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The Old Man and the Sea

Ernest Hemingway

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THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Ernest Hemingway



SPARKNOTES

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Note: This SparkNote uses the Scribner Paperback Fiction edition of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Other editions may vary slightly.

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This edition published by Spark Publishing

Spark Publishing
A Division of SparkNotes LLC
76 9th Avenue, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10011

ISBN 1-4014-0418-9

Text design by Rhea Braunstein
Text composition by Jackson Typesetting

Printed and bound in the United States of America

01 02 03 04 05 SN 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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CONTENTS

CONTEXT	1
PLOT OVERVIEW	3
CHARACTER LIST	5
ANALYSIS OF MAJOR CHARACTERS	7
Santiago	7
Manolin	8
THEMES, MOTIFS, AND SYMBOLS	9
The Honor in Struggle, Defeat, and Death	9
Pride as the Source of Greatness and Determination	10
Crucifixion Imagery	11
Life from Death	12
The Lions on the Beach	12
The Marlin	13
The Shovel-Nosed Sharks	13
SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS	15
Day One	15
Day Two	18
Day Three	22
Day Four	26
Day Five	30

vi • CONTENTS

CRITICAL READINGS	33
HEMINGWAY'S STYLE	37
IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS EXPLAINED	39
KEY FACTS	43
STUDY QUESTIONS AND ESSAY TOPICS	47
REVIEW AND RESOURCES	49
Quiz	49
Suggestions for Further Reading	54



Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1899, the son of a doctor and a music teacher. He began his writing career as a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*. At age eighteen, he volunteered to serve as a Red Cross ambulance driver in World War I and was sent to Italy, where he was badly injured by shrapnel. Hemingway later fictionalized his experience in Italy in what some consider his greatest novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. In 1921, Hemingway moved to Paris, where he served as a correspondent for the *Toronto Daily Star*. In Paris, he fell in with a group of American and English expatriate writers that included F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Ford Madox Ford. In the early 1920s, Hemingway began to achieve fame as a chronicler of the disaffection felt by many American youth after World War I—a generation of youth whom Stein memorably dubbed the “Lost Generation.” His novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) established him as a dominant literary voice of his time. His spare, charged style of writing was revolutionary at the time and would be imitated, for better or for worse, by generations of aspiring young writers to come.

After leaving Paris, Hemingway wrote on bullfighting, published short stories and articles, covered the Spanish Civil War as a journalist, and published his best-selling novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). These pieces helped Hemingway build up the mythic breed of masculinity for which he wished to be known. His work and his life revolved around big-game hunting, fishing, boxing, and bullfighting, endeavors that he tried to master as seriously as he did writing. In the 1930s, Hemingway lived in Key West, Florida, and later in Cuba, and his years of experience fishing the Gulf Stream and the Caribbean provided an essential background for the vivid descriptions of the fisherman’s craft in *The Old Man and the Sea*. In 1936 he wrote a piece for *Esquire* about a Cuban fisherman who was dragged out to sea by a great marlin, a game fish that typically weighs hundreds of pounds. Sharks had destroyed the fisherman’s catch by the time he was found half-delirious by other fish-

2 • THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

ermen. This story seems an obvious seed for the tale of Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

A great fan of baseball, Hemingway liked to talk in the sport's lingo, and by 1952, he badly "needed a win." His novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*, published in 1950, was a disaster. It was his first novel in ten years, and he had claimed to friends that it was his best yet. Critics, however, disagreed and called the work the worst thing Hemingway had ever written. Many readers claimed it read like a parody of Hemingway. The control and precision of his earlier prose seemed to be lost beyond recovery.

The huge success of *The Old Man and the Sea*, published in 1952, was a much-needed vindication. The novella won the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, and it very likely cinched the Nobel Prize for Hemingway in 1954, as it was cited for particular recognition by the Nobel Academy. It would be the last novel published in his lifetime.

Although the novella helped to regenerate Hemingway's wilting career, it has since been met by divided critical opinion. While some critics have praised *The Old Man and the Sea* as a new classic that takes its place among such established American works as William Faulkner's short story "The Bear" and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*, others have attacked the story as "imitation Hemingway" and find fault with the author's departure from the uncompromising realism with which he made his name.

Because Hemingway was a writer who always relied heavily on autobiographical sources, some critics, not surprisingly, eventually decided that the novella served as a thinly veiled attack upon them. According to this reading, Hemingway was the old master at the end of his career being torn apart by—but ultimately triumphing over—critics on a feeding frenzy. But this reading ultimately reduces *The Old Man and the Sea* to little more than an act of literary revenge. The more compelling interpretation asserts that the novella is a parable about life itself, in particular man's struggle for triumph in a world that seems designed to destroy him.

Despite the soberly life-affirming tone of the novella, Hemingway was, at the end of his life, more and more prone to debilitating bouts of depression. He committed suicide in 1961 in Ketchum, Idaho.



PLOT OVERVIEW

The *Old Man and the Sea* is the story of an epic struggle between an old, seasoned fisherman and the greatest catch of his life. For eighty-four days, Santiago, an aged Cuban fisherman, has set out to sea and returned empty-handed. So conspicuously unlucky is he that the parents of his young devoted apprentice and friend, Manolin, have forced the boy to leave the old man in order to fish in a more prosperous boat. Nevertheless, the boy continues to care for the old man upon his return each night. He helps the old man tote his gear to his ramshackle hut, secures food for him, and discusses the latest developments in American baseball, especially the trials of the old man's hero, Joe DiMaggio. Santiago is confident that his unproductive streak will soon come to an end, and he resolves to sail out farther than usual the following day.

On the eighty-fifth day of his unlucky streak, Santiago does as promised, sailing his skiff far beyond the island's shallow coastal waters and venturing into the Gulf Stream. He prepares his lines and drops them. At noon, a big fish, which he knows is a marlin, takes the bait that Santiago has placed one hundred fathoms deep in the waters. The old man expertly hooks the fish, but he cannot pull it in. Instead, the fish begins to pull the boat.

Unable to tie the line fast to the boat for fear the fish would snap a taut line, the old man bears the strain of the line with his shoulders, back, and hands, ready to give slack should the marlin make a run. The fish pulls the boat all through the day, through the night, through another day, and through another night. It swims steadily northwest until at last it tires and swims east with the current. The entire time, Santiago endures constant pain from the fishing line. Whenever the fish lunges, leaps, or makes a dash for freedom, the cord cuts him badly. Although wounded and weary, the old man feels a deep empathy and admiration for the marlin, his brother in suffering, strength, and resolve.

On the third day the fish tires, and Santiago, sleep-deprived, aching, and nearly delirious, manages to pull the marlin in close enough to kill

4 • THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

it with a harpoon thrust. Dead beside the skiff, the marlin is the largest Santiago has ever seen. He lashes it to his boat, raises the small mast, and sets sail for home. While Santiago is excited by the price that the marlin will bring at market, he is more concerned that the people who will eat the fish are unworthy of its greatness.

As Santiago sails on with the fish, the marlin's blood leaves a trail in the water and attracts sharks. The first to attack is a great mako shark, which Santiago manages to slay with the harpoon. In the struggle, the old man loses the harpoon and lengths of valuable rope, which leaves him vulnerable to other shark attacks. The old man fights off the successive vicious predators as best he can, stabbing at them with a crude spear he makes by lashing a knife to an oar, and even clubbing them with the boat's tiller. Although he kills several sharks, more and more appear, and by the time night falls, Santiago's continued fight against the scavengers is useless. They devour the marlin's precious meat, leaving only skeleton, head, and tail. Santiago chastises himself for going "out too far," and for sacrificing his great and worthy opponent. He arrives home before day-break, stumbles back to his shack, and sleeps very deeply.

The next morning, a crowd of amazed fishermen gathers around the skeletal carcass of the fish, which is still lashed to the boat. Knowing nothing of the old man's struggle, tourists at a nearby café observe the remains of the giant marlin and mistake it for a shark. Manolin, who has been worried sick over the old man's absence, is moved to tears when he finds Santiago safe in his bed. The boy fetches the old man some coffee and the daily papers with the baseball scores, and watches him sleep. When the old man wakes, the two agree to fish as partners once more. The old man returns to sleep and dreams his usual dream of lions at play on the beaches of Africa.



CHARACTER LIST

Santiago—The old man of the novella's title, Santiago is a Cuban fisherman who has had an extended run of bad luck. Despite his expertise, he has been unable to catch a fish for eighty-four days. He is humble, yet exhibits a justified pride in his abilities. His knowledge of the sea and its creatures, and of his craft, is unparalleled and helps him preserve a sense of hope regardless of circumstance. Throughout his life, Santiago has been presented with contests to test his strength and endurance. The marlin with which he struggles for three days represents his greatest challenge. Paradoxically, although Santiago ultimately loses the fish, the marlin is also his greatest victory.

The Marlin—Santiago hooks the marlin, which we learn at the end of the novella measures eighteen feet, on the first afternoon of his fishing expedition. Because of the marlin's great size, Santiago is unable to pull the fish in, and the two become engaged in a kind of tug-of-war that often seems more like an alliance than a struggle. The fishing line serves as a symbol of the fraternal connection Santiago feels with the fish. When the captured marlin is later destroyed by sharks, Santiago feels destroyed as well. Like Santiago, the marlin is implicitly compared to Christ.

Manolin—A boy presumably in his adolescence, Manolin is Santiago's apprentice and devoted attendant. The old man first took him out on a boat when he was merely five years old. Due to Santiago's recent bad luck, Manolin's parents have forced the boy to go out on a different fishing boat. Manolin, however, still cares deeply for the old man, to whom he continues to look as a mentor. His love for Santiago is unmistakable as the two discuss baseball and as the young boy recruits help from villagers to improve the old man's impoverished conditions.

