Critical method of teaching my short story class and focused instead on written responses to and activities based on stories assigned to the students”. In these activities French (1987, 38-39) had her students write reflective response assignments, assume roles of fictional characters and sit in panels to present and defend viewpoints which arose from the texts they read. One of the reader response activities suggested by French (1987, 39) included asking the students to choose “one word, sentence, paragraph, or page which they think is the most important in the story and to explain why”. Through her own experimentation with reader response techniques in her classroom French (1987, 35-36) notes that “[o]ne of the more gratifying results of these activities was the change in thinking . . . which occurred in the class”, although “a certain number of students continued to feel anxious about the new method. These were students who had learned to manipulate the traditional analytical skills taught in past English classes, and that served as a crutch for them”. These students “had learned to reject their own tentative readings in favor of the teacher's” (*ibid.*). It is my presumption that in beginning to coach students of this study toward responsive, creative reading the initial step will be the hardest.

In helping her students begin to respond to literature Helene Dunkelblau (2007, 51) found that students most often needed “questions or prompts to help them focus their responses”. These

questions or prompts included the following: “What does a passage or incident in the story make me think of? Have I experienced some of the same things as one of the characters? What would I do if I were the character? What do I think will happen to a character? How would I like the story to end? What questions do I have, and what don’t I understand about the story?” (ibid.). These types of prompts and questions to help “focus” a students’ response can be useful, but often creative reading is best reflected in a free-form response, without questions. These questions can, however, as Dunkelblau (ibid.) suggests, be used to help students get started. How these exercises described above were utilized in this study will be discussed in chapter six in relation to the method.

4 Critical interpretations of Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain”

The short story “Cat in the Rain” is one of Hemingway’s most famous texts, which offers a brief but deeply symbolic window into an American couple’s stay at a hotel in Italy. The story begins and ends in the hotel room of the couple, from which the wife spies a cat huddling under a table outdoors in the rain. The wife decides to fetch the cat indoors, and winds up making the quest on her own, though her husband offers to get it for her. The story is narrated in third person, using the wife, who throughout the story remains without a proper name, as the focal point. Once outdoors, the wife finds the cat gone, but shortly after returning to her room and venting her frustration to her husband through a number of “I wants”, the maid knocks at the door, bringing with her a large tortoise-shell cat for the “signora” (Hemingway 2003, 131). True to the modernist style, the story ends quite suddenly, before the readers are offered a glimpse at the wife’s reaction upon receiving the cat.

To be able to best teach the short story at hand it was vital to be aware of the variety of its critical interpretations. The importance of this will be clarified in the analysis and discussion sections of this thesis, when the theory of teaching literature, reader response criticism and knowledge of criticism related to the short story are combined with information gained from the student responses. For now, the focus will be on the critical interpretations of the text.

There are various ways of approaching a short story. Hemingway's fiction has been the object of analysis of numerous academics, and their interpretations always seem to uncover something new. The general points of variance in the critical interpretations usually spring primarily from whether or not the cat is the same the wife saw outside, and secondly from whether the wife is or would like to be pregnant, or has had a miscarriage.

John Hagopian (1962, 221) suggests that the short story deals with the painful topic of a crisis in a marriage, which is caused by infertility. He divides the short story into five symmetric scenes, from which he derives the key symbolic features that support his interpretation (*ibid.*). The first scene is the one taking place in the hotel room. He suggests that the public garden "dominated by the war monument" foreshadows the infertility (*ibid.*). The second scene is the one in which the wife passes through the hotel lobby. Hagopian (*ibid.*) suggests that through the narration, the reader is allowed to interpret the wife's subconscious, which seems to contrast the hotel keeper and her husband, though the wife herself never consciously makes the comparison (Hagopian 1962, 221). Deciding whether or not this is so is left to the reader. In the third scene the wife ventures outdoors, looking for the cat. Hagopian (*ibid.*) seems to perform the new critical close reading of the text, and calls for a close analysis of the text's every detail.

Hagopian (*ibid.*) goes on to suggest that whilst outdoors, the rubber cape that the woman sees a passer by wearing is symbolic for contraception against the rain; a fairly common symbol for fertility. Hagopian's (*ibid.*) argument is that while the conscious thought of a pregnancy never enters the mind of the American wife, the feelings the padrone seems to stir in her communicate a longing for something to care for. He supports his argument by emphasizing that the numerous things the wife wants, her hair in a bun, her own table, silver, for it to be spring, to have new clothes, and, of course, a cat, all point to a domestic life which would include children. Hagopian (1962, 222) states that the cat is "an obvious symbol for a child" but in the story George does not seem to want the same things.

Hagopian (*ibid.*) suggests that the cat brought indoors is probably not the same as the one the wife saw outdoors, but that what is most important is that “it will most certainly not do”. What I find interesting are on what grounds Hagopian arrived at this last statement. He concedes thereafter, that the wife “is willing to settle for a child-surrogate, but the big tortoise-shell cat obviously cannot serve that purpose” (*ibid.*). Overall, Hagopian’s close, textual analysis of the text suggests that the story is about a crisis in marriage due to symbolic references which arise from the symmetric composition of the short story.

William Adair (1992, 73) takes on a somewhat different approach, suggesting that at the core of the story lies infertility, but that it is not so much a shared infertility, or that of the wife, but rather infertility on part of George. While other interpretations of the story have either characterized George as a fairly flat character, and sometimes as “selfish and insensitive”, Adair (*ibid.*) feels these qualities do not entirely account for George’s choice of action (or lack thereof) in the story. He supports his argument with autobiographical information on Hemingway, like pointing out that Hemingway developed as a short story writer after having written his short story “Up in Michigan”, as well as with intertextual commentary, such as knowledge of a specific, violent scene having been omitted from another story. In supporting his argument Adair (1992, 73) also takes into account historical evidence, such as a letter from Hemingway to his friend Scott Fitzgerald, in which Hemingway comments on his desire to write tragic short stories without any actual violence.

While Hagopian’s (1962, 221) interpretation was based on symbolism and the structure of the text, Adair (1992, 73) bases his interpretation on vertical imagery. This, he argues, “makes George’s horizontal [*sic*] position more pronounced” when combined with his lack of response to his wife’s appeals (Adair 1992, 74). Adair (*ibid.*) enumerates various examples of vertical imagery from the text, such as movement up and down the stairs, all other characters standing and/or moving about, water standing in pools, the maid looking up at the wife, italians looking up at the war monument, palm trees standing in the rain etcetera. Adair (*ibid.*) also supports his argument by

referring to other texts by Hemingway, where “[l]ying down is a frequently recurring ‘event’”. According to Adair (ibid.), in 29 of the stories published in *The First Forty-nine* (in three-fifths of the stories, that is) there is always some character lying down.

Adair (1992, 74) further backs his interpretation by drawing on other socio-historic knowledge, such as the fact that Gertrude Stein had apparently suggested Hemingway try autobiographical realism in his writing. Thus we could suggest that Adair’s (ibid.) reading of “Cat in the Rain” is, while symbolic, also biographical, as Hemingway had written to Ezra Pound commenting on the sexual and creative impotence that Hadley’s losing the manuscripts had caused him. Adair’s (1992, 73) analysis is exceptional, because, as he himself points out: “Most discussions of ‘Cat in the Rain’ almost dismiss George the husband from the story as a complex character-- [sic] as if his only function is to lie on the bed and, as Selfish and Insensitive Male, act as a cue for his wife’s emotional turmoil”. Adair’s (1992, 73) analysis could perhaps thus be characterized as a symbolic, autobiographical reading.

Darren Felty (1997, 363) argues that the story’s main subject is the emotional estrangement of the husband and the wife, which is shown in the spatial relationships and geometric patterns in the imagery. Felty’s interpretation is different from the previous interpretations because he centers it more around the setting, making his reading a more environmental one. This is because a four-page manuscript from 1923 shows that originally Hemingway had written the story as having a much lighter mood, one where the husband and wife are happy and excited to be surrounded by such beautiful nature in this northern part of Italy (Felty 1997, 364). “This sketch, in fact, concentrates almost exclusively on images of happiness and fertility” (ibid.). Felty also points out that in this earlier manuscript, there exists a scene where the husband and wife emerge from a dark tunnel and kiss, after which the husband turns to his wife and says, “Aren’t we happy, Kitty?” (ibid.). Based on this manuscript, it could be argued that in the final version the cat represents the wife, in that she sees herself as being in an equally poor situation as the cat in the rain due to the emotional

estrangement she and her husband are experiencing. Though Felty (1997, 364) notes the wife's "interesting nickname", he does not suggest the cat could directly be read as symbolic of the wife. Thus Felty's reading is an environmental one of the spatial imagery presented in the story, which he supports with textual and extra-textual information.

In his article Peter Griffin (2001, 99-100) suggests that due to his "surly mood" whilst in Rapallo, Hemingway referenced common slang in the title of "Cat in the Rain" and hence a double-entendre runs throughout the story, which serves to demonstrate the wife's almost "manic desire" for a child. It seems Griffin's reading of "Cat in the Rain" is less radical than that of many other Hemingway critics, as he seems to concentrate on the biographical information about the circumstances under which the text was produced (*ibid.*). According to Carlos Baker (Baker, quoted in Griffin 2001, 99) "Cat in the Rain" was written about Hemingway "and Hadley and the manager and the chambermaid at the Hotel Splendide", where the Hemingways stayed at during their visit to Rapallo, Italy in February 1923. This theory was later proved to be false (Griffin 2001, 99). However, Griffin (*ibid.*) supports his argument with autobiographical details in claiming that Hemingway's sour mood seeped into the story's mood because at the time of writing the story, "Hemingway and his wife were both depressed. Despite all precautions, Hadley had become pregnant. . . . There was little money, less work, and not much love".

In Griffin's (2001, 100) analysis, special attention is paid to the rain, which is seen not so much as a symbol for fertility but rather as revealing "vacancy, absence, sadness, and lingering regret", which Griffin (*ibid.*) connects to Hemingway's emotional state at the time of writing. Griffin (2001, 101) characterizes the wife as somewhat needy, though he seems to sympathize with the wife in saying that the "wife wants what should come to a young woman" – a physical relationship with her husband and a child by him. Griffin (*ibid.*) characterizes George as being a part of "the post-war men, [who] have a disgust for action, any action, except the action of the eyes". George is contrasted with the Padrone, who represents the prewar men, which seems to

imply his inclination to action, and character opposite to George's (ibid.). What separates Griffin (2001, 102) from several other critics is his attention to the instances of irony which arise partly from the double-entendre as well as the final scene in which the wife receives her object of desire, but from someone other than her husband. The irony-inducing feature acknowledged by many is naturally the "sterile male cat, [b]ut then [the wife has] already got one of those" (ibid.). Thus Griffin's analysis of "Cat in the Rain" circles around the irony of the double-entendre, the contrast between George and the Padrone and characterization of rain as something negative, as opposed to interpreting the rain as a symbol for fertility.

Warren Bennet (1988, 26) crystallizes the essential matter of the text into questions regarding the cat and the padrone. Bennet (ibid.) recaps several other critical readings of the short story and argues that there are two essential questions which need to be addressed before forming interpretations of the story. The first question is whether there is one or two cats in the story, and the second whether the wife wants to be pregnant, or if she already is expecting (Bennet 1988, 26). These questions are important to bear in mind regarding the teaching of this story, and it would do well to look for such essential questions in other literary pieces that are taught as well, because as Bennet (1988, 27) points out, these are "crucial elements in the story's meaning and the disputes about them need to reexamined in terms of all the textual and extratextual evidence". Bennet (1988, 27-28) argues that both textual and extratextual evidence point to there being two cats, a small female kitty the wife sees and a large male cat the maid brings up. Regarding the possibility of a pregnancy Bennet (ibid.) agrees with John Hagopian in that the wife would *like* to be pregnant, as opposed to *being* pregnant as David Lodge has argued, due to the fact that "[p]regnancy cravings are biologically determined, not 'whimsical', and consequently, such cravings cannot be construed to include cats, clothes, candles, silver, or long hair".

Bennet (1988, 27-28.) also refers to extratextual evidence, such as a letter from Hemingway to F. S. Fitzgerald, wherein Hemingway counters the argument that the wife in the story be based on

Hadley. The role of the padrone, Bennet (1988, 30-31) argues, is to create contrast between the padrone, an admirable man of “dignity, will and commitment”, and George, a representative of the younger generation, who “has neither dignity, nor will, now commitment. He’s a kid”. In the empirical section of my study it will be interesting to see if students have read George treating his wife the same way as Bennet (1988, 31) has: “Rather than respect her, as the padrone does, George disdains her. His egocentricity is so concentrated that he expects his wife to deny her own desires, model herself on her husband and do as he does”. In investigating the students’ readings of the cat, too, I expect it to be revealing to see whether the students have been sensitive to the interpretation Bennet (*ibid.*), for example has performed: when the wife sees the cat in the rain she is not aware of the gender of the cat, yet she quickly projects her own gender onto the cat, relates to its sorry state and transfers onto it her “own sense of homelessness [and] wants to do for the cat what George will not do for her, provide a place of acceptance and comfort”. While Felty (1997, 364) noted the wife’s “interesting nickname”, he did not directly propose the cat be symbolic of the wife. Bennet (1988, 32), however, argues that based on knowledge of the original title of the story, “The Poor Kitty”, this interpretation is most valid.

Bennet’s (1988, 33) interpretation also takes into account a number of other symbols in the text. The growing darkness Bennet (*ibid.*) reads as the growing frustration the wife is experiencing in her marriage, the cause of which is the sense of emptiness caused possibly by the lack of a child, which is symbolized by the dark, empty square in front of the hotel. There is, however, a small light across the square, which in literary symbolism is most often read as a sign of hope (Bennet 1988, 34). This, however, is skillfully nullified by Hemingway in his ironic ending to the story. In literature, an artificial light is often likely interpreted as a source of false hope. Bennet (*ibid.*) considers the irony in the wife getting a tortoise-shell cat to generate from the fact that “[t]ortoise-shells do not naturally reproduce; that is, a female tortoise-shell will not reproduce tortoise-shell kittens and male tortoise-shells are sterile”. Whether or not the students are aware of this will

doubtless affect their readings of the story, and will affect how this story should be taught to them to offer the students the most enriching reading experience possible.

Edwin J. Barton (1994, 72) approaches the text in terms of its epistemological uncertainties, and refers to Gerry Brenner's writing in emphasizing that in Hemingway's texts there is typically a "lexical riddle" which materializes in the story as a missing or ambiguous term for the readers to stew over. In Barton's (ibid.) opinion, the missing word would answer the questions presented by Warren Bennet, which are firstly, whether there are two cats in the story or simply one, and secondly whether the wife wants to have a baby or is already pregnant. Barton (1994, 74) interprets the cat as a child-surrogate, and sketches other possible readings, such as that the wife may have been pregnant before, and why she may be pregnant during the events presented in the story as well. Both seem like possible readings, and it is exactly the epistemological uncertainty to which Barton (1994, 72) refers in the beginning of his article that makes the story quite difficult to interpret in a specific, "correct" manner.

Barton (1994, 75) argues that the stereotypical reading of George and his wife would label the wife as "sexually frustrated and unappreciated" and George as "impotent and insensitive", but then we would read the story "as it should be", when in actual fact "in 'Cat in the Rain' Hemingway subverts these stereotypical labels through the the lexical riddle of 'fertility', which lies behind the the lexical riddle of 'domestic maternity'". In this sense, Barton's (1994, 75) analysis is fairly radical in its nature, because, referring to other short stories by Hemingway he suggests that George's seemingly insensitive behavior is opposite to what it may seem to so-called readerly readers: "These stories present highly complex, fluid, and dynamic relations between the sexes and suggest that Hemingway understood, like another American writer who went before him, that the stories of *eros tyrannos* are rarely just what we would expect". It is critics like Barton who remind us that we ought to keep reading and rereading texts like "Cat in the Rain", as they always seem to offer much more than we have initially presumed.

Oddvar Holmesland's (1986, 221) reading of Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain" is a structuralist interpretation, which differs from numerous other critics' readings due to the fact that structuralist readings concentrate on the language of the text alone and disregard all extra-textual knowledge (Cuddon 1998, 868). Holmesland breaks the short story into its *fabula*, roughly the plot of the story, and its *sjuzet*, order and manner of presenting the chronological events of the story (Cuddon 1998, 328). In terms of readership, identifying the fabula of the formalist theory of the narrative in this short story is not difficult to do. It is identifying the sjuzet that is a challenge for even the most active readers (Lehtonen 1998, 22-24). Holmesland (1986, 222) points out that

Hemingway's characteristic method of creating sjuzet bears on 'a new theory that you could omit anything if you knew that you omitted, and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood.' Omission of units in the logical chain mystifies the reader, inviting a greater imaginative involvement in the life presented.

This is an important observation regarding this study as well, as it is likely that in a classroom of 23 students there are bound to be students who are active, creative readers, and students who are more passive in their reading (Lehtonen 1998, 22-24). It is sensitivity to this method of omission and how it affects the reader's experience of the text that I will, in part, look for in the data collected.

In regard to one of the most central questions surrounding the text, whether there are one or two cats in the story, Holmesland (1986, 223) argues that the reader cannot truly know. However, Holmesland (1986, 224) does agree with a number of other critics in that the "quest for a cat to compensate needs [can be seen] as a metaphor of the wife's deeper, unfulfilled desires. This link", according to Holmesland (*ibid.*), "is rooted in the structuralist concept of binary oppositions". As for the cat being a symbol for a child and motherhood, Holmesland (1986, 225) states that "[t]here is no definite verification in the text for drawing the kitty/tortoise-shell cat or tortoise-shell cat/baby equivalence along the metaphoric axis. The final scene [in the story] evokes a symbolic reverberation, but does not refer directly to another concrete object".

Holmesland (1986, 226) presents the rain as the second important motif in the story. Holmesland (ibid.) recounts the various interpretations of rain by John Hagopian and David Lodge, and summarizes that according to these critics, the rain can be interpreted as a symbol of fertility, against which the rubber cape functions as a symbol of contraception (ibid.). The rain can also be seen negatively, symbolizing “the loss of pleasure and joy, the onset of discomfort and ennui” (ibid.).

Holmesland (1986, 228) brings up a third motif which may be difficult for upper secondary school students to pick out: the window through which the wife looks at the outdoors, blooming with life. The window, Holmesland (ibid.) explains, is a classic structuralist feature which divides the elements in the short story “into binary oppositions”. This has to do with the fertile outdoors and the non-fertile indoors of which the wife is a part of. Holmesland (1986, 230) concludes his elegant analysis by pointing out that the failed quest of the wife is the fundamental reason for the variation in terminology regarding “cat vs. kitty” and “wife vs. girl”: “It may be that her disappointment causes her to regress to an immature obstinacy. Or it may be that, at a symbolic level, her femininity suffers when her quest for the cat fails”. According to Holmesland (1986, 231-2), the cat could indeed be interpreted as a symbol for the wife’s unfulfilled desires in a story that deals with marital estrangement. Regarding the pregnancy, he states, there is no evidence for a pregnancy or a lack thereof (ibid.).

The various critical interpretations of Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain” spark a great deal of discussion, each being slightly different from the next regarding the most crucial points in the story. Having covered the most central interpretations of the short story, the analysis section of this thesis will focus on how the students have interpreted the story. This information, along with knowledge of criticism related to the story, reader response criticism and teaching literature will be used to draw conclusions about how the story could have been taught to offer the students the most enriching reading experience possible in the given circumstances.

5 The theoretical nature of the study

The study is an ethnographic classroom study, the data of which was gathered in Tampere at the end of November, 2011. The study is epistemological and abductive in nature as its aim is to examine how the students interpret the short story and to then view the interpretations in light of theory regarding Hemingway criticism, reader response criticism and theory of teaching and reading literature as described in the first four chapters of this thesis. Another important aspect of the nature of this study was to allow myself to function as a teacher researching my own work. Teachers are encouraged to be capable of studying phenomena that are found in the classroom. This helps us not only develop personally in our profession but hopefully further knowledge within the field of education in general as well.

6 Method

The empirical section of this study was conducted within the framework of the fifth English course of the National Teaching Curriculum (ENA5). The data was gathered from a class of upper secondary school students in their second year at school. The fifth course served extremely well as a framework for this thesis because its theme is culture, and the course description states that in course five culture is dealt with on a broad scale (Finnish National Board of Education 2003, 102). Topics such as “cultural identity and cultural knowledge” and “communications and media competency” are said to serve as possible points of view into this course (ibid.). During this course I had the opportunity to teach the students five 75 minute lessons, which provided this study with a clearer view of how the national curriculum was realized in the actual classroom level work. The lessons are transcribed in the sections to follow.

Teaching literature comes with certain difficulties, one of these being the fact that students are quite different in their reading practices and habits, some stronger and some weaker readers than others. In order to better teach the literary piece chosen for this study it seemed necessary to prepare

for a variety of readers. In addition, the method employed in this study also calls for teaching which is student-oriented, as opposed to text-oriented, for example. In an effort to prepare for the likely weaker readers in the classroom Sari Sulkunen's (2010, 161, 171) research came to play an important role. In describing the results of the ADORE-project (Teaching struggling adolescent readers – A comparative study of good practices in European countries) a research enterprise undertaken by the European Union in which eleven countries took part, Sulkunen (ibid.) explicates the seven factors that were found most useful in supporting weak readers in the classroom.

The seven factors that proved most effective were a safe atmosphere and an encouraging manner of interaction, creating a motivating reading environment, an assessment of individual students' needs, committing the students to the planning of the studies, choosing interesting texts to be read, acknowledging the students' personal interpretations of the texts read, and, lastly, teaching cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies (Sulkunen 2010, 172). The method applied in this study aims particularly to acknowledge students' individual interpretations of the text that was read in class, as well as to teach cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies insofar as was possible within the time frame of the lessons. The lessons will be discussed in more detail further on.

In teaching the short story the teacher may have their own opinion about which interpretation has the most textual and / or extra-textual support, but in teaching the story the teacher's own view should not be key. Towards the end of the lesson the teacher may point out which parts of the text play a key role in each interpretation, but the focus should be on the student reader and their response, if the method as suggested by Therman (2011) is to be followed. This is vital because students will not develop the creative reading skill as described by Heleena Lehtonen (1998) if they are taught to parse the teaching for the teacher's "correct" reading of the text.

