

## **BOOK REVIEW**

## THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA: AN EXISTENTIAL APPROACH

The book enunciates elements of existentialism that have been highlighted by Hemingway. Published in 1952, it was the last fictitious magnum opus to be published during his lifetime.

Through *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway brings to the attention of his readers the need for endurance; in fact, it is possible that it was this very trait that mattered the most to him in this world marked with death and destruction, which is inevitable. Through his protagonist, Santiago's battle with his inner struggles, Hemingway is able to determine his views and values, which in turn enables him to envision his future; helping him reach his true and complete self. The theory of existentialism has been portrayed in the novella with the help of the characters' inner and physical struggles, and the inner spirit of the characters.

The storyline touches upon the theory of existentialism through Santiago and his struggle with a giant Marlin in the Gulf Stream. Hemingway utilizes instances of external conflict between Santiago (an experienced fisherman) and other fishermen, the fish and struggles at the sea. These situations give the readers a literal and metaphorical perception as it symbolizes conflict in its core. Santiago's actions, his freedom of choice when he decided to venture far out into the sea, getting injured by the sharks yet choosing to stay and fish, enduring all the struggles inspite of having the opportunity to walk away, all these portray the existentialism that Hemingway seeks to convey to his readers. Santiago's decision to stay and capture the giant Marlin causes him deep mental and physical sufferings, on the other hand the sea is portrayed as wicked and full of fear, yet they do not deter Santiago like the other fishermen. This conveys the trait of existentialists who find beauty in themselves and make their own decision, without any regard to society. They value individualism, freedom of choice and own to their actions, traits that have been bestowed upon Santiago by Hemingway.

Further, when Santiago makes the decision to move further than his fellow fishermen, it becomes a symbol of universal allegory of man's willpower and the spirit of endurance. Hemingway emphasizes upon the distinct individual experience that Santiago is forced to undergo in a hostile universal, freedom of choice and the need to take responsibility for the consequences of one's act, something that Santiago is forced to undergo as he exercises his will against the giant Marlin, thus affirming his existence. This is akin to the notion of existentialists that an individual, after his birth, must fight with his surroundings to keep surviving on earth. The *Old Man and the Sea* is an apt description of the same, despite Santiago failing to catch fish, he still does not lose hope and continues with his journey at the sea. His determination, personality and choices is what shapes him as an individual. These are the defining traits that embody the notion of existentialism within the novella.