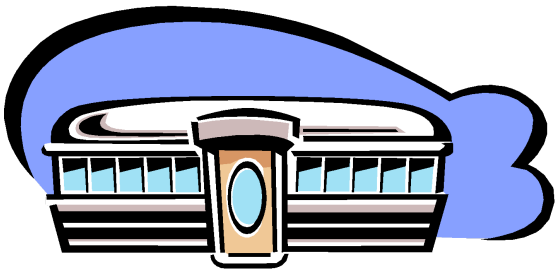
Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) has had a strong influence on American writing. He developed a plain, forceful style based on direct statements and few adjectives and adverbs. By avoiding frills and decorations in his words, he tried to create a clear and exact description of a place, of an action, and of mood.

Hemingway was also very good at characterization. He could bring a character to life by giving a few key details of what the person looked like. He didn't tell *what the character was like, he described that person and let the reader figure things out.*

In this scene from his famous short story "The Killers," Hemingway does almost the whole job of a characterization through dialogue. The scene is a small-town diner that two strange men are just entering.



The door of Henry's lunchroom opened, and two men came in. They sat down at the counter.

"What's yours?" George asked them.

"I don't know," one of the men, Max, said. "What do you want to eat, Al?"

Outside it was getting dark. The streetlight came on outside the window. The two men at the counter read the menu. From the other end of the counter, Nick Adams watched them. He had been talking to George when they came in.

"I'll take ham and eggs," the man called Al said. He wore a derby hat and a black overcoat buttoned across the chest. His face was small and white and he had tight lips. He wore a silk scarf and gloves.

"Give me bacon and eggs," said Max. He was about the same size as Al. Their faces were different, but they were dressed like twins. Both wore overcoats too tight for them. They sat leaning forward, their elbows on the counter.

"This hot town," said Al. "What do they call it?"

"Summit," Max said.

"Ever hear of it?" Al asked his friend.

"They eat dinner," his friend said, "and then they go to sleep."

"That's right," George said.

"So you think that's right?" Al asked George.

"Sure," George said.

"You're a pretty bright boy, aren't you?" Al said.

"Sure," said George.

"Well, you're not," said Al. He turned to Nick. "What's your name?"

"Adams."

"Another bright boy," Al said. "Ain't he a bright boy, Max?"

"The town's full of bright boys," Max said.

George put two platters on the counter. Both men ate with their gloves on. George watched them eat.

"What are you looking at?" Max looked at George.

"Nothing," George said.

"Yes you were. You were looking at me," Max said.

"Maybe the bright boy meant it as a joke, Max," Al said.

George laughed.

"You don't have to laugh," Max said to him. "You don't have to laugh at all, see?"

"All right," said George.

"So he thinks it's all right," Max turned to Al. "He thinks it's all right. That's a good one."

"Oh, he's a thinker," Al said. They went on eating.

"What's the bright boy's name down the counter?" Al asked Max.

"Hey bright boy," Max said to Nick. "You go around on the other side of the counter with your boyfriend."

"What's the idea?" Nick asked. "There isn't any idea," Max said.

"You better go around bright boy," Al said. Nick went around behind the counter.

"What's the idea?" George asked.

“No,” said his friend Max.

“What do you do here nights?” Al asked.

“None of your business,” Al said. “Our business is with a big Swede named Ole Anderson who comes here to eat.”