

## **Semiotic Analysis of Charles Pierce on The Short Story “Cat in The Rain” By Ernest Hemingway**

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### **Abstract**

This study analyzes Ernest Hemingway's short story *Cat in the Rain* through the lens of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, with a particular focus on the concept of the *icon*. Peirce's semiotics is based on three key elements: the sign, the object, and the interpretant, which together construct meaning. Among these, the icon is a sign that resembles or directly represents its referent. This research aims to identify and interpret the various iconic signs present in Hemingway's narrative, shedding light on their role in shaping the story's deeper meanings. Through a close reading of *Cat in the Rain*, several iconic markers emerge, contributing to the story's symbolism and thematic depth. The cat itself, as an icon, represents unfulfilled desires, loneliness, and emotional longing, mirroring the protagonist's inner struggles. Other significant icons, such as the rain and the hotel setting, reinforce the atmosphere of isolation and confinement. By analyzing these elements through Peirce's semiotic framework, this study explores how Hemingway employs iconic signs to communicate complex emotional and psychological states with minimalistic yet powerful language. The findings reveal that the use of icons in *Cat in the Rain* plays a crucial role in conveying the protagonist's sense of longing and dissatisfaction. This study contributes to literary semiotics by demonstrating how Peirce's theory enhances the understanding of Hemingway's symbolic storytelling techniques. Ultimately, the analysis underscores the effectiveness of iconic representation in literature, offering new insights into the interplay between signs and meaning in Hemingway's work.

**Keywords:** semiotics, icon, index, symbol, short story

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Literary works are a collection of works of various types and forms, literary works themselves are part of the art of living for artists. One of the literary works that is often encountered is poetry. According to Siregar (2020) Literary works are a product of an author's creation which contains thoughts, ideas, concepts and other things that the author wants to convey. One of the literary works that we know is a short story. Short stories, or what are often referred to as short stories, are a form of literature that plays an important role in expanding the world of human imagination and feelings. Short stories are a container that can describe stories, characters,

and conflicts in a short period of time. Literary works in the form of short stories contain various semiotic elements that detail the relationship between language and meaning. In this context, literary analysis is an important tool for understanding the meaning in short stories.

One of the short stories that is the focus of attention in this study is “Cat In The Rain” by Ernest Hemingway. The work demonstrates the use of creative and meaningful language, and implies complexity in its narrative. To reveal and detail the semiotic elements contained in this short story, this study will apply a semiotic approach developed by the American philosopher and logician, Charles Sanders Pierce (1839-1914).

Pierce developed a semiotic theory that involves three main elements: signs, objects, and interpretants. Pierce's semiotic theory provides a deep understanding of how linguistic signs are used to represent objects in the real world and how meaning is produced through the interpretation of these signs.

This study aims to explore the signs in the short story “Cat In The Rain” and analyze how these signs create meaning in the story. By exploring semiotic elements such as icons, indexes, and symbols in the short story, this study will enrich our understanding of narrative, language, and representation in literary works. In addition, this study also aims to explore the use of Charles Sanders Pierce's semiotics as a relevant analytical tool in the context of literature.

Through Pierce's semiotic approach, this study is expected to provide in-depth insight into the literary work “Cat In The Rain” by Ernest Hemingway, as well as help open the door for further research on semiotic analysis in Indonesian literature.

This research will involve the analysis of the short story text “Cat In The Rain” by focusing on the semiotic elements that are the basis of Pierce's semiotic theory. Thus, this research is expected to provide a significant contribution to our understanding of how meaning is created in short stories, as well as how semiotic theory can be applied in analyzing literary works. As a scientific study, this research cannot be separated from the existence of other scientific works that are used as reference materials or as reference materials. The references are taken from several national-scale journals and have been accredited as previous literature studies which is Siregar (2020) entitled “chariotic study of charles sanders pierce: tricotomy relationship (icons, indexes and symbols) in the short Story of mashdar zainal's mercusuar children”. However, in this study the author will only analyze from the Icon side in the short story “Cat In The Rain” by Ernest Hemingway.

There are many types of short story studies, from all the differences in study methods, only a few aspects differ, the rest will look the same. One of the short story studies that can be used is the Semiotic Short Story Study. Semiotics itself is the science of signs. Moreover, the semiotic short

story study can be interpreted as a short story study that studies part of the signs created from the poem itself. Siregar (2020) said that in its journey, semiotics was divided into several concepts, namely, the semiotic concept of Ferdinand De Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, Umberto Eco's semiotics, John Fiske's semiotics and Roland Barthes's semiotics. The five semiotic concepts put forward by these experts do not differ too significantly. Umberto Eco said that the basic principle of semiotics is to study everything that can be used to lie (semiotics is a theory of lying).

