

Man and the Sea. It is varied and artful through his symbolism, leitmotifs and recurrent themes.

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THEMES IN 'THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA'

Quite a number of themes are seen in *The Old Man and the Sea*. The novel has different strata of meaning. Various critics have fathomed

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the depth of the underlying meaning in the novel and have expressed different views. Critics like Carlos Baker, Philip Young and Leo Gurko are specially concerned with two qualities of Santiago—his epic individualism and the love he feels for the creatures who share with him a world of inescapable violence—though in the main each views these qualities from a different point of literary compass. Young regards the novel as essentially classical in nature, Gurko sees it as reflecting Hemingway's romanticism; and to Baker, the novel is Christian in context and the old fisherman is suggestive of Christ. Let us see these different shades of meaning in the novel.

The theme of individualism and interdependence

According to Burhans, the novel reveals the theme of individualism and interdependence. Santiago has learnt the importance of solidarity and interdependence through his individualism. This old man has been unlucky because of his failure to catch a single fish for as many as eighty-four days. He has fished alone for forty-four days and with the boy for another forty days. The boy deserts him thinking him to be an unlucky fisherman. The old man has depended upon the boy but now he has been sailing alone on the vast ocean. He has caught a big marlin which is mauled by the sharks. But the old man does not accept defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated, and he decides to fight them until he dies. In his sequestered life and lonely voyage on the ocean, he has experienced kinship with the sea, the birds, the fishes and the memories of the youth. The old man shows kinship with the birds dipping into the water. Seeing the ducks flying over he feels that he is not lonely. He talks to the warbler from the north. The bird flies around the old man's head and rests on the line. He puts the questions to the bird, "How old are you?" "Is this your first trip?" It is not the only bird that he loves. He shows kinship even with the marlin whom he kills. He kills the fish for pride and profession—more the spiritual than the physical one. He says, "Fish, I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill dead before this day ends." The old man considers the marlin as his brother. In this respect Burhans has observed, "And so, though he kills the great fish, the old man has come to love him as his equal brother, sharing a life, which is a capricious mixture of incredible beauty and deadly violence and in which all creatures are both hunter and the hunted, they are bound together in its most primal relationship."

The theme of strong individualism and a sense of universality, and the love of all creatures has provided unity and coherence to the novel. The old man who has been helped by the boy in the beginning, remembers him too often. His thoughts go back to Manolin in his fatigue and loneliness. He remarks, 'I wish I had the boy,' and later he thinks, 'No one should be alone in their old age. The old man's kinship with other persons grows when the marlin has been eaten away by the sharks.

"I cannot be too far out now he thought." "I hope no one has been too worried. There is only the boy to worry, of course. But I am sure he would have confidence. Many of the old fishermen will worry. Many others too."

The themes of individualism and interdependence are related. The old man's interdependence grows and he constantly thinks of the society, the baseball, and DiMaggio. The thought of the boy, the baseball pattern DiMaggio, and the vision of the lions have impressed an artistic pattern and provided unity to the story. The dream of the lions on the Adriatic beach strengthens the feeling of solidarity and love. The sentiment of love has been aroused through them.

The theme of individualism in the novel is connected with Hemingway's tragic vision of man. Burhans has pointed out that the man is faced with violence, and cruelty of the universe like the old man. "Man has a place in this world". And in his realization that "in going alone and too far out, beyond all people in the world," he has ruined both himself and also the great fish. The old man reflects Hemingway's feeling that "in his individualism and his pride and his need, man inevitably goes beyond his true place in the world and thereby brings violence and destruction on himself and others." Doubtlessly, Santiago has suffered in going too far out, he has learnt many things in going too far, the endurance, courage, sympathy and love. He has also realized the futility of pride and individualism and understands himself.

Theme of human struggle against the forces of the world

Another important theme of the novel is the human struggle against the forces of the world. In this struggle man can only lose, but it is in such a way that his loss has dignity and this loss ultimately looks as the final victory. From this point of view *The Old Man and the Sea* has become the epic metaphor, a contest between man and all those forces which stand between him and the attainment of his goal. For a man defeat is not disgraceful if he fights well according to his abilities and powers. To lose is inevitable, but one may transcend defeat by displaying an invincible courage and an unconquerable will and determination. In this novel Santiago is determined to show what a man he is and what he can endure. In his struggle he really rises in our estimation. The message of the novel is "A man can be destroyed but not defeated." The novel is in fact the story of moral triumph. Santiago's experience has been rightly called "a ritual of transfiguration". The old man's life shows that man has immense and infinite capacity to endure.

The theme of artist's struggle with his material

The novel can also be studied as an allegory of the artist's struggle with his material. In fact it is the struggle of Hemingway with his material that we find exemplified in the story of Santiago. Symbolically, the novel is an account of Hemingway's struggle to write his best. Hemingway treats his art exactly as Santiago treats his vocation of fishing. Like Santiago, Hemingway aims at precision, exactness and perfection. Santiago a master fisherman and sets his fishing lines with more care than other fishermen. It is better to be lucky, he thinks, but he will be exact and skillful instead; then when luck comes, he will be ready for it. This is applicable to Hemingway as a writer. Hemingway also believes in accomplishing his literary tasks with the greatest possible skill, strength

most conscientiously to produce the best results one of which is this very novel. In other way also Santiago's respect for the marlin is Hemingway's respect for his literary pursuits. Santiago's determination to overpower the big marlin is Hemingway's determination to master his literary art. Santiago's fight against the sharks represents Hemingway's bold stand against the ruthless critics who tried to demolish him and destroy his reputation. Thus *The Old Man and the Sea* can be considered a personal