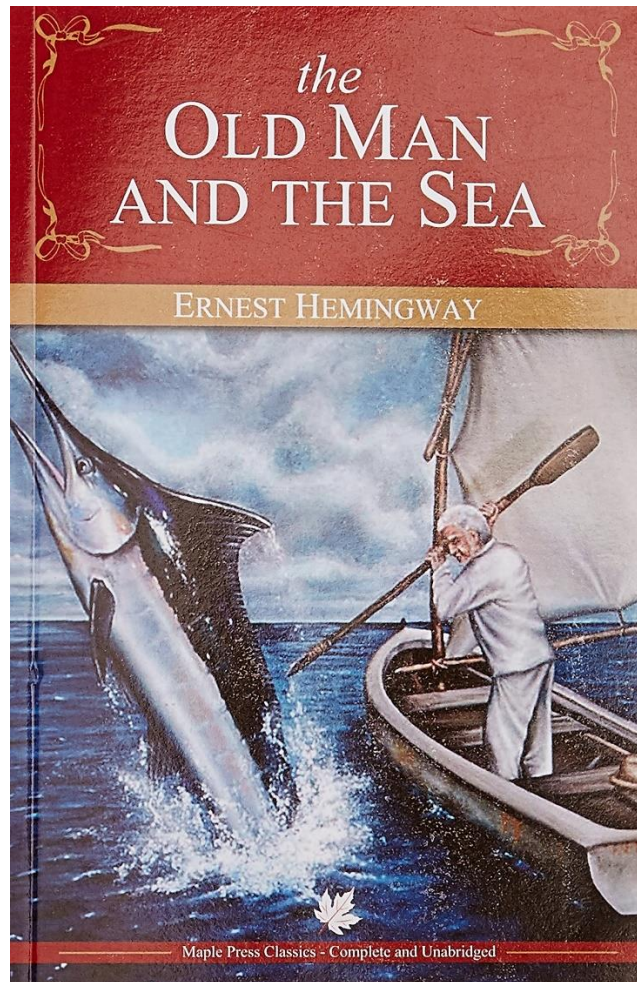


**Struggles and Suffering in Hemingway's
*The Old Man And The Sea***

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Abstract

The Old Man and The Sea is the masterpiece of Ernest Hemingway. It is a considered opinion of Hemingway critics that he very successfully transformed his personal experiences in deep-sea fishing, bull-fighting, and big-game hunting into works of art.

In Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, we meet an old, yet determined fisherman, Santiago, who is strong. His best days are not behind him, despite an 84 days streak of bad luck. With his young companion no longer able to fish with him, Santiago sets out to fish farther than any other fisherman, even though he is alone. The events that occur both during and after the fishing trip, reveal a lot about the mindset of Santiago. In this paper we discuss how the story's plot and characters, including Santiago, are portrayed through these themes of struggle and suffering. There are various elements of struggle that take place in the story. Whether human or animal, this story focuses a great deal on the power of struggle in one's life.

Keywords: *The Oldman and the Sea*, Human suffering, Fisherman, Life struggles, symbols of struggle

Manolin, the Young Boy

At the beginning of the story, the young boy Manolin used to fish with Santiago, but was forced to stop because of a 40 days streak of bad luck. While Manolin wished to stay with Santiago, his parents made him go to fish with another fisherman Manolin states, "It was papa made me leave I am a boy and I must obey him". (p.1) Manolin struggles with his parents' decision, as he believes Santiago is a great fisherman who would have more luck if they fished together. "It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty". (p.1) Manolin's love for Santiago is clear; he helps his older friend everyday by assisting with the duties related to fishing. His struggle with his parents' decision is inconvenient until the very end of the story.

The Theme of Struggle

There is a clear theme of struggle that takes place between Santiago and his body throughout the entire story. It gets worse, however, once he rows far out to sea. It takes three days for Santiago to harpoon and kill a great Marlin. He's exhausted, yet works relentlessly to lure and haul the fish, in order to make the greatest catch of his career. After finally catching the Marlin, Santiago cannot get the fish into the skiff. The struggle of harpooning the Marlin exhausts Santiago. "The old man felt faint, and sick and he could not see well". (p.26)

Struggle with Marlin

Trying to catch the Marlin, and then fighting the sharks, Santiago's body faces relentless struggle during those few days on the skiff. *The Old Man and the Sea* is a worthy symbolic novel which conveys the ability of the author to exploit symbols to give literary value to the text.