The term semiotics comes from the Ancient Greek word, "semeion" which means sign or in English, "sign". Semiotics is a science that studies signs. This science assumes that social phenomena or society and the culture in it are signs. Semiotics also studies systems, rules that allow these signs to have meaning.

According to Primandika (2018), language as a composition of signs, in Saussure's theory there are elements that are always attached, namely signified (signified) and signifier (signifier). Signifiers are actual words. Meanwhile, the signified contains elements of implied meaning that require semiotic study.

This study aims to analyze *Cat in the Rain* by Ernest Hemingway using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, focusing specifically on the concept of the *icon*. By identifying and interpreting iconic signs in the story, the research explores how meaning is constructed through representation. Unlike previous studies that examine Peirce's full trichotomy, this study concentrates solely on *icons*, providing insight into their role in literary analysis. Additionally, it demonstrates the practical application of semiotic theory in literature, contributing to both semiotics and literary studies.

## **2. RESEACRH METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive research method. Qualitative descriptive research is a research method used to understand and describe phenomena or events by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data in the form of words, pictures, or narratives, without using numbers or statistics. This method has several strong arguments that support its use in various disciplines, including social sciences, humanities, and education. Descriptive Research Methods are generally carried out with the main objective, namely to systematically describe the facts and characteristics of the objects and subjects being studied accurately. Descriptive research according to Agustina (2017) is research that really only describes what happens in a particular field or area. The writing technique is qualitative descriptive, which presents a discussion based on literary works. According to Siregar (2020), qualitative methods pay attention to natural data in relation to the context of its existence.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### **Analysis of *Cat in the Rain* Using Peirce's Semiotic Approach**

This study examines *Cat in the Rain* by Ernest Hemingway through the lens of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework, which classifies signals into three categories: icons, indexes, and symbols. An icon directly mirrors its referent, exemplified by a cat visually like an actual animal. An index possesses a direct, causal, or contextual relationship with another entity, such as rain signifying sadness or loneliness. A symbol, however, acquires significance through convention and interpretation, exemplified by the cat representing unmet wishes. This research seeks to reveal the profound meanings inherent in Hemingway's narrative through the analysis of semiotic aspects in the short tale. Hemingway employs a succinct yet impactful writing style to express intricate emotions and themes, including loneliness, yearning, and discontent, through ostensibly simple imagery and objects. Utilizing Peirce's semiotic theory facilitates a more sophisticated comprehension of meaning construction within the text, illustrating how Hemingway's intentional employment of signs enriches the emotional and thematic complexity of the narrative.

#### **Iconic Elements in *Cat in the Rain***

##### **1. Cat**

The cat in *Cat in the Rain* serves as a icon as it directly symbolizes a tangible animal characterized by its small size, quadrupedal form, and fur-covered body. Nonetheless, its existence in the rain amplifies its symbolic importance beyond a simple representation. The cat serves as a barometer of the wife's emotional state, reflecting her yearning for warmth, safety, and protection. The wife's obsession with the cat implies a subconscious identification with it, so amplifying her sense of isolation and emotional neglect inside her marriage. Symbolically, the cat embodies the wife's unfulfilled aspirations, including maternal instincts, companionship, and emotional affirmation. Her need to nurture and tend to the cat signifies a profound craving for affection and mastery over her life, which is absent in her present situation. The cat represents the overarching subject of confinement and unfulfilled desires, as it searches for refuge in parallel to the wife's need for emotional comfort. Hemingway's concise yet evocative style facilitates various readings, rendering the cat a potent literary device that embodies the protagonist's internal conflict without explicit articulation. Through these semiotic layers, the cat transcends its status as a mere animal, becoming into a multifaceted symbol of the wife's psychological and emotional turmoil.

## 2. Rain

In *Cat in the Rain*, rain functions as a symbol, directly signifying precipitation, a commonly acknowledged phenomenon in reality. Beyond its physical representation, rain serves as a *\*index\** of the wife's emotional condition, symbolizing melancholy, solitude, and discomfort. The incessant rain reflects her internal conflict, amplifying the loneliness she feels in her marriage. Although rain is typically linked to purification and rejuvenation, in this narrative, it has a more melancholic function, underscoring sorrow and yearning. The relentless chilly rain juxtaposes the warmth and stability the wife desires yet lacks, accentuating the emotional chasm between her and her husband. The rain symbolically highlights the lack of emotional warmth in their relationship, exacerbating her displeasure and intensifying the subject of unmet ambitions. Hemingway's employment of rain as a semiotic device enriches the narrative, implicitly communicating the wife's mental turmoil without overt articulation.

