



Under Kilimanjaro

Ernest Hemingway

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2005: by Ernest Hemingway- This is about the people he came to know and love.

Under Kilimanjaro Details

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Mark R. says

***1/2

I probably should have read "Green Hills of Africa" before "Under Kilimanjaro", and I realized that part way through, but figured I can always come back around to "Green Hills" later.

I like Ernest Hemingway's nonfiction. It reads much like his fiction, actually. Lots of dialogue, which he put together after returning from a trip to Africa in the early 1950s. This book was left incomplete upon his death, and his son took it up in the 90s, releasing a shortened version titled "True at First Light".

One of the most notable elements of this particular "nonfiction novel" is Hemingway's use of humor, an aspect of his writing certainly not absent from his previous works, but more plentiful here.

The characters of Hemingway and his wife, Miss Mary, are a lot of fun to read about, as is Hemingway's "fiancee", a local woman named Debba, who is enamored with him. The two women go along with Hemingway and his companions on various lion, zebra, and leopard hunts, Hemingway's official position as a kind of guest game warden directing them to kill certain animals that pose a threat to the local tribes with whom they have formed friendly alliances.

The book is a bit long, and I'd imagine if Hemingway had lived to complete it, he'd have excised a few sections. The glossary and character index in the back of the book are helpful, but I found myself mixing up a few of the characters with similar names and speaking styles. Still, it's a good book; if I was more adventurous, I would envy Hemingway and Miss Mary's experiences in Africa.

I guess I do envy them, though I'm still not very adventurous.

Peter B says

Read it because it was Hemingway, a long book that seemed like a journal of a hunting trip. Reviews didn't help much. Tried to stay with it was presenting such an outdated lifestyle that it was a chore.

Natalia says

sacrilege, i know, but I really couldn't get into this book - I can't say I enjoy novels that are just day to day activities. However the insights into East Africa were interesting.

Ted Westfall says

Another intriguing look into one of the extraordinary settings of Hemmingway's adventurous life. As an

honorary game warden of the region, Papa deliberately unveils the culture of East Africa through description and narration of daily hunt/camp life. At times, I am simply amazed at the quantity of Tusker Beer drank by Papa and his "wakamaba brothers"...how can they shoot so well when everyday is a carousel ride of tusker, campari gin, and whiskey?

Shane says

Being a lifelong fan of Hemingway, I was disappointed in this book, his last. I should have noticed the signals when the piles of hardbound copies in the bookstore were selling for under eight dollars apiece, when it was polythene wrapped so that I could not flip pages to sample what I was buying (in publisher hubris – “don’t question the master, dude!”) and when most of its interesting parts had already been published in a much smaller version titled, *True at First Light* some years ago.

Although dubbed a fiction, this is a thinly veiled journal of Hemingway and his fourth wife Mary’s sojourn for several months in a hunting camp under the shadow of the great mountain Kilimanjaro. There are endless rounds of drinking, hunting, killing, eating, trading jokes by campfire, bathing, diarrhoea, going local, driving and flying around the game reserve – the routine of life in this place which to Hemingway is his nirvana. The elements of tension and conflict needed to render this travelogue into a novel are provided in the hunt for a lion by Mary and a leopard by Papa, in the latter’s abortive attempts to take a young African wife while still being in love and married to his American one, and from the constant threat of approaching Mau Mau marauders who never really appear in the end.

In his meandering ruminations (I am sure the two editors dared not touch the ramblings of the Great One) Hemingway opens us to his past encounters in the literary field with luminaries such as Ford Maddox Ford, Ezra Pound and Scott Fitzgerald, plus his sojourns in France, Spain and Cuba, and he expresses his resignation for not winning the Nobel that year (he lost to Winston Churchill but won in the following year) – not sure what all these had in common with the African novel, but they were good insights nevertheless. I also realized in reading this book that Hemingway used most of his life experiences to form his fiction and that his imaginative component was but a smidgeon applied to a collage of real life experiences.

Hemingway certainly belongs to a vanished age of macho men whose lives were better than their fiction; people who came of age with weapons in hand, surrounded by death, and who had to kill their meat in order to be validated. There is no mention of him ever eating vegetables! Even Mary who comes to hunting later in her life gets hooked on the sport, and obsesses over killing her lion even though her shooting is suspect, and she begins to take pleasure in killing animals as the novel progresses. As a writer, Hemingway’s ego is total; I am sure he would have had choice words for this review if he was alive, just as he tears into the critical reader from Iowa and ends up calling her a bitch. In the process, the hierarchy of creation in Hemingway’s world becomes clear: White Man => White Woman => Black Woman => Animal.

African tribal rituals and culture are brought alive as Hemingway goes native and tries to belong – to be a brother, to smell like them, eat like them, hunt like them, celebrate like them, and love like them. In exchange, and much to the game warden’s chagrin, he teaches his African brothers to drink like him. He also claims relationship to the Native American Indian and talks about his God, Gitche Manitou, and of the Happy Hunting Grounds where there is endless and unrestricted game hunting, drinking and celebration – sometime I wondered whether he was deliberately leading on the locals (and his readers).

The Hemingway style got to me this time. The run-on sentences, word repetitions, indirect and stylized

dialogue, oblique references to events happening off stage, the sparse use of commas and the heavy use of the word “and” – lyrical though they may be – did not flow for me this time and I often had to revert to re-reading sentences or to skipping them in frustration.

A nostalgic book for Hemingway aficionados, no doubt – but this is the work of a writer whose best work peaked a long time ago. Just as the trip to Africa in *Under Kilimanjaro* is a repetition of the one Hemingway did 20 years prior and chronicled in *The Green Hills of Africa*, this was my romp through a Hemingway tome after a similar time gap – just for old time’s sake!