6.1 How the research questions will be answered

The purpose of the study was to discover how students interpreted Hemingway's short story "Cat in the Rain", and to explore how this knowledge could be used to teach the short story in a way that would enrich student interpretations of "Cat in the Rain". The first research question I intend to answer by distributing a reader response survey whilst applying an adaptation of Cecilia Therman's (2011, 54) proposed method of teaching literature. I will then analyze the results of the survey by fragmenting and categorizing the student responses to gain a sense of how the class interpreted the short story as a whole. For this reason some interpretations have a non-whole decimal number out of the total number of responses as its result, which is seen in the interpretive profiles diagram (see p. 117). The second question I will answer based on the analysis of the student responses, drawing from fields of literary studies, education and reader response.

6.2 Therman's method and how it was applied

In carrying out the lesson during which the data for the study was gathered, I applied a method proposed by Cecilia Therman (2011, 54), which is reader-oriented in its nature. In her article Therman (*ibid.*) points out that the general trend in 21st century Finland seems to be one where schools value reading as a free-time activity, but find it difficult to cultivate this in their students.

Therman (2011, 55) proposes that teaching literature in a way that acknowledges, as a priority, the student reader's interpretations of a text is more motivating to students than methods such as lecturing alone (see Showalter 2003 for lecturing). In this thesis lecturing had a small role, as it was only briefly employed at the end of the data gathering lesson to allow the students to learn something new about the text at hand. The purpose of this method is not only to encourage reading but also to acknowledge and enrich students' original readings of a given text (Therman 2011, 55).

Therman (*ibid.*) underlines that the method differs from reader response criticism on two central issues: how the nature of language is viewed and how the nature of language affects the

uniqueness of each interpretation. Therman (2011, 55) argues that while numerous reader response critics maintain that language in general is highly individual, and that this often leads to the conclusion that literary interpretations must be extremely fragmented, in her study (2004, 129) the results showed numerous similarities in the interpretations of the text, and few completely unique readings. This, Therman (2011, 55) underlines, is because language is at once individual and shared. Thus she proposes a method of teaching literature in a way that would begin with each reader's response to a text, but would then continue with an analysis of effects of the universality of language and the effects of personal experiences that contribute to a student's reading of a text (Therman 2011, 56). In this study, however, Therman's (ibid.) proposed method was adapted to explore not how and which life experiences and the universality of language affected the students' interpretations, but rather how the students interpreted the text to begin with. The method was also supplemented with reader response activities suggested by Patricia Ross French (1987, 39).

The method Therman (2011, 59) proposes consists of four steps. In the first step, the students are to structure their own response, and they are then, secondly, to share their responses with other readers of the same text. In the third step, the teacher and the students aim to uncover what they have assumed in performing the readings they have expressed in the first step. In the final step the purpose is to constructively add new information to what the students already know, and consider how the new information affects their original reading. The purpose is to enrich, and not replace, the students' own interpretations (ibid.).

The first step of Therman's (2011, 55) method I realized by using a single, open-ended question which aims to help the students evoke their over-all response to the short story: "What is the most important word / phrase / sentence in the story? Please explain your answer" (French 1987, 39). Patricia Ross French (ibid.) has applied reader response in the classroom by using these types of exercises when teaching literature. French (1987, 28) advocates the use of "response statement assignments, [which help the student focus] on particular issues of interpretation [that accompany]

each reading”. French (1987, 39) also suggests, for example, to ask the students “to write about a personal experience similar to one in the story” and reminds teachers to “treat every response—no matter how out-of-bounds you think it is—as valid. Explore it; find out where it comes from; let the class work with it. The resulting discussion gets at central issues in the text and teaches much about the reading process”. In the first step of Therman’s (2011, 55) method the central idea is to help students formulate their own reading, and it is my presumption that the reader response activity suggested by French (1987, 39) could help achieve it.

The second step of Therman’s (2011, 55) method calls for sharing the responses. In the process of teaching I hoped to create an atmosphere of dialogue in the classroom, where the students would express their readings independently in the brief discussion held in between written responding. I hoped that the students would voice the ideas they had had as well as write them down. However, if the discussion did not seem to generate on its own, I intended to use the student responses written in the first step as initiators of dialogue. The third part of the survey consists of multiple choice questions, where, to allow for some freedom of interpretation, each answer also contains the possible “own answer”, where the student may indicate a choice of readings different to those offered. The survey can be found in the Appendix of this study.

As the aim of my study was different to that of Therman’s (2011, 55), the purpose of the third step was to uncover how the students interpreted specific variables of the short story, before offering them new information on the short story. I presumed this step to offer the greatest insight into the student interpretations, as it was by far the largest segment of the survey. In the responses I expected to gain a sense of the level of introspectiveness in the reading of each student, as that can be expected to vary greatly. The insightfulness of the responses has to do with the students’ competence as readers, as Lehtonen’s (1998, 22-23) studies on active and passive readers demonstrated earlier. Rosenblatt (1994, 57-58) notes that readers vary in how well they remember what they have read and what their response was to a given section of text. In discussing the ability

of the reader to evoke a response to a text Rosenblatt (ibid.) points out that “[a]wareness—more or less explicit—of repetitions, echoes, resonances, repercussions, linkages, cumulative effects, contrasts, or surprises is the main mnemonic matrix for the structuring of emotion, idea, situation, character, plot—in short, for the evocation of a work of art”. The difficulty in realizing this third step is the likelihood that the less “experienced” readers may find it hard to put into words or to observe at all the possible repetitions, echoes, resonances etcetera as noted by Rosenblatt (ibid.).

The third step of the method was ultimately actualized with the second and third parts of the survey. Part two of the survey consisted of open-ended questions and part three of multiple choice questions, which allowed for an individual response but required a short, concise answer. Thus there was a clear move from open questions to fairly closed questions. I offered the students a list of adjectives to help formulate their responses, but encouraged them to either ask or look up in a dictionary a word they thought, for example, best communicates their idea. Many things contribute to the interpretations readers formulate, as Rosenblatt (1994, 81) points out:

[i]f we think of the total literary transaction, we must recognize that the reader brings to or adds to the non-verbal or socio-physical setting his whole past experience of life and literature. His memories, his present preoccupations, his sense of values, his aspirations, enter into a relationship with the text.

In teaching literature it would be enriching for the students to understand how these factors may affect their reading (Therman 2011, 58).

The fourth and final step of the method involves offering the students new information related to the text at hand, after which it is important to consider how the information will affect the readings performed originally to enrich student readings (Therman 2011, 55). This I actualized by holding a short, ten-minute mini-lesson in which I told the students about the most central background facts related to the short story, about the iceberg-metaphor often used when describing Hemingway’s writing, and offered a few examples of how the cat in the story could be interpreted. The interpretive examples were based on the critical readings I have recounted earlier in this study. The aim was to have a short discussion following the lecture section, where the students would talk

about how the new information affected their reading of the story. In the following sections I will describe and reflect on the circumstances under which the research was conducted and recount the lessons as they transpired, and consider how using the method worked in practice.

6.3 Description of lessons and research circumstances

The lesson during which the data was gathered was preceded by a lesson which aimed at introducing the topic of reading and the text at hand to the students. The lesson leading up to the data gathering lesson was held on Friday, November 18, 2011, and the data gathering lesson on Tuesday, November 22, 2011.

During the introductory lesson the aim was to get students to think more about reading, and to realize that reading occurs daily in numerous forms, and it is not to be confused with the specific idea of recreational reading alone. For this purpose, I taught the students the various functions of reading, which included functional reading, social reading, professional reading, academic reading, ritual reading as well as recreational reading (Lehtonen 1998, 17-18). I then proceeded to give examples of situations in which textual skills, reading, writing and dealing with texts, would come at hand in the lives of the students. I explained that these skills are necessary not only for exams and gathering information but also as tools for empowerment and active citizenship (Grünn 2007, 107-122). I aimed to clarify the concept of textual skills as much as possible, and, to connect the subject matter to their Finnish language studies, I then moved on to presenting one way of beginning to unravel a text; through the nature of the text. I considered it necessary to clarify the concepts as much as possible, as in my previous experience of this class I had had the impression that while there were a few strong students and strong readers in the class, there were also students who had fairly weak textual skills. For this purpose I clarified the fact that texts can be considered instructive, descriptive, narrative, expository or argumentative. I offered examples of each and explained what the words meant. With Linnakylä's (2004, 171) observation on Finnish students mainly reading magazines and comics in mind, to conclude my presentation I offered the students a

brief questionnaire, which aimed to help students think about what types of texts they most often read.

After the students had filled out the questionnaire, I told them that we would focus on reading fiction, as reading fiction is often thought to be the most challenging type of text to read, as opposed to other types of texts, such as news and academic, school-related texts (Nampajärvi 2002, 46). I gave the students a pre-reading exercise aimed at helping them think about their reading more actively (Lehtonen 1998, 22; Eskey 2005, 576). Having completed the pre-reading exercise, the students were instructed to use the rest of the class time, approximately 15-20 minutes, to read the short story at their own pace. The story, I instructed, was to be brought to the next lesson on the following Tuesday.

Tuesday's lesson, during which the data was collected, begun with reflecting on the introductory lesson, and what we covered then. I reminded the students about the short story they read, and told them that today we would venture deeper into unraveling the story, because as some of them may have noticed, there is a possibility the text is more complex than it may seem. I then proceeded to instruct the students on how we would deal with the text. As these exercises would be a part of a study I was conducting, I asked them to do their best, and to not discuss their answers with their classmates. I had separated the desks beforehand and given each student a labeled seat to ensure that friends sitting near each other would not be tempted to consult each other, as had happened the last time I used reader-response activities in the classroom. The exercises would be in three parts, and the students were asked to raise their hands when finished with each. The students were presented with such a large number of questions about various aspects of the story that I assumed most students would have had to return to the text in order to respond, making the survey questions part of the "while-reading" exercises (Eskey 2005, 576).

The first part of the survey was tested with the same students in a prior exercise. In this initial trial of the open-ended response question it became apparent that students would quickly opt

to write down exactly the same answer as their friends and peers, so that in the trial-run results I found several pairs of identical answers to the question “What is the most important word / phrase / sentence in the story? Why?”. To avoid this happening a second time, and to verify if the same identical responses were to arise without the students consulting each other, I seated the students individually as opposed to groups of four, and asked them specifically to fill out the surveys independently. The survey was tested in its entirety with two students prior to giving the survey to the test group. These two students were not a part of the official test group from which the data was collected, but by answering the set of survey questions helped avoid possible ambiguities in the phrasing of the questions.

I began with the first step in Therman’s method. The students were given an A5-sheet of paper with the question “What is the most important word / phrase / sentence in the short story? Please explain your answer”. Answering this took approximately 10 minutes. I instructed the students to scan the text to help them refresh their memory and gave a new copy of the short story to those who had not brought their text to class.

Having collected this exercise from each student, I asked students to share some of their views about what they had thought was the most important bit in the text, and why. I strongly emphasized that there were no wrong answers. However, due, perhaps, to the fact that I had only taught the students five 75 minute lessons so far and did not know them very well personally, or to, possibly, the general group dynamics, the students were rather reluctant to offer their opinions. Therefore, having anticipated the difficulty of conducting a discussion which would have involved the entire class, I asked if I could read a few differing answers from the stack of responses I had collected. I again emphasized that all answers were correct. I read a few out loud to the class, and pointed out that even though these replies suggest different sections of the text as the most important, both are correct, because the aim is for each student to discover what is most important in the text for them personally.

The purpose of the third step was to explore how the students had interpreted the short story. For this purpose I used a double-sided, A4-sized questionnaire with open-ended questions ranging from the characterization of the persons portrayed in the text, the state of the relationship of the husband and wife, significance of weather, the cat(s), the difference and purpose of variations in terminology to the key events of the story. Once the students had answered the open-ended questions, I administered the third part to the survey; the multiple choice questions.

The fourth and final step of the method followed as soon as each student had turned in their multiple choice questionnaire. In the last step of the method the aim was to offer the students new information about the text they had read. I began my short, ten-minute presentation by asking if anyone had recognized the author. None of the students had done so. I explained that the writing style of Ernest Hemingway can sometimes be recognized from his short, abrupt style of writing, which some think stems from his time spent working as a reporter, as Marshal Walker (1983, 148) observes:

Style is the key to Hemingway's life and to the manner and meaning of his work. In the 1920s, with some guidance from Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound in Paris, Hemingway developed a spare, factual prose style from the practice of writing action journalism.

I explained to the students that the reason Hemingway's fiction is still read extensively today is because his texts continue to fascinate readers. This is because there is often a number of ways of interpreting the text. I pointed out that when we talk about Hemingway's writing, the iceberg-comparison often arises, because in reading his texts, there is more often than not much more to be understood than it may at first seem. I emphasized that in literature readers may interpret the text as they wish, but they must find evidence, textual or extra-textual, to support that argument. In somewhat simplified terms, this is what literary critics do.

I proceeded then to demonstrate various interpretations of the cat in the text with the use of a table, drawing on the critical interpretations offered by the aforementioned Hemingway critics, and pointed out that there are numerous ways of interpreting this relatively small feature of the text, and

that these are certainly not all but some of the best defended interpretations. I briefly demonstrated which sections or features of the text were used to form each interpretation. As the lesson was drawing to a close and the method still called for considering how the new information affected our readings of the text, I conducted a short survey by the raising of hands, and asked the students to indicate how they would now interpret the cat.

7 Analysis

The data analyzed is both qualitative and quantitative. While the open-ended questions served to explore the student interpretations, the multiple choice questions sought to gather quantitative information about the frequency of specific interpretations made regarding various elements in the story, including the cat, rain, the stay at the hotel, and the most prevalent qualities of the two key characters, George and wife.

The qualitative analysis will aim to typify the most prevalent response profile, while the quantitative analysis will serve to answer how frequently this response arose. While not all students were present at the lesson, there were 21 students of 23 present during the data gathering lesson on Tuesday, November 22. In the analysis, the respondents have been coded to allow a compilation of each student's responses to the entire three-part survey into individual interpretive profiles. For example, S4F stands for Student number 4, Female. The purpose of the coding is to allow for interpretive profiling, which will be elaborated on in chapter eight. A number of the questions prompt the students to interpret specific factors in the text. This is because, as John Hagopian (1962, 221) points out, "Hemingway is pre-eminently an artist of implications, [wherefore] we must try to discover what is implied here, a process which involves considerable speculation". Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 221), too, highlights that in reading Hemingway "every detail of conversation and description carries significance for the understanding of the whole". This is part of the proficiency in creative reading, a skill which is highly valuable in conducting academic studies, for example, by virtue of what Lehtonen points out: "Creative reading produces new combinations and

structures of thoughts that are more than the sum of their parts” (Lehtonen 1998, 33; my translation). The purpose of the analysis is to demonstrate, using the examples from student responses, how the students analyzed “Cat in the Rain”.

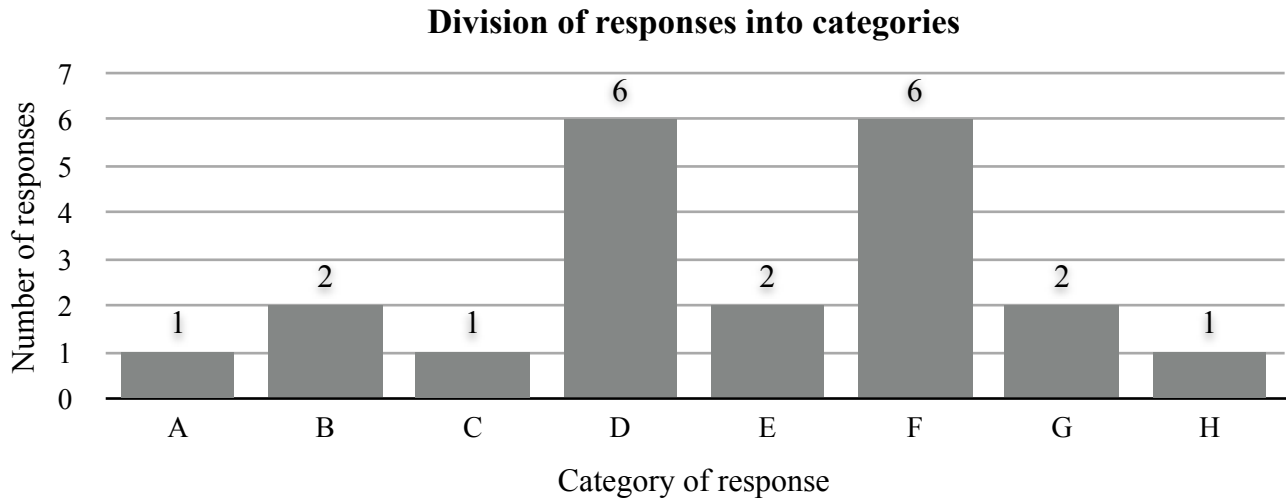
7.1 Response question’s data analysis

The initial response-question asked the students “What is the most important word / phrase / sentence in the short story? Please explain your answer”. To analyze the results, the data was first transcribed onto the computer, and reviewed multiple times. I then divided the responses into thematic categories descriptive of the answer. As the responses consisted of a choice within the text as well as a justification for this choice, the results here are analyzed in two parts, first from the point of view of what was chosen as the most important section of the story, and then from the point of view of the justification. The division of answers into specific categories seen here was reviewed two to three times over the period of approximately three months, and the categories seen here represent the final choices.

The responses were divided into eight categories altogether. The categories are as follows:

- A: The moment when the cat disappears / is found to be gone
- B: The concept of a cat in the rain
- C: The moment when the wife turns down George’s offer to get the cat and thinks of the padrone
- D: The sense of wanting a cat
- E: The moment when the maid brings the cat to the wife
- F: The word *cat*
- G: The moment when the maid laughs at the wife
- H: The moment when the wife decides to go look for the cat

The response groups could be classified as moments, a feeling, a concept and a single word. The division of the 21 student responses into the above eight categories is depicted in Figure 1:

Figure 1:

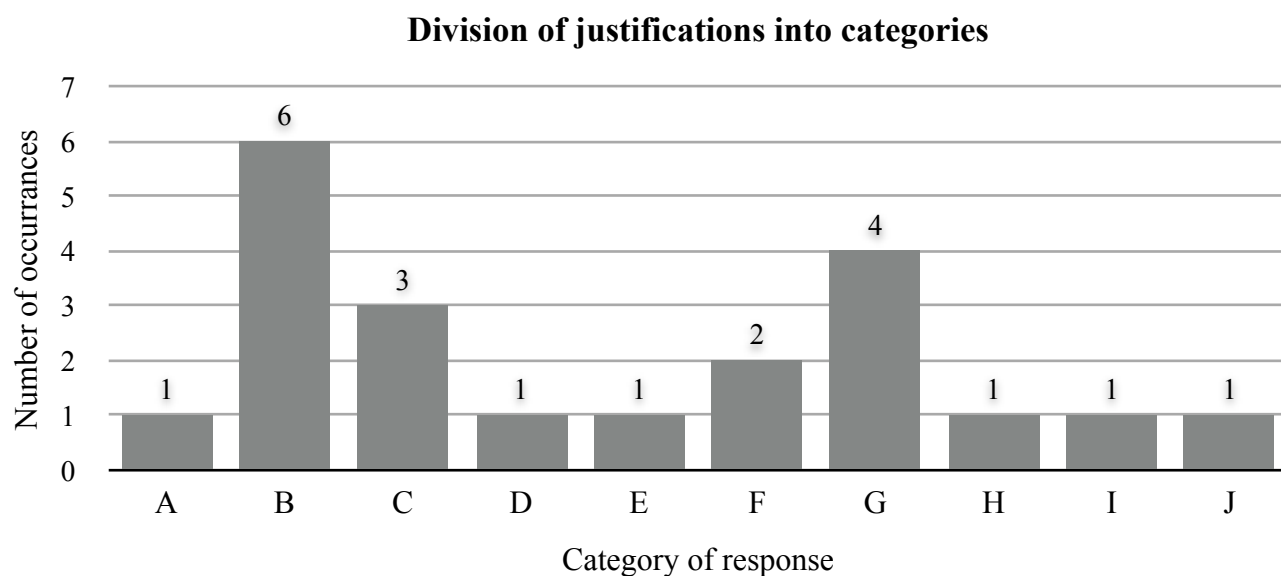
As Figure 1 demonstrates, the most popular themes chosen as the most important word, phrase or sentence in the story were the sense of wanting a cat (D) and the word “cat” (F). Interestingly, the sections of the text second most often elected as the most important were the concept of a cat in the rain, the moment when the maid brings the cat to the wife, and the moment when the maid laughs at the wife. These were followed by three responses each of which elected a uniquely chosen section of the text as the most important. These included the moment when the cat is found to be gone, the moment when the wife turns down George’s offer to go get the cat, and lastly the moment when the wife decides to look for the cat outside.

The justifications for choosing each response were divided into categories. As it turns out, the justifications for choosing the most important section of text were extremely varied, despite the fact that the data was only collected from 21 students. The categories of justification are as follows:

- A: Demonstrates a typical feature in a short story (general observation)
- B: Highlights topic of the short story (justification specific to story)
- C: Depicts a conflict between the wife, George and the padrone (justification specific to story)
- D: Highlights the moral lesson of the story (justification specific to story)
- E: Demonstrates the character’s obsession with cats (justification specific to story)
- F: Depicts wife’s emotional assimilation with the cat (justification specific to story)
- G: Repetition of a word (justification specific to story)
- H: Wife gets what she wants despite conflict (justification specific to story)
- I: Refers to story title (justification specific to story)
- J: N/A

The division of the 21 justifications into the above categories is as follows:

Figure 2:



Interestingly, the justifications for choices of the most important section of the text are even more varied than the sections chosen as most important. This goes to show that the same section of the text was chosen as the most important, but for at least two different reasons. Similarly, the same justification was sometimes used to support the choice for the most important section of the text in more than one case. For example, in the first case, two students elected *wanting the cat* (response category D) as the most important segment of the text, but for different reasons. The first student supports the choice by arguing that it depicts the conflict between the wife, husband and the padrone (justification category C), while the second student supports their argument by suggesting that it reflects the wife's emotional assimilation with the cat (justification category F). The following examples of student responses serve to demonstrate this:

- (1) Most important section: “‘Anyway, I want a cat,’ she said. I want a cat now. If I can’t have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat”. [Wanting a cat]

Justification: I think this is the most important sentence of the text. Wife wants something but his husband doesn’t want that to be happened. But soon there comes another man who gave something to the wife that she wants. (S4F) [Depicts a conflict between the wife, George and the padrone]

(2) Most important: “I want a cat” [Wanting a cat]

Justification: “I think it describes the story because the wife seems a bit unhappy the way things are in her life, and it all comes to her mind when she sees the cat in the rain, and decides that she wants a cat and so on...” (S10F) [Depicts wife’s emotional assimilation with the cat]

In the second case, the repetition (justification category G) of a word such as *cat* and *wanting* (response categories D and F) is used to support different choices for most important segment of text. For example:

(3) Most important: “the cat” [The word *cat*]

Justification: “The most important word is . . . because the whole story was about the cat and the American women wanted to have the cat herself”. (S6M) [Repetition of a word]

(4) Most important: “It isn’t any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain” [Depicts wife’s emotional assimilation with the cat]

Justification: “Most important sentence in the story is . . . because it tells what this text is about”. (S2F) [Repetition of a word]

The results of this particular question are interesting because in her study, Cecilia Therman (2011, 56) found that the interpretations of three novels of the university students she studied were more similar than distinct. Therman (2004, 129) found that the interpretations were rarely exceptional or uncommon, and that frequently they were such that a number of people could well agree with the interpretation at hand. Possible reasons for the varying of the results of the two studies will be discussed further in chapter 8.

