
Analysis of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and The Sea*

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Abstract

American journalist Ernest Miller Hemingway, better known as Ernest Hemingway in English literature, was also a sportsman and author of short stories and novels. Hemingway published seven books throughout his lifetime, with *The Sun Also Rises*, *Farewell to Arms*, and *The Old Man and the Sea* being the most widely read. The core principles of human life are contained in Hemingway's book *The Old Man and the Sea*. Many readers, whether they are linguists or beginners, are drawn to read and analyze this story because of its easy linguistic style and profound message. This book is jam-packed with all kinds of symbols, motivational lessons, and human values. *The Oldman and the Sea* by Hemingway tells the tale of an elderly man's fight and helplessness against fate. Hemingway acknowledges the harshness of fate in a man's life, just as the Greek tragedians. The adage "Man proposes, God disposes" perfectly captures the significance of fate in a person's life. *The Oldman and the Sea* is a timeless tale because it illustrates how people fight to achieve their goals in life but are occasionally crushed by the forces of fate. Despite his strong character and seagoing knowledge, the old man is unable to catch the fish for a few days. He once caught a marlin, a large fish, but it was too heavy for him to drag it to shore. The marlin's blood attracted sharks in the middle of the old man's attempt to haul it to shore, leaving him with nothing but the skeleton. Hemingway uses the character of the elderly man to discuss how powerless man is in the face of fate. This essay's goal is to explain the author's interpretation of a book by closely analyzing the author's decisions made within the text, including word choice, themes, motifs, and numerous other literary techniques.

Keywords: stream of consciousness, style, fatalistic solution, method, survival.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born in the Chicago suburb of Oak Park, Illinois, in the US Midwest, as the second oldest of six children. In April 1917, he received his high school diploma, and he wished to enlist in the army for the First World War. His father, however, objected, so he became a reporter. The Kansas City Star hired Hemingway as a reporter. He left the paper in May of 1918 and served in Italy as a troop carrier driver, but he returned home after being injured by a bomb. He started to see his non-journalistic writing appear in print in Paris after receiving advice and support from

other American writers there, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound. In 1925, his first significant book, a collection of stories titled *In Our Time*, was published in New York City after first appearing in Paris in 1924. He released *The Sun Also Rises*, a book that gave him his first significant degree of success, in 1926. *The Lost Generation*, a term Hemingway ridiculed while popularizing it, is a bunch of idle expats living in France and Spain in this bleak but brilliant book. He was also exposed to the spotlight through this profession, which he both desired and despised for the rest of his life. In 1926, Hemingway published *The Torrents of Spring*, a spoof of Sherwood Anderson's novel *Dark Laughter* by an American author.

He returned to the United States from Paris in 1928 when he was 29 years old. While in Key West, Florida, he created a significant piece of writing. He started writing *A Farewell to Arms* in Paris and finished it in 1929. When the book was published in September 1929, it immediately became a best-seller and went on to sell 80,000 copies in only four months. In 1932, he released **Death in the Afternoon** and in 1933, he released the collection of short stories **Winner Take Nothing**. The nonfiction book **Green Hills of Africa** which covered the hunting expedition in Africa, was published in 1935. He was inspired by his visit to Kenya to write the well-known short story **The Snows of Kilimanjaro**. When the Spanish Civil War began in 1937, he enlisted in the Republican army. After the fascist revolutionary army won the civil war, Hemingway returned to the United States and finished the highly acclaimed novel 1940 **For Whom the Bell Tolls**, which serves as the backdrop to the Spanish Civil War. He enlisted in the military in 1944 as a correspondent for the Normandy landings and returned to Cuba after the conflict. In September 1952, the book **The Old Man and the Sea** was published. In 1953, Hemingway won the Pulitzer Prize, and in 1954, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. He never published another story after **The Old Man and the Sea** came out, and he battled other ailments like alcoholism and despair. After all, on the morning of July 2, 1961, he shot himself to death.