Shelby Johnston says

This book is flashback, therefore I would suggest reading after reading his previous novels or else one can enjoy this book in full context.

Peter says

“No hay remedio” to the tedious nature of this book.

Grey says

A bit hard to read but definitely worth the effort. The declarative narrative gets a bit staccato at times, but the sweep of the panorama and the emotion are typically awesome. What a life! What a writer!

Craig Cottongim says

I couldn't wait to finish this, now I'm sad it's over. I guess I'll re-read it again in 4 or 5 years when I can't remember it. I'm still not sure which I liked better, this or *The Green Hills of Africa*. Both were great and I like ER's memoirs better than most of his fiction. *Old man and the sea* is my favorite, I will say I'm over 1/2 way through *Islands in the Stream* and like it a lot.

Megan says

I adore Hemingway, and I think this is the most enjoyable Hemingway book I've ever read. It's funny, entertaining, and not deep in the least. :)

Azziba says

More like a three and a half. Readable but I personally didn't agree with several of the feelings Hemingway portrayed.

Carmen says

I thought I could read anything Hemingway, but ugh. This did not hold my attention at all and was a chore to read. I had a hard time holding onto characters and the plot. Oh well, I guess even great writers aren't great all the time.

Wise Cat says

I'd give this 1 1/2 stars if we could do half star ratings which I wish we would. Anyway, I see why this book was in the "withdrawn" pile at the library. (Those are books that are shabby in condition or don't circulate enough to make it worth keeping) It was boring!

When I saw it was by Ernest Hemingway, as well as the title, I thought it would be something different I would want to read. It's hardcover and in PRISTINE, brand new condition. (I've read Hemingway before, like A Farewell to Arms, The Sun Also Rises, and The Old Man and the Sea. I loved all of them.) I browsed through the pages, and I saw it was about his safari in Africa. There seemed to be a lot of dialogue, but I thought it might have some adventure or stories about the people.

The title made me think of an old 1952 movie I saw once that I liked: "The Snows of Kilimanjaro". I thought the movie was based on this book, but I see it was based on a short story. Anyway this book sat on my bookcase since 2008! I FINALLY read it, sort of.

I found myself skipping pages in some chapters, esp. as I got near the end...Though I don't like hunting and think it's cruel, I thought it might at least have local African customs and culture in it. Or descriptions of what I'm sure is breathtaking landscape. There was little of each, esp. about the culture/customs. This book was supposed to show Hemingway's humorous side from what I read on the inside flap, but I found nothing funny about it at all.

I can't believe Hemingway wrote this. 99% of the book is dialogue----shallow, boring, repetitive (at times) dialogue. Also, it was not always clear who's saying what. It didn't always say "He said" or "Mary said" or "I said". So I lost track of who was talking about what. It didn't always follow the usual alternating turns a typical conversation between 2 or more people takes.

Examples of repetitiveness would be thing like his wife is asleep, then she's awake, then asleep again. Or she doesn't feel well, feels worse, feels better, then worse again. The dialogue was usually about superficial things like who's drinking beer, who's drinking Coke, who's going on the hunt, who's not, who's going to town, who's not, etc. You get the idea.

There was a lot of what we used to call "run on" sentences when I was in school. These are very long sentences with no punctuation AT ALL, seemingly to go on forever. This made it hard to read.

I got sick of hearing about how his stupid wife was obsessed with and wanted to kill this poor lion. :-(This

went on for about 200 pages at least. I skipped over the gory details about hunting and killing these animals. Even though it was for meat usually, sometimes it was just for the hides or furs. I couldn't stand this part so I turned the pages when I came across that.

The cast of characters in the back was handy, BUT there was way, way too many of them to follow. And to top that off, there was NO CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT at all. I got tired of flipping to the back to see who was whom, and after awhile I just didn't care.

There is a glossary of Swahili words in the back as well which was interesting. But again, I didn't feel like flipping back and forth to read the definition of a word. That was annoying, and not all words were in the glossary anyway. It would have been easier to read if the translation was in parenthesis, or as a footnote at the bottom of the page. I do like that the glossary was included but it would have been better if it was more accessible as one reads.

Last night I labored through the final pages before going to sleep. I just scanned the last chapters or so, wondering if it would redeem itself in the end. Unfortunately it did not.

It was one of the most boring books I've ever read. Some hunters or safari goers might like it, but I wouldn't recommend it to anyone, even Hemingway fans.

I wanted to like this book, but I could never get into it. What a chore to read, what a waste of paper, what a waste of time.....

Sigh...

I don't know if everyone else can see where it says I read this "2 times!" That was an accident, but it won't let me edit it. NO WAY did I read it twice.....Once was more than enough, and I can't even say I read it thoroughly to boot.....

Just goes to prove again that just because I like an author, I don't like everything he/she writes.

Claudia Taller says

The Snows of Kilimanjaro by Ernest Hemingway is tedious, but it really shows us who he was and how much he cared about Mary and some of his regrets and his way of just being in his head and I so like who he is when he's talking to us in this book. Now that I've seen his home in Key West, I'd love to see where he lived at the end of his life with Mary. The book starts in the middle of his story so we know he and Mary are in Africa a lot, that it's a huge part of their lives, but yet we don't know it all—how much time did the Hemingways spend there? We see Papa's softer side, his old-man side in this book, a mature man who is still trying to find his way, still on a journey toward what's next. It's not at all surprising that he killed himself—there was such a determination in him to live well that he would have thought he died well too.

Hal Brodsky says

Posthumously published piece about Hemingway's last visit to Africa combines snippets of good writing

with Hemingway at his boastful narcissistic worst. Certainly an odd read, but for completeness, hey it Hemingway.