7.2 Open-ended questions’ data analysis

The open-ended questionnaire formed the second part of the overall survey, which aimed to discover how the students had interpreted the short story. The analysis of these results was conducted similarly to the first part of the survey. Having been transcribed onto the computer, the answers to each question were divided into thematic response categories, and reviewed multiple

times. The number of hits each category received will be represented here to answer, in part, the first research question in this study, regarding how the students have interpreted the short story.

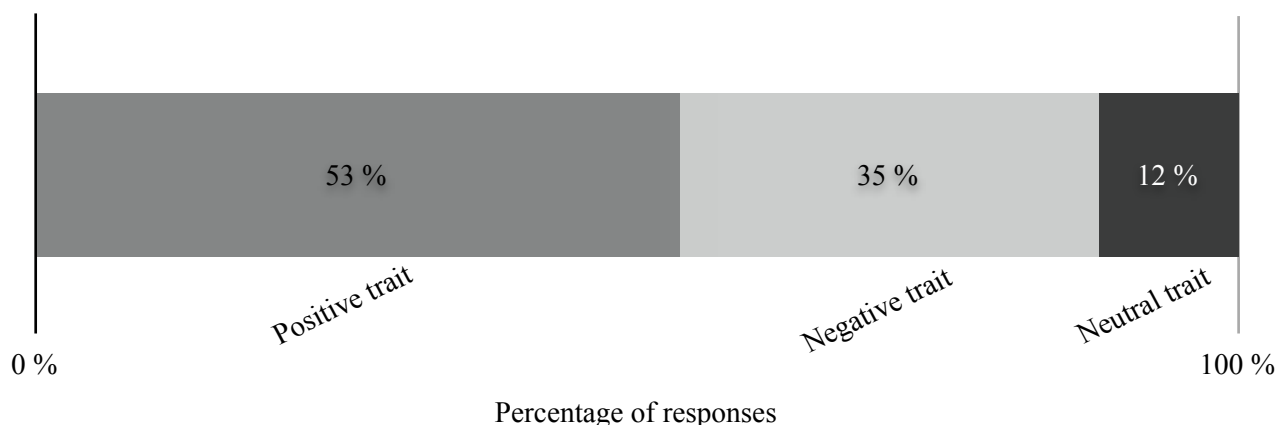
7.2.1 Question 1: What was the female character like?

The first question in the series of open-ended questions was “What is the woman in the story like? Please use adjectives”. The question elicited the following responses, presented in Table 1 in order of most to least frequent response and according to whether the quality was sympathetic, neutral or antagonistic towards the wife, with number of hits out of the total of 43 represented in brackets following the response:

Table 1: Division of traits attributed to wife

Positive qualities:		Negative qualities:		Neutral qualities:	
Frustrated	(4/43)	Spoiled	(3/43)	Young	(1/43)
Unhappy	(4/43)	Ignorant	(2/43)	Dreamer	(1/43)
Miserable	(2/43)	Wants many things	(2/43)	Tired	(1/43)
Depressed	(2/43)	Weird	(2/43)	Searching	(1/43)
Lonely	(2/43)	Insensitive	(1/43)	Asking	(1/43)
Caring	(1/43)	Naïve	(1/43)		
Bored	(1/43)	Demanding	(1/43)		
Determined	(1/43)	Cranky	(1/43)		
Emotional	(1/43)	Oppressing	(1/43)		
Passionate	(1/43)	Obsessive	(1/43)		
Caring	(1/43)				
Helpful	(1/43)				
Willing	(1/43)				
Sad	(1/43)				

The number of unique responses demonstrates that students may, for various reasons, experience the same character in numerous different ways. However, in light of the results found in Therman’s (2011, 56) study, which demonstrated that a majority of the interpretations made were more similar than different, here the similarities seem to arise from whether the reader sympathized with the wife’s situation labeling her with positive attributes, or whether the reader interpreted the wife as having negative qualities. The division of the above attributes into positive and negative is presented in Figure 3:

Figure 3:**Division of positive, negative and neutral traits attributed to wife**

The number of responses that can be categorized as belonging to positive traits was notably higher (23/43) than the number of responses categorized as negative attributes (15/43), and percentage-wise the difference is dramatic (53% vs. 35%). It is interesting to note that in characterizing the wife the class quite clearly sympathized with the wife, attributing her with qualities that were positive or qualities which she could have been said to have by no fault of her own (5/43 or 12% neutral qualities). Those who seemed not to sympathize with the wife labeled the wife with negative traits. The five of the 43 words which were classified as neutral were classified as such because they were adjectives denoting the character's age or a physical property (*young, tired*), or were verbs describing the character's activities (*searching, asking*). The qualities *miserable* and *unhappy* have been labeled here as positive traits, because these are qualities the wife may be interpreted as having through no fault of her own, or as being a victim of the circumstance, thus revealing a sense of sympathy towards the wife. In regard to the neutral words represented here, it should be pointed out that had this been an ordinary lesson during which this exercise was conducted, it would have been important to ascertain that the student has understood the question. The question prompted specifically for adjectives, and while the verbs chosen by the student are descriptive, they do not characterize the wife's person. However, given the nature of the circumstances, this is the kind of information the study benefits from; what to bear in mind when teaching this text to a group of upper secondary school students.

7.2.2 Question 2: What was George like?

The second question was identical to the first, only here the purpose was to characterize George, the husband. Therefore an identical method of analysis was employed. The following list enumerates the traits assigned to the character of George categorized as whether the trait was a positive, negative or neutral quality. The number in brackets represents the number of hits the word gained out of the total of 36 words chosen.

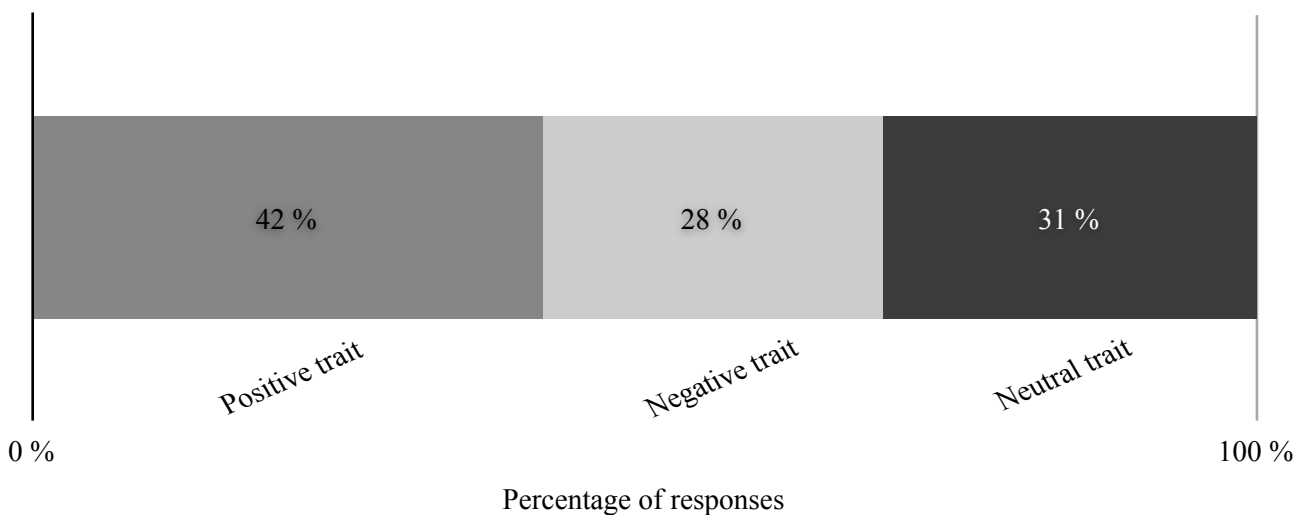
Table 2: Division of traits attributed to George

Positive qualities:		Negative qualities:		Neutral qualities:	
Bored	(2/36)	Ignorant	(4/36)	Quiet	(4/36)
Loves his wife	(1/36)	Lazy	(2/36)	Wants to read	(2/36)
Offered help	(1/36)	Angry	(1/36)	Tired	(1/36)
Reasonable	(1/36)	Boring	(1/36)	Older than wife	(1/36)
Frustrated	(1/36)	Cold	(1/36)	Typical rich man	(1/36)
Peaceful	(1/36)	Insensitive	(1/36)	Curious	(1/36)
Kind	(1/36)			Asking	(1/36)
Calm	(1/36)				
Normal	(1/36)				
Not insensitive	(1/36)				
Flamboyant	(1/36)				
Loyal	(1/36)				
Worried	(1/36)				
Supportive	(1/36)				

The division of the above qualities into positive, negative and neutral ones is depicted in Figure 4:

Figure 4:

Division of positive, negative and neutral traits attributed to George



Of all the words chosen to characterize George, only a few of the words used by students seem to have come from the vocabulary list offered to help the students. The vocabulary list included the following adjectives (the number in brackets indicates the number of times the word appeared in student responses, and the following word describes the semantic type of the adjective) (Dixon & Aichenvald 2006, 3-5):

<i>ignorant</i> (4/36, human propensity)	<i>willing</i> (0/36, human propensity)
<i>insensitive</i> (1/36, human propensity)	<i>committed</i> (0/36, human propensity)
<i>frustrated</i> (1/36, human propensity)	<i>luxurious</i> (0/36, qualification)
<i>realistic</i> (0/36, qualification),	<i>oppressing</i> (0/36, qualification)
<i>spoiled</i> (0/36, human propensity)	<i>restricting</i> (0/36, physical property)
<i>neglected</i> (0/36, qualification)	<i>refreshing</i> (0/36, physical property)
<i>unappreciated</i> (0/36, qualification)	<i>miserable</i> (0/36, human propensity)
<i>dignified</i> (0/36, qualification)	<i>harmful</i> (0/36, qualification).

It is surprising to note that although *willing* on the vocabulary list received zero hits, two students offered *helpful* to describe George, thus communicating a fairly similar sentiment. In addition, although *luxurious* was, quite naturally not used to describe George's person, one student described him as *very flamboyant* and another as *a typical rich man*. Considering the fact that only six of the 36 adjectives chosen to describe George came from the vocabulary list, it can be concluded that the list did not influence the student responses as much as was originally feared. This is a positive result, as it seemed a reasonable concern that the students would rely too much on the vocabulary sheet as opposed to using a dictionary to express themselves with words that were new to them.

Some of the words chosen to describe George were rather unexpected, these including the response *very flamboyant*, because in the short story George is described in very minimalistic terms, and is certainly not described as a vivacious, exuberant character. Rather, as a character, George could be described as somewhat static with the possibility of a dynamic agency. This knowledge ought to be kept in mind in teaching the text, as students, and readers in general, typically see the characters very strongly in light of their own experiences. Also, as the students formulating the

responses are speakers of English as a Foreign Language, who have begun their English studies in the third grade (and are speakers of English as the A1-language), it may be that some of the words were not clear to the students in their full meaning and this may of course influence the validity of these results.

Interestingly, the character of George was attributed with more neutral traits (11/36 or 31%) than the wife (5/43 or 12%). The possible reasons for this may be in the above mentioned language competence or an effect of the vocabulary list offered to the students, but the reason may also lie in the difference between George's character as opposed to his wife's, as well as the slightly static nature of his character. Surprisingly, the wife was attributed with more of positive qualities (23/43 or 53%) than George (15/36 or 42%). This may be due to the same reasons stated above. It is interesting to note that George and his wife were attributed with an almost equal amount of negative qualities: George with 10/36 or 28% unsympathetic responses, and the wife with 15/43 or 35% unsympathetic responses. This is surprising, and seems to be an issue which divides the readers in and outside the classroom, as critics, too, point out.

In the critical interpretations George is most often the character that is least sympathized with. William Adair (1992, 73) is one of the few critics who suggest that George might be a more dynamic character than the story initially lets on. Adair (*ibid.*) argues, that "selfish and insensitive" does not sufficiently describe George's character, and suggests that there is something more to his character, such as an unspoken tragedy. Surprisingly, most students seemed to view George quite sympathetically, attributing with him mostly positive terms (42% of all terms). Unlike with most critical readings, the students were not in fact entirely inclined to see George as "selfish and insensitive" (*ibid.*). For this reason it might be enriching to have a discussion during which students could consider the negative ways in which George's actions and statements could be seen. Naturally, students who viewed George more negatively could be encouraged to reflect on reasons why George might be viewed more positively. In addition, students who viewed George mostly

neutrally could be divided equally into both groups so as to help them see both sides of the “argument” and help them formulate their own understanding of the matter, though naturally the matter is not simple enough to dichotomize as such. The same type of exercise, of course, could be done regarding the wife’s character.

7.2.3 Question 3: Relationship of George and his wife

In analyzing the data to the question “What is the relationship of George and his wife like?”, the results were grouped according to whether the students rated the relationship positively, negatively or neutrally. Out of 21 responses to this question in total, only one response classified the relationship as somehow positive, two did not answer the question, four responses were classified as neutral, and the remaining 14 responses all indicated there was something wrong with the relationship, for a number of different reasons. The result is interesting, because it indicates that most of the students were sensitive to the subtle signs of the estrangement of George and his wife, which has also been largely analyzed by Hemingway critics. For example, Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 231) suggests that the short story states its theme of estrangement from the very opening sentence. Warren Bennet (1988, 26) points out that according to Jeffrey Meyers the short story is really depicting “the disintegration of [Ernest’s] marriage to Hadley”.

The student responses varied from very short and unjustified to lengthier, more analytical musings on the quality of George and his wife’s relationship. The following exemplify the responses which classified the relationship negatively:

(5) Their relationship is a little dead. Maybe they love each other, but the wife doesn’t respect her husband helping. She is already dreaming at somebody else (S3F).

This response shows that the student has clearly picked up on the air of estrangement between the husband and wife, and has also been sensitive to the narrative voice possibly revealing the wife’s sub-conscious appeal toward the padrone of the hotel. Similar ideas came up in other student responses, such as in the following response:

(6) It looks like everything is fine but I get the feeling that it's not fine and the wife seems like she's unhappy / frustrated to the situation but acts like everything is okay (S10F).

Some responses seemed to indicate that the students had interpreted the relationship as quite clearly estranged. This can be seen in responses such as:

(7) It's not good relationship. They don't do anything together. They don't communicate well. They both seem to be unhappy with their relationship (S15F).

(8) A little distant (?) (etäinen), because George would rather read a book than listen to his wife (S5F).

(9) There is no passion in their relationship. George is just reading while his wife is talking to him and stuff like that (S17M).

Four of the 21 responses characterized the relationship as fairly average.

(10) They have a good marriage, but something is not enough for the wife, because of that she wants the cat. So the cat would replace her emptiness (S12F).

(11) Maybe not the best marriage but not the worst either (S18F).

(12) Pretty average. They are not arguing and are not frustrated or insensitive. They are speaking [unclear word, perhaps searching] pretty successfully. And don't seem to be a bad relationship (S19M).

(13) It's ok (S21M).

The first answer (10) demonstrates that the student has been sensitive to the likely purpose of the wife's quest and her need for some kind of fulfillment in life. The second student's response (11) seems to indicate that the student had not noticed anything strikingly out of the ordinary, although one could argue that the emotional estrangement of the husband and wife is one of the most important themes in the story. The third and fourth responses (12 and 13) seem to signal that the student cannot see a lack or a fault in the relationship between the characters. For these students the discussions regarding the interpretive possibilities could be a particularly enriching experience. Being able to read the text as something more than its literal meaning would enhance the reading experience considerably.

Surprisingly, one of the 21 students characterized the relationship of George and his wife positively. Regrettably, the respondent did not justify their reading:

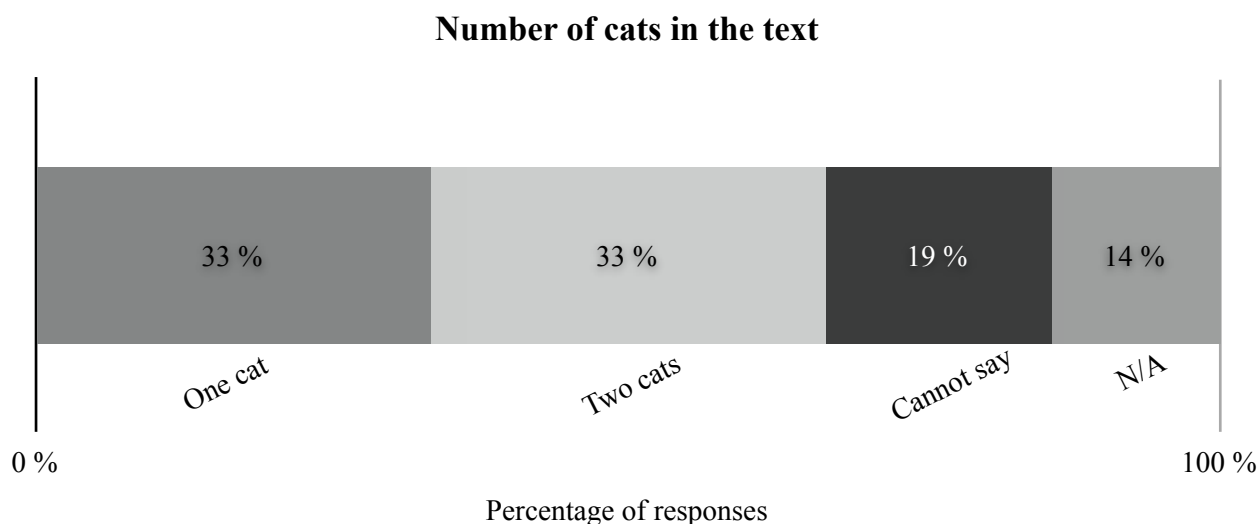
(14) I think they love each other (S2F).

Overall, based on the above range of responses, it seems clear that while there will be differing opinions about matters related to the text, the students' abilities to interpret the text will also vary considerably, as will their ability to use the text to justify their responses. Here, most students were sensitive to the somewhat decaying state of the relationship and suggested that it was due to George's dictatorship-styled manner of speaking to his wife, while others thought it was due to the wife's demanding nature. While a specific reading is rarely sought after in literature, in this case critics seem to agree that the marriage of George and his wife is a somewhat unhappy one.

7.2.4 Question 4: One or two cats?

Question four asked the students to consider "Is the cat the maid brings up the same one as the one the wife saw outside? Why?". The possible responses to this question are 'yes', 'no' and 'cannot say'. The question would have benefited from the addition of "or why not?" to the tail-end of the question, however, it seems the lack did not affect student responses as there are both affirmative and negative answers, as can be seen from Figure 5:

Figure 5:



As Figure 5 demonstrates, equal numbers of students, 7/21 or 33%, thought there were either one or two cats in the text. If the student thought there was only one cat in the text, this was indicated with the response 'yes, it is the same cat', whereas if the student thought there were two cats in the text the respective response would have been 'no, it is not the same cat'. In their justifications, students

who thought there was only one cat in the text justified their answer with following types of arguments:

(15) Yes. Padrone had sent it and knew the wife wanted that specific cat which she saw (S7M).

(16) Yes, maybe it's the hotel owners cat but he wanted to give it to the american girl (S10F).

(17) Definitely the same, because the hotel keeper saw how badly the wife wanted the cat and that's why she got it (S12F).

(18) Yes because when the women went outside, the cat was gone. The hotel keeper was propably the one who picked the cat from outside (S5F).

The other three student responses which indicated the story only had one cat did not justify their answers. Another seven of the 21 students suggested the story had two cats, meaning the cat the maid brings up at the end of the story is not the same as the one the wife saw outside the hotel. Of these responses, only one student did not justify their answer. The six others justified their answers as follows:

(19) No. It's padrones cat (S3F).

(20) Probably not. How the cat would get inside of the hotel if maid came in same time as george's wife (S17M).

(21) I don't think it is, the maid just wanted to be nice (S18F).

(22) I think it's not because it would have said before that if has tortoise-shell (I mean it's very colourful) (S13F).

(23) I don't think so, I think that padrone brought one for her (S16M).

(24) No way, they couldn't be so lucky that the cat just comes to them (S20M).

In analyzing the justifications for whether there were one or two cats in the text, it seems that the response "one cat", or "yes, it's the same cat" had fewer and somewhat poorer justifications. The response "two cats", or "no, it's not the same cat" had justifications which seemed to indicate that the students took into account the same epistemological uncertainty Edwin Barton highlights, that is to say, the possibility that the reader cannot truly know the real number of cats in the text, but still opted for answering "yes" or "no", rather than "cannot say".

Edwin Barton (1994, 72) argues that both textual and extratextual evidence point to there being two cats, and most critics are quite divided in this issue, and "no one, so far as I know, has managed to explore the range of lexical riddles behind this 'easy to come by' crux". While three

students did not answer the question at all, four of the 21 responses answered “Maybe”, or “Cannot say”. These students justified their answers with the following types of arguments:

(25) Maybe but it could be different cat also (S6M).

(26) Maybe (S21M).