Joe DiMaggio—Although DiMaggio never appears in the novel, he plays a significant role nonetheless. Santiago worships him as a model of strength and commitment, and his thoughts turn toward DiMaggio

6 • THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

whenever he needs to reassure himself of his own strength. Despite a painful bone spur that might have crippled another player, DiMaggio went on to secure a triumphant career. He was a center fielder for the New York Yankees from 1936 to 1951, and is often considered the best all-around player ever at that position.

Perico—Perico, the reader assumes, owns the bodega in Santiago's village. He never appears in the novel, but he serves an important role in the fisherman's life by providing him with newspapers that report the baseball scores. This act establishes him as a kind man who helps the aging Santiago.

Martin—Like Perico, Martin, a café owner in Santiago's village, does not appear in the story. The reader learns of him through Manolin, who often goes to Martin for Santiago's supper. As the old man says, Martin is a man of frequent kindness who deserves to be repaid.



SANTIAGO

Santiago suffers terribly throughout *The Old Man and the Sea*. In the opening pages of the book, he has gone eighty-four days without catching a fish and has become the laughingstock of his small village. He then endures a long and grueling struggle with the marlin only to see his trophy catch destroyed by sharks. Yet, the destruction enables the old man to undergo a remarkable transformation, and he wrests triumph and renewed life from his seeming defeat. After all, Santiago is an old man whose physical existence is almost over, but the reader is assured that Santiago will persist through Manolin, who, like a disciple, awaits the old man's teachings and will make use of those lessons long after his teacher has died. Thus Santiago manages, perhaps, the most miraculous feat of all: he finds a way to prolong his life after death.

Santiago's commitment to sailing out farther than any fisherman has before, to where the big fish promise to be, testifies to the depth of his pride. Yet, it also shows his determination to change his luck. Later, after the sharks have destroyed his prize marlin, Santiago chastises himself for his hubris (exaggerated pride), claiming that it has ruined both the marlin and himself. True as this might be, it is only half the picture. For Santiago's pride also enables him to achieve his most true and complete self. Furthermore, it helps him earn the deeper respect of the village fisherman and secures him the prized companionship of the boy—he knows that he will never have to endure such an epic struggle again.

Santiago's pride is what enables him to endure, and it is perhaps endurance that matters most in Hemingway's conception of the world—a world in which death and destruction, as part of the natural order of things, are unavoidable. Hemingway seems to believe there are only two options: defeat or endurance until destruction; Santiago clearly chooses the latter. His stoic determination is mythic, nearly Christ-like in proportion. For three days, he holds fast to the line that links him to the fish,

8 • THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

even though it cuts deeply into his palms, causes a crippling cramp in his left hand, and ruins his back. This physical pain allows Santiago to forge a connection with the marlin that goes beyond the literal link of the line: his bodily aches attest to the fact that he is well matched, that the fish is a worthy opponent, and that he himself, because he is able to fight so hard, is a worthy fisherman. This connectedness to the world around him eventually elevates Santiago beyond what would otherwise be his defeat. Like Christ, to whom Santiago is unashamedly compared at the end of the novella, the old man's physical suffering leads to a more significant spiritual triumph.

MANOLIN

Manolin is present only in the beginning and at the end of *The Old Man and the Sea*, but his presence is important because Manolin's devotion to Santiago highlights Santiago's value as a person and as a fisherman. Manolin demonstrates his love for Santiago openly. He makes sure that the old man has food, blankets, and can rest without being bothered. Despite Hemingway's insistence that his characters were a real old man and a real boy, Manolin's purity and singleness of purpose elevate him to the level of a symbolic character. Manolin's actions are not tainted by the confusion, ambivalence, or willfulness that typify adolescence. Instead, he is a companion who feels nothing but love and devotion.

Hemingway does hint at the boy's resentment for his father, whose wishes Manolin obeys by abandoning the old man after forty days without catching a fish. This fact helps to establish the boy as a real human being, as a person with conflicted loyalties who faces difficult decisions. By the end of the book, however, the boy abandons his duty to his father, swearing that he will sail with the old man regardless of the consequences. He stands, in the novella's final pages, as a symbol of uncompromised love and fidelity. As the old man's apprentice, he also represents the life that will follow from death. His dedication to learning from the old man ensures that Santiago will live on.



THEMES

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Honor in Struggle, Defeat, and Death

From the very first paragraph, Santiago is characterized as someone struggling against defeat. He has gone eighty-four days without catching a fish—he will soon pass his own record of eighty-seven days. Almost as a reminder of Santiago’s struggle, the sail of his skiff resembles “the flag of permanent defeat.” But the old man refuses defeat at every turn: he resolves to sail out beyond the other fishermen to where the biggest fish promise to be. He lands the marlin, tying his record of eighty-seven days after a brutal three-day fight, and he continues to ward off sharks from stealing his prey, even though he knows the battle is useless.

Because Santiago is pitted against the creatures of the sea, some readers choose to view the tale as a chronicle of man’s battle *against* the natural world, but the novella is, more accurately, the story of man’s place *within* nature. Both Santiago and the marlin display qualities of pride, honor, and bravery, and both are subject to the same eternal law: they must kill or be killed. As Santiago reflects when he watches the weary warbler fly toward shore, where it will inevitably meet the hawk, the world is filled with predators, and no living thing can escape the inevitable struggle that will lead to its death. Santiago lives according to his own observation: “man is not made for defeat . . . [a] man can be destroyed but not defeated.” In Hemingway’s portrait of the world, death is inevitable, but the best men (and animals) will nonetheless refuse to give in to its power. Accordingly, man and fish will struggle to the death, just as hungry sharks will lay waste to an old man’s trophy catch.

The novel suggests that it is possible to transcend this natural law. In fact, the very inevitability of destruction creates the terms that allow a worthy man or beast to transcend it. It is precisely through the effort

to battle the inevitable that a man can prove himself. Indeed, a man can prove this determination over and over through the worthiness of the opponents he chooses to face. Santiago finds the marlin worthy of a fight, just as he once found “the great negro of Cienfuegos” worthy. His admiration for these opponents brings love and respect into an equation with death, as their destruction becomes a point of honor and bravery that confirms Santiago’s heroic qualities. One might characterize the equation as the working out of the statement “Because I love you, I have to kill you.” Alternately, one might draw a parallel to the poet John Keats and his insistence that beauty can only be comprehended in the moment before death, as beauty bows to destruction. Santiago, though destroyed at the end of the novella, is never defeated. Instead, he emerges as a hero. Santiago’s struggle does not enable him to change man’s place in the world. Rather, it enables him to meet his most dignified destiny.

Pride as the Source of Greatness and Determination

Many parallels exist between Santiago and the classic heroes of the ancient world. In addition to exhibiting terrific strength, bravery, and moral certainty, those heroes usually possess a tragic flaw—a quality that, though admirable, leads to their eventual downfall. If pride is Santiago’s fatal flaw, he is keenly aware of it. After sharks have destroyed the marlin, the old man apologizes again and again to his worthy opponent. He has ruined them both, he concedes, by sailing beyond the usual boundaries of fishermen. Indeed, his last word on the subject comes when he asks himself the reason for his undoing and decides, “Nothing . . . I went out too far.”

While it is certainly true that Santiago’s eighty-four-day run of bad luck is an affront to his pride as a masterful fisherman, and that his attempt to bear out his skills by sailing far into the gulf waters leads to disaster, Hemingway does not condemn his protagonist for being full of pride. On the contrary, Santiago stands as proof that pride motivates men to greatness. Because the old man acknowledges that he killed the mighty marlin largely out of pride, and because his capture of the marlin leads in turn to his heroic transcendence of defeat, pride becomes the source of Santiago’s greatest strength. Without a ferocious sense of pride, that battle would never have been fought, or more likely, it would have been abandoned before the end.

Santiago's pride also motivates his desire to transcend the destructive forces of nature. Throughout the novel, no matter how baleful his circumstances become, the old man exhibits an unflagging determination to catch the marlin and bring it to shore. When the first shark arrives, Santiago's resolve is mentioned twice in the space of just a few paragraphs. First we are told that the old man "was full of resolution but he had little hope." Then, sentences later, the narrator says: "He hit [the shark] without hope but with resolution." The old man meets every challenge with the same unwavering determination: he is willing to die in order to bring in the marlin, and he is willing to die in order to battle the feeding sharks. It is this conscious decision to act, to fight, to never give up that enables Santiago to avoid defeat. Although he returns to Havana without the trophy of his long battle, he returns with the knowledge that he has acquitted himself proudly and manfully. Hemingway seems to suggest that victory is not a prerequisite for honor. Instead, glory depends upon one having the pride to see a struggle through to its end, regardless of the outcome. Even if the old man had returned with the marlin intact, his moment of glory, like the marlin's meat, would have been short-lived. The glory and honor Santiago accrues comes not from his battle itself but from his pride and determination to fight.

MOTIFS

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Crucifixion Imagery

In order to suggest the profundity of the old man's sacrifice and the glory that derives from it, Hemingway purposefully likens Santiago to Christ, who, according to Christian theology, gave his life for the greater glory of humankind. Crucifixion imagery is the most noticeable way in which Hemingway creates the symbolic parallel between Santiago and Christ. When Santiago's palms are first cut by his fishing line, the reader cannot help but think of Christ suffering his stigmata. Later, when the sharks arrive, Hemingway portrays the old man as a crucified martyr, saying that he makes a noise similar to that of a man having nails driven through his hands. Furthermore, the image of the old man struggling up

12 • THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

the hill with his mast across his shoulders recalls Christ's march toward Calgary. Even the position in which Santiago collapses on his bed—face down with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up—brings to mind the image of Christ suffering on the cross. Hemingway employs these images in the final pages of the novella in order to link Santiago to Christ, who exemplified transcendence by turning loss into gain, defeat into triumph, and even death into renewed life.

