



[The Killers](#), by Ernest Hemingway

In A Nutshell

Ernest Hemingway wrote the short story "The Killers" one morning in a hotel room in Madrid, Spain. His editor didn't change a word of it before it was published, that same year, in *Scribner's Magazine*. Since that first publication, it's been included in many of Hemingway's short story anthologies, including *Men Without Women* in 1927, *The Snow of Kilimanjaro* in 1936, and *The Nick Adams Stories* in 1972. "The Killers" is considered one of Hemingway's best works, so it's not surprising that literally *thousands of pages* of literary criticism have been written about these 3000 words. (We even read an essay by Quentin E. Martin arguing that "The Killers" represents Albert Einstein's theory of relativity and the Heisenberg uncertainty principle.) On top of that, three movie versions were made, two starting with Hemingway's story and running off in derivative film noir glory.

Main character (although this description is subject to debate) Nick Adams has been the protagonist of many other of Hemingway's short stories (hence the collection *The Nick Adams Stories*, which you would imagine might require quite a bit of Nick Adams). In these works, Hemingway basically explores Nick's coming of age, from adolescence to adulthood, and all the stuff that goes with that. "The Killers" is par for the Nick Adams course, and in this tale we do hit a lot of these themes.

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- [The Killers Summary](#)
- Also: literary devices, characters, trivia, audio, photos, links, and more

Big Picture Study Questions

- 1 Author and critic Robert Penn Warren raised this question: "To whom does 'The Killers' belong?" and concluded that the answer was "Nick Adams." Is he right? Who and what is this story really about?
- 2 Which character does the reader most identify with?
- 3 Do we believe Nick's claim at the end of the story that he's going to get out of town? Does this seem like an extreme reaction on his part? Does George's final comment that he'd "better not think about it" seem likely to change Nick's resolve to leave?

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