Hemingway's characters unmistakably represent his own morals and outlook on life. Young men who are greatly affected by their experiences in combat make up the major characters in **The Sun Also Rises**, **A Farewell to Arms** and **For Whom the Bell Tolls**. All three of these are set during World War II. Hemingway saw war as a compelling emblem of a complex, morally ambiguous world that offered nearly unavoidable suffering, harm, and devastation.

The Old Man and the Sea is undoubtedly Hemingway's masterpiece. It is an uncomplicated tale about a piscator named Santiago and his struggle against a sizeable marlin. Santiago has been unable to catch anything for eighty-four days, but he keeps his morale high. He ventures deep into the sea and baits a colossal marlin. An aching scuffle follows, during which Santiago succeeds in slaying the fish and attaching it to his boat. On his way home, he learns that he has to wage a greater struggle against the predators of the sea lurking around his boat that devour the marlin. What remains is the skeleton of the fish. The greybeard brings the skeletal remains of the marlin to his abode. He then drops off and starts dreaming, almost dead with exhaustion. But his battle against the odds earns him much respect. Among so many significant American writers, Hemingway is particularly famous for his objective and terse prose style. Being his final novel that got published when he was alive, **The Old Man and the Sea** generally mirror his unique framing method. This essay will evaluate *The Old Man and the Sea* and discuss the author's interpretation of the book by closely analyzing the author's choices made within the text, including word choice,

themes, motifs, and numerous other literary techniques. Ernest Hemingway penned the classic book *The Old Man and the Sea* in 1951. It is believed to be the eminent author's final significant work to be released while he was still alive. The novel is a quick read (less than 100 pages) with a Cuban setting of Havana. A small boy, a beautiful and courageous fish, and an elderly fisherman are all included in the story. The characters are among the most courageous and sincere ones one has ever encountered in a novel. It's also important to emphasize Santiago's regard for the marlin. He apologizes profusely to the fish, but he still respects it and is motivated to win. He describes it as honourable and occasionally expresses regret over the pointlessness of a life that leads people to abuse the delicate animals of nature.

A fairly straightforward tale is chosen by the author and elevated to literary perfection. The Marlin, a non-human, has a significant role in the tale, which is noteworthy. Another appealing aspect of this tale is the life lessons the elderly guy imparts while fighting for his survival. For someone who is unfamiliar with all the fishing terminology, methods, techniques, and equipment, **The Old Man and the Sea** is a challenging book to read. Most readers certainly find it challenging to finish the book for a number of reasons, including this. Additionally, it implies that after finishing the book, the reader becomes a more knowledgeable reader. What makes this novel a success is the climax. The Old Man and the Sea's tragic conclusion is what gives the novel its enchantment and gives it the distinction of becoming a classic. One cannot but cry for the elderly guy Santiago and his unwavering spirit if they are sensitive and emotional readers. Despite being a short book, it is not an easy read. Although the reader needs some time to get into it and it slows down noticeably in the middle, the entertainment value remains high.

According to Schatz, it is a straightforward tale with a deeper moral and relevance that transcends space and time. It conveys the universal facts of a man's existence in this world, where perseverance, pride, dreams, and ambitions inspire man to succeed in the face of hardship. It is a story about the unbreakable spirit of man; the old man represents a positive outlook on life, battles the enormous marlin, and imparts wisdom to mankind. (Schatz, 2020)

In the words of James Topham:

Hemingway's novella shows how death can invigorate life, how killing and death can bring a man to an understanding of his own mortality -- and his own power to overcome it. Hemingway writes of a time when fishing was not merely a business or a sport. Instead, fishing was an expression of humankind in its natural state -- in tune with nature. Enormous stamina and power arose in the breast of Santiago. The simple fisherman became a classical hero in his epic struggle. (Topham)

Santiago's method of coping with his craziness is reflected in Hemingway's usage of a stream of consciousness. In this conflict, he ultimately poses three questions: "Who am I? How come I'm here? What do I have that makes me deserving of life? His answer to the first query is based on his memories, which are by nature private. His thoughts wander to baseball, the market stalls, and the African fields of his youth. He describes his past and how he came to be here. He recalls that he has been fishing all of his life and that it has virtually taken over as his only goal in life, which provides the answer to the second question. He has achieved this success thanks to his extensive fishing knowledge. Finally, Santiago responds to the third query by telling the tale of an arm-wrestling match he won after two days of competition. His will serves as a means of self-expression. Even though completing this goal would be suicide, doing so would also

amount to suicide because he would have betrayed his sense of self. His will is his last defence against time and the single thing he will not give up because time has taken away both his body and his fortune. Therefore, he is unable to give up the fishing line in his hand. (Chiba)

