

The Old Man and the Sea: A Discussion

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Abstract. *This paper discusses the major themes in one of the Hemingway's enduring works, *The Old Man and the Sea*. It is a deceptively simple story, told with great power, of a decrepit Cuban fisherman who struggles through the most difficult patch in his life—unlucky and his supreme ordeal with an unrelenting, excruciating fight with a giant marlin far out into the Gulf Stream. Though short and simple, this work is not only dramatic but also propagates that a mere human can overcome struggles in life. In very contemporary terms, Hemingway retells the courage-in-the-face-of-defeat theme, personal triumph from loss. Hemingway tells the tale in simple yet powerful language about an old Cuban fisherman fighting his biggest fight at the worst period of his life — unlucky and his supreme ordeal with a giant marlin far out in the Gulf Stream. Though short and simple, this work teems not only with drama but also with the introspection that a simple man can overcome such insurmountable odds in life. In a resolutely contemporary reworking, Hemingway captures the classic theme of courage in the face of defeat, of personal triumph won from loss.*

Key words: *Sea, Old Man, Fish, Fisherman, Nature etc.*

Introduction:

The Old Man and the Sea opens with a portrayal of an aged gent, Santiago, a fisherman who has gone eighty-four days without making a catch. The native fishermen have labeled him as "salao," which means the worst form of unlucky. This, of course, is an insult to Santiago after having spent the better part of his life at sea and traveling widely in his younger years. He is also considered one of the best skilled fishermen around; he just had not caught any big fish to earn himself money for such a long time. There was this boy, Manolin, helping him at first but after forty days without a fare his parents ordered him not to go to the old man anymore so now he works with another fisherman. In the evening this boy has some sort of feeling for Santiago so they both share some talk and food. *The Old Man and the Sea* opens with a description of an old man, Santiago, a fisherman who has gone eighty-four days without catching a single fish. This man was already known among local fishermen as "salao," that is to say as the worst form of unlucky. Of course, it is offensive for Santiago who spent all his life at the sea and travelled a lot while being young. He also happens to be one of the finest and most experienced fishermen, but he just hasn't caught any large fish that he could sell in quite some time. Initially, there was this boy Manolin helping him out, but after forty days without fare his parents ordered him not to go back to work for the old man so now he's working with another fisherman. There is this boy who has some sort of affection towards Santiago and they both meet in the evenings in order to talk about different matters and take their meals together.

Characters in ‘The Old Man and the Sea’

1. Santiago: The novella's central character. A dedicated fisherman who taught Manolin everything he knows about fishing; Santiago is now old and poor and has gone 84 days without a catch.

2. Manolin: A young man from the fishing village who has fished with Santiago since the age of five and now cares for the old man. Manolin recently began fishing with another fisherman whom his parents consider luckier than Santiago.
3. Martin: The owner of the Terrace (his name is Spanish for St. Martin), he sends food and drink to Santiago through Manolin.
4. Rogelio: A man of the village who on occasion helps Santiago with the fishing net.
5. Perico: A man at the bodega (his name is Spanish for St. Peter, an apostle and fisherman) who gives Santiago newspapers to read.
6. Marlin: An eighteen-foot bluish billfish and a catch of legendary proportions.
7. Mako: A mackerel shark (dentuso in Spanish) that is a voracious and frightening killer known for its rows of large, sharp teeth.
8. Shovel-nosed sharks: The scavenger sharks (galanos in Spanish) that destroy the marlin.
9. Pedrico: A fisherman in the village who looks after Santiago's skiff and gear and receives the marlin's head to use in fish traps.
10. Tourists: A man and woman at the Terrace who see the marlin's skeleton and, misunderstanding a waiter's explanation of what happened, think the skeleton is that of a shark.

Hemingway's Style

Hemingway's writing style is primarily derived from his job as a journalist. His utilization of language is dissimilar to that of, for example, William Faulkner's contemporary, John F. Kennedy. Short sentences, simple structures for sentences, detailed descriptions, and factual information all contribute to a narrative that is almost imperceptible to the reader. However, without being aware of its own existence, the language also has a complex emotional and larger-than-life meaning; the writer's ability to utilize these techniques is apparent; they include the repeated use of simple patterns, allusions, and themes. Additionally, the narrative is repeated, the historical facts are indirect, and the narrative is blended.

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, every word and phrase in the book points to Hemingway's dedication to craft and the desire for exactness. Hemingway himself described the narrative as "principled" on the "iceberg principle": meaning that "7-8" parts of the story were below the surface. While the writing in *The Old Man and the Sea* depicts Hemingway's attempts to reduce the language and communicate as much as possible in as few words as possible, the novella's messages have a larger and larger scope. The narrative's concise history and simple plot are both deceptive and endearing. They are also associated with the political landscape of the time period in question.