Life from Death

Death is *the* unavoidable force in the novella, the one fact that no living creature can escape. But death, Hemingway suggests, is never an end in itself: in death there is always the possibility of the most vigorous life. The reader notes that as Santiago slays the marlin, not only is the old man reinvigorated by the battle, but the fish also comes alive “with his death in him.” Life, the possibility of renewal, necessarily follows on the heels of death.

Whereas the marlin's death hints at a type of physical reanimation, death leads to life in less literal ways at other points in the novella. The book's crucifixion imagery emphasizes the cyclical connection between life and death, as does Santiago's battle with the marlin. His success at bringing the marlin in earns him the awed respect of the fishermen who once mocked him, and secures him the companionship of Manolin, the apprentice who will carry on Santiago's teachings long after the old man has died.

The Lions on the Beach

Santiago dreams his pleasant dream of the lions at play on the beaches of Africa three times. The first time is the night before he departs on his three-day fishing expedition, the second occurs when he sleeps on the boat for a few hours in the middle of his struggle with the marlin, and the third takes place at the very end of the book. In fact, the sober promise of the triumph and regeneration with which the novella closes is supported by the final image of the lions. Because Santiago associates the lions with his youth, the dream suggests the circular nature of life. Additionally, because Santiago imagines the lions, fierce predators, playing, his dream suggests a harmony between the opposing forces—life and death, love and hate, destruction and regeneration—of nature.

SYMBOLS

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The Marlin

Magnificent and glorious, the marlin symbolizes the ideal opponent. In a world in which “everything kills everything else in some way,” Santiago feels genuinely lucky to find himself matched against a creature that brings out the best in him: his strength and courage, his love and respect.

The Shovel-Nosed Sharks

The shovel-nosed sharks are little more than moving appetites who thoughtlessly and gracelessly attack the marlin. As opponents for the old man, they stand in bold contrast to the marlin, which is worthy of Santiago’s effort and strength. They symbolize and embody the destructive laws of the universe and attest to the fact that those laws can be transcended only when equals fight to the death. Because they are base predators, Santiago wins no glory from battling them.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The Old Man and the Sea is a narrative without pauses, chapter breaks, or other marked divisions. For ease of discussion, this SparkNote divides the text into five sections that correspond to the five days that the narrative spans.

DAY ONE

Summary

From Santiago's return from the eighty-fourth consecutive day without catching a fish to his dreams of lions on the beach

*He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach.
They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he
loved the boy.*

Santiago, an old fisherman, has gone eighty-four days without catching a fish. For the first forty days, a boy named Manolin had fished with him, but Manolin's parents, who call Santiago *salao*, or "the worst form of unlucky," forced Manolin to leave him in order to work in a more prosperous boat. The old man is wrinkled, splotched, and scarred from handling heavy fish on cords, but his eyes, which are the color of the sea, remain "cheerful and undefeated."

Having made some money with the successful fishermen, the boy offers to return to Santiago's skiff, reminding him of their previous eighty-seven-day run of bad luck, which culminated in their catching big fish every day for three weeks. He talks with the old man as they haul in Santiago's fishing gear and laments that he was forced to obey his father, who lacks faith and, as a result, made him switch boats. The pair stops for a beer at a terrace café, where fishermen make fun of Santiago. The old man does not mind. Santiago and Manolin reminisce about the many years the two of them fished together, and the boy begs the old

man to let him provide fresh bait fish for him. The old man accepts the gift with humility. Santiago announces his plans to go “far out” in the sea the following day.

Manolin and Santiago haul the gear to the old man’s shack, which is furnished with nothing more than the barest necessities: a bed, a table and chair, and a place to cook. On the wall are two pictures: one of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and one of the Virgin of Cobre, the patroness of Cuba. The old man has taken down the photograph of his wife, which made him “too lonely.” The two go through their usual dinner ritual, in which the boy asks Santiago what he is going to eat, and the old man replies, “yellow rice with fish,” and then offers some to the boy. The boy declines, and his offer to start the old man’s fire is rejected. In reality, there is no food.

Excited to read the baseball scores, Santiago pulls out a newspaper, which he says was given to him by Perico at the bodega. Manolin goes to get the bait fish and returns with some dinner as well, a gift from Martin, the café owner. The old man is moved by Martin’s thoughtfulness and promises to repay the kindness. Manolin and Santiago discuss baseball. Santiago is a huge admirer of “the great DiMaggio,” whose father was a fisherman. After discussing with Santiago the greatest ballplayers and the greatest baseball managers, the boy declares that Santiago is the greatest fisherman: “There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only you.” Finally, the boy leaves, and the old man goes to sleep. He dreams his sweet, recurring dream, of lions playing on the white beaches of Africa, a scene he saw from his ship when he was a very young man.

Analysis

The opening pages of the book establish Santiago’s character and set the scene for the action to follow. Even though he loves Manolin and is loved dearly by the boy, the old man lives as an outsider. The greeting he receives from the fishermen, most of whom mock him for his fruitless voyages to sea, shows Santiago to be an alienated, almost ostracized figure. Such an alienated position is characteristic of Hemingway’s heroes, whose greatest achievements depend, in large part, upon their isolation. In Hemingway’s works, it is only once a man is removed from the numbing and false confines of modern society that he can confront the larger, universal truths that govern him. In *A Farewell to*

Arms, for instance, only after Frederic Henry abandons his post in the army and lives in seclusion is he able to learn the dismal lesson that death renders meaningless such notions as honor, glory, and love. Yet, although Hemingway's message in *The Old Man and the Sea* is tragic in many respects, the story of Santiago and the destruction of his greatest catch is far from dismal. Unlike Frederic, Santiago is not defeated by his enlightenment. The narrator emphasizes Santiago's perseverance in the opening pages, mentioning that the old man's eyes are still "cheerful and undefeated" after suffering nearly three months without a single catch. And, although Santiago's struggle will bring about defeat—the great marlin will be devoured by sharks—Santiago will emerge as a victor. As he tells the boy, in order for this to happen, he must venture far out, farther than the other fishermen are willing to go.

In Hemingway's narrative, Santiago is elevated above the normal stature of a protagonist, assuming near-mythical proportions. He belongs to a tradition of literary heroes whose superior qualities necessitate their distance from ordinary humans and endeavors. Because Manolin constantly expresses his devotion to, reverence for, and trust of Santiago, he establishes his mentor as a figure of significant moral and professional stature, despite the difficulties of the past eighty-four days. While other young fishermen make fun of the old man, Manolin knows Santiago's true worth and the extent of Santiago's knowledge. In the old man, Hemingway provides the reader with a model of good, simple living: Santiago transcends the evils of the world—hunger, poverty, the contempt of his fellow men—by enduring them.

In these first few scenes, Hemingway introduces several issues and images that will recur throughout the book. The first is the question of Santiago's endurance. The descriptions of his crude hut, almost nonexistent eating habits, and emaciated body force the reader to question the old man's physical capacities. How could Santiago, who subsists on occasional handouts from kind café owners or, worse, imaginary meals, wage the terrific battle with the great marlin that the novel recounts? As the book progresses, we see that the question is irrelevant. Although Santiago's battle is played out in physical terms, the stakes are decidedly spiritual.

This section also introduces two important symbols: the lions playing on the beaches of Africa and baseball's immortal Joe DiMaggio.

Throughout his trial at sea, Santiago's thoughts will return to DiMaggio, for to him the baseball player represents a kind of triumphant survival. After suffering a bone spur in his heel, DiMaggio returned to baseball to become, in the eyes of many, the greatest player of all time. The lions are a more enigmatic symbol. The narrator says that they are Santiago's only remaining dream. When he sleeps, he no longer envisions storms or women or fish, but only the "young cats in the dusk," which "he love[s] . . . as he love[s] the boy." Because the image of the lions has stayed with Santiago since his boyhood, the lions connect the end of the old man's life with the beginning, giving his existence a kind of circularity. Like Santiago, the lions are hunters at the core of their being. The fact that Santiago dreams of the lions at play rather than on the hunt indicates that his dream is a break—albeit a temporary one—from the vicious order of the natural world.

DAY TWO

Summary

From Santiago waking Manolin at the start of the eighty-fifth day since Santiago has caught a fish to Santiago's promise to kill the marlin before the day ends

*The old man hit him on the head for kindness and kicked him,
his body still shuddering, under the shade of the stern.*

The next morning, before sunrise, the old man goes to Manolin's house to wake the boy. The two head back to Santiago's shack, carry the old man's gear to his boat, and drink coffee from condensed milk cans. Santiago has slept well and is confident about the day's prospects. He and Manolin part on the beach, wishing each other good luck.

The old man rows steadily away from shore, toward the deep waters of the Gulf Stream. He hears the leaps and whirs of the flying fish, which he considers to be his friends, and thinks with sympathy of the small, frail birds that try to catch them. He loves the sea, though at times it can be cruel. He thinks of the sea as a woman whose wild behavior is beyond her control. The old man drops his baited fishing lines to various

measured depths and rows expertly to keep them from drifting with the current. Above all else, he is precise.

The sun comes up. Santiago continues to move away from shore, observing his world as he drifts along. He sees flying fish pursued by dolphins; a diving, circling seabird; Sargasso weed, a type of seaweed found in the Gulf Stream; the distasteful purple Portuguese man-of-war; and the small fish that swim among the jellyfish-like creature's filaments. Rowing farther and farther out, Santiago follows the seabird that is hunting for fish, using it as a guide. Soon, one of the old man's lines goes taut. He pulls up a ten-pound tuna, which, he says out loud, will make a lovely piece of bait. He wonders when he developed the habit of talking to himself but does not remember. He thinks that if the other fishermen heard him talking, they would think him crazy, although he knows he isn't. Eventually, the old man realizes that he has sailed so far out that he can no longer see the green of the shore.

