

The old man and the sea by Ernest Hemingway

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. In the first forty days a boy had been with him. But after forty days without a fish the boy's parents had told him that the old man was now definitely and finally *salao*, which is the worst form of unlucky, and the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week. It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty and he always went down to help him carry either the coiled lines or the gaff and harpoon and the sail that was furled around the mast. The sail was patched with flour sacks and, furled, it looked like the flag of permanent defeat.

The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck. The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its [9] reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh. They were as old as erosions in a fishless desert.

Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated.

"Santiago," the boy said to him as they climbed the bank from where the skiff was hauled up. "I could go with you again. We've made some money."

The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him.

"No," the old man said. "You're with a lucky boat. Stay with them."

"But remember how you went eighty-seven days without fish and then we caught big ones every day for three weeks."

Summary

The central character is an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago, who has not caught a fish for 84 days. The family of his apprentice, Manolin, has forced the boy to leave the old fisherman, though Manolin continues to support him with food and bait. Santiago is a [mentor](#) to the boy, who cherishes the old man and the life lessons he imparts. Convinced that his luck must change, Santiago takes his skiff far out into the deep waters of the [Gulf Stream](#), where he soon hooks a giant [marlin](#). With all his great experience and strength, he struggles with the fish for three days, admiring its strength, dignity, and faithfulness to its identity; its destiny is as true as Santiago's as a fisherman. He finally reels the marlin in and lashes it to his boat.

Analysis and reception

The Old Man and the Sea contains many of the themes that preoccupied Hemingway as a writer and as a man. The routines of life in a Cuban fishing village are [evoked](#) in the opening pages with a characteristic economy of language. The stripped-down existence of the fisherman Santiago is crafted in a spare, elemental style that is as eloquently dismissive as a shrug of the old man's powerful shoulders. With age and luck now against him, Santiago knows he must row out "beyond all people," away from land and into the [Gulf Stream](#), where one last drama would be played out, in an empty arena of sea and sky.

Hemingway was famously fascinated with ideas of men proving their worth by facing and overcoming the challenges of nature. When the old man hooks a marlin longer than his boat, he is tested to the limits as he works the line with bleeding hands in an effort to bring it close enough to [harpoon](#). Through his struggle, Santiago demonstrates the ability of the human spirit to endure hardship and suffering in order to win. It is also his deep love and knowledge of the sea, in its impassive cruelty and beneficence, that allows him to prevail. The essential physicality of the story—the smells of tar and salt and fish blood, the cramp and nausea and blind exhaustion of the old man, the terrifying death spasms of the great fish—is set against the [ethereal](#) qualities of

dazzling light and water, isolation, and the swelling motion of the sea.

Assistant Professors

Maytham Ali

Dyala university

Colledge of basic education