In the words of Bob Corbett:

Hemingway celebrates the courage and raw guts of this old man, even recounting a time in Casablanca when he had spent an entire day in an arm wrestling match with a much larger man in a seaside tavern. Hemingway celebrates a concept of humans as beings who go it alone, fierce, brave, courageous without even thinking about it, oozing strength from the nature of the best of the species. (Corbett, Book Review -- Ernest Hemingway THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA)

Hemingway and Faulkner were huge fans of one another's writing and frequently offered (qualified) praise. William Faulkner in his review of *The Old Man and the Sea* noted:

His best. Time may show it to be the best single piece of any of us, I mean his and my contemporaries. This time, he discovered God, a Creator. Until now, his men and women had made themselves, shaped themselves out of their own clay; their victories and defeats were at the hands of each other, just to prove to themselves or one another how tough they could be. But this time, he wrote about pity: about something somewhere that made them all: the old man who had to catch the fish and then lose it, the fish that had to be caught and then lost, the sharks which had to rob the old man of his fish; made them all and loved them all and pitied them all. It's all right. Praise God that whatever made and loves and pities Hemingway and me kept him from touching it any further. (Faulkner, 193)

This essay's goal is to explain the author's interpretation of a book by closely analyzing the author's decisions made within the text, including word choice, themes, motifs, and numerous other literary techniques.

II. The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway's use of style: A Man's Character

One of the most significant stylists in American literature today is universally acknowledged to be Ernest Hemingway. His writing style is characterized by brief, straightforward sentences with few adjectives, frequent repetition, and informal language. He also avoids showing emotion and makes great use of understatement. He is one of the most dramatic writers of the 20th century due to his concise, methodical approach to the craft. **The Old Man and the Sea**, a novella by Hemingway, exhibits his sardonic and literary approach and tackles the subject of telling stories about difficult moral dilemmas.

In an interview, Hemingway described his method for writing **The Old Man and the Sea** as one that focuses on close observation, meaning that everything he observes is added to his extensive knowledge of everything he knows or has seen. He always tries to write about the iceberg's principle, if knowing that is of any use. For every visible portion, seven-eighths of it is submerged. Anything that is known may be discarded, and doing so will only make your iceberg stronger. It is the portion that is hidden. (Plimpton)

Therefore, a reader should be aware that Hemingway's story is informed by a wealth of information and experience and that the seeming simplicity of his use of language is deceiving. **The Old Man and the Sea** premise, which chronicles the tale of a Cuban fisherman called Santiago and his three-day fight to land a massive marlin before losing his prize to sharks on the way back to land, initially looks to be simple. Since the story is written from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, the reader is able to empathize with Santiago as he struggles to comprehend the purpose of his life through his conflict with a fish. For example:

Then he began to pity the great fish that he had hooked. He is wonderful and strange and who knows how old he is, he thought. Never have I had such a strong fish or one who acted so strangely. Perhaps he is too wise to jump. He could ruin me by jumping or by a wild rush but perhaps he has been hooked many times before and he knows that this is how he should make his fight. He cannot know that it is only one man against him, nor that it is an old man. But what a great fish he is and what will he bring in the market if the flesh is good. He took the bait like a male and he pulls like a male and his fight has no panic in it. I wonder if he has any plans or if he is just as desperate as I am? (OMIS 48-49)

The section focuses on Ernest Hemingway's plain sentence structure as well as the co-existing structure in the phrase, particularly in the repetition of terms like "hooked," "strange," "fight," and "fish." Alliteration also makes parallelism stronger. By implying sympathy for the fish and revealing that it is a male fish, the author also gives a hint about his theme and forges a conceptual connection between Santiago and the fish. He suggests that the struggle for survival is fierce for both man and fish, but the intensity and severity of the struggle are hidden by the author's use of understatement. The internal monologue has dramatic tension since emotionalism is absent.