## 3. Hotel

The hotel is an *icon* of a temporary place of residence. It serves as an *index* of transience, reinforcing the couple's impermanence in their current setting and possibly in their relationship. The wife's discomfort in the hotel suggests deeper emotional instability. As a *symbol*, the hotel represents a liminal space—she is neither fully at home nor fully content, mirroring her psychological and emotional uncertainty. The structured, impersonal nature of the hotel contrasts with the warmth and stability she craves, intensifying the sense of detachment in her marriage.

## 4. The American Wife

The protagonist's physical characteristics, attire, and actions serve as *icons*. Her frustration over not being able to retrieve the cat and her desire for change (wanting short hair and new experiences) act as *indexes* of her deeper longing for agency and affection. Symbolically, she represents the broader theme of dissatisfaction and emotional neglect. Hemingway crafts her character with minimal but revealing details, making her a vessel for exploring themes of gender roles, emotional needs, and existential longing.

## 5. The Husband

The husband's passive behavior—lying on the bed reading—functions as an *icon* of inactivity. This posture and his lack of engagement with his wife serve as an *index* of his emotional distance and disinterest in her desires. His detached demeanor symbolizes the broader issue of miscommunication and neglect in relationships. He embodies the archetype of a partner who

remains emotionally unavailable, making the wife's longing for connection all the more poignant.

#### 6. **Silver**

The mention of "silver" (likely referring to tableware or décor) functions as an *icon* by providing a visual cue of luxury and refinement. It acts as an *index* of the wife's aspirations for a stable, elegant, and idealized life. As a *symbol*, silver represents traditional domestic values, prosperity, and possibly the societal expectations placed upon women. The contrast between this imagery and the wife's current reality emphasizes the gap between her desires and her actual circumstances.

#### 7. **The Cat Under the Green Table**

The image of the cat sheltering under a green table is an *icon* of a small creature seeking refuge. The cat's attempt to find shelter acts as an *index* of the wife's emotional needs—she, too, is seeking comfort and security. Symbolically, the green table may represent a temporary sanctuary, a place of momentary relief but not a permanent solution. This aligns with the overarching theme of longing and unfulfilled desires that permeates the story.

By applying Peirce's semiotic framework, this study reveals how Hemingway uses *icons*, *indexes*, and *symbols* to construct a rich, multi-layered narrative in *Cat in the Rain*. The interplay between these signs deepens the reader's understanding of the protagonist's emotional state and the broader themes of loneliness, gender roles, and emotional neglect. This analysis underscores the effectiveness of semiotic theory in literary interpretation, demonstrating how seemingly simple imagery can carry profound symbolic weight.

### 4. **CONCLUSION**

Analysis of the short story "Cat in the Rain" through the lens of Charles Peirce's semiotics reveals how Hemingway effectively uses icons, indices, and symbols to convey complex and layered meanings. Hemingway not only describes objects and actions literally (icon), but also uses them to indicate something else (index) and as a representation of more abstract ideas or concepts (symbol). For example, rain is not just water falling from the sky (icon), but also indicates sadness and isolation (index) and symbolizes challenges or even cleansing (symbol). Cats are not just pets (icon), but also indicate the wife's desire to have something to care for and love (index), and symbolize the desire for a child, or attention (symbol). The strength of this analysis lies in how icons, indices, and symbols interact with each other to create deeper meanings. The hotel owner's attention (index) highlights the

husband's lack of attention (index). The wife's desire for a cat (index and symbol) emphasizes her dissatisfaction in the marriage. This interaction builds a stronger narrative than just a literal description. The interaction between characters and objects is also important. The hotel owner's attention (index) towards the wife highlights the lack of attention from her husband (index). The wife's desire for a cat (index and symbol) emphasizes her dissatisfaction with her marriage. Through the use of these signs, Hemingway explores central themes such as Dissatisfaction and Longing, where the wife feels dissatisfied with her marriage and longs for something more. The cat becomes a symbol of this longing, which could be for a child, attention, or emotional fulfillment. Isolation and lack of communication indicate a deficiency in communication and emotional connection between husband and wife, creating a sense of isolation for the wife. The husband who keeps reading and ignoring his wife indicates this. Moreover, Gender Roles and Social Expectations can also be interpreted in relation to women of that time. The wife's desire to have "silver" and "cats" can be seen as a symbol of the desire to fulfill the traditional roles of wife and mother.

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