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disillusionment was only magnified by his 10-year struggle with writing that preceded the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Other Books Related to *The Old Man and the Sea*

In Paris, Hemingway became part of the "lost generation" of American writers who had relocated to Europe after World War I. In the company of writers like Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Gertrude Stein, Hemingway infused his work with a sense of emptiness, disillusionment, and rebellion against patriotic ideals. In this way, his work can be considered related to novels like *Ulysses* and *The Great Gatsby*, which describe the sadness and hardship of the human condition.

Key Facts about *The Old Man and the Sea*

Full Title: *The Old Man and the Sea*

- **When Written:** 1951
- **Where Written:** Cuba
- **When Published:** 1952
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Fiction (novella); Parable
- **Setting:** Late 1940s; a fishing village near Havana, Cuba, and the waters of the Gulf of Mexico
- **Climax:** When Santiago finally harpoons and kills the marlin; when Santiago fights off the final pack of sharks

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- **Antagonist:** The marlin; the sharks
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient, although largely limited to Santiago's point of view

Extra Credit for *The Old Man and the Sea*

Awards: *The Old Man and the Sea* was the last major work of fiction Hemingway wrote. It won the Pulitzer Prize in 1953 and contributed to Hemingway's selection for the Nobel Prize in 1954.

Criticism of the Critics: Hemingway's novel *Across the River and Into the Trees*, published in 1950, met with severe negative criticism, although Hemingway said he considered it his best work yet. When *The Old Man and the Sea* was published to great acclaim, some viewed the story as Hemingway's symbolic attack on literary critics—the elderly master fighting and triumphing over his long-time adversaries.



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Characters of the Novella

Santiago

The protagonist of the novella, Santiago is an elderly widowed Cuban fisherman whose "luck" seems to have run out—he hasn't caught anything in 84 days. Santiago is humble in his dealings with others.

Manolin

An adolescent Cuban boy who has fished with Santiago since he was a child, Manolin is Santiago's devoted apprentice. He cares for Santiago in his old age, and encourages him in his fishing.

Minor Characters

Pedrico

Another fisherman in Santiago's village, Pedrico makes fish traps. Santiago gives him the marlin's head at the end of the novella in gratitude for supplying him with newspapers that report the baseball scores.

Martin

The owner of the seaside café, the Terrace, where Santiago and other fisherman eat. Martin provides Santiago with meals during his unlucky streak.



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Plot of the Short Novel

On the coast of Cuba near Havana, an old widowed fisherman named **Santiago** has been unable to catch a fish for 84 days. His apprentice, **Manolin**, has been forced by his parents to seek another "luckier" employer, although Manolin continues to help Santiago launch and retrieve his boat from the ocean each day. Manolin cares for the aging Santiago, bringing him food and clothing, and in return Santiago tells Manolin stories about baseball legends and his younger days fishing in a boat off of Africa. Every night, Santiago dreams of **lions** on the beaches of Africa. Early each morning, Santiago walks up the road to Manolin's family's home to wake him up for work.

On the morning of the 85th day, Manolin helps Santiago launch his boat into the sea. Santiago rows over the deep well where he has been trying to catch fish for the past week and decides to try his luck farther out. Finally, in the early afternoon, he catches a ten-pound tuna, which he decides will be his meal for the day. Not long afterward, Santiago feels a hard pull on his line and realizes that a huge marlin has caught his hook.

Because the marlin is so big, however, Santiago cannot pull it in. The marlin pulls Santiago's skiff farther and farther from land. As the sun goes down, Santiago begins to feel a kind of companionship with the marlin. He pities the fish, even loves it, but is still determined to kill it. He decides to cut all his other lines so that nothing will interfere with his great catch.

As the sun comes up on Santiago's second day at sea, the marlin suddenly surges, pulling the line and cutting Santiago's hand. As he nurses his hand, the marlin jumps up out of the water, and Santiago can see the fish is bigger than any marlin he has ever seen, much less caught on his own. He has to hold onto the line with



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all his might so that the marlin does not break free from the boat. He prays that he will be able to kill the marlin, and wonders what his hero Joe DiMaggio would do if he were in Santiago's situation.

As it grows dark on Santiago's second day at sea, he lets out a small line and catches a dolphin to eat. He rests for a few hours, but is woken by the marlin jumping frantically. Santiago continues holding the line, although it has been cutting into his hand for some time. The marlin tires and begins circling the boat as Santiago grows weaker from lack of sleep and exhaustion. Finally, Santiago uses all his strength to harpoon and kill the marlin.

Santiago ties the marlin to the side of his boat and begins sailing back toward Cuba. During the homeward journey, however—his third day at sea—**sharks** attack the boat, tearing the flesh from the marlin. Santiago fights desperately, killing or driving off most of the sharks, but eventually the sharks eat all the flesh off the marlin. When Santiago pulls into the harbor, everyone is sleeping, and Santiago struggles to carry his mast back to his shack, leaving the marlin's skeleton still tied to his boat in the harbor.

The next day, Manolin finds Santiago asleep in his shack. Manolin is overjoyed to see him but cries when he sees the cuts in Santiago's hands. He brings Santiago coffee, passing the crowd of fisherman who are marveling at the marlin's giant skeleton. When Santiago wakes up, Manolin tells him he doesn't care what his parents say—he's going to start fishing with Santiago again. Meanwhile, as a party of tourists watches the marlin's skeleton and mistakes it for a shark, Santiago drifts back to sleep under Manolin's watchful gaze and dreams of lions.

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Themes of The Novella, *The Old Man And The Sea*

- i) **Resistance to Defeat**
- ii) **Pride**
- iii) **Friendship**
- iv) **Youth and Age**
- v) **Man and Nature**
- vi) **Christian Allegory**

Symbol of the Novella

The Sharks

Scavengers and little more than swimming appetites, the sharks are **Santiago's** fiercest antagonists. Although Santiago manages to kill most of them, they tear apart the marlin's body and leave Santiago devastated. While the marlin is portrayed as both an adversary and a noble companion to Santiago, the sharks are portrayed as purely vicious. The shovel-nosed sharks can also be seen as symbolizing the destructive forces of nature and of the people of Jerusalem, whose petty jealousies and rivalries led to the crucifixion of Jesus. Some have even argued that the sharks symbolize literary critics, whom Hemingway saw as "feasting" on the creations of true artists without actually creating anything themselves.