

**Critical  
Analysis  
of the Novella**





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# SANTIAGO

- ❖ Protagonist
- ❖ A skilled fisherman from Cuba who has a deep respect for the sea and all of nature
- ❖ Lonely
- ❖ Unable to catch any fish in 84 days
- ❖ Loved Manolin and taught him how to fish
- ❖ Despite being extremely poor, he refuses to give up
- ❖ Determined; feels it a sin to lose hope
- ❖ Loved Baseball
- ❖ Idolized Joe DiMaggio for his return to baseball despite a battle with bone spurs
- ❖ Christ-like (Symbol)



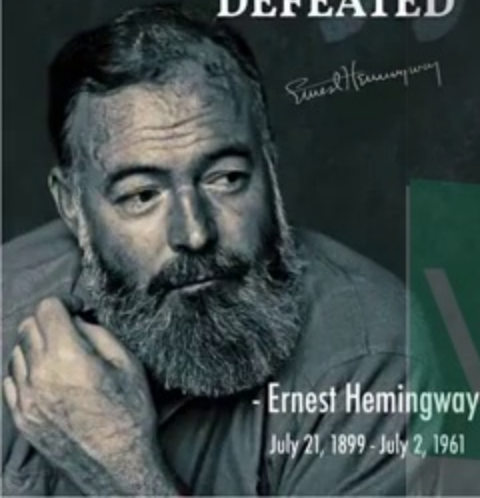
Man is not made for defeat

Man can be

**DESTROYED**

but not

**DEFEATED**



- Ernest Hemingway

July 21, 1899 - July 2, 1961



The novella can be interpreted as an allegory of Hemingway's career at the time he wrote it.



Philip Young, a literary critic writes: "*The Old Man and the Sea* is...an account of Hemingway's personal struggle...to write his best.... The...metaphors...need almost no translation".



Hemingway was one of the most prolific and successful writers of the 1920s and 1930s, but for nearly ten years he didn't publish a novel.



Many people thought Hemingway's best days were behind him.



Literary critic Sonny Elizondo agrees: "*The Old Man and the Sea* was published in 1952, after the bleakest ten years in Hemingway's literary career...and people began to think that Hemingway had exhausted his store of ideas".



Santiago, the protagonist, was once a great fisherman, but now he is regarded as a has-been, because he has gone "84 days...without catching a fish". Therefore, "many of the fishermen...make fun of the old man..."

# Tone and language

**Tone** –  
Journalistic,  
matter of fact but  
sympathetical

The monotonous  
tone matches to  
the loneliness of  
the old man who  
is being  
dragged into the  
sea

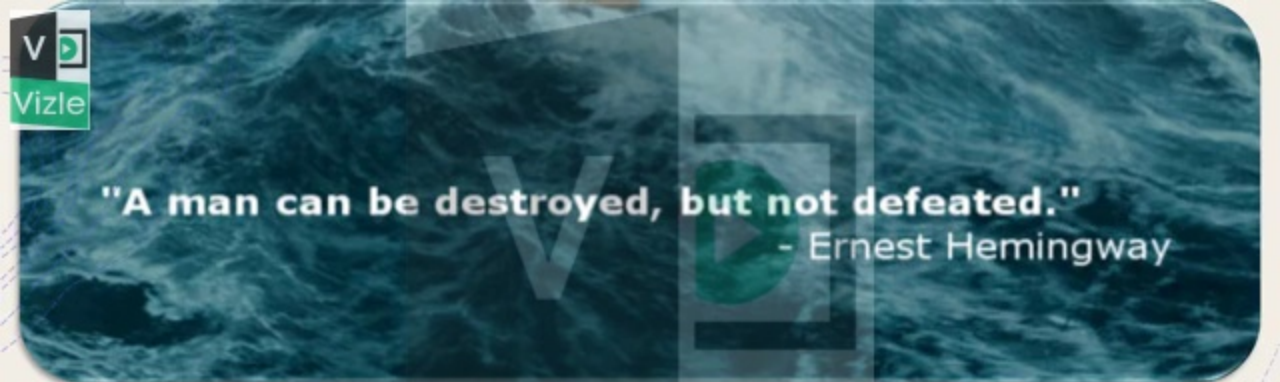
**Style** –  
Minimalistic –  
Minimum  
characters, use  
of minimum  
words

**Language** –  
Simple,  
sometimes uses  
Spanish

## Youth and Old age



- ❖ The title of the novella, suggests the critical thematic role that age plays in the story.
- ❖ Santiago and Manolin, represent the old and the young, and a beautiful harmony develops between them.
- ❖ What one lacks, the other provides
  - Manolin, has energy and enthusiasm (finds food and clothing for Santiago, and encourages him despite his bad luck.)
  - Santiago, in turn, has wisdom and experience. He tells Manolin stories about baseball and teaches him to fish.
  - Santiago's determination to be a good role model for Manolin is one of his main motivations in battling the marlin for three days—he wants to show Manolin "what a man can do."



**"A man can be destroyed, but not defeated."**  
- Ernest Hemingway

## 5. Success and Defeat

- ❖ Santiago is a man fighting against defeat.
- ❖ Yet Santiago never gives in to defeat: he sails far out into the ocean in hopes of landing a fish, struggles with the marlin for three days and nights despite immense physical pain and exhaustion, and, after catching the marlin, fights off the sharks even when it's clear that the battle against them is hopeless.
- ❖ He turns to a number of tactics to fuel his resistance to defeat: he recalls memories of his youthful strength; he relies on his pride by demanding that he prove himself a worthy role model for Manolin or by comparing himself to his hero Joe DiMaggio; and he prays to God, even though his prayers do nothing to ease his physical suffering.



# Symbols

**Mast**

- An allusion to the Christian cross, which in turn symbolizes pain and suffering for a greater good.

**Skiff**

- Represents Santiago himself at the beginning – a flag of permanent defeat

**Lost Harpoon**

- Loss of power

**Manolin**

- Hope and future







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