When the projecting stick that marks the top of the hundred-fathom line dips sharply, Santiago is sure that the fish tugging on the line is of a considerable size, and he prays that it will take the bait. The marlin plays with the bait for a while, and when it does finally take the bait, it starts to move with it, pulling the boat. The old man gives a mighty pull, then another, but he gains nothing. The fish drags the skiff farther into the sea. No land at all is visible to Santiago now.

All day the fish pulls the boat as the old man braces the line with his back and holds it taut in his hands, ready to give more line if necessary. The struggle goes on all night, as the fish continues to pull the boat. The glow given off by the lights of Havana gradually fades, signifying that the boat is the farthest from shore it has been so far. Over and over, the old man wishes he had the boy with him. When he sees two porpoises playing in the water, Santiago begins to pity his quarry, to consider it a brother. He thinks back to the time that he caught one of a pair of marlin: the male fish let the female take the bait, then he stayed by the boat, as though in mourning. Although the memory makes him sad, Santiago's determination is unchecked: as the marlin swims out, the old man goes "beyond all people in the world" to find him.

The sun rises and the fish has not tired, though it is now swimming in shallower waters. The old man cannot increase the tension on the line, because if it is too taut it will break and the fish will get away. Also,

if the hook makes too big a cut in the fish, the fish may get away from it. Santiago hopes that the fish will jump, because its air sacs would fill and prevent the fish from going too deep into the water, which would make it easier to pull out. A yellow weed attaches to the line, helping to slow the fish. Santiago can do nothing but hold on. He pledges his love and respect to the fish, but he nevertheless promises that he will kill his opponent before the day ends.

Analysis

As Santiago sets out on the eighty-fifth day, the reader witnesses the qualities that earn him Manolin's praise and dedication. The old man is an expert seaman, able to read the sea, sky, and their respective creatures like books that tell him what he needs to know. The flying fish, for instance, signal the arrival of dolphins, while, in Santiago's experience, the magnificent tug on the line can mean only one thing: a marlin—a type of large game fish that weighs hundreds of pounds. Unlike the fishermen he passes on his way into the deep waters of the gulf, Santiago exercises an unparalleled precision when fishing. He keeps his lines perfectly straight instead of letting them drift as the other fishermen do, which means that he always knows exactly how deep they are. Santiago's focus, his strength and resolve in the face of tremendous obstacles, as well as the sheer artistry with which he executes his tasks, mark him as a hero.

Santiago conforms to the model of the classical hero in two important respects. First, he displays a rare determination to understand the universe, as is evident when he meditates that the sea is beautiful and benevolent, but also so cruel that the birds who rely on the sea's bounty are too delicate for it. Second, the old man possesses a tragic flaw that will lead to his downfall: pride. Santiago's pride carries him far, not only metaphorically but literally—beyond his fellow fishermen into beautiful but, in the end, terribly cruel waters. As in classical epics, the most important struggle in Hemingway's novella is a moral one. The fish itself is of secondary importance, for it is merely a trophy, a material prize.

Some critics have taken issue with Hemingway's depiction of the old man because it betrays the very tenets of fiction that the author demanded (see "Hemingway's Style"). Hemingway was, first and foremost, a proponent of realism. He wished to strip literature of its pretense and ornamentation, and he built a reputation as a journalistic writer who

prized hard facts above all else. Metaphysical meditations and lofty philosophizing held little interest for Hemingway when compared to the details of daily life. As he states in *A Farewell to Arms*, “Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the number of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.” But several critics have charged Hemingway with a failure to render his old man or, for that matter, the sea realistically. Hemingway has forged particular details that simply are not true. For example, as critic Robert P. Weeks points out, the poisonous Portuguese man-of-war that follows Santiago’s boat would not appear in the waters off of Cuba for another six months. A more significant, less petty objection is the charge that Hemingway reduces Santiago to an unrealistic archetype of goodness and purity, while the surrounding world is marked by man’s romance and brotherhood with the sea and its many creatures.

Many critics believe that Hemingway was striking out into new literary territory with *The Old Man and the Sea*. America’s foremost proponent of realism seemed to be moving toward something as highly symbolic as parable. Hemingway, however, disagreed. The philosophy that governed his writing of the novella was the same one that shaped his earlier novels. In a 1958 interview with *The Paris Review*, Hemingway spoke about *The Old Man and the Sea*:

Anyway, to skip how [the writing] is done, I had unbelievable luck this time and could convey the [old man’s] experience completely and have it be one that no one had ever conveyed. The luck was that I had a good man and a good boy and lately writers have forgotten there are still such things.

To Hemingway, Santiago and Manolin were as true to the real world as protagonists like Frederic Henry of *A Farewell to Arms* or Jake Barnes of *The Sun Also Rises*.

The old man’s memory of hooking the female marlin of a male-female pair exemplifies Hemingway’s vision of a world in which women have no real place—even the picture of Santiago’s wife no longer remains on his wall. Men are the central focus of most of Hemingway’s writing and certainly of *The Old Man and the Sea*. It is no coincidence

that Santiago is convinced that his greatest adversary is, as he continually notes, a male, a fact that he could not possibly ascertain before even seeing the fish.

DAY THREE

Summary

From Santiago's encounter with the weary warbler to his decision to rest after contemplating the night sky

I do not understand these things, he thought. But it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers.

A small, tired warbler (a type of bird) lands on the stern of the skiff, flutters around Santiago's head, then perches on the taut fishing line that links the old man to the big fish. The old man suspects that it is the warbler's first trip, and that it knows nothing of the hawks that will meet the warbler as it nears land. Knowing that the warbler cannot understand him, the old man tells the bird to stay and rest up before heading toward shore. Just then the marlin surges, nearly pulling Santiago overboard, and the bird departs. Santiago notices that his hand is bleeding from where the line has cut it.

Aware that he will need to keep his strength, the old man makes himself eat the tuna he caught the day before, which he had expected to use as bait. While he cuts and eats the fish with his right hand, his already cut left hand cramps and tightens into a claw under the strain of taking all the fish's resistance. Santiago is angered and frustrated by the weakness of his own body, but the tuna, he hopes, will reinvigorate the hand. As he eats, he feels a brotherly desire to feed the marlin too.

While waiting for the cramp in his hand to ease, Santiago looks across the vast waters and thinks himself to be completely alone. A flight of ducks passes overhead, and he realizes that it is impossible for a man to be alone on the sea. The slant of the fishing line changes, indicating to the old fisherman that the fish is approaching the surface. Suddenly, the fish leaps magnificently into the air, and Santiago sees that it is bigger

than any he has ever witnessed; it is two feet longer than the skiff itself. Santiago declares it “great” and promises never to let the fish learn its own strength. The line races out until the fish slows to its earlier pace. By noon, the old man’s hand is uncramped, and though he claims he is not religious, he says ten Hail Marys and ten Our Fathers and promises that, if he catches the fish, he will make a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre. In case his struggle with the marlin should continue for another night, Santiago baits another line in hopes of catching another meal.

The second day of Santiago’s struggle with the marlin wears on. The old man alternately questions and justifies seeking the death of such a noble opponent. As dusk approaches, Santiago’s thoughts turn to baseball. The great DiMaggio, thinks the old man, plays brilliantly despite the pain of a bone spur in his heel. Santiago is not actually sure what a bone spur is, but he is sure he would not be able to bear the pain of one himself. (A bone spur is an outgrowth that projects from the bone.) He wonders if DiMaggio would stay with the marlin. To boost his confidence, the old man recalls the great all-night arm wrestling match he won as a young man. Having beaten “the great negro from Cienfuegos [a town in Cuba],” Santiago earned the title *El Campeón*, or “The Champion.”

Just before nightfall, a dolphin takes the second bait Santiago had dropped. The old man hauls it in with one hand and clubs it dead. He saves the meat for the following day. Although Santiago boasts to the marlin that he feels prepared for their impending fight, he is really numb with pain. The stars come out. Santiago considers the stars his friends, as he does the great marlin. He considers himself lucky that his lot in life does not involve hunting anything so great as the stars or the moon. Again, he feels sorry for the marlin, though he is as determined as ever to kill it. The fish will feed many people, Santiago decides, though they are not worthy of the creature’s great dignity. By starlight, still bracing and handling the line, Santiago considers rigging the oars so that the fish will have to pull harder and eventually tire itself out. He fears this strategy would ultimately result in the loss of the fish. He decides to “rest,” which really just means putting down his hands and letting the line go across his back, instead of using his own strength to resist his opponent.

After “resting” for two hours, Santiago chastises himself for not sleeping, and he fears what could happen should his mind become “un-

clear.” He butchers the dolphin he caught earlier and finds two flying fish in its belly. In the chilling night, he eats half of a fillet of dolphin meat and one of the flying fish. While the marlin is quiet, the old man decides to sleep. He has several dreams: a school of porpoises leaps from and returns to the ocean; he is back in his hut during a storm; and he again dreams of the lions on the beach in Africa.

Analysis

The narrator tells us that Santiago does not mention the hawks that await the little warbler because he thinks the bird will learn about them “soon enough.” Hemingway tempers the grimness of Santiago’s observation with Santiago’s feeling of deep connection with the warbler. He suggests that the world, though designed to bring about death, is a vast, interconnected network of life. Additionally, the warbler’s feeling of exhaustion and its ultimate fate—destruction by predators—mirror Santiago’s own eventual exhaustion and the marlin’s ravishment by sharks.