Themes of 'The Old Man and the Sea' Resistance to Defeat

Resistance:

As a fisherman who has not caught anything in the last 84 days, Santiago is attempting to fight back. However, Santiago never yields to the fate: he continues to sail deeper into the ocean in hopes of catching a fish, he struggled with the marlin for three days and nights despite the immense physical pain and fatigue, he then caught the marlin and battled the sharks when it was apparent that the battle against them was futile. Whenever the situation is particularly difficult and the despair is overwhelmingly large, Santiago tries to employ several different tactics in order to fuel his fight against the adversity: he recalls his youthful power, he compares himself to his role model Joe DiMaggio, and he prays to God, despite the lack of results from his prayers. Ultimately, Santiago represents every man's attempt to survive. Similarly, the pursuit of the marlin by Santiago was unsuccessful. No one can ever avoid death. However, through Santiago's conflict, Hemingway demonstrates that escaping death is not the concern. As Santiago notes near the conclusion of his battle with the marlin, a man can be destroyed, but not triumphed over. Ultimately, victory over the inevitable is not what defines a man. Instead, it is the struggle of a man against what is inevitable,

even when he recognizes it is inevitable, this is what defines him. The more difficult the conflict, the more worthy the opponent, the more powerfully he can demonstrate himself.

Friendship:

The bond between Santiago and Manolin is crucial to the Santiago's victory over the marlin. In exchange for the mentorship of Santiago and his company, Manolin gives physical assistance to him in the village, supplying food and clothing to him and assisting him in loading his skiff. He also offers emotional support, helping Santiago to maintain his unfortunate status. Despite Santiago's lack of "hope and confidence," when Manolin visited, they exhibited the same behavior as when the breeze increases. Once he encounters the marlin, Santiago refuses to capitulate because he is aware that Manolin would be upset with him.

However, the majority of the novella occurs when Santiago is alone. Except for the bond with Manolin during the evening, Santiago is noted for his solitude. His spouse has died, and he subsists alone and fishes. However, just as he refuses to capitulate to death, he also refuses to capitulate to solitude. Other animals have friends in common. The fish that flies are his primary allies on the ocean, as a result, the marlin is also his brother. He terms the stars as his "distant companions," and considers the ocean as a man he adores. Santiago converses with himself, converses with his injured left hand, and hypothesizes that Manolin will sit beside him. Ultimately, these friendships have a direct effect on Santiago: they prevent him from feeling compassion. As such, he has the impetus to accomplish what seems physically impossible for an elderly man.

Youth and Age:

The title of the novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, alludes to the critical significance of age in the narrative. The book's two primary characters, Santiago and Manolin, represent the elderly and young, respectively, and a symbiotic relationship between them is developing. What one lacks, the other compensates for it. Manolin has energy and passion. He provides food and clothing to Santiago, and supports him despite his unfortunate fate. Santiago is endowed with knowledge and experience. He narrates to Manolin how to play baseball and instructs him in the art of fishing. Santiago's desire to be a good role model for Manolin is one of his primary motivating factors in attempting to battle the marlin for three days, he wishes to demonstrate to Manolin the extent of his capabilities. Also, the age of Santiago is crucial to the short story because it has caused him to become physically weak. Without this flaw, his success would be less significant to him. As Santiago mentions, he had witnessed numerous fish that were heavier than 1,000 pounds, and had captured two of that magnitude in his lifetime, but never alone or as an elderly man. Santiago finds comfort and power in recalling his younger years, these are represented by the lions on the beach in his dreams. He reminisces about these lions—lazy; graceful but powerful animals—from the perspective of an elderly man. Through this, he recognizes that he is still capable of being a powerful opponent.

Man and Nature:

Since *The Old Man and the Sea* is about a man's attempt to battle a marlin, it's natural to believe the short story as depicting the man's attempt to battle nature. In fact, through Santiago, the novella investigates the human connection to nature. He considers the fluttering fish to be his friends, and converses with a bird of like to enjoy the time. The ocean is fraught with danger, including sharks and erratic weather, but it also supports him by providing food in the form of dolphins and shrimp. Ultimately, Santiago doesn't just see the marlin as an opponent, he regards it as a sibling. During the middle of their conflict, Santiago told the marlin, "Come on and slay me." I have no concern with who dies who. Santiago's statement demonstrates his appreciation of the marlin's intelligence and implies the fundamental law of nature that binds man to animal: all organisms must perish, must be slaughtered or born again. This causes man and nature to share a circular system: in it, death is necessary and promotes a new life.

Respect:

As the sunrise approaches on Santiago's second day aboard the ship, he shouted out in order to let the fish know his desire. Readers may find it strange that Santiago wishes to slaughter a fish that he

claims is both his and his respect. However, his esteem is derived from the fact that he has never encountered a fish with such a strong or perceptive nature, he values the fish's life more than he values his own. On his second night at sea, Santiago began to feel compassion for the marlin, but he still wanted to kill the marlin. He then calculates how many meals can be made from the marlin, and feels that the noble animal should have a more fortunate end than to be devoured by its fellow citizens. Despite the apparent love of Santiago for his fellow fisherman and their children, his respect for the marlin extends past his daily life, and he wishes to have the fish's meat for himself.

Conclusion:

During the thematic exploration, the author examined the novel and deduced that victory was not necessary for a good reputation. Instead, success is based on possessing pride and a desire to see the struggle through to its conclusion, regardless of the outcome. Even if Santiago had repatriated the marlin with its head intact, his moment of triumph, like the marlin's meat, would have been of little importance and short duration. The acclaim and respect of Santiago is not derived from his victory, but instead from his spirit of pride and grit that kept him fighting until the end.

The novel isn't about a single man named Santiago. It's the narrative of all individuals who attempt to achieve the greatest possible degree of success, whether or not they succeed. Man must have faith in himself and God in order to have strength and nobility to overcome any obstacles he may encounter. He can capitalize on his conceit to win in every conflict.

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