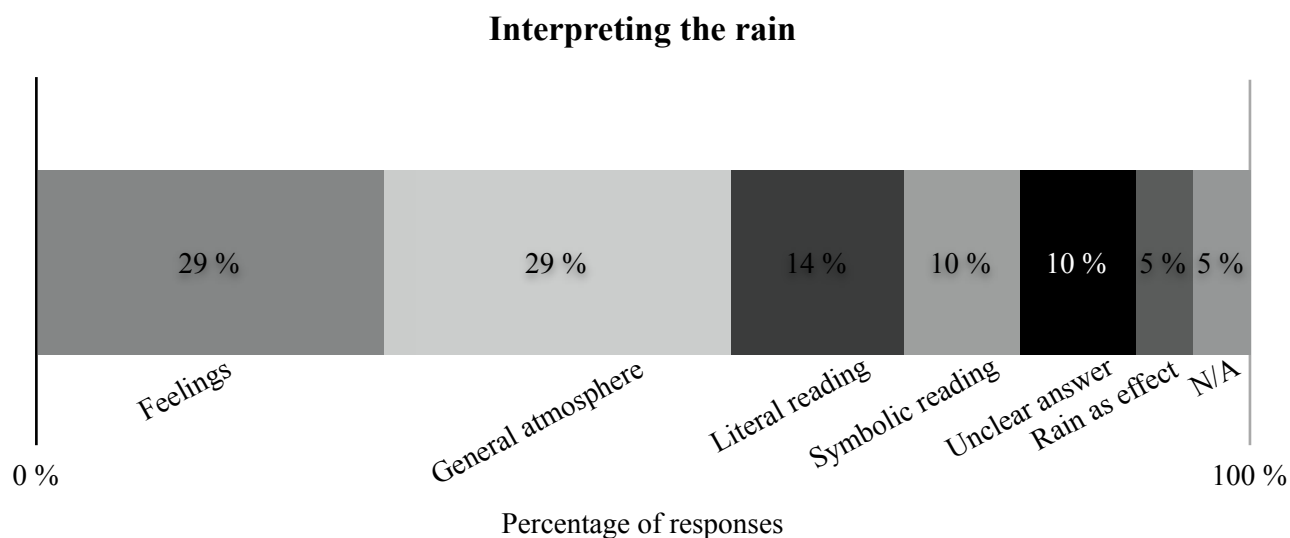
(27) Maybe. I think that the padrone just wants to make the wife happy. But it doesn't really matter if it's the same cat or not (S4F).

(28) I don't know. There are no descriptions how it looks (S19M).

Epistemologically it seems impossible to know whether there are one or two cats in the text, though Warren Bennet (1988, 27) does present a convincing argument for two cats. John Hagopian (1962, 222) asserts that “[i]t is not clear whether this is exactly the same cat that the wife had seen from the window—probably not; in any case, it will most certainly not do”. According to Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 223), too, “[i]t is doubtful whether the enigma of the cat's identity can be solved, considering the wealth of contradictory indices”. In teaching this text, it is possible to argue for any of the three answers, but in choosing any option one should be prepared to justify their answer.

7.2.5 Question 5: The possible significance of the weather

Question five asked the students to propose a meaning to the weather in the story. Retrospectively this question seems like a fairly loaded question, seeing as it seems to imply that the weather indeed has a significance, which would therefore corrupt the responses gathered in this question. This, however, did not prevent some of the students from performing a literal interpretation of the weather and reading it as simply meaning “It's raining”. Notwithstanding, the data gathered here was thematically grouped according to whether the students had interpreted the weather literally, as reflecting a character's feelings, as something symbolic, as reflecting the general atmosphere of the story or whether they thought the rain was simply an effect. Two responses were classified here as unclear, and one student did not answer the question, perhaps due to a lack of time. The division of responses is presented in Figure 6:

Figure 6:

The division of responses is similar to other responses analyzed earlier, in that two responses were most popular: 6/21 (29%) students responded that the rain reflected the wife's negative feelings, and another 6/21 considered the rain as reflective of the general atmosphere in the text. The responses which interpreted the rain as reflecting the wife's feelings included the following answers:

- (29) Dark, frustrated feelings (S3F).
- (30) Maybe sadness (S5F).
- (31) Mood of Georges' wife (S17M).
- (32) I think that the wife might be lonely (S18F).
- (33) It's sad story (S21M).
- (34) She was crying (S8M).

The six students who suggested the rain reflected the general atmosphere of the story justified their responses as follows:

- (35) It kind of implies that something's wrong, for example in Georges and his wife's marriage (S10F).
- (36) The weather was really wet and bad. It tells that something is wrong (S2F).
- (37): The atmosphere is really miserable and because of the weather the story sounded more emotional (S12F).
- (38) Weather gets some kind of oppressive atmosphere at the story (S14M).
- (39) That it was a sad and negative atmosphere (S20M).
- (40) That the day is miserable but at the same time refreshing (S11F).

Two students (10%) thought the rain was symbolic for a more specific idea, such as:

- (41) The weather is same as Georges and his wife's relationship (S15F).
- (42) Life doesn't always go well, but you can still find a shelter from a good person (S7M).

Two of the 21 (10%) responses were not classified as it was not clear what the intended content of the sentence was, or because the response referred to an activity only metaphorically related to actual rain.

(43) I think it ment a brain storm (S16M).

While one of the 21 responses was left blank, one student interpreted the rain as an effect to emphasize a feature or a matter in the text:

(44) I think it gives a sad feeling into the story (S4F).

Owing, perhaps, to the somewhat loaded nature of the question posed to the students most students did attribute a specific meaning to the rain, whereas only a marginal group of students (3/21 or 14%) read the rain as nothing more than its literal meaning. It is therefore difficult to determine whether the students would have given the rain a specific meaning, had they not been asked. Comparing these results to the opening question of the survey, “What is the most important word / phrase / sentence in the text”, it is surprising to note that rain came up in only one thematic groups which rose from the data. This was response group B, titled “The concept of a cat in the rain”. Of all the student responses only 2/21 (10%) were such that could be grouped under this title.

In teaching a literary piece, it seems important to emphasize that students bear the title of the text in mind throughout their reading, as here, for example, most students seem to have initially focused on the cat alone, and left the other half of the title without much thought. The question posed here, then, seems to have brought the rain to students’ attention more, although that may indeed be due to the presupposing nature of the question. It may not be presumptuous to suggest, that the shorter the text, the closer it ought to be read, particularly in the case of Hemingway and “Cat in the Rain”, as the smallest detail can tip the scale in favor of the more sound argument, should such be sought.

According to Holmesland (1986, 226), rain is a dominant motif in the text. He quotes Hagopian’s theory on the rain symbolizing fertility, and the rubber cape as contraception: “In effect,

such a reading combines the the fertility associated with the rain and the ‘public garden’, and the ‘big palms and green benches’. As signalled [sic] by her awareness of the man with the rubber cape, the wife’s marriage to George is a contraceptive against fertility” (ibid.). Holmesland (ibid.) refers to David Lodge’s model of binary oppositions which was built to counter Hagopian’s theory, and asserts that according to Lodge, “rain *can* symbolise fertility, when defined by oppositions to drought. In this story, however (and incidentally, throughout Hemingway’s work), it is opposed to ‘good weather’ and symbolises the loss of pleasure and joy, the onset of discomfort and the ennui”. These varying points of view could all enhance student readings, should they be used in the teaching of this short story.

7.2.6 Question 6: The possible significance of the cat

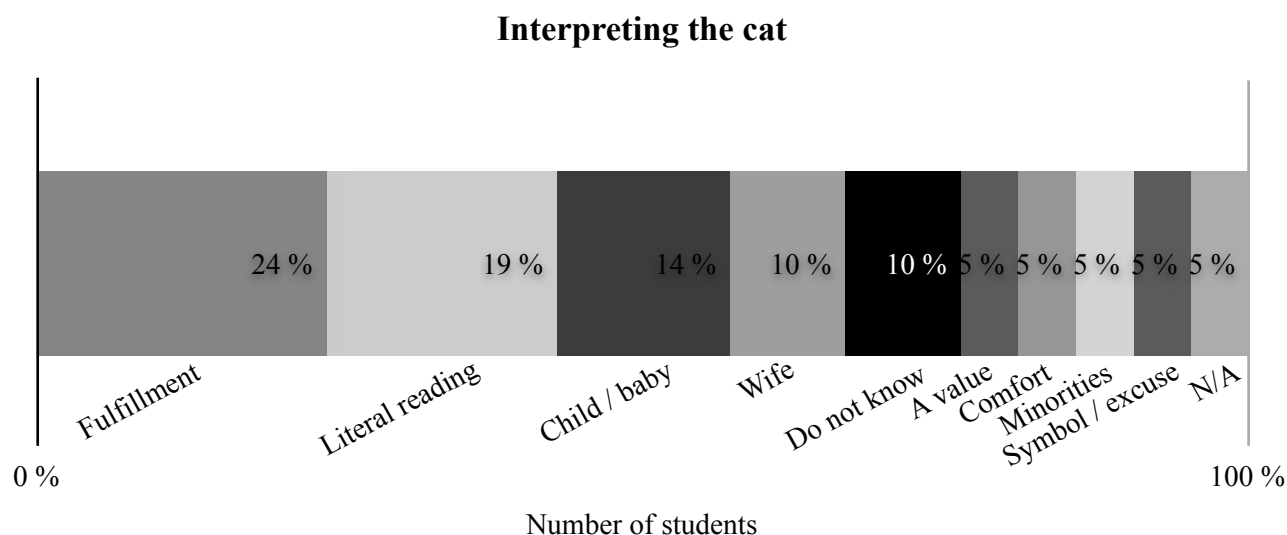
In question six the students were asked to explain what the cat in the short story might represent. As the question is very similar to question five, the same questions of validity and the loaded nature of the question arise. The responses were grouped into the following themes:

The cat signifies/symbolizes:

- a child surrogate, a baby or child
- a value
- something that is missing, fulfillment
- the wife
- comfort
- minorities
- a cat / an animal, literal reading
- a symbol or an excuse
- don’t know
- N/A

The responses were quite varied, as can be seen from the large number of thematic groups into which the responses were divided. Most groups had one to two responses which were classified as belonging to it, yet one response group had a distinctly larger number of students whose response fell into that said category. The division of responses into the above thematic groups is demonstrated in Figure 7:

Figure 7:



The most popular response 5/21 (24%) the cat representing something that was missing in the wife's life, to which she was seeking fulfillment. Four of the 21 responses (19%) read the cat as simply representing itself; a literal reading. This included responses which expressed the cat representing the main idea in the text, or the main character. Three of the 21 responses (14%) indicated the cat was representative of a child or a baby. Of the 21 responses two students (10%) thought the cat was representative of the wife herself. Two students (5%) could not answer the question (*Do not know*). Four students all offered unique answers to the question (each representing 5% of the total responses), such as that the cat represented a value, comfort, a minority, or was a symbol or an excuse for the wife to leave the hotel room. One student (5%) did not answer the question in any way (*N/A*).

From these responses it seems reasonable to suggest that a question which prompted the students to consider a possible significance for a textual feature seemed to accelerate their interpretive reading, although the question could have been phrased in a more neutral way. However, in evaluating the neutrality of the question presented here to the students, the possibility of formulating the question in a more neutral manner, such as "What, if any, is the function of the cat in the story?" could have been linguistically too challenging for the students to answer, and would have thus presented a pedagogical challenge for conducting the study. This is something that

has to be taken into account particularly should a similar question be used later in teaching this or any other short story. In teaching interpretive reading to students it is posing questions which adequately support the students' interpretive reading skills in a constructive, Vygotskian spirit that is the very heart of the matter (For Vygotsky, see for example Rinne et al. 2004, 179).

The critics gave varying interpretations for the cat in the text. John Hagopian (1962, 222) and Edwin J. Barton (1994, 74) both argued the cat symbolize a child, while William Adair (1992, 73) suggested the cat stand for impotence. Peter Griffin (2001, 102) argued that due to the double-entendre in the text the cat represent the female reproductive organ. Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 231) argued the cat represent the wife's unfulfilled desires, while based on Darren Felty's (1997, 364) and Warren Bennet's (1988, 32) research it is possible to suggest the cat represent the wife. The results indicate that, of the critics' readings, the students' responses were mostly in accordance with Holmesland, Hagopian and Barton's readings.

7.2.7 Question 7: The possible significance of “cat” vs. “kitty”

Question seven aimed to find out whether the students would be able to offer an explanation for the difference in the terms *cat* and *kitty* and for what this difference between the terms might mean in light of the story. While I knew the question would be challenging for at least some of the students, it was my presupposition that the more active readers might be able to suggest possible reasons for what the switch in the terminology might mean for the story. A number of Hemingway critics have also formed theories about what the switching of terminology might mean. Warren Bennet (1988, 27) for example suggests that the switch implies two different cats in the text. The first is a younger cat, which is only seen outside the hotel through the wife's eyes. Bennet (ibid.) observes that

it is highly improbable that either the padrone or the maid would leave the hotel later to look in the rain for a cat [and] if they did, it would be impossible for either the padrone or the maid to capture a particular stray, wet cat which neither of them has ever seen. It is much more likely that the padrone has a cat of his own in the hotel, probably for protection against rats and mice, . . . that he sends his own cat to the girl in order to please her.

It seems that in considering the difference between the terms *cat* versus *kitty* the crux lies in the classic question of whether there are one or two cats in the text.

The responses range from highly sophisticated analyses to answers that indicate a fairly superficial reading of this feature in the short story. The results are grouped according to the most prevalent themes of the responses. The question presented to the students was in two parts. The first part asked to point out what they thought was the difference between *a cat* and *a kitty*. This, I expected, every student should be able to comment on, for there are numerous possible answers. The responses were much more uniform than in earlier questions: 9/21 students thought the main difference between the two terms was the age of the animal. This difference of age between *a cat* and *a kitty* was interpreted by the students as meaning different things, as can be seen from the following responses. Also, different factors such as the animal's age and cuteness overlapped in the student answers at times. The responses are related here according to which quality the response prioritized. The first group of responses named the age of the animal as the main difference, and explored what this meant for the short story as follows:

- (45) A cat is an older one and a kitty is cute, and tiny babycat. Wife would like to have a tiny cat, but she wants somebody else to give it, not her husband (S3F).
- (46) A cat is adult and kitty is just a baby cat. A kitty could mean infertility (S9M).
- (47) a kitty is a baby cat (S17M).
- (48) A cat is more older than kitty, that how I could see it or the wife called it kitty, because she felt so pity for it. It's like when like something you autimaticly change the name to more cutier (S12F).
- (49) A cat is adult. A kitty's little cat (S15F).
- (50) A cat is an adult cat and a kitty is not yet adult cat. I think every cat not even considering cats age is an kitty for the wife (S16M).
- (51) Kitty sounds like just birth cat. I don't know (S14M).
- (52) Kitty is young cat (S21M).
- (53) A cat is fully grown. A kitty is a newborn like a human – baby (S19M).

Three of 21 students suggested the difference lay in a factor related to the cuteness of the animal.

- (54) A kitty is more qute interpretation (S2F).
- (55) "A cat" means is as a pet, "kitty" is more cutier and the word might symbolise a baby (S13F).
- (56) A cat is a normal cat. A kitty is small, fluffy and cute (S20M).

One student (5%) thought there was no difference between *a cat* and *a kitty*, and 8/21 students (38%) did not specify a difference between the two terms, but did however offer an explanation as to what the switch in terminology might mean. That is to say, the students did not explain what the difference between *a cat* and *a kitty* was, but did reflect on what the switch in terminology meant for the text. For example:

(57) Well in this story a cat could be a stranger, probably a homeless kid, and a kitty could be her own child (S7M).

(58) A cat is just a cat, something that just is there. But the kitty might mean something special that the wife needs, something that she has lost and something that she can maybe identify with (S10F).

(59) When she said a kitty she sounds like a little girl (S18F).

(60) When they use “kitty” it made me feel like the cat is really something living thing and important. But then when they used just “a cat” it made me feel like the cat was just some cat (S4F).

Interestingly, it seems that the answers which disregarded specifying a difference in the terminology and rather offered an explanation for the effect this switch has for the text were the ones that most seem to coincide with readings by published Hemingway critics. Edwin Barton (1994, 74) suggests that the cat could be seen “as a symbolic displacement of maternal instincts”, and it is because of this that it is highly interesting to note that students, too, picked up on this issue, which can best be seen in S10F’s answer above, “A cat is just a cat, something that just is there. But the kitty might mean something special that the wife needs, something that she has lost and something that she can maybe identify with”. Barton (1994, 74) specifically points out that there may indeed be something that the wife lost, which is reflected in the switch of verb tenses: “The perceptible trace of the perfect tense, as opposed to a more nearly simple past, intimates that her hopes belong exclusively to the past”. Another interesting reading comes from student 18F, who points to how the switch in terminology makes the wife sound “like a little girl”. According to Barton (1994, 73), switching from *wife* to *girl* may signal “a change in standing. The narrator seems to key into the fictional consciousness of the maid: the American wife/woman is behaving like a girl”. Perhaps the same

could then be said of the change from *cat* to *kitty*. These types of student responses imply a reader who takes a more active role in their reading.

7.2.8 Question 8: The possible significance of the wife's hairstyle

Question eight was similar in nature to question seven, in that it was my presumption that the answers depict reader proficiency and, in that, the students' ability to perform symbolic readings of textual features that might otherwise seem insignificant when read literally. This is a valuable skill, and particularly useful when reading Hemingway. The question asked the students to explain what it might mean that the wife has "hair clipped close like a boy's", though she would like to have hair that can be pulled back into a "big knot at the back [she] could feel" (Hemingway 2003, 131). The 22 student responses regarding the wife's hairstyle ranged from insightful commentaries on the femininity of style to rather superficial restatement of facts.

Six of the 22 (27%) responses indicated that the wife's short hairstyle and her desire for hair that she could pull back into a bun had to do with her femininity or that the wife felt or, in the students' opinion, the wife looked ugly:

- (61) She doesn't feel herself pretty. . . . (S3F)
- (62) It means that maybe she wants to feel like a woman again and maybe she hasn't felt like it for a while (S10F).
- (63) She wants to feel herself more feminine (S2F).
- (64) She have ugly hair and look like a boy, maybe she wanted to look like a beauty girl (S18F).
- (65) She would want to feel herself as a woman, not like George's buddy (S16M).
- (66) She's hair looks bad (S21M).

Surprisingly, another 6/22 (27%) responses were left blank. It appeared at the time that one student did not notice the other side of the response sheet, and one student did not have time to complete the survey, but that still leaves four students who thought they did not give a suggestion as to what this might have to do with.

Three of the 22 (14%) responses suggested this desire to change hairstyles had to do with wanting more freedom, or perhaps being bored with the way things were:

(67) . . . She would like to have also some freedom (S3F).

(68) Probably she was tired looking the same all the time, she wanted the change-up. . . . (S12F)

(69) The wife want to be different. She is bored to be the same old wife and she would like to try something new (S4F).

Another interesting find was that three of the 22 (14%) responses suggested the wife was somehow ill, wherefore she did not or could not have long hair. This seems to indicate a fairly scientific, biological, reading of a text which usually would be likely to prompt a more symbolic, aesthetic reading, such as interpreting the longer hairstyle, the hair up in a bun, as symbolizing maternity and domesticity, or perhaps as the wife trying to draw her husband's attention to her femininity (Griffin 2001, 101; Bennet 1988, 33). These students, however, proposed that the wife may be "sick or something" (S14M), "has a cancer" (S17M) or that she is "so depressed that she wanted to feel some emotion" (S8M). Interestingly, all three students who performed this type of a reading were male. It is difficult to reach a definitive interpretation of these types of matters, as the number of interpretive possibilities is always greater than the number of readers. This can be seen, for example, in Edwin Barton's (1994, 76) reading, which suggests that George may not be quite as insensitive after all, if his comments are considered to be "less a defense mechanism or a brutish cry of exasperation than an exhortation to acceptance of an existential reality".

In further interpreting the meaning of the wife's longing for longer hair two responses of the 22 suggested that this change had to do with the wife wanting a number of things; a materialistic longing:

(70) She wants to be something different and her husband keeps her in her roots (S7M).

(71) . . . Like I said earlier, nothing is seems to be enough for her, she wants something new all the time (S12F).

These are fairly understandable readings, as the word *want* is indeed repeated sixteen times in the text (Hemingway 2003, 130-131). Two of the 22 responses (9%) restated the information of the question in their own words, which seems to imply what Heleena Lehtonen (1998, 27) calls repetitive reading comprehension, which is a superficial manner of processing the read text. In

repetitive reading comprehension the reader aims to remember the text as it has been read, and does not necessarily process the text at all (ibid.).

In the critical interpretations Warren Bennet (1988, 33) argues that George is self-centered to the point where he wants his wife to look and act like him, with her hair short and reading: “I like [your hair] the way it is. . . . You look pretty darn nice” (Hemingway 2003, 131). The hairstyle is also related to John Hagopian’s (1962, 221) idea regarding the possibility that the wife feels or is “demoted in femininity” for lacking something to care for, in addition to the feminine hair she yearns for. According to Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 230), there is “[a] central male/female opposition [that] supports the previous reading. The wife yearns for long hair, and disapproves of the short hair she shares with her husband”. This may be, as John Hagopian argues (1962, 221-222), because “the American girl wants to be like her mother”. The story may be assumed to have taken place in the 1920s, during which “close-cropped” haircuts were popular (ibid.). This is again something that might have enhanced the student readings of the short story.

7.2.9 Question 9: The possible importance of the padrone and the maid

Question nine asked the students to offer explanations as to why the padrone and the maid might be important to the story. Again, the responses to this question ranged from highly interpretive, insightful responses to an inability to offer any explanation as to their importance. The repetition of a certain word, such as *like*, may have had a decisive effect on the student readers. While the responses to the possible importance of the padrone and the maid in the story were quite varied, there were two interpretations which were most popular.

Eight out of 29 (28%) responses referred to the padrone being important because the wife had feelings for him. This is demonstrated in the following examples:

- (72) Wif may have crush on the padron (S17M).
- (73) I think there is something between the woman and the padrone (S5F).
- (74) The wife liked so much the padrone, for minute I though she had crush on him (S12F).
- (75) Wife likes the padrone . . . (S18F).
- (76) Padrone is important because the wife has feelings for him (S15F).

- (77) The padrone seems to be “perfect” and the wife likes him (S4F).
 (78) Pardone is important in the story, because Georges wife loves the padrone (S16M).
 (79) I think the wife had a crush on the padrone (S8M).