The brotherhood between Santiago and the surrounding world extends beyond the warbler. The old man feels an intimate connection to the great fish, as well as to the sea and stars. Santiago constantly pledges his love, respect, and sentiment of brotherhood to the marlin. For this reason, the fish’s death is not portrayed as senselessly tragic. Santiago, and seemingly Hemingway, feel that since death *must* come in the world, it is preferable that it come at the hands of a worthy opponent. The old man’s magnificence—the honor and humility with which he executes his task—elevates his struggle to a rarified, even transcendent level.

Skills that involved great displays of strength captured Hemingway’s imagination, and his fiction is filled with fishermen, big-game hunters, bullfighters, prizefighters, and soldiers. Hemingway’s fiction presents a world peopled almost exclusively by men—men who live most successfully in the world through displays of skill. In Hemingway’s world, mere survival is not enough. To elevate oneself above the masses, one must master the rules and rituals by which men are judged. Time and again, we see Santiago displaying the art and the rituals that make him a master of his trade. Only *his* lines do not drift carelessly in the current; only *he* braves waters so far from shore.

Rules and rituals dominate the rest of the old man’s life as well. When he is not thinking about fishing, his mind turns to religion or

baseball. Because Santiago declares that he is not a religious man, his prayers to the Virgin of Cobre seem less an appeal to a supernatural divinity and more a habit that orders and provides a context for his daily experience. Similarly, Santiago's worship of Joe DiMaggio, and his constant comparisons between the baseball great and himself, suggest his preference for worlds in which men are measured by a clear set of standards. The great DiMaggio's reputation is secured by his superlative batting average as surely as Santiago's will be by an eighteen-foot marlin.

Even though Santiago doesn't consider himself a religious man, it is during his struggle with the marlin that the book becomes strongly suggestive of a Christian parable. As his struggle intensifies, Santiago begins to seem more and more Christ-like: through his pain, suffering, and eventual defeat, he will transcend his previous incarnation as a failed fisherman. Hemingway achieves this effect by relying on the potent and, to many readers, familiar symbolism identified with Jesus Christ's life and death. The cuts on the old man's hands from the fishing line recall the stigmata—the crucifixion wounds of Jesus. Santiago's isolation, too, evokes that of Christ, who spent forty days alone in the wilderness. Having taken his boat out on the ocean farther than any other fisherman has ever gone, Santiago is beyond even the fringes of society.

Hemingway also unites the old man with marlin through Santiago's frequent expressions of his feeling of kinship. He thus suggests that the fate of one is the fate of the other. Although they are opponents, Santiago and the marlin are also partners, allies, and, in a sense, doubles. Thus, the following passage, which links the marlin to Christ, implicitly links Santiago to Christ as well:

“Christ, I did not know he was so big.”

“I'll kill him though,” [Santiago] said. “In all his greatness and his glory.”

Santiago's expletive (“Christ”) and the laudatory phrase “his greatness and his glory” link the fish's fate to Christ's. Because Santiago declares the marlin his “true brother,” he implies that they share a common fate. When, later in the book, sharks attack the marlin's carcass, thereby

attacking Santiago as well, the sense of alliance between the old man and the fish becomes even more explicit.

DAY FOUR

Summary

From the marlin waking Santiago by jerking the line to Santiago's return to his shack

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty.

The marlin wakes Santiago by jerking the line. The fish jumps out of the water again and again, and Santiago is thrown into the bow of the skiff, facedown in his dolphin meat. The line feeds out fast, and the old man brakes against it with his back and hands. His left hand, especially, is badly cut. Santiago wishes that the boy were with him to wet the coils of the line, which would lessen the friction.

The old man wipes the crushed dolphin meat off his face, fearing that it will make him nauseated and he will lose his strength. Looking at his damaged hand, he reflects that “pain does not matter to a man.” He eats the second flying fish in hopes of building up his strength. As the sun rises, the marlin begins to circle. For hours the old man fights the circling fish for every inch of line, slowly pulling it in. He feels faint and dizzy and sees black spots before his eyes. The fish riots against the line, battering the boat with its spear. When it passes under the boat, Santiago cannot believe its size. As the marlin continues to circle, Santiago adds enough pressure to the line to bring the fish closer and closer to the skiff. The old man thinks that the fish is killing him, and admires him for it, saying, “I do not care who kills who.” Eventually, he pulls the fish onto its side by the boat and plunges his harpoon into it. The fish lurches out of the water, brilliantly and beautifully alive as it dies. When it falls back into the water, its blood stains the waves.

The old man pulls the skiff up alongside the fish and fastens the fish to the side of the boat. He thinks about how much money he will be

able to make from such a big fish, and he imagines that DiMaggio would be proud of him. Santiago's hands are so cut up that they resemble raw meat. With the mast up and the sail drawn, man, fish, and boat head for land. In his light-headed state, the old man finds himself wondering for a moment if he is bringing the fish in or vice versa. He shakes some shrimp from a patch of gulf weed and eats them raw. He watches the marlin carefully as the ship sails on. The old man's wounds remind him that his battle with the marlin was real and not a dream.

An hour later, a mako shark arrives, having smelled the marlin's blood. Except for its jaws full of talonlike teeth, the shark is a beautiful fish. When the shark hits the marlin, the old man sinks his harpoon into the shark's head. The shark lashes on the water and, eventually, sinks, taking the harpoon and the old man's rope with it. The mako has taken nearly forty pounds of meat, so fresh blood from the marlin spills into the water, inevitably drawing more sharks to attack. Santiago realizes that his struggle with the marlin was for nothing; all will soon be lost. But, he muses, "a man can be destroyed but not defeated."

Santiago tries to cheer himself by thinking that DiMaggio would be pleased by his performance, and he wonders again if his hands equal DiMaggio's bone spurs as a handicap. He tries to be hopeful, thinking that it is silly, if not sinful, to stop hoping. He reminds himself that he didn't kill the marlin simply for food, that he killed it out of pride and love. He wonders if it is a sin to kill something you love. The shark, on the other hand, he does not feel guilty about killing, because he did it in self-defense. He decides that "everything kills everything else in some way."

Two hours later, a pair of shovel-nosed sharks arrives, and Santiago makes a noise likened to the sound a man might make as nails are driven through his hands. The sharks attack, and Santiago fights them with a knife that he had lashed to an oar as a makeshift weapon. He enjoyed killing the mako because it was a worthy opponent, a mighty and fearless predator, but he has nothing but disdain for the scavenging shovel-nosed sharks. The old man kills them both, but not before they take a good quarter of the marlin, including the best meat. Again, Santiago wishes that he hadn't killed the marlin. He apologizes to the dead marlin for having gone out so far, saying it did neither of them any good.

Still hopeful that the whole ordeal had been a dream, Santiago can-

not bear to look at the mutilated marlin. Another shovel-nosed shark arrives. The old man kills it, but he loses his knife in the process. Just before nightfall, two more sharks approach. The old man's arsenal has been reduced to the club he uses to kill bait fish. He manages to club the sharks into retreat, but not before they repeatedly maul the marlin. Stiff, sore, and weary, he hopes he does not have to fight anymore. He even dares to imagine making it home with the half-fish that remains. Again, he apologizes to the marlin carcass and attempts to console it by reminding the fish how many sharks he has killed. He wonders how many sharks the marlin killed when it was alive, and he pledges to fight the sharks until he dies. Although he hopes to be lucky, Santiago believes that he "violated [his] luck" when he sailed too far out.

Around midnight, a pack of sharks arrives. Near-blind in the darkness, Santiago strikes out at the sounds of jaws and fins. Something snatches his club. He breaks off the boat's tiller and makes a futile attempt to use it as a weapon. When the last shark tries to tear at the tough head of the marlin, the old man clubs the shark until the tiller splinters. He plunges the sharp edge into the shark's flesh and the beast lets go. No meat is left on the marlin.

The old man spits blood into the water, which frightens him for a moment. He settles in to steer the boat, numb and past all feeling. He asks himself what it was that defeated him and concludes, "Nothing . . . I went out too far." When he reaches the harbor, all lights are out and no one is near. He notices the skeleton of the fish still tied to the skiff. He takes down the mast and begins to shoulder it up the hill to his shack. It is terrifically heavy, and he is forced to sit down five times before he reaches his home. Once there, the old man sleeps.

Analysis

You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more?

The fantastical final stage of the old man's fight with the fish brings two thematic issues to the fore. The first concerns man's place in nature, the second concerns nature itself. It is possible to interpret Santiago's journey as a cautionary tale of sorts, a tragic lesson about what happens

when man's pride forces him beyond the boundaries of his rightful, human place in the world. This interpretation is undermined, however, by the fact that Santiago finds the place where he is most completely, honestly, and fully himself only by sailing out farther than he ever has before. Indeed, Santiago has not left his true place; he has *found* it, which suggests that man's greatest potential can be found in his return to the natural world from which modern advancements have driven him.

At one point, Santiago embraces his unity with the marlin, thinking, "You are killing me, fish . . . But you have a right to . . . brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who." This realization speaks to the novella's theory of the natural world. As Santiago's exhausting and near-endless battle with the marlin shows, his is a world in which life and death go hand in loving hand. Everything in the world must die, and according to Santiago, only a brotherhood between men—or creatures—can alleviate the grimness of that fact. The death of the marlin serves as a beautiful case in point, for as the fish dies it is not only transformed into something larger than itself, it is also charged with life: "Then the fish came alive, with his death in him." In Hemingway's conception of the natural world, beauty is deadly, age is strength, and death is the greatest instance of vitality.