In order to comprehend Hemingway's detached writing style with reference to his issue, it is also crucial to emphasize the masculine aspect of the dramatic circumstance. His main concern is with personal honour, namely how a man should live and die in a society where violence is a necessary part of existence. Hemingway is drawn to depicting a world in which man is at odds with nature: "Fish"; he said, "I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends" (OMIS 54).

When Santiago considers the subject of the distinction between human and non-human ties, his moral conflict gradually develops. For example, Hemingway notes:

It is silly not to hope, he thought. Besides I believe it is a sin. Do not think about sin, he thought. There are enough problems now without sin. Also I have no understanding of it. I have no understanding of it and I am not sure that I believe in it. Perhaps it was a sin to kill the fish. I suppose it was even though I did it to keep me alive and feed many people. But then everything is a sin. Do not think about sin. It is much too late for that and there are people who are paid to do it. Let them think about it. You were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish. San Pedro was a fisherman as was the father of the great DiMaggio (OMTS 104-105)

An important ethical question, which Santiago is unable to answer because of crude sentence construction and native conceptualizations of an incorporeal discourse, is how one may value and enjoy nature while yet needing to destroy it. The author uses an internal monologue once more in a certain order to create a morbid collocation, forcing the reader to reflect on sin and wonder and suppose about the superiority of man over beast. The author uses an internal monologue once more in a certain order to create a

morbid collocation, forcing the reader to reflect on sin and wonder and suppose about the superiority of man over beast.

Hemingway's awareness of the significance of enjoying the beauty and majesty of nature is connected to Santiago's fatalistic solution to his dilemma regarding the morality of murdering his fish. He provides a pattern that captures the fundamental characteristics of a fisherman in Santiago's world by using parallel structure. In other words, the fact that St. Peter, Santiago, and Jo DiMaggio's father were all fishermen provides an order in the universe that might be interpreted as a symbol of stability.

Hemingway's account of Santiago's reaction to his loss of his marlin also is a representative of his method:

He knew he was beaten now finally and without remedy and he went back to the stern and found the jagged end of the tiller would fit in the slot of the rudder well enough for him to steer. He settled the sack around his shoulders and put the skiff on her course. He sailed lightly now and he had no thoughts or any feelings of any kind. He was past everything now and he sailed the skill to make his home port as well and as intelligently as he could. In the night sharks hit the carcass as someone might pick up crumbs from the table. The old man paid no attention to them and did not pay any attention to anything except steering. He only noticed how lightly and how well the skiff sailed now there was no great weight beside her (OMTS 119).

The plot's lack of intensity is a result of the gradual story progression. In addition, the story's secret significance is simple to overlook. There would be many messages and lessons if we read it while understanding the setting or characters, such as the sea and sharks, but it is difficult for young readers to understand the hidden meaning.

Hemingway's disdain for the rhetorical trick of utilizing emotion is clearly demonstrated in this sentence. The fight is ended; the battle has been lost. But Santiago has persevered and survived. Hemingway was a firm believer that suffering greatly gives life purpose. The powerful alliteration of sounds helps the reader understand how fatigued Santiago is at this point and the extent of the fisherman's loss. *The Old Man and the Sea's* method was created with the purpose of a hero who, at the moment, has focused all of his attention on catching his fish and is now unconcerned with anything else. He is now a defeated man, yet in facing defeat honestly, he still has some dignity.

It may be inferred that Hemingway's approach is fundamentally founded on the elusive clarity of word choice and sentence construction, the consistent use of repetition, the extensive use of internal monologue, and the controlled restraint of sentiment, parallelism, and alliteration. The portrait illustrating the theme of the tragic irony of a man's struggle against himself and nature is produced as a result of the rhetorical consequence. The enormous existential conflict is reduced to Santiago's three-day encounter with forces that are stronger than he can handle. Santiago's escapades become a history of his ability to endure, showing the certainty of loss and the peace he finds in accepting it.

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