**Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research**
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**English Department**

# *"The Old Man and the Sea"*

**Ernest Hemingway**

## *Second Stage*

## *Second Semester*

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***By***

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**Day Three- Summary:**

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 cannotunderstand 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 hecaught the day before, which he had expected to use as bait. While he cuts and eats thefish with his right hand, his already cut left hand cramps and tightens into a claw underthe 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 actuallysure 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 greatnegro 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 hisfriends, 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 forthe 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 thatthe 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 "unclear." He butchers the dolphin he caught earlier and finds two flying fish in its belly. In the chilling night, he eats half ofa 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 aboutdeath, 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.