The transformation that the fish undergoes upon its death anticipates the transformation that awaits Santiago in the novella's final pages. The old man's battle with the fish is marked by supreme pain and suffering, but he lives in a world in which extreme pain can be a source of triumph rather than defeat. The key to Santiago's triumph, as the end of the novel makes clear, is an almost martyrlike endurance, a quality that the old man knows and values. Santiago repeatedly reminds himself that physical pain does not matter to a man, and he urges himself to keep his head clear and to know how to suffer like a man.

After the arrival of the mako shark, Santiago seems preoccupied with the notion of hope. Hope is shown to be a necessary component of endurance, so much so that the novella seems to suggest that endurance can be found wherever pain and hope meet. As Santiago sails on while the sharks continue to attack his catch, the narrator says that Santiago "was full of resolution but he had little hope"; later, the narrator comments, "He hit [the shark] without hope but with resolution." But without hope Santiago has reason neither to fight the sharks nor to return

home. He soon realizes that it is silly not to hope, and he even goes so far as to consider it a sin. Ultimately, he overcomes the shark attack by *bearing* it. Poet Delmore Schwartz regards *The Old Man and the Sea* as a dramatic development in Hemingway's career because Santiago's "sober hope" strikes a sort of compromise between youthful naïveté and the jadedness of age. Before the novella, Hemingway had given the world heroes who lived either shrouded by illusions, such as Nick Adams in "Indian Camp," or crushed by disillusionment, such as Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*.

DAY FIVE

Summary

From Manolin bringing the old man coffee to the old man's return to sleep to dream, once again, about the lions

Early the next morning, Manolin comes to the old man's shack, and the sight of his friend's ravaged hands brings him to tears. He goes to fetch coffee. Fishermen have gathered around Santiago's boat and measured the carcass at eighteen feet. Manolin waits for the old man to wake up, keeping his coffee warm for him so it is ready right away. When the old man wakes, he and Manolin talk warmly. Santiago says that the sharks beat him, and Manolin insists that he will work with the old man again, regardless of what his parents say. He reveals that there had been a search for Santiago involving the coast guard and planes. Santiago is happy to have someone to talk to, and after he and Manolin make plans, the old man sleeps again. Manolin leaves to find food and the newspapers for the old man, and to tell Pedrico that the marlin's head is his. That afternoon two tourists at the terrace café mistake the great skeleton for that of a shark. Manolin continues to watch over the old man as he sleeps and dreams of the lions.

Analysis

Given the depth of Santiago's tragedy—most likely Santiago will never have the opportunity to catch another such fish in his lifetime—*The Old Man and the Sea* ends on a rather optimistic note. Santiago is re-

united with Manolin, who desperately wants to complete his training. All of the old man's noble qualities and, more important, the lessons he draws from his experience, will be passed on to the boy, which means the fisherman's life will continue on, in some form, even after his death. The promise of triumph and regeneration is supported by the closing image of the book. For the third time, Santiago returns to his dream of the lions at play on the African beaches. As an image that recalls the old man's youth, the lions suggest the circularity of life. They also suggest the harmony—the lions are, after all, playing—that exists between the opposing forces of nature.

The hope that Santiago clings to at the novella's close is not the hope that comes from naïveté. It is, rather, a hope that comes from experience, of something new emerging from something old, as a phoenix rises out of the ashes. The novella states as much when Santiago reflects that “a man can be destroyed but not defeated.” The destruction of the marlin is not a defeat for Santiago; rather, it leads to his redemption. Indeed, the fishermen who once mocked him now stand in awe of him. The decimation of the marlin, of course, is a significant loss. The sharks strip Santiago of his greater glory as surely as they strip the great fish of its flesh. But to view the shark attack as precipitating only loss is to see but half the picture. When Santiago says, “Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive,” he is pointing, once again, to the vast, necessary, and ever-shifting tension that exists between loss and gain, triumph and defeat, life and death.

In the final pages of the novella, Hemingway employs a number of images that link Santiago to Christ, the model of transcendence, who turned loss into gain, defeat into triumph, and even death into new life. Hemingway unabashedly paints the old man as a crucified martyr: as soon as the sharks arrive, the narrator comments that the noise Santiago made resembled the noise one would make “feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood.” The narrator's description of Santiago's return to town also recalls the crucifixion. As the old man struggles up the hill with his mast across his shoulders, the reader cannot help but recall Christ's march toward Calvary. Even the position in which he collapses on his bed—he sleeps facedown on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up—brings to mind the image of Christ suffering on the cross.



The *Old Man and the Sea* is a story told so simply and precisely that it invites the reader to fish (pardon the pun) for secondary meaning. After the novella was published, Hemingway urged a friend against such readings, insisting, “I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea and a real fish and real sharks.” Yet this seems rather disingenuous, especially given the famous “iceberg principle” that governed Hemingway’s writing for decades. (See “Hemingway’s Style” below.)

The very simplicity of the story suggests that it is a parable meant to illustrate a moral lesson. But the nature of the lesson is not obvious. The Hemingway scholar Philip Young offers a compelling answer to this question when he suggests that the novel is a parable, but one for life itself, and thus readers who search for other allegorical meanings inevitably reduce the grandeur of the text. But, of course, alternate readings persist. Paraphrased below are several prominent interpretations of symbolism and metaphor in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

THE WRITER’S STRUGGLE

Still reeling from the critical thrashing of his previous book, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, Hemingway constructs an allegory about the struggle of a writer who extends himself beyond all limits, only to have the resulting work picked apart by critics. Placing the novella in the context of Hemingway’s resentment toward his critics, the parallels become quite obvious: the sharks are the critics; Santiago’s art is as lonely as the writer’s; the marlin, magnificent and elusive and inextricably bound to the man who hunts it, represents Art. Furthermore, Santiago is a former champion who wants to be champion again—in 1952, Hemingway was in the same position.

Hemingway seems to have believed that his writing exceeded his critics’ ability to understand it. In an interview conducted after the publication of *Across the River and Into the Trees*, he claims to have gone “far

out.” More compelling evidence for this reading comes from the text itself. Santiago is the consummate craftsman. As a writer might aspire to do, he keeps his lines where he wants them “with precision.” In fact, he keeps them “straighter than anyone did.” As the double meaning of “line” links the writer and the fisherman, so does Hemingway’s description of Santiago’s line being thick as a “big pencil.”

A CHRISTIAN ALLEGORY

The Christian references in *The Old Man and the Sea* are inescapable. Manolin sails with Santiago for forty days, which is the same amount of time Christ was banished to the wilderness. Santiago’s trial with the fish lasts for three days, a crucial number in Christian theology, for it marks the Trinity as well as the interval between the death and resurrection of Christ. The scars of Santiago’s trial—his cut hands, for instance—unite him with the crucified Christ, as does his posture when he returns to his village. Santiago reminds the reader of Christ as he bears the mast upon his shoulders and, further, as he collapses with his arms out and palms up in the pose of crucifixion. Moreover, one could say that Santiago exhibits essential Christian traits of humility and charity. Like Christ, he also undergoes a great trial and returns to society having experienced something others cannot. And, like Christ, the fisherman is a martyr of sorts.

The question is whether these accumulated symbols amount to anything coherent. Viewing the novella through the lens of Christian allegory is useful in that it provides a context for understanding some of the work’s dominant themes. For example, by linking Santiago to Christ, Hemingway strengthens the reader’s sense that a terrific and profound triumph has come from the old man’s defeat.

RELIGION OF MAN

One critic, at least, sees *The Old Man and the Sea* as a religious allegory, but a decidedly non-Christian one. The novella, in this view, is the clearest expression of what Joseph Waldmeir refers to as Hemingway’s “Religion of Man.” This is a religion without an afterlife, in which spiritual completion is achieved through physical action. It is the cult

of manhood. If anything counts in this world, if anything has meaning and moral significance, it is *how* one does whatever one does. This is especially true of solitary individuals in life-and-death situations. One must kill to live, one must die, and these actions have no otherworldly importance. Their meaning resides in how they are enacted. Because there is no eternal salvation, all meaning and purpose are derived from earthly experience, from doing one's deeds well and bravely and truly—from being, in short, a Man.

Santiago acts bravely and truly, and kills like a Man, which gives meaning and purpose to his struggle. The final, material outcome of the struggle—that is, whether he returns home with the fish—becomes irrelevant. The fish, too, has acted well and bravely and truly. It has been a brother to Santiago, and it has died like a Man (indeed, Hemingway tells us the sex of the fish). There is thus meaning and purpose in the fish's death. This reinforces the male-dominated worldview that Hemingway creates in the novella: it is no mistake that there are no notable female characters in *The Old Man and the Sea*.



HEMINGWAY'S STYLE

In his discussion of the prose style of *The Old Man and the Sea* in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea*, Malcolm Cowley notes that Hemingway “uses the oldest and shortest words, the simplest constructions, but gives them a new value—as if English were a strange language that he had studied or invented for himself and was trying to write in its original purity.” Indeed, Hemingway was a revolutionary writer. Following on the heels of American novelists like Henry James and, even earlier, Herman Melville, to whom Hemingway was inevitably compared as a writer of “fishermen stories,” Hemingway stood out rather shockingly. Whereas those novelists fashioned complex sentences to capture some of the most complex observations ever transcribed in English, Hemingway felt sure that he could do the same using concise everyday speech.

He developed and prided himself on a philosophy of writing that he termed “the iceberg principle,” which essentially explains the air of strangeness and mystery to which Cowley alludes. In a 1958 interview in *The Paris Review*, Hemingway described this style of writing in the following terms:

I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it underwater for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg. It is the part that doesn't show. If a writer omits something because he does not know it then there is a hole in the story.

Hemingway went on to say that in *The Old Man and the Sea*

I have tried to eliminate everything unnecessary . . . I've seen the marlin mate and know about that. So I leave that out. I've seen a school (or pod) of more than fifty sperm whales in that same stretch of water and once harpooned one nearly sixty feet in length and lost him. So I left that out. All the stories I know from the

fishing village I leave out. But the knowledge is what makes the underwater part of the iceberg.