In addition to these responses, the padrone was also seen as important because he “refers to how being respectful and caring is important” (S7M) (1/29 or 3%). Another student (3%) thought the padrone was not important at all (S6M) while a third student (3%) proposed that the padrone was important because he brought the cat to the wife (S20M). While the students are encouraged to make their own suppositions and readings of the text, in teaching this, or any other for that matter, text the teacher may want to ascertain the student has understood the events and agents in the text as they are presented. For example, in reference to the last example (S20M), the teacher may want to explore if the student has in fact understood that the person who brought the cat to the wife was the maid; however it may be that the student meant the padrone was the facilitator in bringing the cat to the wife, but failed to express this lucidly.

The maid was often seen as a facilitator in the wife and the padrone’s relationship, or as the padrone’s helper (2/29 or 6%). Two of the 29 responses (6%) indicated the maid as being important because she brought the cat to the wife (80, 81). One student suggested the maid has a big role in the text, but did not specify why or how (84), while two students proposed the maid as important because she acts as a helper or facilitator (82, 83). One student thought the maid was significant because she laughed at the wife (85). The seventh mention of the importance of the maid suggested that she was important in the text because she functioned as an expression of love (86).

- (80) . . . maid bring cat to wife (S17M).
 (81) . . . The maid finally brought the cat to wife (S12F).
 (82) . . . Maid is important, because she is padrones and wifes helper (S16M).
 (83) . . . The maid brings out the umbrella when its raining . . . (S20M)
 (84) . . . The maid has a big role (S6M).
 (85) . . . and maid just laughed to the wife, when they were outside (S18F).
 (86) . . . The maid is just a way to express love (S7M).

Five of the 29 (17%) responses grouped the maid and the padrone together and suggested a shared importance for the characters. Two of the five responses suggested the characters are important

because they bring the cat to the wife. The other three single responses included the characters being important because they make the wife feel something; because they act as tools of fate; and because “[t]hey just are important characters. Without characters there wouldn’t be any story” (S11F).

This is perhaps an aspect of the text which is most difficult for the students to grapple on their own. From the responses it seems that most students responded to the repetition of the word *like* in relation to the padrone, but they did not compare or contrast the two male characters at all. From a literary analysis’ point of view it would seem natural to examine any textual feature which came in a pair, as that might often create a dichotomy. Such seems to be the case here with the two male characters in the text. Warren Bennet (1988, 30) summarizes the cause and effect of the character dichotomy quite effectively:

The padrone is an admirable man, and although briefly sketched, he is Hemingway’s earliest role model. Each of the padrone’s qualities corresponds to the qualities of the role model as he later appears in Hemingway’s fiction: a man of dignity, will, and commitment. . . . [T]he values which the young have lost are made apparent. . . . The wife’s recognition of the padrone’s extraordinary character suggests that her husband, George, lacks the qualities which the wife finds so attractive in the padrone. George has neither dignity, nor will, nor commitment. He is a ‘kid’.

It is sensitivity to these types of possibilities, combined with extratextual knowledge of historical circumstance and authorial background information, which could enrich the above types of student responses. While Bennet’s reading is certainly not the only correct or even possible one, it does offer a whole new perspective to the students, and would help a number of students explain, for example, what they originally noted in the attraction the wife felt toward the padrone might have meant in regard to the text. For, it seems, it is one thing to make an observation in the text, but it is entirely a matter onto its own to decipher what this observation means in the context of this particular short story.

7.2.10 Question 10: Order of character importance

The purpose of this question was to see which of the six possible characters the students would feel was the most important, and in what order the students would place the characters, when ranging from most to least important. In the survey the six characters were placed in a square box, as opposed to a linear line, one after another, to avoid suggesting any specific order.

The question was sparked by Hemingway critics, which most often seem to place the wife as the central character, perhaps most often due to the wife having the most agency. However, some critics, such as William Adair (1992, 73), have also pointed to George as having the key role in the text, and have analyzed the text from George's point of view. "[I]t seems likely that [Hemingway] would give both George and his wife their reasons, motives, complexity-- especially since they are husband and wife, and more, since they seem based on himself and his wife Hadley" (ibid.). While the possibility of the characters being based on Hemingway and his wife has been disproved by Hemingway himself (Bennet 1988, 28-29), Adair (1992, 73) argues that "if George is a round rather than a flat character, then his supineness, passivity, lack of response to his wife's unspoken plea for a little physical closeness, suggests that something is wrong with him" (ibid.). Adair (1992, 73-74) performs a biographical reading which he supports with vertical imagery found in the text. He proposes that these vertical images, juxtaposed with George's lying down, suggest he is sexually impotent (ibid.). This, according to Adair (1992, 74), we may assume because we know Gertrude Stein had suggested to Hemingway that "he try for an autobiographical realism in his fiction", which is why we may assume that Hadley losing Hemingway's manuscripts is reflected in Hemingway's fiction as "something 'tragic' and in a sense, violent".

Moreover, some critics have appointed importance not only to these aforementioned key characters but also to the waiter standing outside, across the square. This, too, relates to Adair's (1992, 73-74) attention to vertical imagery:

[T]he story is filled with vertical imagery and words: water 'stood' in pools, the wife 'stood' at the window, the waiter 'stood' in the doorway, and the old hotel keeper 'stood' behind his desk when the wife appeared; then she 'stood' in the doorway (the

maid's opening the umbrella may be pertinent here, too), and at the end, the maid 'stood' in another doorway holding (vertically) the cat.

Adair (1992, 73-74) enumerates a number of other vertical images to illustrate his point effectively. Other critics, too, such as Darren Felty (1997, 365) noted the sense of stagnation in the imagery, although he thought these images were juxtaposed with fertility, and not so much with George's impotence.

In formulating the question at hand for the survey, it was my presupposition that the students would view the wife or the cat as the most important, due to the wife's agency and the cat's centrality particularly from the title's point of view. After all, students in upper secondary are often schooled to consider a text's title in particular, when analyzing a text. This, of course, is a reasonable thing to do with any text, but therein lies the danger that students disregard other features of the text which could well be meaningful in comprehending various possible interpretations of the text. Finally, it should be noted that one character was left out of the question: the man crossing the square in a rubber cape (Hemingway 2003, 130). While this omission was not entirely intentional, it would have been difficult to identify the man to the students. This meant that the question was ultimately left with six characters, each of whom were identifiable to the students with a single word. Had this man in a rubber cape been included in the question, labeling him "man" would have been somewhat ambiguous, and for example, "the man in a rubber cape" would have sat awkwardly in the question amongst "George" and "padrone" and the other characters. However, Hemingway critics, such as John Hagopian (1962, 221), have suggested that this character is important, because he is part of a symbolic setting:

The critical reader seeking significance for every detail (as he must when working with a story so short and so economical as this) is encouraged again to speculate on possible meanings [for the man in a rubber cape]. The rubber cape is protection from the rain, and rain is a fundamental necessity for fertility, and fertility is precisely what is lacking in the American wife's marriage.

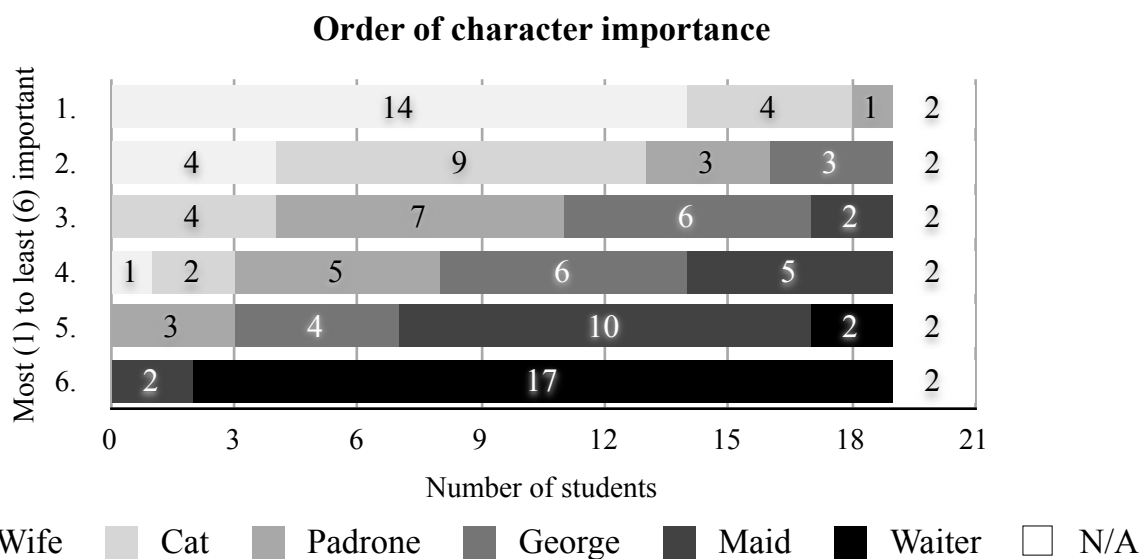
While the man in the rubber cape has a central role in supporting the already familiar theme of fertility, it seems that this is the type of information which the teacher could offer the students in studying the text.

Overall, the most typical order of importance in regard to the characters was (the number of responses out of the 21 total responses are presented in the brackets):

Wife (14/21), cat (9/21), padrone (7/21), George (6/21), maid (10/21), waiter (17/21)

This can be seen in Figure 8:

Figure 8:



As predicted, the wife was clearly viewed as the most important character, the cat coming up a close second. The characters which received responses indicating them as the most important characters were those of the wife, cat, and the padrone. Interestingly, the character of George did not receive any responses that would have proposed him as the most important character. Instead, one response suggested the padrone as most important. The third and fourth most important characters were almost evenly divided between George and the padrone. Two students did not answer the question, most likely due to a lack of time.

In regard to the most typical order of importance, it may be due to the wife's "liking" the padrone for which the padrone placed a close third in the overall arrangement. However, George

was not left more than a single response away, which goes to show that George and the padrone were viewed as more or less of equal importance. Finally, it seems fairly natural that the students viewed the maid and the waiter as the two least important characters. As Hagopian (1962, 221) pointed out earlier, students should be made aware not to disregard any textual feature when approaching a short story, particularly one by Hemingway. The smallest detail may carry meaning, and open further interpretive possibilities, all of which can enhance the reading experience.

As John Hagopian (1962, 220) underlines, in a short story that is as “formally and economically structured as a classic ballet . . . [e]very detail of speech and gesture carries a full weight of meaning”. For this reason students should be taught to consider a possible significance for everything they find in a short story. Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 230) uses Greimas’s model to discuss character importance as follows:

In reference to Greimas, the wife is subject of the story, the cat is object, George is the opponent, but so is also the hotel-keeper indirectly, and the maid enacts the roles as his helper. The two men attempt to shield the wife from the rain (they even decide to avoid the rain themselves), and the maid is acting out the hotel-keeper’s orders. It is equally significant that the third male in the story is trying to protect himself from the rain by wearing a rubber cape. In fact, this figure is the first one she sees after opening the door to go out.

Bringing students to realize further possibilities in reading, such as the roles as depicted by Holmesland (ibid.) above, enrich the reading experience and hopefully entice the student to read on, and to welcome instances of literature use in the classroom.

7.2.11 Question 11: Is the story realistic?

The question of whether or not the story is realistic sparks also from the critical writings related to Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain”. William Adair (1992, 74) notes that Gertrude Stein suggested to Hemingway he try autobiographical realism in his writing, and Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 221) points out in his structuralist analysis of “Cat in the Rain” that “[t]he story is realistic in that it centres on the dramatization of a problem in human relationships, located to a particular time and

place, and purports to reveal some truth about the situation”. This is something more than half (14.5/21 or 69%) of the responses took note of as well- the realism of the text- however, only one of the students referred to the story as being allegorical. This comes close to what Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 232) suggests about the realism of the text:

‘Cat in the Rain’ is basically a metonymic realistic story. There is an implied notion of ‘vraisemblance’ which assumes a correlation between text and reality, The story aims to expose some human problem, and the referential function of the text appears to subordinate the expressiveness of the artistic form.

The students who thought the story was realistic all supported their arguments one way or another. The most typical argument for its realism was that the events of the story “could happen” in real life.

- (87) It could happen in real life, so yeah, it is (S7M).
- (88) Yes, because it could happen in real world (S4F).
- (89) It is quite realistic, people can do thinks like that (S2F).

Three of the 21 (14%) responses included the notion of “Why not” when asked if the story was realistic. This could either suggest the students could not see why it could not be a realistic story, or that they had not thought about it, but seeing as the question prompted for an answer they may as well answer ‘yes’.

- (90) Why not? That kind a story could be real story, there was nothing impossible (S12F).
- (91) Yes I think it’s realistic, why not? (S10F)
- (92) Why not. But it’s a bit weird that the wife likes to have some strange cat in the hotel room (S6M).

One student suggested that the story was realistic specifically because “this is vertauskuva” (S3F, Fin. allegory). An allegorical story has indeed a primary and secondary “surface” in meaning, wherefore if the story can be read allegorically it should have a surface meaning as well, as is the case here (Cuddon 1998, 20). The last student to have interpreted the story as realistic argued so based on the fact that the story “deals with love and emotions” (S16M).

Four responses of the 21 (19%) were not entirely sure if the story was realistic. The response was classified as “maybe” if the answer included the words *might* or *could*. However, though the

above “yes, it is realistic” responses also used the word *could*, they explicitly consented the story may be realistic, wherefore they were separated from the “maybe” responses.

(93) it might be real if it happened like 30 years ago. hotel keepers are not that nice nowadays (S17M).

Fascinatingly enough, the student (S17M) is quite right to assume the story is from several decades ago (88 years ago at the time of conducting the survey in 2011), and he seems to be doing so based on his existential knowledge (Council of Europe 2012, 11). This fact was only revealed to the students after they had handed in their response sheets. Of the three other responses which indicated ‘maybe’, only one student could not offer any justification:

(94) Might be, I don’t know (S18F).

(95) It could be realistic ‘cause it shows that marriages are not perfect (S15F).

(96) It could be because people are different (S8M).

Two of the 21 (10%) responses indicated quite clearly that the reader thought the story could not be realistic:

(97): No. I don’t be that kind of stories at realistic (S14M).

(98): Its not realistic, the ending is like in fairy tales (S20M).

One student (5%) thought the story was otherwise realistic, except for the ending, where the wife gets the cat. This response was thus counted as both a ‘yes’ and a ‘no’, with 0.5 weight for both responses:

(99) It is realistic except the ending (S13F).

This response is interesting, because it may stem from the fact that the student is reacting to the irony in the text, or perhaps to the fact that the reader is not given any indication of whether the wife will be pleased to get this cat. Here we may refer to critical opinions regarding the text. Critics, such as Hagopian (1962, 222), argue that the cat “will most certainly not do”, and point out that the ending is the “final, ironic coda [where the] girl’s symbolic wish is grotesquely fulfilled in painfully realistic terms”. Finally, three students (14%) left the question blank. These were marked as N/A in the analysis.

The realism of the short story, which the students, too, noted, ties into the *fabula* of the story as pointed to by Holmesland (1986, 222). The *fabula* of the text itself has no elements of the incredible or supernatural; elements of magical realism. This is why it is important to be sensitive to what Holmesland (*ibid.*) underlines as the *sjuzet* of the story. For this reason the survey contained the following question regarding the possibility of an omission of information (See 7.2.12). Overall, the students thought the story was quite possibly realistic, except perhaps for the ending. Interestingly, Edwin Barton (1994, 73) suggests that there are grounds for arguing that the story is in fact not realistic. Barton (*ibid.*) argues that “it is only when [readers] continue to ask questions that the illusion of reality may begin to fall away, allowing [the readers] to appreciate how a text may contrive a number of competing fictions: the hermeneutics of the story”. Barton (*ibid.*) bases his argument not on the ending but on the fact that when the maid asks the wife “Ha perduto qualche cosa, signora?”, or “Have you lost something, madam?”,

[i]n the logic of ‘realistic’ fiction, such a question would require that the American wife translate it, too, in order to reply. And, significantly, her response gives evidence of transformation as well as translation, for it is immediately following this question that the narrator begins to refer to the wife as ‘the American girl’.

Of the total 21 responses 12.5/22 (57%) answered ‘yes, the story is realistic’, 4/21 (19%) responses indicated ‘maybe’, 3.5/21 (17%) responded ‘no’ and another 3/21 (14%) were blank. From the results it seems that a number of students in this class would have been surprised to entertain the possibility of the story not being realistic at all. This is something that could be looked at should the story be taught again to a group of upper secondary school students.

7.2.12 Question 12: The possibility of an omission of information

Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 222) notes that “Hemingway’s characteristic method of creating *sjuzet*” relied on an omission of information. As Holmesland (1986, 222) observes, this “[o]mission of units in the logical chain mystifies the reader, inviting a greater imaginative involvement”. This is particularly relevant for this study, because in order to enrich student readings, students need to be

encouraged to read actively. Edwin Barton (1994, 72) approaches “Cat in the Rain” from an epistemological point of view, and asserts that Hemingway’s short stories usually employ one of three “epistemologic formulas [sic]”, one of which he cites as the “lexical riddle”. In the lexical riddle “Hemingway’s strategy . . . is to have readers so stew over the missing or ambiguous term that once they discover it or its meaning, they will feel they have solved the story and mosey along to the next one” (ibid.). In his article Barton (ibid.) explores the “range of lexical riddles behind this ‘easy-to-come-by’ crux”. It seemed therefore interesting to ask the students if they thought there was anything the reader was not told; if there indeed seemed to be an omission of sorts that they had responded to in their reading.

Overall 21 students had the opportunity of answering this question. Of these 21 responses 9/21 (43%) students thought there was something the reader was not being told; 2/21 (10%) thought there might be something not being said; 2/21 (10%) responded “no”. Eight of the 21 (38%) students did not propose an answer for the question at all. It may be that the students considered the question too difficult to tackle on their own, they may have gotten tired of answering questions by this time or they may simply have not been able to suggest an answer to the question. The question does require the use of creative reading from the student, or alternatively experience in reading and in unreliable narrators or knowledge of Hemingway’s “epistemologic formulas” (Barton 1994, 72).

The students who responded ‘yes’, there is something that the reader is not told, argued their case with the following types of reasons:

- (100) How old they are. Are they in what situation in their live (S3F).
- (101) Yes there is because the narrator just implys things but doesn’t say them outloud (S10F).
- (102) Why the woman is depressed and what is the gap she is trying to fill (S5F).
- (103) I’d say georges wife has a cancer (S17M).
- (104) Relationship between the wife and George. Are they happy together or not? Also the padrone, why the wife liked him so much (S12F)?
- (105) Narrator doesn’t tell us what there is between the padrone and the wife. It would tell more about the wife if she is cheating (S15F).
- (106) Does the wife really likes the padrone. It could explane much if it’s told straight in the story (S4F).

(107) The narrator doesn't tell if the couple have children (S13F).

(108) Where the cat went when wife is going down (S14M).

The responses are interesting because they range from responses which seem to be heading toward the same conclusions as the Hemingway critics (S5F: "The gap she is trying to fill") to responses which longed for somewhat surprising details, such as "Where the cat went" when the wife went to look for it (S14M). Two students seemed to be rather frustrated with the fact that the narrator clearly implies things, but does not state the facts as they are (101, 106). This response is quite rewarding for the teacher, as the students seem to have been sensitive to Hemingway being "an artist of implications" (Hagopian 1962, 221). It also seems that a number of students thought there was something about the "love triangle" between the wife, George and the padrone which the reader was not told about. So in sum, the topics students thought the reader was not told included age, reasons for possible depression, illness, quality of relationships, the possibility of a relationship between the wife and the padrone, whether the couple has children, and where the cat went to.

The students who responded 'maybe' expressed the idea as follows:

(109) Possibly, but that's what the narrators does (S6M).

(110) There could be but I dont know that what. It would be important for. the (S11F)

It seems the first student is not aware of the possibility of an unreliable narrator (109). The second seems to have run out of time to finish their thought (110). One of the responses was written in response to question 13 (next), though it seems to be clearly in response to question 12. The student suggested that the "Narrator could tell the real reason, why they were in the hotel, because it would help to understand the story better" (S16M). As can be seen, this response has nothing to do with repetition, which was the central idea in question 13, but rather to do with the possible omission, and thus question 12.

Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 232) notes that "[by] his method of omitting logical links [Hemingway] manages to complicate interpretation while inspiring the reader's imaginative involvement to solve the enigma". Barton's (1994, 72) idea of lexical riddles in Hemingway's

fiction is also important to bear in mind when considering the possibility of something being omitted from the text. In teaching the story to students it would seem important to direct students toward considering possibilities which are implicit in the text, such as the possibility of an omission of information or an unreliable narrator (Holmesland 1986, 232; Barton 1994, 72).

7.2.13 Question 13: Repetition

This question intended to see if the students read the text carefully enough to note the repetition of various elements in the story, and whether they were able to offer a significance to these motifs. Holmesland (1986, 223-227) points out that there are three literary motifs which arise from the text: the cat, the rain, and the window. In reading and analyzing literary texts, such as Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain", students ought to be reminded of the importance of repetition and its possible significances. Here, "[t]he cat initiates and sustains the main action of the story. Though its full meaning cannot be paraphrased, its function as a symbol around which the whole story centres, may be analysed" (Holmesland 1986, 223). The rain, on the other hand, can and has been interpreted in a number of ways. Holmesland (1986, 226) underlines that in Hemingway's works rain is usually interpreted as "the loss of pleasure and joy, the onset of discomfort and ennui". In regard to the window as a motif, Holmesland (1986, 228) highlights that it "enhances the marital ennui through the aggravating atmosphere of endless rain without; it points to central thematic oppositions". Holmesland (1986, 227-229) analyzes the motifs in relation to Greimas's model and comes to the conclusion that "[t]he Rain/Good weather model naturally conditions the interpretation of the cat's role. It loses its credibility as child-surrogate", largely because "the structural opposition is between drought and rain", and not *rain vs. good weather*.

In addition to the two fairly predictable motifs in the text, the cat and rain, Adair (1992, 73-74) points to two other motifs which can be found in the text: vertical imagery and the action of lying down. The two motifs tie into his interpretation of George being potentially impotent. "There is another hint of his impotence: the story is filled with vertical imagery and words" (ibid.). As was

discussed in chapter 4 and section 7.2.10 of this thesis, Adair (1992, 73-74.) notes that “[l]ying down is a constantly recurring ‘event’ in Hemingway’s fiction and in the short stories it always has a reason: a character has been physically or emotionally wounded or hurt”. This is certainly something students could be made aware of in reading Hemingway, which might thus enhance their reading experience.

