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**College of Education**

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# **Novel**

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# Hemingway's Style

The words are plain, and the structure is ordinary, traits which characterize Hemingway's literary style. While in other works this economy of language is used to convey the immediacy of experience, Hemingway's terseness is heightened here to the point of rendering much of the prose empty on one level and pregnant with meaning on the other; that is, the sentences tend to lose their particular connection to reality but at the same time attain a more general, symbolic character, much like the effect of poetry. Hemingway's style, then, helps explain why so many commentators view his novella more as a fable than as fiction.

# The Heroic Struggle against Unchangeable Fate

Manolin's parents decided that "the old man was now and definitely *salao*, which is the worst form of unlucky". This sentence proclaims one of the novel's themes, the heroic struggle against unchangeable fate. Indeed, the entire first paragraph emphasizes Santiago's apparent lack of success. For example, "It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty." And most powerfully, "The sail was patched with flour sacks and, furled, it looked like the flag of permanent defeat".

This type of descriptive degradation of Santiago continues with details of his old, worn body. Even his scars, legacies of past successes, are "old as erosions in a fishless desert".

## Dichotomy Between two Different Types of Success

There is a dichotomy between two different types of success: outer, material success and inner, spiritual success. While Santiago clearly lacks the former, the significance of this lack is eclipsed by his possession of the latter. This triumph of spirit over exhaustible material resources is another important theme of the novel. Also, Santiago's eye color foreshadows Hemingway's increasingly explicit likening of Santiago to the sea, suggesting an analogy between Santiago's indomitable spirit and the sea's boundless strength "Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea

# The Relationship Between Santiago and Manolin

The relationship between Santiago and Manolin can be summed up in one sentence: "The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him". Manolin is Santiago's apprentice, but their relationship is not restricted to business alone. Manolin idolizes Santiago but the object of this idolization is not only the once great though presently failed fisherman; it is an idolization of ideals. This helps explain Manolin's unique, almost religious, devotion to the old man, underscored when Manolin begs Santiago's pardon for his not fishing with the old man anymore. Manolin says, "It was Papa made me leave."

Despite the clear hierarchy of this teacher/student relationship, Santiago does stress his equality with the boy. When Manolin asks to buy the old man a beer, Santiago replies, "Why not?...Between fisherman". And when Manolin asks to help Santiago with his fishing, Santiago replies, "You are already a man".

## Unity of Nature

An unexpected equality comes out when Hemingway describes the various ways marlins and sharks are treated on shore. While this foreshadows the struggle between Santiago's marlin and the sharks, it also equalizes the participants. Despite the battles at sea, the marlins and sharks are both butchered and used by humans on land; their antagonisms mean nothing on shore. Like the case of Santiago and Manolin, this equalization demonstrates the novella's thematic concern with the unity of nature including humanity.

The fact the fishing requires both calm detachment and violent engagement (a kind of masculine flourish) further illustrates the unity of a world which both oppresses man and out of which the strength to resist that oppression comes.