Certainly, there are moments when the reader feels the suggestion of vast meaning beneath Hemingway's few, spare words. Santiago's beautiful and elusive memory of the lions playing on the beach suggests another world and another time, while his unexpected gratitude that man does "not have to try to kill the stars" signals a profound inner life of which the reader has only a mere glimpse. But there are moments when this style feels hollow rather than spare, when Santiago's words seem more like an imitation of Hemingway than a profound and inevitable reaction to circumstance. His cursing of the shark, for instance, reads like a parody of Hemingway's own swaggering (and adolescent) masculinity: "Slide down a mile deep. Go see your friend, or maybe it's your mother." In his posthumously published works, such moments of near self-parody proliferate. Fortunately, in *The Old Man and the Sea*, such slips are rare.



IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS EXPLAINED

1. He no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy.

Since the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea*, there has been much debate surrounding the story's symbols. Does the old man represent the author nearing the end of his career? Do the vicious sharks stand for cruel literary critics or the inevitably destructive forces of nature? While most readers agree that, as a parable, *The Old Man and the Sea* addresses universal life, the image of the lions playing on the African beach, which is presented three times in the novel, remains something of an enigma. Like poetry, the lions are supremely suggestive without being tethered to a single meaning. Indeed, the only thing that is certain about the image is that it serves as a source of comfort and renewal for Santiago.

This passage, which describes Santiago's dreams on the night before he sets out for his fishing expedition (the first day that the narrative covers), simultaneously confirms and moves beyond Hemingway's immediately recognizable vision of the universe. Hemingway made his career telling stories about "great occurrences," "great fish," and "contests of strength." The fact that Santiago no longer dreams of any of these makes him unique among Hemingway's heroes. Of course, by dreaming of lions he is still in a recognizably "Hemingwayesque" world, but the lions here are at play and thus suggest a time of youth and ease. They are also linked explicitly to Manolin, a connection that is made apparent at the end of the novel as the boy watches over his aged friend as Santiago's dream of the lions returns.

2. Just then the stern line came taut under his foot, where he had kept the loop of the line, and he dropped his oars and felt the weight of the small tuna's shivering pull as he held the line firm and commenced to haul it in. The shivering increased as

he pulled in and he could see the blue back of the fish in the water and the gold of his sides before he swung him over the side and into the boat. He lay in the stern in the sun, compact and bullet shaped, his big, unintelligent eyes staring as he thumped his life out against the planking of the boat with the quick shivering strokes of his neat, fast-moving tail. The old man hit him on the head for kindness and kicked him, his body still shuddering, under the shade of the stern.

This passage, which describes Santiago's hauling in of the tuna on the second day of the narrative, exemplifies the power and beauty of the simple, evocative style of prose that earned Hemingway his reputation as a revolutionary and influenced generations of writers to come. Hemingway's strength and mastery lies in his ability to render concrete but still poetic images using familiar words and simple vocabulary. The scene above is instantly familiar, even to the many readers who have no experience hauling in fish. For instance, the "compact and bullet shaped" fish is remarkably visible as it shivers and shudders on the floor of the skiff. Hemingway loads the passage with carefully chosen sounds. For instance, the repetition of the "k" and "s" sounds in the last sentence suggests a calm, rhythmic motion, like the breaking of waves against the boat or the side-to-side twitching of the fish's body.

The passage also demonstrates the psychological depths Hemingway could access despite his incredible economy of language. When the old man hits the fish on the head, Hemingway qualifies the action with only two words: "for kindness." These two words, however, give the reader full insight into the old man's character. Hemingway renders Santiago's connection to, and respect and love for, the world in which he lives without reporting the old man's innermost thoughts. Instead, using two well-chosen words, he hints at a depth of feeling that makes Santiago who he is. Hemingway described this technique as the "iceberg principle," for he believed that the simplest writing, when done well, would hint at the greatest human truths, just as the tip of an iceberg hinted at the terrific frozen mass that rested underwater.

3. "I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him. I am glad we do not have to try to kill the stars." Imagine if each day a man must try to kill the moon, he thought. The moon runs away. . . . Then he was sorry for the great

fish that had nothing to eat and his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him. . . . There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity. I do not understand these things, he thought. But it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers.

This passage is found at the end of the third day related by the novella. As Santiago struggles with the marlin, he reflects upon the nature of the universe and his place in it. He displays both pity for the fish and an unflagging determination to kill it, because the marlin's death helps to reinvigorate the fisherman's life. The predatory nature of this exchange is inevitable, for just as hawks will continue to hunt warblers, men will continue to kill marlin, and sharks will continue to rob them of their catches. The cruelty of this natural order is subverted, however, because of the kinship Santiago feels for his prey. His opponent is worthy, so worthy, in fact, that he later goes on to say that it doesn't matter who kills whom. There is, in the old man's estimation, some sense to this order. Man can achieve greatness only when placed in a well-matched contest against his earthly brothers. To find glory, Santiago does not need to extend himself beyond his animal nature by looking to the sun or the stars.

4. Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skiff.

The killing of the marlin, which occurs on the fourth day of the narrative, marks the climax of the novella. The end of the marlin's life is the most vital of moments, as the fish comes alive "with his death in him" and exhibits to Santiago, more strongly than ever before, "all his power and his beauty." The fish seems to transcend his own death, because it invests him with a new life. This notion of transcendence is important, for it resounds within Santiago's story. Like the fish, the old man suffers something of a death on his way back to the village. He is stripped of his quarry and, given his age, will likely never

have the opportunity to land such a magnificent fish again. Nevertheless, he returns to the village with his spirit and his reputation revitalized.

5. You did not kill the fish only to keep alive and to sell for food, he thought. You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman. You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more?

As Santiago sails back to his village on the fourth day of the novella, towing behind him the carcass of the decimated marlin, he tries to make sense of the destruction he has witnessed. He feels deeply apologetic toward the fish, which he sees as too dignified for such a wasteful end. He attempts to explain to himself his reasons for killing the fish, and admits that his desire to hunt the fish stemmed from the very same quality that led to its eventual destruction: his pride. He then justifies his behavior by claiming that his slaying of the marlin was necessitated by his love and respect for it. Indeed, when Santiago kills the fish, the loss of life is somehow transcendently beautiful, as opposed to the bold, senseless scavenging on the part of the sharks.



KEY FACTS

FULL TITLE

The Old Man and the Sea

AUTHOR

Ernest Hemingway

TYPE OF WORK

Novella

GENRE

Parable; tragedy

LANGUAGE

English

TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN

1951, Cuba

DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION

1952

PUBLISHER

Scribner's

NARRATOR

The novella is narrated by an anonymous narrator.

POINT OF VIEW

Sometimes the narrator describes the characters and events objectively, that is, as they would appear to an outside observer. However, the narrator frequently provides details about Santiago's inner thoughts and dreams.

TONE

Despite the narrator's journalistic, matter-of-fact tone, his reverence for Santiago and his struggle is apparent. The text affirms its hero to a degree unusual even for Hemingway.

TENSE

Past

44 • THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

SETTING (TIME)

Late 1940s

SETTING (PLACE)

A small fishing village near Havana, Cuba; the waters of the Gulf of Mexico

PROTAGONIST

Santiago

MAJOR CONFLICT

For three days, Santiago struggles against the greatest fish of his long career.

RISING ACTION

After eighty-four successive days without catching a fish, Santiago promises his former assistant Manolin that he will go “far out” into the ocean. The marlin takes the bait, but Santiago is unable to reel him in, which leads to a three-day struggle between the fisherman and the fish.

CLIMAX

The marlin circles the skiff while Santiago slowly reels him in. Santiago nearly passes out from exhaustion but is able to gather enough strength to harpoon the marlin through the heart, causing him to lurch in an almost sexual climax of vitality before dying.

FALLING ACTION

Santiago sails back to shore with the marlin tied to his boat. Sharks follow the marlin’s trail of blood and destroy it. Santiago arrives home toting only the fish’s skeletal carcass. The village fishermen respect their formerly ridiculed peer, and Manolin pledges to return to fishing with Santiago. Santiago falls into a deep sleep and dreams of his lions.

THEMES

The honor in struggle, defeat, and death; pride as the source of greatness and determination

MOTIFS

Crucifixion imagery; life from death; the lions on the beach

SYMBOLS

The marlin; the shovel-nosed sharks

FORESHADOWING

Santiago's insistence that he will sail out farther than ever before foreshadows his destruction; because the marlin is linked to Santiago, the marlin's death foreshadows Santiago's own destruction by the sharks.



STUDY QUESTIONS AND ESSAY TOPICS

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. *What is the role of the sea in The Old Man and the Sea?*

The rich waters of the Gulf Stream provide a revolving cast of bit players—birds and beasts—that the old man observes and greets. Through Santiago's interactions with these figures, his character emerges. In fact, Santiago is so connected to these waters, which he thinks of good-humoredly as a sometimes fickle lover, that the sea acts almost like a lens through which the reader views his character. Santiago's interaction with the weary warbler, for instance, shows not only his kindness but also, as he thinks about the hawks that will inevitably hunt the tiny bird, a philosophy that dominates and structures his life. His strength, resolve, and pride are measured in terms of how far out into the gulf he sails. The sea also provides glimpses of the depth of Santiago's knowledge: in his comments about the wind, the current, and the friction of the water reside an entire lifetime of experience, skill, and dedication. When, at the end of the novella, Manolin states that he still has much to learn from the old man, it seems an expression of the obvious.