Focus of This Paper

This paper may be divided into sections.

This paper first deals with aestheticism in general and tells about the common stylistic devices in literature such as simile, metaphor, irony and so on. Secondly, the paper makes the connection with the concept of symbol and some theories that are related to symbols such as Langer's theory, Whitehead theory, Frye's theory and Saussure's theory. Thirdly, I deal with the general overview of American literature and the major works of Hemingway, focusing on his masterpiece. Finally, the paper focuses on the symbols used in the novel and their interpretations. This work aims at showing the interest of Hemingway for symbols and his intention to represent themes behind the use of symbols in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

American Literature

American literature has passed through a lot of periods by familiar number of masterpieces to vanquish the literary thirst of those who are fond of reading. Among many writers in nineteenth century, Hemingway is significant for his style. Hemingway who is well known as a writer commences his writing for the first time as a reporter for 'The Kansas City Star'. The experiences that he got as a journalist made him famous among the readers for his style. He avoided complicated syntax in his writing. About seventy percent of the sentences are simple sentences.

Fisherman Santiago

The novel opens with the struggle of old Santiago who is the hero of the novel, to catch a fish because he has failed to bring a fish for eightyfour days though he is an experienced fisher man in Cuba. And also, the hero of Hemingway is a baseball lover. This failure of Santiago to catch a fish makes him the laughing stock in the village. Anyhow the little boy Manolin, the

apprentice of Santiago keeps his eye upon the old man to take care of his meals and such things, though his parents force him to go with another boat, because of the bad luck of Santiago. Then to avoid his bad luck, Santiago plans to sail far into the sea, because he believes that man is not made for defeat.

The Struggle of Santiago with the Giant Marlin

In the middle section of the story, it is possible to see the struggle of Santiago with the giant marlin and when he comes back he struggles with sharks to save his great catch. Finally, though Shark destroyed the giant Marlin, Santiago becomes great among the fisherman in the village. Mainly the setting of the novel can be divided into two portions. At the beginning and the end the story takes place in the small fishing village Cuba that is situated near Havana. Cuba is an island in the Caribbean, whose main industry is fishing.

Hemingway's Personal Experience

Hemingway lived in Cuba for a few years before the revolution to Fidel Castro, obtaining an intimate knowledge of the places that are described in 'The Old Man and the Sea'. At the middle part of the story, it deals with the waves of the Gulf stream that brings the giant Marlin in the month of September and October. In the novel the setting also becomes symbolic, because the sea represents the total universe against the humanity represented by Santiago.

Sea represents great role in the novel as setting and a symbol. The main event of the story takes place in the sea. Here sea symbolizes the 'Universe' and the Santiago's isolation in the universe. Mast symbolizes the cross that Jesus Christ was forced to drag. The desire of the author to represent Santiago as a Christ-like figure, mast symbolizes the cross in the novel.

Symbols – Semblance to the Life of Jesus

In *The old man and the Sea* Santiago symbolizes Jesus Christ and the nature of human beings who don't like to accept defeat in their lives. When Santiago fights with Marlin, he suffers so much. However, he bears all these sufferings without complaining about it. And also he doesn't like to accept defeat, because he believes that man has been made not for defeat.

Manolin is the young boy who follows Santiago. In *The Old Man and the Sea* Manolin symbolizes the youth of Santiago and the disciples of Jesus. And he symbolizes the responsibility of youth for the elders. When the old man would look at Manolin he would see himself at a younger age. Manolin symbolizes the disciples of Jesus. Manolin gives his care towards the old man and that represents the youngsters, who look up to the elders of the society.

All the other fishermen in the story are the people who used new equipment for fishing while Santiago goes to fish in a small skiff. When Santiago brings the skeleton of the large marlin, they try to put him down by saying the following. Hemingway uses these fisher men and the proprietors of the coffee shop for the symbolical representation of the people who don't like to appreciate others. The fishes represent anyone who would only think about themselves rather than others. In some ways the fishes are like the sharks wanting to take things away from Santiago while Santiago is much like the Marlin.

In the novel many incidents can be seen which are similar to the life of Jesus. He doesn't try to impress the reader with an artificial complicated and unrealistic story. It is a fact that every word of the story plays an essential part and none is superfluous or meaningless. This is the reason why the story is so beautiful and unique in the literary world.

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