The Impact of Death

When discussing themes and how death can portray them, many can readily agree that "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" by Ernest Hemingway is one story that is heavily influenced by the teme of death. On the other hand, some may say that Hemingway does not portray death in a way that represents the theme. My view is that death in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," plays a vital and significant role in the theme, through symbols and characters.

In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," the hyena foreshadows the death of the protagonist quite often. Later on, we see how Mt. Kilimanjaro plays a role as well to Harry. The mountain represents the greatest achievement that can ever be reached. The climax of achievement. Another vital symbol shown by Hemingway is the leopard. The leopard symbolizes immortality. There were times where the protagonist actually had times of immortality. One example being his youth, living in Paris as a poor writer. The leopard also represents an award for taking the difficult road. Later on, when Harry finally travels to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro he achieves the highest achievement he could. Also by finding the leopard.

The first reference to death is the injury the protagonist has, which is Gangrene a putrid, and deadly infection, causing his body to rot and turn greenish black. This is used as a reference to death because Harry realizes he is slowly dying. The injury all started from a thorn scratch, it becomes a realization to Harry that death is slowly approaching as he says "The marvellous thing is that it's painless... That's how you know when it starts." Harry constantly mentions that he wishes to die, his desire to live fades as the story progresses. He knows in his mind, that death is very close. He begins to become very arrogant as some may say towards his wife. He says "You can shoot me. You're a good shot now. I taught you to shoot, didn't I?" Harry is trying to show that he is giving up. Although some may say he is a coward, that's not necessarily why he is giving up. He feels that just dying already is much better than just waiting for a plane from Nairobi or a truck that will never arrive. When Harry says "I don't give a damn about the truck." Although he is remaining very persistent on giving up, his intentions are formed by the thoughts of him dying.

Harry, has several moments when he feels the verge of death is near. It first appears after the sun has gone down. "It came with a rush; not as a rush of water nor of wind; but of a sudden evil smelling emptiness and the odd thing was that the hyena slipped lightly along the edge of it." The hyena

is used as a symbol for death. When he comes in contact with the hyena he believes he is going to die, shown when his wife offers him broth. "I'm going to die tonight. I don't need my strength up," throughout, as the story progresses we can see how the symbolic meaning of the hyena is significant to the progression of not only the character of Harry but the story as well.

As time progresses from this moment, Harry faces another proximity of death. "He felt death come again. This time there was no rush. It was a puff, as of a wind that makes a candle flicker and the flame go tall," Harry comes in direct contact with death itself. He slowly becomes distant... "He was tired. Too tired. He was going to sleep a little while. He lay still and death was not there. It must have gone around another street." His attitude toward death became more and more casual. There was one moment that drastically changed how rapidly death approached Harry. "Now he wouldn't care about death. One thing he had always dreaded was the pain. He could stand pain as well as any man, until it went on too long, and wore him out." Harry was strong but his toughness towards pain wouldn't last long when it came to death.

The most significant death is when Hemingway ends his story with

Harry's spirit triumphant. When the protagonist dies, his spirit is released

and travels to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro, it shines in the sunlight, which is

the light for his spirit. This death is very symbolic to the overall theme of the story which is death. Out of each death, this one is the most representative of the theme. It shows how Harry's thoughts were flowing, how his sanity was more mentally sane rather than insane. Harry's greatest goal was to get the greatest achievement by getting to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. When he finally did with his spirit it was very significant to the overall climax of the story, finally reaching the top. This death demonstrates how the story's progression was based around the hyena and the leopard influencing his life.

Harry throughout drifts from being conscious to being unconscious. Demonstrating the fantasy like deaths, that are not so realistic. His mind becomes infiltrated with memories from his past. Towards the end of the story, Harry hallucinates the plane coming to save them. Which is just an illusion. Helen represents a realistic death apart from Harry's version of mythical unrealistic deaths. One night, Harry drifts to sleep and as she tries to awaken him, she cannot. Then Helen realizes his heart stopped. The hyena howling outside the tent is heard as this is the animal that feeds on dead carcasses.

In conclusion, the deaths all throughout the story help to drive the theme of death. Through many symbols, illusions and foreshadowing events.

This is very significant to the story of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," by Ernest Hemingway. Due to the high play of elements to drive one theme.