Darren Felty (1997, 365) on the other hand suggests that what repeats are images of stagnation and fertility. “The first paragraph details the setting and establishes both the tone and underlying theme of the story by juxtaposing images of fertility and stagnation and by employing a vocabulary of spatial and geometric relationships” (Felty 1997, 365). Felty (1997, 365-366) notes that, for example, the word “square” is repeated three times. For him, all these serve the interpretation of the spatial confinement and the oppression the wife senses in not only being at the hotel in the poor weather but also in her marriage (Felty 1997, 366). As the above critical views on the repetition of various elements in the text has shown, there indeed are numerous motifs running throughout the text, though only a few have been mentioned here. What remains to be seen is whether the students note the repetitions, and what kind of meaning the students attribute to the motifs.

Of the 21 students who had an opportunity to respond to the question five (24%) left the question unanswered. Of the 21 responses 16 (76%) indicated something being repeated. These students brought up ‘wanting’ in 10/16 (62%) of the responses which indicated something being repeated in the text:

- (111) Wife wants all kinds of stuff. I think it reflects into her past, when she was a spoiled brat who got everything (S7M).
- (112) “I wanted it so much”, maybe it means that the wife has lost something that she really wanted (S10F)?
- (113) The woman says many times that “I want a cat” (S5F).
- (114) Wif wants is repeated i want this i want that long hair a cat etc (S17M).
- (115) The wife is repeated twice, I think so, that she wants the kitty. Seems to be she wanted it more than everything (S12F).
- (116) Wife said many times that she wants a kitty (S18F).

- (117) The wife wants the cat. She wants somebody to spent time with (S15F).
 (118) Yes, wife wants the cat. Wife wants the cat but her husband wont get it for her, but the padrone did (S4F).
 (119) That the wife wants to have a cat (S11F).
 (120) That the wife wanted a cat (S8M).

The ‘cat’ came up in 4/16 (25%) responses which said something is repeated:

- (121) The cat [...] (S3F)
 (122) There is repeated many times the word a cat and a kitty, it tells that the wife wants something (S2F).
 (123) Cat is repeated. Cat makes a bond between all the par in the story (S13F).
 (124) The cat because its the key factor in the story (S20M).

The weather, specifically rain, came up in two of the 16 (13%) responses which suggested something was repeated:

- (125) . . . and the weather (S3F).
 (126) Rain. I don’t know (S14M).

Only one (5%) of the students, who responded to the question, thought there was nothing repeated in the text and responded: “I don’t think so” (S6M). Most students did indeed note some form of repetition, most answers indicating the sense of wanting being the most prevalent of repetitions. This could be seen as a pedagogical road sign; a suggestion for how to enrich the reading experiences. The repetitive motifs seem to be such that most students are not fully aware of them, and this could be an opportunity to use the critical, literary analysis to enrich teaching and learning about literature in the classroom.

7.2.14 Question 14: The possible importance of the setting

The settings of literary texts seem often to be neglected in favor of an analysis of characters and turns of events. Settings, however, are of paramount importance particularly when exploring realistic texts, which could be argued to be the case with “Cat in the Rain” (Holmesland 1986, 232). In a lecture on literary landscapes Markku Salmela (2011) stressed that in realistic texts the landscape usually reflects character psychology or emotion. Darren Felty’s (1997, 363) analysis of “Cat in the Rain” relies on the selfsame concept of the setting reflecting character psychology. “The

story employs a complex of barriers, enclosures, and geometrically defined details to represent the emotional and psychological boundaries that restrict character interaction” (Felty 1997, 363). For this reason it seemed important to explore if the students found the setting in the story important, and if they were able to offer it some kind of significance.

Of the 21 students who had an opportunity to respond to the question “Is knowing *where* the story takes place important?” 4/21 (19%) students responded ‘Yes’, 9/21 (43%) responded ‘No’ and a surprisingly high number of students, 8/21 (38%) did not answer the question at all. It seems striking that so few students would view the setting and landscape of the text as in any way significant, to say nothing of the 8/21 blank responses. The four students who responded ‘Yes’ to the question formulated their responses as follows:

(127) It is important to know that the story takes place in a hotel (S15F).

(128) Place is always an important part of a story, although reader doesn’t always notice that. But if the place changes the story changes (S13F).

(129) Yes, because when your reading this story, you try to imagine all the places told in the story (S16M).

(130) I think yes, it’s pretty important (S10F).

Interestingly, of the nine students who considered the setting as not important only four justified their answers somehow, whilst the other five simply wrote ‘No’. The other four expanded their answers as follows:

(132) This could happen anywhere, so I think it doesn’t matter (S7M).

(133) No because the location isn’t very important in this story (S5F).

(134) It’s not that important, but good to know. Also where the characters are come from (S12F).

(135) No, but it’s pretty obvious in this story (S6M).

From the responses received to this question regarding the importance of setting it seems that students in upper secondary school would benefit from any mention regarding the importance of a literary setting or landscape. Taking the setting into account might also lead the student readers toward a biographical interpretation of the text, as it is known that Hemingway and Hadley were on a trip to Rapallo, Italy, in February 1923 when Hemingway first wrote a draft of “Cat in the

Rain” (Griffin 2001, 100). However, as was observed earlier, students, too, should be warned against strictly biographical readings, as reading literature is not about recreating the mental state of the author (Eagleton 1983, 47). This becomes pointedly clear here, as Warren Bennet (1988, 28-29) highlights that Hemingway explicitly denied “Cat in the Rain” being about Hadley and himself: “Cat in the rain wasnt [sic] about Hadley,” Bennet (ibid.) quotes Hemingway as having written to F. Scott Fitzgerald in a letter dated December 24, 1925.

I know that you and Zelda always thought it was. When I wrote that were at Rapallo but Hadley was 4 months pregnant with Bumby. The Inn Keeper was the one at Cortina D’Ampezzo and the man and the girl were a harvard [sic] kid and his wife that I’d met at Genoa. Hadley never made a speech in her life about wanting a baby because she had been told various things by her doctor and I’d– no use going into all that.

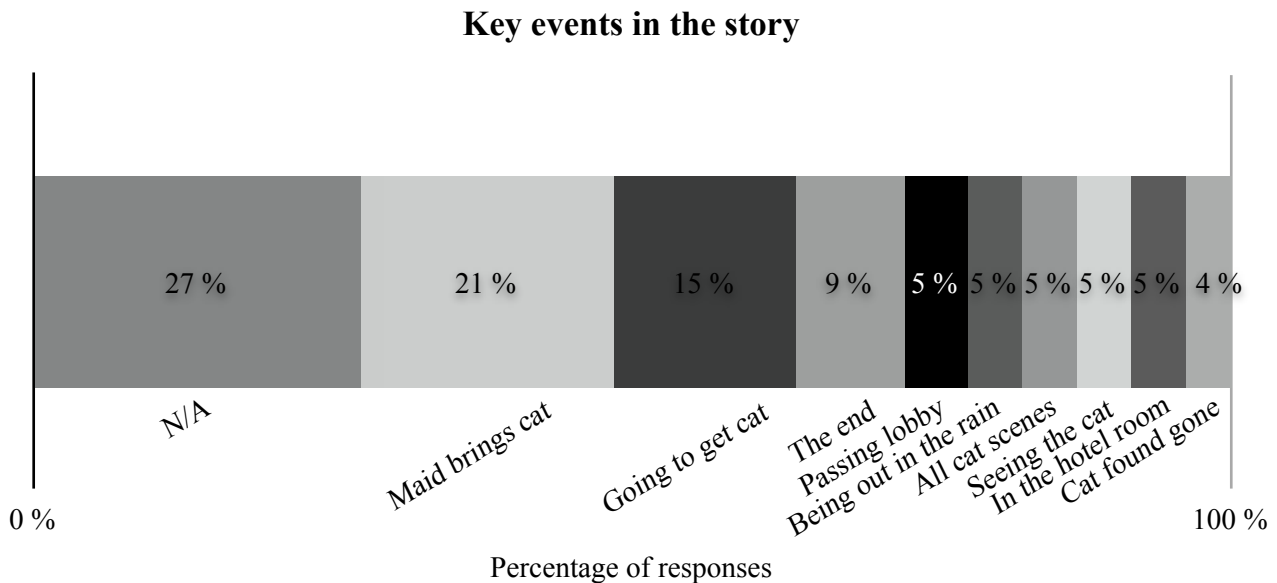
Information of the above kind regarding the circumstances under which the story was first drafted could offer the students a new point of view from which to approach the text, though here it should be made clear that though the trip did offer Hemingway inspiration regarding the setting, it cannot be read directly as being about him and his wife.

7.2.15 Question 15: Key events

The purpose of the last open-ended questions was to gain a sense of which events the students saw as the most important. While this may seem similar to the opening question of the survey (“What is the most important word / phrase / sentence in the text?”), it was my presupposition that this question warrant a different kind of answer. The first question would have allowed for an answer that was a single noun, whereas this question looks specifically at the events in the text. John Hagopian (1962, 221), for example, argues that “[t]here follows a movement of departure and return in five symmetrically arranged scenes: the hotel room, the passage through the lobby outdoors in the rain, return through the lobby, and back in the hotel room”. While there are numerous smaller moments which could be elected as one of the key instances in the text, many critics have pointed to the end of the story (see for example Hagopian 1962, 222).

Of the 21 students who had an opportunity to respond to the question, 15 (71%) answered the question, indicating nine different events depicted in Figure 9:

Figure 9:



From the responses 6/21 students left the question blank (27% of overall responses). Out of the total 21 responses 4.66 suggested the key event was the maid bringing the cat to the wife (21%). The end was classified as a separate event, as the end could entail the entire scene in the hotel room after the wife's return, which could be analyzed as reflecting the relationship of George and his wife, which is a central event in regard to the entire text. The "maid bringing the cat" could be interpreted as the "final ironic coda" of the text, and in numerous critical opinions, as well as in my own, should not be merged into the concept of the "end" as a whole (Hagopian 1962, 222). Therefore "the end" was classified as a unit of its own, and the "maid bringing the cat" as a unit of its own. Two of the 21 responses (9%) indicated the end as the key event:

(135) Since there aren't that much events in this story I would say the end. Padrone shows that he cares about things like this and is willing to help (S7M).

(136) The end where the wife gets her cat. Because the padrone gave it to her, not her husband (S4F).

Six responses (29%) referred to the maid bringing the cat to the wife.

(137) . . . but then the maid brings it to her. I don't really know hot to explain why but I think those are the most important events (S10F).

(138) When the maid brings the cat to the woman. I think this is an important event because the woman says constantly that she want a cat and then she gets one (S5F).

(139) . . . and the moment when maid brings the cat to her (S17M).

(140) . . . and when the maid prings the cat to her. Because she likes the padrone and it's important if they have something between them (S15F).

(141) When maid brought the cat to the wife, because wife got what she wanted and I think it made her happy (S16M).

(142) When maid give cat to the wife (S14M).

The third most popular response was the moment when the wife decides to go and get the cat, which was the proposed answer in 3.33/21 (15%) responses:

(143) When woman went to caught a cat (S9M).

(144) Maybe that when the wife go out find the kitty (S18F).

(145) When the wife leaves the room and goes to search the cat. That's the only part when something happens (S6M).

(146) When the wife goes out . . . (S15F)

Of the 21 total responses 1.16 (5%) indicated that the key event was the moment when the wife passed through the lobby, with the wife's feelings being depicted at the same time. The number of responses derives from the fact that two students suggested three key events, in which one of the events mentioned was the wife passing through the lobby, and a third student suggested two key events, one of which was this same event.

(147) the moment when wif passed hotel lobby and how his feelings to padrone are discribed . . . (S17M)

(148) When the wife goes out and meets the padrone . . . Because she likes the padrone and it's important if they have something between them (S15F).

One response was categorized as three different events: passing through the lobby with a depiction of the wife's feelings, the cat found to be gone and the cat being brought to the wife. The response was difficult to categorize as it seems to contain more questions than commentary on any events in the text. It stands to wonder, if the student completely understood the question, particularly the meaning of the word "event".

(149) The relationship between the *wife and the padrone*. Why are they so close? They don't even know each other. Also, where did the *cat gone away* when the wife went out to get it. The final was, *how the padrone founded the cat* (S12F)?

The responses also included four single responses, (each representing 5%) which indicated a unique choice of the key event in the text. These included being out in the rain, all the cat scenes, seeing the cat and being in the hotel room. Interestingly, the least popular response was the moment when the cat was found to be gone, which was the proposed interpretation in only 0.85/21 (4%) responses. This number was arrived by virtue of the fact that one student proposed two key events, one of which was this (0.5/21 responses) and another student proposed three different key events, one of which, again, was this event. Therefore, though proposed in two student responses, this interpretation was calculated as having received only 0.85/21 hits of the total number of responses.

In teaching this aspect of the short story it would seem beneficial to hold short discussions regarding why the students thought a particular point in the text was key, as though there were groups of popular responses, the moments which were thought key in the plot were in no way uniform. As Stanley Fish's (1986, 70) reading communities, for example, have demonstrated, student readers learn more effectively when they share and verbalize experiences in literature.

7.3 Multiple choice questions' data analysis

The purpose of the multiple choice questions was to help gain an overall view of the way specific variables in the text were interpreted by the students. This is because, based on the background research on the critics' interpretations of the text, there are several key elements that generally cause diversions in the interpretations, so I considered it necessary to ask the students to give these specific elements significance.

The first question in the series of survey questions was the most open, allowing the student to freely choose their response and justify it. The second set of questions were also open-ended, but they were not entirely free-form because the vocabulary list can be said to have had a slight effect, as was demonstrated earlier, and also because the questions were set in a way that, retrospectively, seem to be guiding the students in a direction which seems to suggest there indeed is some

significance to elements such as the cat or the rain in the text. This, however, did not stop students, who were so inclined, from answering in a manner that indicated a literal reading of the text, with no depth or analysis to it. It was my presumption that, through multiple choice questions, the students would be forced to express their interpretation more succinctly in a single-word response. The possible choices of responses included interpretations by Hemingway critics and the possibility of one's own answer.

The elements I wanted to find interpretations to were the cat, a characterization of the two key characters, the atmosphere of the hotel, the rain, and the matter of whether the wife is pregnant, has lost a child, would like to have a child or cannot have a child. The results of the student responses are analyzed in the following sections. Finally, it is important to note that for unknown reasons there is no data from students S1M and S13F on the multiple choice questions. It may be that at the end of the lesson they did not turn in the multiple choice question response sheet, though I gathered the last sheets from the students standing by the door to ascertain that all students hand in the last response sheets.

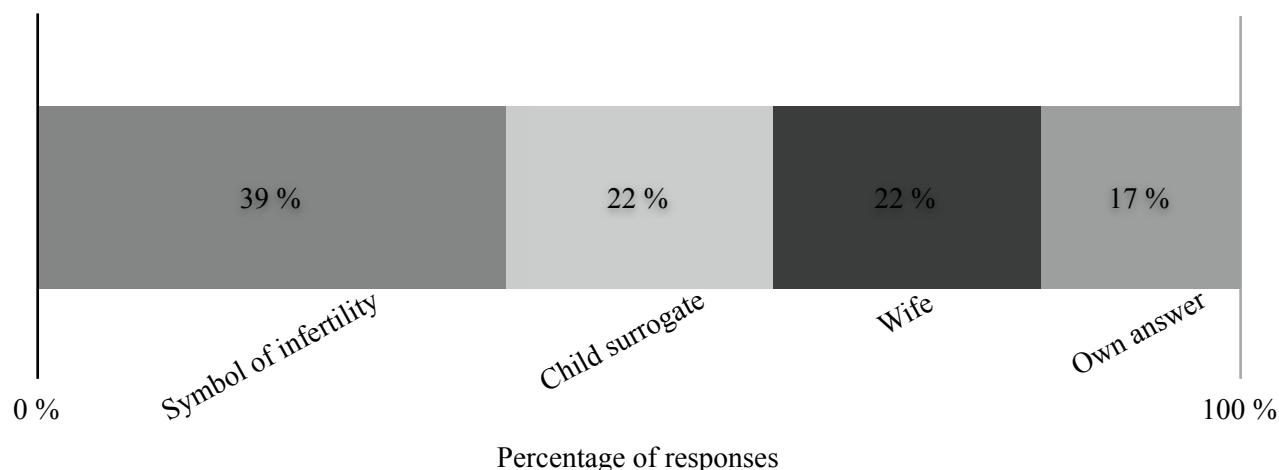
7.3.1 Question 1: What the cat represents

This question burrows into the heart of the most debated question regarding Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain": the significance of the cat. The possible significances are briefly outlined here. Warren Bennet (1988, 31-34) proposed that the cat represent infertility, due to the fact that "[t]ortoise-shells do not naturally reproduce" and because the wife, upon seeing the cat, "immediately makes a subconscious transference of her own sense of homelessness to the cat, and she wants to do for the cat what George will not do for her, provide a place of acceptance and comfort". John Hagopian (1962, 222) argues that the cat is "an obvious symbol for a child". Similarly to Hagopian's view on the cat, Edwin Barton (1994, 74) on the other hand sees the cat as a "symbolic displacement of maternal instincts". Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 224) argues that the cat "looms as a metaphor of the

wife's deeper, unfulfilled desires". Based on Darren Felty's (1997, 364) research including an earlier manuscript of the short story, it is possible to argue that the cat may in fact refer to the wife, as in the earlier manuscript the wife's "interesting nickname" was Kitty. This is supported by Bennet (1988, 32) who observes that "[t]he fact that the original title of the story was 'The Poor Kitty' and the fact that in the earlier manuscript the husband calls his wife 'Kitty' indicates that Hemingway's original intention was to portray the wife as the 'poor kitty' and the actual cat in the rain as symbolic of the wife". Finally, the cat might be interpreted as a symbol for impotence or infertility due to the fact that tortoise-shells cannot reproduce, as William Adair (1992, 75) points out, or as the female reproductive organ, as Peter Griffin (2001, 100) suggest, because Hemingway was rather bitter about Hadley losing his manuscripts, causing him to suffer from artistic impotence as a writer.

As the cat can have a number of interpretations, of which six have been reviewed above, it seemed reasonable to find out what meaning the students would give to the cat figure in the text. This could be done in regular classroom conditions in the future as well. Having read the text, the students could be presented with this question, and whichever interpretation(s) would seem the least touched-upon could be reviewed with the whole class, so as to bring to light different points of view in the numerous possible interpretations.

In an effort to not guide the student responses too much, the question ended with: "If no answer is correct in your opinion, please write down what you think is the best answer on the empty line" (see Appendix for survey). The division of answers is demonstrated in Figure 10:

Figure 10:**What does the cat represent?**

Of all the student responses 7/19 (39%) thought the cat in Hemingway's short story represented infertility. This may be because the vocabulary the students used to work with the short story included the words *infertility*, *infertile*, *impotence* and *impotent*. In addition to this, the last question on the multiple choice questionnaire included a question regarding whether or not the wife was, had been, or wanted to be pregnant. The second most popular interpretation for the cat was evenly divided between the cat representing the wife and the being a symbol for a child, or child-surrogate, both representing 22% of the total responses.

In answering this question, three students opted for suggesting their own interpretation for the variable of the cat. One student expressed that the cat represented "something cute" (S19M), and a second student proposed the cat represented "[m]aybe a miscarriage" (S10F). A third student suggested the cat represented "comfort for the wife" (S16M). These answers made up 17% of the total responses. It is perhaps due to the sensitive nature of the response, as well as a limited linguistic knowledge that no students suggested the cat represent the female reproductive organ, though the title may have such a meaning in "common slang" as Peter Griffin suggests (2001, 100). Interestingly, when comparing the results of the question at hand and the sixth open-ended question, the question at hand has four different interpretations (or six if each 'own answer' is counted as a

separate unit in addition to the three suggested interpretations) for the cat, whereas the open-ended question has a variety of nine different responses (see p. 53). This seems to suggest that the students will opt for a ready made answer if one is proposed to them, but will think much more creatively if asked or prompted to do so.

It seems reasonable that the interpretations which are less prevalent in the student responses be introduced to and discussed with the entire class, possibly in small discussion groups. In formulating the differing interpretations it would be important that each reading be supported with textual or extra-textual knowledge, so that the students, too, become familiar with the dynamics of formulating a literary response. It is also important that the students realize that there is no one correct answer, necessarily. One response may have more “evidence” to support it than another, but it does not make other readings with less evidence false or wrong. In performing a reading of a literary text numerous factors come to play, wherefore different things will take center stage for different readers (Rosenblatt 1994, 14).

7.3.2 Question 2: Description of wife and George

The two main characters, George and his wife, have both been characterized by critics in completely opposite ways at various times. The crux of the matter lies in whether the reader sympathizes with George or his wife. Most critics, as William Adair (1992, 73) points out, “dismiss George the husband from the story as a complex character-- as if his only function is to lie on the bed and, as Selfish and Insensitive Male, act as cue for his wife’s emotional turmoil”. Adair (1992, 75) argues, that the story does not so much revolve around what the wife has lost personally, but rather that the question “Ha perduto qualche cosa, Signora?” refers to the wife having lost her husband’s manuscripts, for which now her husband suffers.

Indeed, Peter Griffin (2001, 101-102) for example sees George as a fairly distasteful character, someone who tells his wife “bitchily [to] get something to read” and seems “dry, desiccated, unable or unwilling to act”. Griffin (2001, 101) suggests that the padrone, while a

proper, pre-war man, can only “serve [the wife] in his fashion: the comforts he provides, the small civilities he performs”, and that the wife only “wants what should come to a young woman. And she speaks of it subconsciously”. Griffin, therefore, seems to sympathize with the wife.

John Hagopian (1962, 221) also seems to sympathize with the wife. He, too, sees the padrone as representing pre-war men, and that subconsciously, as the wife feels she is under distress, the padrone “arouses in her [the same] feelings of comfort and protection that her father did”. The wife feels distressed because she has failed “to find a creature to care for”, because she is not happy settling for a “strictly companionate marriage with George” (ibid.).