2. *Santiago is considered by many readers to be a tragic hero, in that his greatest strength—his pride—leads to his eventual downfall. Discuss the role of pride in Santiago's plight.*

At first, Santiago's plight seems rather hopeless. He has gone eighty-four days without catching a fish, and he is the laughingstock of his small village. Regardless of his past, the old man determines to change his luck and sail out farther than he or the other fishermen ever have before. His commitment to sailing out to where the big fish are testifies to the depth of his pride. Later, after the sharks have destroyed his prize marlin, Santiago chastises himself for his hubris, claiming that it has ruined both the marlin and himself. Yet, Santiago's pride also enables him to achieve what he otherwise would not. Not until he meets and battles the marlin are his skills

as a fisherman truly put to the test. In other words, the pride that leads to the destruction of his quarry also helps him earn the deeper respect of the village fisherman and secures him the prized companionship of the boy.

3. Discuss religious symbolism in *The Old Man and the Sea*. To what effect does Hemingway employ such images?

Christian symbolism, especially images that refer to the crucifixion of Christ, is present throughout *The Old Man and the Sea*. During the old man's battle with the marlin, his palms are cut by his fishing cable. Given Santiago's suffering and willingness to sacrifice his life, the wounds are suggestive of Christ's stigmata, and Hemingway goes on to portray the old man as a Christ-like martyr. As soon as the sharks arrive, Santiago makes a noise one would make "feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood." And the old man's struggle up the hill to his village with his mast across his shoulders is evocative of Christ's march toward Calvary. Even the position in which Santiago collapses on his bed—he lies face down with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up—brings to mind the image of Christ on the cross. Hemingway employs these images in order to link Santiago to Christ, who exemplified transcendence by turning loss into gain, defeat into triumph, and even death into life.

SUGGESTED ESSAY TOPICS

1. Discuss Hemingway's "iceberg" principle of writing in relation to *The Old Man and the Sea*.
2. What significance do the lions on the beach have for the old man?
3. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated," says the old man after the first shark attack. At the end of the story, is the old man defeated? Why or why not?
4. *The Old Man and the Sea* is, essentially, the story of a single character. Indeed, other than the old man, only one human being receives any kind of prolonged attention. Discuss the role of Manolin in the novella. Is he necessary to the book?



REVIEW AND RESOURCES

Quiz

- When the novella opens, how long has it been since Santiago last caught a fish?*
 - 40 days
 - 84 days
 - 87 days
 - 120 days

- Manolin's parents refuse to let the boy fish with the old man because they believe Santiago is salao. How does Hemingway translate this word?*
 - "Crazy"
 - "Selfish"
 - "Washed up"
 - "The worst form of unlucky"

- How does Hemingway describe Santiago's eyes?*
 - They are full of pain
 - They are blank with defeat
 - They betray the weariness of his soul
 - They are the color of the sea

- What kind of reception does Santiago receive at the terrace café?*
 - The fishermen regard him as a hero
 - Most of the fishermen mock him
 - The successful fishermen offer him a portion of their day's catch
 - The younger fishermen pretend that the old man doesn't exist

- Who is Santiago's hero?*
 - Harry Truman
 - Joe DiMaggio
 - Dick Sisler
 - Fidel Castro

50 • THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

6. *What hangs on the wall of the old man's shack?*
- A. A photograph of his wife
 - B. The latest baseball scores
 - C. A mounted fish
 - D. Pictures
7. *On the night before he promises Manolin to go "far out" to sea, of what does Santiago dream?*
- A. A great storm
 - B. A beautiful woman
 - C. Lions on the beach
 - D. A wrestling match
8. *Why does Santiago not let his lines drift like the other fishermen?*
- A. He is a stubborn man who prefers the old-fashioned way of fishing
 - B. He believes it is imprecise, and he strives always to be exact
 - C. It is dangerous, as he might become tangled with another boat
 - D. He is no longer young or strong enough to control a drifting line
9. *What kind of fish does Santiago first catch?*
- A. A tuna
 - B. A marlin
 - C. A shrimp
 - D. A Portuguese man-of-war
10. *How does the old man know immediately the size of the great marlin he has caught?*
- A. Soon after taking the bait, the fish jumps into the air, showing itself to the old man
 - B. Santiago has encountered this fish before as a younger man
 - C. He pulls and pulls on the line and nothing happens
 - D. He doesn't know the size of the fish until after the sharks have attacked it

11. *During his great struggle with the marlin, what does Santiago wish repeatedly?*
- A. He wishes he were younger
 - B. He wishes for better equipment
 - C. He wishes that the fishermen who mocked him earlier were present to witness his victory
 - D. He wishes that the boy, Manolin, were with him
12. *In what year was *The Old Man and the Sea* published?*
- A. 1950
 - B. 1951
 - C. 1952
 - D. 1953
13. *As his first full day of fighting with the fish wears on, what does Santiago begin to think about his adversary?*
- A. He praises the fish because it promises to bring a wonderful price at market
 - B. He considers that he and the marlin are brothers, joined by the fact that they both ventured far out beyond all people and dangers in the water
 - C. He detests the fish for its vigor and vitality
 - D. He believes the fish is a test of his worth, sent to him by God
14. *What does the weary warbler that lands on Santiago's fishing line make the old man think of?*
- A. The probability that he, like the bird, will never make it back to land
 - B. The predatory hawks that await the bird's arrival near land
 - C. The hidden strength of the weak
 - D. The beauty of the natural world
15. *What happens to make Santiago curse the treachery of his own body?*
- A. He gets seasick
 - B. He has diarrhea
 - C. His hand cramps
 - D. He needs to sleep

52 • THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

16. *In order to help himself catch the fish, what does Santiago do?*
- A. He promises to pay more attention to Manolin upon his return
 - B. He decides to recite ten Hail Marys and ten Our Fathers
 - C. He lightens the boat by throwing all unnecessary weight overboard
 - D. He ties the skiff to a buoy so that the fish cannot pull it farther out to sea
17. *The great Joe DiMaggio suffers from what affliction?*
- A. A bone spur
 - B. Alcoholism
 - C. A ruined knee
 - D. Failing eyesight
18. *To give himself confidence, Santiago remembers his contest with “the great negro of Cienfuegos.” At what sport did the old man beat this challenger?*
- A. Fencing
 - B. Tennis
 - C. Arm wrestling
 - D. Boxing
19. *Why does the thought of selling the fish’s meat disappoint the old man?*
- A. He knows people will cook the marlin, but it is best eaten raw
 - B. Market prices are low, and Santiago will get only a fraction of what the fish is worth
 - C. Because marlin has an unpleasant taste, Santiago wishes he caught something that made for better eating, like a shark
 - D. The people who will eat the meat are unworthy
20. *What does the old man remove and eat from the belly of a dolphin?*
- A. Shrimp
 - B. Flying fish
 - C. Seaweed
 - D. Piranha

21. *How does Santiago finally kill the marlin?*
- A. He harpoons it through the heart
 - B. He stabs it between the eyes
 - C. He lashes it to the inside of the boat
 - D. He bashes its head with his club
22. *How long does it take for the sharks to arrive and attack the marlin?*
- A. Ten minutes
 - B. One hour
 - C. Six hours
 - D. A full day
23. *After the shark attack, Santiago reflects that destruction is inevitable. How does he articulate this philosophy?*
- A. The world is such an inhospitable place that no death should be mourned
 - B. Out, out, brief candle!
 - C. Even the worthiest opponents must fall
 - D. Everything in the world kills everything else in some way
24. *What happens upon the old man's return to his fishing village?*
- A. Manolin promises to sail with him
 - B. The fishermen mock Santiago for the folly of sailing out so far
 - C. Tourists ask the old man to recount his adventures
 - D. A statue is erected in his honor
25. *The old man remembers that once, when he killed a female marlin, the male marlin*
- A. Bit the tail off the female
 - B. Returned with a posse of marlins seeking revenge
 - C. Made a sound like there were nails being driven through his fins
 - D. Swam alongside the boat as though in mourning

Answer Key:

1: B; 2: D; 3: D; 4: B; 5: B; 6: D; 7: C; 8: B; 9: A; 10: C; 11: D; 12: C; 13: B; 14: B; 15: C; 16: B; 17: A; 18: C; 19: D; 20: B; 21: A; 22: B; 23: D; 24: A; 25: D

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Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury

All Quiet on the Western Front, Erich Maria Remarque

Animal Farm, George Orwell

The Awakening, Kate Chopin

Beloved, Toni Morrison

Beowulf, Anonymous

Brave New World, Aldous Huxley

The Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer

The Catcher in the Rye, J.D. Salinger

Crime and Punishment, Fyodor Dostoevsky

The Crucible, Arthur Miller

Their Eyes Were Watching God, Zora Neale Hurston

A Farewell to Arms, Ernest Hemingway

Lord of the Flies, William Golding

Frankenstein, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck

Great Expectations, Charles Dickens

Heart of Darkness, Joseph Conrad

Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain

The Iliad, Homer

Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison

Jane Eyre, Charlotte Brontë

The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan

The Jungle, Upton Sinclair

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck

Moby Dick, Herman Melville

To Kill A Mockingbird, Harper Lee

The Odyssey, Homer

The Oedipus Trilogy: Antigone, Oedipus Rex, and Oedipus at Colonus, Sophocles

The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway

Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen

The Red Badge of Courage, Stephen Crane

Death of a Salesman, Arthur Miller

The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne

A Separate Peace, John Knowles

Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe

A Tale of Two Cities, Charles Dickens

Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe

Wuthering Heights, Emily Brontë

Dante's Inferno, Dante Alighieri

Hamlet, William Shakespeare

Julius Caesar, William Shakespeare

King Lear, William Shakespeare

Macbeth, William Shakespeare

A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare

Othello, William Shakespeare

Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare

The Tempest, William Shakespeare