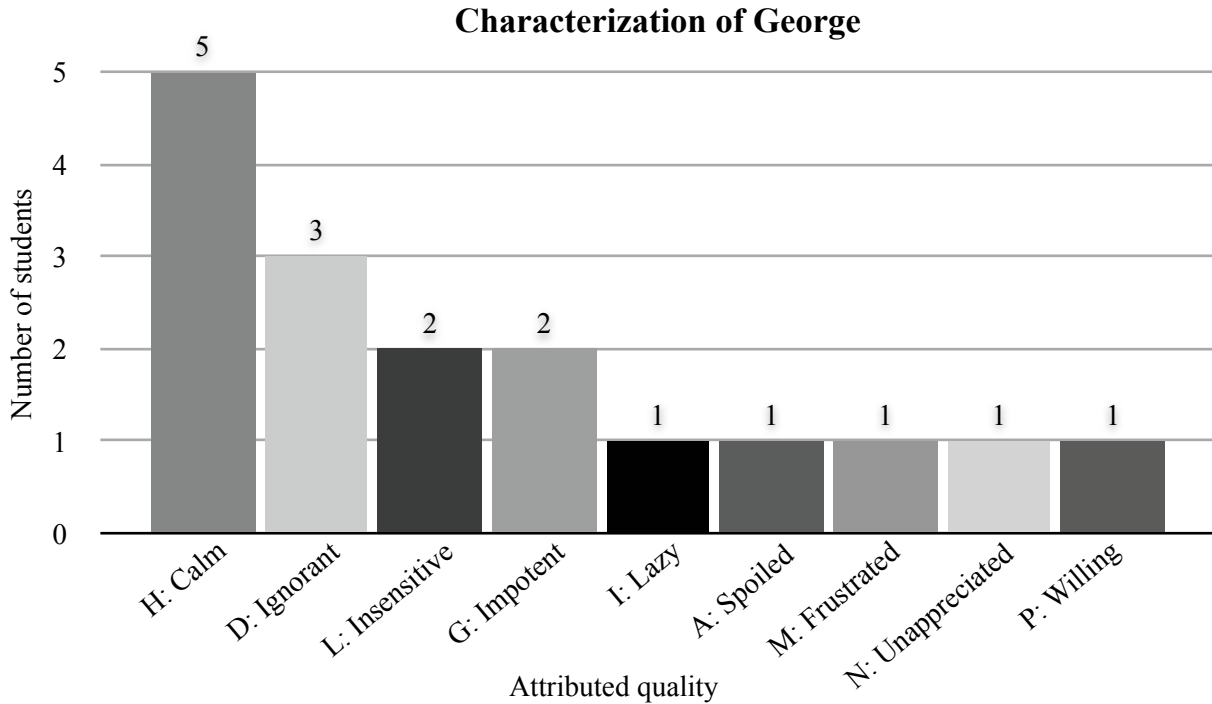
Darren Felty (1997, 365) argues the wife is in an “emotional and psychological predicament” and that she feels confined by the various spaces in the story. Felty (ibid.) sympathizes with the wife, though he does not seem to blame the husband. The wife attempts to communicate with her husband through expressing “her longing for the cat: in effect, her remorse over her own loneliness” (Felty 1997, 368). Ultimately, the last scene in which the wife “sits on the bed—for the first and only time sharing the same plane as her husband” really “represents the wife’s single failed attempt to transcend the emotional walls of their marriage, an attempt characterized by the spatial dynamic of their interaction” (ibid.).

Warren Bennet (1988, 31) also sees George as a fairly unlikeable character, and views the wife as the victim. Bennet (1988, 30-31), as was pointed out earlier, compares the padrone, “a man of dignity, will, and commitment”, to George, who seems to lack “the qualities which the wife finds so attractive in the padrone”. George “makes a pretense of having the will to get up and take action, but in reality there is no such will in him” (ibid.). In Bennet’s (ibid.) view, George’s comment to his wife to “not get wet”, too, is “flippant and mean-spirited”, while the padrone sends someone to actually help the wife on her quest. Bennet is thus another critic who sympathizes with the wife.

Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 224) argues that the story revolves around the theme of “marital triteness and [a] quest for a cat to compensate needs”, and suggest there exist a hint of “authorial

sympathy” toward the wife, because “[t]he cat’s sudden intrusion upon their separateness, which, upon failing, [causes] the wife’s “femininity [to] suffer” (1986, 230). Edwin Barton (1994, 72) on the other hand discusses the uncertainties in interpreting the story, which also encompass the roles of the husband and wife. “The stereotyped labels here, then, are not only the sexually frustrated and unappreciated wife but also the impotent and insensitive husband. with [sic] these, one can easily reconstruct a clichéd diagnosis: what a community of ‘readerly’ (in Barthes’ sense) readers might regard as the story as it should be” (Barton 1994, 75). Barton (ibid.) points out that Hemingway’s work usually revolves around “domestic and sexual relations between men and women”, where “stories of *eros tyrannos* are rarely just what we would expect”. “Reading the story with this admonition in mind enables one to ponder the possibility that George’s attitude and remarks are not wholly insensitive, though they may not be wholly justifiable either” (Barton 1994, 76). It is, therefore, important to recognize that the stereotypical reading, which many of the above critical interpretations point to, is just that: reading the story as it should be, as opposed to how it could be. This is what Heleena Lehtonen (1998, 32), too, discusses in conjunction with creative reading.

When asked to characterize the two main characters, George and his wife, the students’ responses varied most when describing George. The division of responses is depicted in Figure 11:

Figure 11:

George was most often seen as a calm character, which was the case in 5/17 (29%) responses. Second most frequently, in 3/17 responses or 18%, the students saw George as an ignorant character, possibly because they sympathized with the wife. It may also be that in characterizing George and his wife the students had to work harder to clarify the meaning of each quality to themselves, in the process of which some word, such as ignorant, may have been interpreted more as absent-minded than as purposefully neglectful of his wife. In the cases of describing George as *insensitive* and *impotent*, both were chosen in 2/17, or 12%, of the responses. Five qualities were chosen uniquely, which included *lazy*, *spoiled*, *frustrated*, *unappreciated* and *willing*. All attributes except *lazy* were listed in the suggested vocabulary list which was offered to the students to help work with the text. It may also be that some students randomly chose an adjective from the list to describe George, but this is almost impossible to ascertain. Eight of the 17, or 47 % of the qualities, were such that could be construed as positive qualities (5 * calm, 1 * willing, 1 * unappreciated, 1 * frustrated) and 9/17, or 53% of responses, were qualities which could be interpreted as negative ones (3 * ignorant , 2 * insensitive, 2 * impotent, 1 * lazy).

In analyzing the wife, on the other hand, the student responses were much more uniform.

The division of responses can be seen in Figure 12:

Figure 12:



Most responses seemed to sympathize with the wife, in that 13/17, or 76% of the responses, students saw the wife as either *frustrated*, *unappreciated*, *neglected*, or “*Own answer: miserable*”. Eight of the 17 or 47%, of the students thought the wife was frustrated with her life, or some aspect of it. Only 4/17 responses, or 24%, seemed to attribute the wife with a negative quality, such as *spoiled or selfish*, *childish or insensitive*. In this case, the students would benefit from exploring the situation from the husband’s point of view, as William Adair (1992, 73) suggested above, so that the possibly stereotypical reading be enriched with other points of view as well. It is interesting to note that although in the first open-ended question students characterized the wife as *frustrated* in only 4/47 cases, the number here has doubled. This may be due to the fact that the students who earlier described the wife as unhappy chose now to express this under with *frustrated*. In the case of *spoiled*, the number here is much lower when compared to the number in the interpretive profile,

because the number in the profile includes responses which indicated not only *spoiled* but also the concepts of *wants many things* and being materialistically *demanding*.

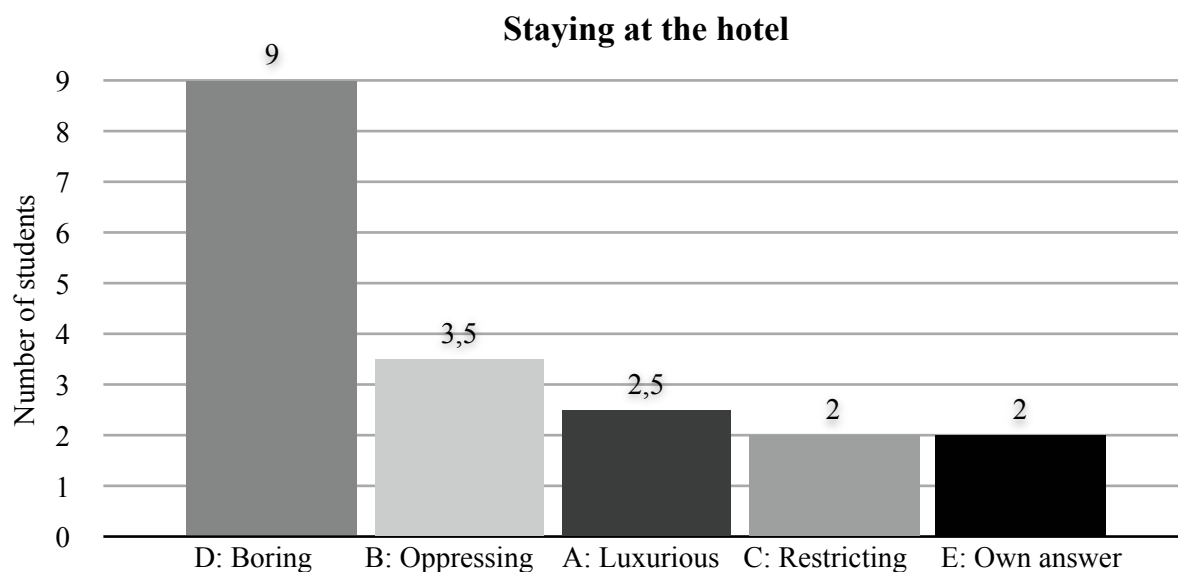
7.3.3 Question 3: Staying at the hotel

In asking the students to analyze what it was like staying at the hotel of the story, the idea was to determine whether the students were sensitive to the mood and atmosphere of the story and its setting. The dreary mood of the story could be said to be reflected in the weather and the successfulness of the wife's quest. Darren Felty (1997, 363), for example, suggests that the story is filled with "[i]mages of constraint [which] become progressively more dominant, representing the restrictions placed upon both the characters and nature". Felty (1997, 364) observes that the mood of the story changed as Hemingway developed the story, so that over time "[t]he sense of openness and freedom . . . [gave] way to the bleak tone and strained relationships of the final version".

Warren Bennet (1988, 33) notes that the ending of the story is particularly depressing. Looking out at the square from her window, once again, "the square is not only empty, it is shrouded in darkness, a symbol of existential nothingness, the loss of meaning and the loss of hope" (ibid.). It may well be that in formulating their interpretations students may not be conscious of the possible significances of mood-setting details, such as when the light goes on in the square: the light "is an image that suggests hope, but artificial light is only a substitute for daylight, and the hope which this light foreshadows will be only a temporary substitute for what the girl really wants" (Bennet 1988, 34).

As with the previous multiple choice questions, this question sought to find out if and what interpretation the students would appoint to the mood variable. The division of student responses is depicted in Figure 13:

Figure 13:



In analyzing the results, one response of the total 19 suggested that staying at the hotel was both *luxurious* and *oppressing*, for which reason it was calculated as representing 0,5 units of both response groups. Overall, here the student responses were surprisingly uniform. Almost half (9/19 or 47%) of the students thought staying at the hotel was *boring*. This may be a reflection of their own experiences, naturally, but it may also be a reflection of how the students interpreted the wife's desperate quest, or the general mood of the story, which indeed is bleak, as Felty (1997, 364) pointed out.

Second most frequently the students thought it was *oppressing* staying at the hotel. This may be because of the weather and the limited possibility of activities to do in a hotel on a rainy day. The third most popular response was *luxurious* (2.5/19 each or 13% of the total responses), with the rest of the responses divided equally (2/19 or 11%) between *restricting* and students' own answers: *average*, *refreshing*. These student responses are particularly interesting because they are original. It seems fairly understandable to suggest that a visit to a hotel be *refreshing*, but it would be even more enlightening to hear why a particular student considered staying at the hotel *average*. In dealing with this particular topic, however, it would be interesting to start group discussions about

this kind of an experience, and ask students to present their arguments for why they thought it was *boring* staying at the hotel.

7.3.4 Question 4: Interpreting the rain

An important factor in interpreting any text is the weather. In this text, the key matter lies in whether the rain is interpreted as a positive force, or as a negative, inhibiting force. The weather in literature ties particularly closely into the study of literary landscapes. As landscapes portray the human psychology and emotion, so it is with weather (Salmela 2011). John Hagopian (1962, 221) observes that the text's central issue, fertility and the possible lack thereof, is "symbolically foreshadowed by the public garden (fertility) dominated by the war monument (death). 'In the good weather there was always an artist', but the rain, ironically, inhibits creativity; there are no painters here, but the war monument 'glistened in the rain'". As was pointed out earlier according to Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 226), in Hemingway's texts rain usually "symbolises the loss of pleasure and joy, the onset of discomfort and ennui. One critic regards the rain as a positive force, the other takes it to be negative". Because of this, it seemed relevant to find out whether the students interpreted the rain as more of a positive or negative force.

The students were asked to indicate whether they thought the rain was "A: Refreshing: it makes things grow", "B: Cold, miserable, harmful" or "C: Own answer". Of the total 19 responses one student opted for an original answer (6% of total responses); one student circled both A and B on the form, and the rest (17 students) chose A or B. As it turns out, 14/18 students (78%) interpreted the rain as "Cold, miserable, harmful", and only 3/18 (17%) saw the rain as refreshing. The responses are surprisingly uniform. Perhaps this is due to the somewhat oppressive atmosphere of the text in general, or a manifestation of the students reacting to Darren Felty's (1997, 363) concept of spatial confinement he feels is strongly depicted in the text. The students' responses seem to follow surprisingly close to Holmesland's (1986, 226) observation on the rain usually

representing something negative in Hemingway's work. Indeed Peter Griffin (2001, 100), too, argued that in "Cat in the Rain" the rain "reveals vacancy, absence, sadness, and lingering regret". In teaching the story, it may be interesting for the students to consider why the rain might be rejuvenating, and for what reasons it could be taken to be oppressing.

7.3.5 Question 5: The possibility of a pregnancy

As Warren Bennet (1988, 26) highlights in his article, the "present critical opinion has produced two disputes which need to be considered before proceeding. One is the question of whether there is one cat or two cats in the story, and the second is the question of whether the wife *wants* to have a baby or whether she is already pregnant" (italics Bennet's). Because the issue of a possible pregnancy was such a widely discussed issue, it seemed justified to also ask the students what they thought was the case. While Edwin J. Barton (1994, 73) suggests that the reader ought to consider the possibility of the wife having been pregnant before, "[s]till more to the point, we may wonder if the reader is meant to understand that she is incapable of bearing children, either because of complication owing to a miscarriage or abortion". Barton (1994, 73-74) himself argues that the maid's question "Have you lost something, Madam? . . . explicitly introduces the question of loss or lack, which both infers and implies a prior fulfillment of desire, whether physical or symbolic". It seems difficult, as Barton (ibid.) points out, to determine whether the wife has been, or would like to be, pregnant, although we may probably state with relative certainty that she is not pregnant at the time the story takes place, after all, as Bennet (1988, 28) reminds us: "Pregnancy cravings are biologically determined, not 'whimsical', and consequently, such cravings cannot be construed to include cats, clothes, candles, silver, or long hair".

The most typical responses were divided almost equally between the wife wanting to be pregnant or having had a miscarriage. Eight of the total 19 responses, or 42%, suggested the wife wanted to be pregnant, while 7.5/19 (40%) suggested the wife had probably had a miscarriage. Of

the three remaining responses, one suggested the wife was not pregnant, another that the wife could be any of these “because she acts weirdly” (S6M), and a third that the wife hoped for a relationship with the padrone. In response to the question, one student replied “I don’t think so because there is not any clear marks in the text that would lead to she’s pregnant” (S8M). Another student replied “No, I think that the wife is just confused, because she doesn’t know how to move forward with padron” (S16M). Only 0.5/19 responses suggested the wife was pregnant, explaining “Wife could be pregnant because she was oppressed from it . . .” (S21M). Although the student probably intended to communicate the sense of being anxious over the pregnancy whilst erroneously using the word “oppressed” in the given context, their message seems clear nonetheless.

Most of the students opted either for the possibility of the wife wanting to be pregnant, or having had a miscarriage. The question posed to the students would have been better had it expressed the possibility of “none of the above” being true, as it seems surprising that only two of the 19 total responses indicated that the wife may not be or even want to be pregnant at all, or that she might in fact be romantically interested in the padrone.

8 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how students of a certain upper secondary class interpreted Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain” when taught with a more reader-oriented method, and to discuss how this knowledge regarding the interpretations could be used in the future when teaching “Cat in the Rain”, or possibly other pieces of literature. In the process of analyzing the data it appeared the best way to gain a sense of the entire class’s interpretations would be to build an interpretive profile of each student. These profiles were then overlapped to gain a sense of the class’s “interpretive consciousness” as a whole. The product of the analysis is the diagram in the Appendix of this study.

8.1 Interpretive profiles in comparing readings

The interpretive profile was built to demonstrate the popularity of various interpretations of five chosen variables from the story as well as the frequency of interpretive combinations. In planning how to best extract student readings of this text I noted several factors of the text which repeatedly came up in critics' articles on "Cat in the Rain". I chose five factors: the cat, the wife, George, the hotel and the rain. These variables were chosen because they seemed to be involved in the points in which critical opinions seemed to differ from one another.

To build the profile, student responses to the open questions six (cat), one (wife) and two (George) were used, as well as multiple choice questions three (hotel) and four (rain). Each student was made a response profile which combined their responses to these five specific questions. These individual response profiles called for "a splitting of opinions" within a single student to build an all-class encompassing consciousness. With these individual profiles each student's responses were split into categories according to how I interpreted and classified their response. For example, student S3F described George by saying "George is tired but still loves his wife. He offered to help her, but wife said 'no'." The qualities of 'being tired', 'loving his wife' were classified as positive; sympathetic to George. The matter of having 'offered to help' was classified as neutral, because the statement reports rather than offers an opinion on the matter. Each of the three "interpretive units" was then given the weight of 0.33, because the student's response to what George was like was split into three different qualities. Each interpretive unit was then summed to demonstrate the total number of times any given response was made. For example, George was interpreted neutrally in six of the 21 interpretations, which wound up being the second most popular interpretation of George. Thus, because a single student's responses were divided between various interpretations, the total number of interpretations for a variable is in some cases demonstrated as a non-whole decimal number.

The interpretive profile for the entire class is found in the Appendix (page 117). The titles in the circles demonstrate the interpretations. The darker circles are the most popular interpretations.

The numbers in brackets indicate the popularity of the response out of the 21 theoretically whole student responses. The “floating” numbers in the circles show the number of times that particular combination of responses was made, the number indicating the frequency of the combination placed always in the bottom circle of the two circles. This interpretive profile allows for a comparison of the students’ as well as critics’ readings, as well as allowing the student readings to be compared amongst one another. Using these profiles it is possible, for example, to contrast male and female student readings and to further group, compare and contrast the reader profiles, but this would give rise to a whole new study.

In order to compare critics’ readings to student’s readings, the critics’ readings of the key variables were used to build the basis for the possible response categories. I then added the categories extracted from critics’ readings to the categories of student responses. Thus, John Hagopian (1962, 222) and Edwin Barton’s (1994, 74) view of the cat representing a child surrogate were matched with 2.5/21 of the student responses. William Adair’s (1992, 73) interpretation of the cat as a symbol of impotence was reflected in only 0.5/21 of the student responses. Darren Felty (1997, 364) and Warren Bennet (1988, 32) suggested the cat represent the wife, whereas in the student responses only 2/21 responses indicated the same. Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 224) proposed the cat represent the wife’s unfulfilled desires, which was in fact the most popular interpretation (4.5/21) among the students. Unsurprisingly, Peter Griffin’s (2001, 101) reading of the cat in the rain representing female genitals was not echoed in the student responses at all.

In interpreting the wife I sought for descriptions of the wife in critical readings. Oddvar Holmesland (1986, 230) suggests the wife is “immature”, which was, surprisingly, the least popular response amongst the students (0.75/21 or 4%). Peter Griffin (2001, 101) suggests that the wife is the neglected party in the marriage, which was the second most popular response amongst the students (6.3/21 or 30%). Although Holmesland (1986, 223), Adair (1992, 75) and Bennet (1988, 31) suggest various reasons why the wife might be construed as frustrated, this was reflected in only

2.83/21 (14%) responses. The most popular student interpretation of the wife was “spoiled”, with 6.41/21 (or 31%) responses indicating it, possibly due to the wife wanting a number of things, and being materialistically demanding.

In describing the character of George critics often interpreted George as either somehow mean-spirited and/or egotistical, as Warren Bennet (1988, 31) did, or as impotent or ignorant as William Adair (1992, 73) and Peter Griffin (2001, 102) did. The student responses, however, were almost entirely different. Most students, 6.88/21 (33%) described George in positive terms, or in neutral terms (6/21 or 29%). Only 4.33/21 (21%) students described George in negative terms and only 3.5/21 (17%) responses indicated George was somehow ignorant.

While not all critics, understandably, offer arguments regarding each of the variables at hand, John Hagopian (1962, 221) describes staying at the hotel as somewhat oppressing. This was reflected in 3.5/21 (17%) responses, and was the second most popular student interpretation of staying at the hotel. The most popular student interpretation of staying at the hotel was that it was ‘boring’ (9/21 or 43%). Hagopian (ibid.) and Darren Felty (1997, 363) both suggest that the stay at the hotel has a restricting air about it. This, however, was matched by only 2/21 (10%) student interpretations, and was topped only by interpreting the stay as ‘luxurious’ (2.5/21 or 12%).

The last question regarded the controversial interpretation of the rain in the story. Hagopian (1962, 221) suggested the rain is refreshing, and symbolizes the concept of fertility. Only 3.5/21 (17%) student responses were in accordance with this. Instead, the most popular response was interpreting the rain as cold and miserable, which was the case in 13.5/21 (64%) responses. Interestingly, this interpretation was the one that most students were in agreement within the entire class, followed by seeing the hotel stay as boring.

The individual reader profiles, and the class’s collective interpretive profile, offer an understanding of how these upper secondary class students interpreted the highly complex short story, which has caused no end of critical discussion to this day. Using this knowledge the teacher

could gain a better sense of which interpretations students most often make, which is pedagogically useful when modeling literary interpretations to students (see for example Helena Linna 1999; Heleena Lehtonen 1998). Having taught this story to students in the framework of this study it has become clear that in teaching literature to students the teacher would benefit from being familiar with a variety of interpretations of the key matters in the text. As Helena Linna (1999, 26) observed regarding teaching reading comprehension, a teacher cannot properly teach students to become skillful readers if they are not familiar with the process of reading comprehension, and so it seems a teacher would benefit from knowledge of critical interpretations when teaching a literary piece. The heart of the matter, however, lies in the fact that the teacher need not, and initially should even avoid steering students toward any particular interpretation. Patricia Ross French (1987, 34), too, has found that allowing students to begin on the path of interpretation with reader response activities the students independently “addressed all the major issues in the story”.

Applying reader response into classroom teaching is not entirely straightforward, however, for therein lies the danger of the discussion becoming what I. A. Richards (quoted in Eagleton 1983, 44) called “aestheticist chit-chat”. In order to avoid this, the teacher would benefit from participating as an active listener and having a firm grasp of the existing criticism, as well as an open mind to entertain new interpretive possibilities. Allowing the students to begin building their own interpretations before offering them ready, structured and well-argued readings is important, because this way the students learn to take charge of their own interpretations and responses, as Catherine Belsey (2005, 160) says: “[Knowledge from secondary sources] is valuable, if it leads to further textual analysis. Always read the sources and consider the analogues. Never take other people’s word for it. This is key to saying something new: what is distinctive about *this* text emerges as its difference from all the others”. Belsey (ibid.) refers to exactly what Heleena Lehtonen (1998, 34) has argued on the subject of creative reading. In her work Lehtonen (ibid.) describes the concept of divergent creative reading, in which the reader uses the thoughts offered by

the text in forming new ideas. Divergent creative reading requires that we are as free as possible from universally accepted concepts and truths (Lehtonen 1998, 34.). Belsey (2005, 160) echoes this by continuing: “Textual analysis”, a form of creative reading,

is hard – and, if it isn’t, it ought to be. It is always much easier to do a literature search, or read an anthology of essays. It is easier, but less productive. What secondary sources usually provide is well informed, coherent and rhetorically persuasive arguments, which can leave the researcher convinced that whatever *can* be said *has* been said already.

This divergent, creative reading may happen in the classroom on its own, but as numerous literary didactics professionals have demonstrated, there are a number of ways a teacher can encourage and direct their students toward this goal. I will begin by reviewing the method suggested by Cecilia Therman (2011, 59) and the success of the method employed in this study, as well as reviewing the success of the other theory used in this study. I will then reflect on possible requirements for repeating this type of lesson with another piece of literature.

Therman (2011, 54-55) notes that student-centered methods of teaching literature are not new, as such, but somehow they do not seem to be inciting an interest to read in the students. Therman’s (2011, 57) intention was to develop a method of teaching literature which would hold the student’s interpretation as its starting point, and would then comprehensibly combine other interpretive points of view and knowledge from literary studies. Therman (2011, 56) underlines that the reason the proposed method is different from reader response criticism is that while reader response critics view interpretations as highly unique and individualized, her study showed that the students interpreted the given text in very similar ways, with only a few exceptionally different readings. In this study the method proposed by Therman was modified to fit the objective of the study, however, should the method employed in another empirical study, one could employ Therman’s method as originally suggested. In the study at hand, as has been demonstrated, the student responses were quite varied and did not easily conform to, for example, the same response combinations. Louise Rosenblatt’s (1994, 128) work offers an explanation for the outcome of both of these experiments:

It is sometimes maintained that readers tend to agree on the work and to differ only on matters of detail. This impression—which is by no means generally supported by evidence—is largely due to the fact that discussion of a text tends to be carried on among people sharing a common cultural climate.

It is possible that having studied readings by university educated students, the student matter may be somewhat more homogenous (although, naturally not completely so) than the student matter of an upper secondary school class of students, which contains young adults who may be expected to specialize in a number of fields. Rosenblatt (1994, 128-129) further clarifies the matter by explaining that a group of people with similar cultural climates may agree on

some hierarchy of viewpoints [and] may also be able to come to a common judgement about which reading seems most satisfactory [, but] this judgement will [always] be in terms of particular linguistic, semantic, metaphysical factors appropriate to a particular time and place *and* a particular—more or less coherent—set of criteria for an adequate reading.

What this means for the method and teaching literature in further experiments of this kind is that the students benefit from lessons in life and literature best when the teacher is aware of this possible scale, or hierarchy, of interpretations, and knows what segments of text are used in constructing whichever interpretation. The teacher could use this knowledge in helping students enrich their readings. Knowledge of this hierarchy of viewpoints is important, because as Rosenblatt (1994, 104-105; Italics Rosenblatt's) highlights: “the assumption that recognition of the reader's activity in evoking the poem inevitably implies that any reading is as valid as any other . . . would of course lead to critical chaos. *But nothing in my insistence on the reader's activity necessitates such a conclusion*”.

Should the experiment be repeated with a different piece of literature, one of the founding blocks for an enriching lesson would be knowledge of criticism related to the said piece of literature. The second block can be found in reader response activities which can be used in the second and third steps of the method. After all, as was demonstrated by Patricia Ross French (1987, 39) for example, in class discussions with a reader response undercurrent the instructor could

always aspire to “find out where [the student’s response] comes from” and work as an active listener. The method employed in this study benefited from combining both knowledge of a literary piece as well as reader response criticism. The third block of theory which would form a sound basis for an enriching lesson in literature comes from theory of teaching literature.

In reporting the results of the ADORE project Sari Sulkunen (2010, 172; see chapters 6 and 8 above) noted out that acknowledging students’ interpretations of literature was one of the seven factors which supported weaker readers in the classroom. Acknowledging weaker readers in the classroom is vital if students are hoped to be taught in a way that would enrich their interpretations, because although Therman (2011, 58) observes that “[a]s we read literary texts we make a vast amount of assumptions about the objectives of various characters and why the author has depicted the characters’ activity a certain way”, it is not wildly out of bounds to assume that such activity during reading only take place in the minds of active readers, while passive readers will trod through the text and emerge on the other side of the reading experience not much wiser than they were before reading (see section 3.2 above for Lehtonen and passive readers).

Through the experiment it became quite clear that when used on the upper secondary level it is the more passive readers that present a challenge to the method, lest it take into account the existence of such readers and arm itself with knowledge of how to encourage the weaker readers into working more actively with the text. While it will do well to realize that connecting literary experiences to one’s own life requires a level of what Howard Gardner (Gardner quoted in Clayton 2003, 84) calls intrapersonal intelligence, which is not identically developed in us, students can none the less benefit from being prompted to reflect more consciously on the above types of matters, such as relating a literary work to one’s own life. The seven factors found in the ADORE-project are one way to begin. In this study the amount of time that was able to be allocated for the study was so short (two times 75 min lessons) that only two of the seven factors were utilized: acknowledging student readings and teaching cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies on

approaching the text. The students were reminded about what was read, given pre-reading activities, and reminded about the techniques of skimming texts and about active reading. The lesson would have benefited from students briefly sharing their views in small group discussions in executing the method's second step, as opposed asking the students to share their views with the entire class, but this is something that can be taken into account in the future when teaching a similar lesson. I wanted the students to document their thinking into the survey questions so I could gain a most accurate sense of each individual's interpretations regarding the various aspects of the text. In the future, however, a more open discussion is most beneficial.

Should a similar method be followed again, the students might be more motivated if they had a say in what they read (Linna 1999, 34; Sulkunen 2010, 172). Students might also be much more motivated if they were to keep a journal on their responses (not unlike in the European Language Portfolio) (Council of Europe 2011). This would "help the students seek and find their own way of responding to the books they read" (Linna 1999, 38-39). Other activities could include groups which would function as response communities (see Fish 1986), keeping a reading log, journal or portfolio as part of evaluation or as demonstration of growth over a long period of time, as well as using drama in constructing responses (Linna 1999, 36-78; French 1987, 38-39). Overall, the method employed in this study seems promising when combined with activities that encourage the student readers to respond to literature, and to think and read creatively. The activities suggested by professionals of teaching literature which have been reviewed here are a sound way to begin on the path of enriching student reading.

8.1 Reliability

Several steps have been taken to ensure the reliability of this ethnographic case study. These include having a versatile set of data, awareness of the contextuality of the study's results, the meticulousness and the transparency of the methods of analysis, the ample use of student response examples in the text, and the diverse use of other research (Moilanen & Rähkä 2001, 53-61).

To gain data which was as versatile as possible, the survey consisted of questions which ranged from open-ended questions to closed questions. In order to have had a completely open-ended question the students could have been asked to write a short paragraph reflecting their response to the text. This, however, was not practical given the circumstances, as there was not enough time to help students learn to respond to literary texts, which would have naturally been more advantageous for this study. This is nonetheless something to be kept in mind when teaching students to respond to literature later, because prompting a free response will help the students in formulating their response individually, with the least possible amount of direction, after which it is easier to move on to more directed activities and discussion questions regarding the text. This is because, as a number of experts have concluded, it is most beneficial for the student to formulate their own response first, before learning about the text and about other possible interpretations of the text at hand (see for example Therman 2011, 56).

The second part of the survey, consisting of 15 open-ended questions, formed the largest part of the overall survey. This section intended to discover how the students had interpreted Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain" (see Lehtonen 1998, 22 for active reading). This differed from Therman's (2011, 59) method in that the purpose was not to discover what the students have assumed in their reading, nor did the students readily explain what they assumed when performing any given interpretation, though some assumptions could be uncovered from the interpretive profiles. How any interpretation relates to a student's own life was thus left undiscovered, as no explicit connections from students' own lives to the text were made in the survey responses, or in the brief teacher-lead discussion when sharing some of the responses to the first question of the response survey.

Should one work to discover and analyze the readers' underlying assumptions Therman (2011, 61; my translation) explains that the researcher should distinguish "which textual fragments are key in each interpretation, and what assumptions about the characters' and author's objectives

are included in these said interpretations”. This is something that could form a part of executing this method in the future. As I noted earlier, students would benefit most from a teacher who knew various interpretations of the given text, and what segments of texts are used in each interpretation. Assuming that some readings are more valid than others, the difficulty lies in evaluating which reading is more sound than the other.

The adequacy or inadequacy of a reading can be demonstrated by indicating the parts of the text which have been ignored, or which have not been interwoven into the rest of the semantic structure built on the text. . . . Yet, as we have seen, even within the same general cultural situation, differences in what the reader brings to the text and differences in the criteria of adequacy will make possible different though equally ‘acceptable’ readings. (Rosenblatt 1994, 129)

For this reason it is not within the realms of this study to begin to hypothesize how to evaluate readings, though it is vital to recognize the difficulty in this matter and to recognize the importance of knowing “which textual fragments are key in each interpretation” (Therman 2011, 61; my translation).

As Moilanen and Rähkä (2001, 44) point out, construing meaning out of data in qualitative studies always relies heavily on the context of the study. Therefore what is true for this study, under the given circumstances, may not hold entirely for a study conducted in another classroom, school, at another time and place. The fact that the results rely so heavily on the context requires sensitivity on part of the researcher to detect slight changes in the studied subject matter, and an ability to put things into perspective (*ibid.*). In this study I have worked to interpret the student readings of Hemingway’s “Cat in the Rain” and aimed to produce an understanding of what significance the results hold in light of teaching this story in the future. While this process relies heavily on my understanding and ways of construing meaning out of data, Moilanen and Rähkä (2001, 45) acknowledge that it would be unjust to claim that these types of interpretations be entirely subjective. Although it is impossible to eliminate the possibility that the data of the study has been misinterpreted due to “the equivocal nature of the human existence”, Moilanen and Rähkä (*ibid.*) maintain that in constructing interpretations, these interpretations most often have a shared, social

basis, in addition to their individually constructed significance. This is not only true of formulating interpretations of academic data but also of language and literature. Heleena Lehtonen (1998, 32; my translation) presents the shared nature of language in an illustrative comparison:

A group of students read the sentence ‘A train is speeding toward a tunnel’, and having read it draw a picture of the situation. From the pictures we may tell that each student’s vision of the set-up is different. For example the train may be an express train, a freight train, local train etc., but all visualizations contain elements which we connect to the word ‘train’.

The elements of study, namely the categories of responses, which the student readings were grouped into, and what significance these divisions hold, have been reviewed a multitude of times over the period of a calendar year, and have been made as lucid as possible to persons reading the study to evaluate the categories and methods of analysis employed in this study. The method of analysis in this study followed the conventions of qualitative research (see for example Eskola 2001). The method of gathering data consisted of three types of questions in a single, large survey given to the students, as well as of observations I made as a participating observer in the study.

Having collected the data I read through the material multiple times. I then transcribed my data onto the computer to be able to break it down in the analysis and use as examples more adeptly. I grouped all the responses to each question together and begun to look for repetitive themes which arose from the responses. This was done separately for each question. The thematic groups seen here have been reviewed several times over time. To have made the division of responses into thematic categories more reliable the study would have benefited from a second person categorizing the student responses and justifications, but such was not possible given the circumstances and limited resources under which the study was conducted. However, it will do well to take into account the fact that this study could have benefited from such.

Each student was given a code name (S3F = student number three, female) to avoid using actual student names and to still allow for myself and others to be able to match various responses to each student, and, ultimately, to build interpretive profiles based on the coded responses. In

addition, I took notes of likely scenarios or ideas which arose based on the responses. These included observations and instances such as when the student came into class late and did not have time to complete the survey; that the student may not have realized to turn the paper over to complete page two of the second group of survey questions; that the response looks more like it was meant to answer the previous question, etcetera.

Eskola (2007, 172-173) underlines that when dealing with the data of a qualitative study “the purpose of the analysis is to somehow condense the data in a way that leaves nothing essential out and that increases the informative value of the data”. Although I primarily aimed to divide all responses into thematic groups so that each student’s interpretive profile could be studied individually, the most typical responses were always noted carefully, because in teaching a classroom of over twenty students it is important to be aware of the most typical student response, and to become sensitive to the numerous possible insightful responses, which in part make teaching literature such a pleasure.

Eskola (2007, 173) highlights that in depicting the results the researcher needs to choose whether to portray the most interesting of the results, or to describe the findings equally. In this study I have chosen to describe the results in their entirety so as to allow the reader to arrive at their own conclusions based on the results, which hopefully will be similar to those which I have arrived at, while moving from most prevalent response to the least prevalent. In addition, I have added the interpretive profile of the entire class to demonstrate the class’s “interpretive consciousness”, and left out the individual interpretive profiles for the sake of economy. I chose to describe the results in this way because the purpose of the study was to discover how the students have interpreted the story as a class, so as to be able to teach it better. Thus, it seemed that the person(s) reading the study, and myself included, would benefit from being able to see the entire range of responses. Thus, having reached the stage at which the researcher is to report on the findings, I have aimed to merge the results with student examples and my reflections on what the results mean and possible

reasons for various discoveries. These findings have then been linked back to earlier theory on relevant matters, such as active readership and the dynamics of formulating a response (Eskola 2007, 177).

Räihä and Moilanen (2007, 62-63) point out that in qualitative research the reliability of the work rests largely on the discourse between the given study and other research done in the same or adjacent fields. In this study I have used a range of research from Master's theses, such as Cecilia Therman's (2004) study, to expert sources, such as Heleena Lehtonen's (1998) work on reading proficiency and Helena Linna's (1999) work on teaching literature, multinational research program results such as those from the ADORE project's (Sulkunen 2010) and articles on "Cat in the Rain" by various Hemingway critics. In order to best understand the dynamics of formulating a response I have used the work of Louise Rosenblatt (1994) on the transactional nature of the literary work. This I have aimed to weave into my reflections regarding the teaching of literature in this given case in the following section.

8.2 Transferability of results

Moilanen and Räihä (2007, 65; my translation) assert that in qualitative studies it will do well to use the concept of "proportioning" instead of "generalization", because the researcher ought to demonstrate to what extent they expect their results to shed light on other research in addition to the specific case they have studied. Although in this study I have formed statistics regarding the frequency of various student responses it will do well to bear in mind what Moilanen and Räihä (ibid.) highlight in their article: performing a generalization in the tradition of quantitative studies is quite impossible in qualitative research.

Although the results of this study are not directly applicable as such, it is my hope that teachers of literature and any persons interested in this practice consider the methods utilized in this study and the possible benefits to be gained from teaching students to respond to literature independently prior to learning about any given piece of literature. As was seen in this study, some

of the responses seemed to reflect a fairly passive reader who approached the text quite literally, though several insightful responses were found amid the responses as well (see Lehtonen 1998, 23-24 and chapter 8, p. 96 above for Lehtonen's passive reader). One need not be a literary aficionado to be aware of the fact that in literature a literal reading rarely reveals everything the text has to offer. If we hope to educate students who grow to be avid readers in and outside of school, we would do well to teach them to respond to literature independently before allowing them to reach for what is claimed to be the "correct" interpretation.

A literary piece for teaching would primarily be chosen based on students' interests and proficiency level in the language. Naturally, this does not mean that students choose what they are taught, but rather that the teacher make suggestions based on knowledge of the students gained in the classroom. The teacher could then seek to familiarize his or herself with various critical interpretations of the text, or draw on relevant knowledge of the text. The teacher may offer exercises which prompt students to form interpretive responses to the central issues of the text. In teaching any new text it would be important to know which are they 'key variables', the factors which cause points of interpretive diversion among readers, and structure response questions around these points. This information could then be used to build interpretive profiles of the readers in the classroom, and be used for pedagogical decision-making regarding, for example, reader groups and types of exercises. By knowing how the students would interpret the text, the teacher may more effectively enrich the original readings.

9 Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to find out how students of an upper secondary school class interpreted Hemingway's "Cat in the Rain" and to explore and reflect on how this information could be used to best teach this short story. My results show that the students would greatly benefit from a teaching method which seeks to enrich their original interpretations of a text. This could be done by combining knowledge of criticism, literary didactics and knowledge of students and their responses

when preparing to teach a lesson on a literary piece. While the purpose of this study is not to offer normative standards for actualizing the national curriculum in the classroom, it hopes to offer some ideas for discussion regarding the use of literature in the EFL classroom.

The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools states that the students must reach a certain level of language proficiency within each academic year, learn to communicate in a culturally appropriate manner in the object language, learn to evaluate their language skills in relation to the learning objectives, gain knowledge of their strengths and areas of development as a communicator and language student as well as learn to develop their language skills with strategies appropriate to their developmental needs, studies and current communicative task. Combining Cecilia Therman's method (2011) and the possibility of building interpretive profiles of students offers a concrete way of bringing literature to life in in the EFL classroom in a way that offers students not only the intercultural communications skills The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools calls for, but demonstrates, in addition, very concretely to students how language learning is a rewarding process which demands perseverance and a wide variety of exercises, including exercises in interpretive, reflective reading. The curriculum sets a specific target regarding the language proficiency level which the student must reach. Reading in the target language and the in-depth processing of the read material develops students vocabulary and language skills, and can thus be a highly efficient and edifying task for the language learner at any level, given that the material is appropriate for the group of student readers.

The study gives rise to further appealing research causes. In the field of literary criticism further studies might explore the covert statements made by authors to expand teachers' and students' knowledge of possible speaker attitudes, motivations and values, which Therman (2011, 61) refers to. These types of studies would thus be of practical use for the classroom. In the field of education further possible studies might qualitatively assess the impact of teaching in a way that combined criticism, literary didactics and knowledge of student interpretations. It would be

interesting to apply the method used here as well as Therman's (2011) original method to other pieces of literature, and possibly to other genres of literature in addition to the short story genre seen here. The data gathered could also be used for other studies, for example in exploring how the student responses changed from one survey to the next or to further develop the interpretive profiling. Using literature in the English Foreign Language setting can be extremely enriching for students and teachers, and it is my hope that it be used with great ardor in the future.

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11 Appendix

The three-part questionnaire.

NAME: _____

What is the most important word / phrase / sentence in the story? Please explain your answer.

NAME: _____

What is the most important word / phrase / sentence in the story? Please explain your answer.

NAME: _____

1. What is the woman in the story like? Please use adjectives.

2. What is George like? Please use adjectives.

3. What is the relationship of George and his wife like?

4. Is the cat the maid brings up the same as the one the wife saw outside? Why?

5. What does the weather in the story mean?

6. What does the cat in the story mean?

7. What is the difference between “a cat” and “a kitty”? What could this mean in the story?

8. What do you think it means that the wife has hair “clipped close like a boy’s” but she would like to have hair that she could pull “back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back [she] could feel?”

9. Why is the padrone important in the story? Why is the maid important?

10. Put the characters in order from most important to least important:

MAID	WIFE	GEORGE
CAT	PADRONE	WAITER

The most important: _____

2nd important: _____

3rd important: _____

4th important: _____

5th important: _____

Least important: _____

11. Is the story realistic? Why or why not?

12. Is there something the narrator is not telling us? What? Why would this be important?

13. Is there something that is repeated in the story? What? Why would this be important?

14. Is knowing *where* the story takes place important?

15. What are the most important events in the story? Why?

NAME: _____

Multiple choice. Please circle the option that you feel is the most accurate choice. If no answer is correct in your opinion, please write down what you think is the best answer on the empty line.

1. What does the cat in the story represent?

- a) cat
- b) child-surrogate
- c) symbol of infertility / impotence
- d) wife
- e) female genitals
- f) _____

2. What is the most accurate description of the wife? What about of George? Please write “wife” or “George” next to the word you think best describes each. Choose only one word for wife, and one word for George.

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| a) spoiled / selfish | k) smart |
| b) neglected | l) insensitive |
| c) childish | m) frustrated |
| d) ignorant | n) unappreciated |
| e) arrogant | o) dignified |
| f) mean | p) willing |
| g) impotent | q) committed |
| h) calm | r) _____ |
| i) lazy | |
| j) focused | |

3. What is it like staying at the story’s hotel?

- a) luxurious
- b) oppressing
- c) restricting
- d) boring
- e) _____

4. How do you see the rain in the story?

- a) refreshing: it makes things grow
- b) cold, miserable, harmful
- c) _____

5. Does the text imply that the wife is pregnant? Or that she wants to be pregnant? Or that she has had a miscarriage? Please choose and explain your answer.

The interpretive profile of the entire class:

