

## Great River Monster: A Critical Approach from The Old Man and The Sea and other writings

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### Abstract

The Old Man and The Sea is the last work of Earnest Hemingway and here he proves that he is the greatest River Monster in the world. In the text Santiago caught a big fish that he had ever seen. Many writers create some characters like Santiago in The Old Man and The Sea and Captain Ahab in Moby Dick and both try to be River Monster but Santiago only becomes River Monster and gets victory because finally he defeats the fish like Monster and he proves himself as a great River Monster.

**Key note:** Santiago ( in The Old Man and The Sea ), Captain Ahab ( in Moby Dick ) and comparative study.

### Introduction

Santiago is a fisherman living in a village and fishes for his livelihood. His wife has died and who had no children. He lives alone. For 84 days Santiago has gone without catching fish. This is very unfortunate for him and the young man who is like a son to him. For this reason the young man goes with another fisherman according to his parents. The young man supports his family for their livelihood and without money he can't support his family. Santiago is an old man and obviously all about him is old except his eyes which are of the color of the sea and are cheerful and undefeated. He is the best fisherman of all times. He is an ideal fisher because he considers that fishing is more than occupation and also thinks that this is the best way of life. He is conscious of the mood of the weather and sensitive to sunrise. He is well aware of the far off hills. He knows the thrill of the contest between man and fish. He is conscious of the patience of man in front of the sea. He believes in love loyalty and respect. Santiago is a man of

determination and resolution. After eighty four days failure, he decides to far out to catch a big fish. He succeeds in catching a big marlin but he loses the battle at the hands of sharks. He is ready to fight beyond the limits of his strength. We can't say him defeated as he has gone on trying. He is morally victorious. His belief in that "the man can be destroyed but not defeated" sets up him a man of strong determination. His resolution is clearly described in his long struggle with the marlin. He has unlimited will power and self-confidence that enables him to win victory over his adversary. The old man is very patient and courageous person. He is determined to " stay with you until I am dead". He tells the fish " I will kill you dead before this day ends". He shows himself to be a seasoned and a skilful fisherman. He knows the sea and its creatures very well. He judges the behavior of the marlin and of the shark very well. He believes in the techniques and skill. He says " It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact".

Novel shows Santiago a Christ like figure. He is ready to endure the pain. He belongs to a category

of “good man”. He is very humble. When mandolin that he is the best fisherman, Santiago says “No, I know others better”. His pride has been gone for a long time when he defeats the marlin. The humility remains with his immense fatigue. Santiago is very compassionate. He loves the creature of the sea, the flying fish, the green turtles and the hawksbill with their elegances and speed. Porpoises delight him. “They are our brothers like the flying fish”. Santiago is very simple man who does not have to lie or boast about his fishing successes. He says all about himself truly. He does not have the habit of blame the currents or winds for far his failures. He keeps on fishing confidently.

He is optimistic by temperament. He has strong faith in success and confidence in future. He is the man of common sense. His prudence is his “trick”. Santiago like words leach-gatherer, acquires a high dignity. Both these characters belong to the gallery of immortals.

The old man accepts his kindness with a humility that is like a quiet kind of pride. Over their evening meals of rice or black beans, they talk about the fish they had caught in luckier times or about American baseball and the great Joe Di Maggio. At night alone in his shake, Santiago dreams of lions on the beaches of Africa where he had gone on a sailing ship years before. He no longer dreams of his dead wife.

On the eighty-fifth day, Santiago rows out of the harbor in the cool dark before dawn. After leaving the smell of land behind him, he sets his lines. Two of his baits are fresh tunas the boy had given him as well as sardines to cover his hooks. The lines sink straight down into deep dark water. As the sun rises, he sees other boats in towards shore which is only a low green line on the sea. A hovering man-of-war bird shows him where dolphins are chasing some flying fish but the school is moving too fast and is too far away. The bird circles again. This time Santiago sees tuna leaping in the sunlight. A small one takes the hook on his stern line. Hauling the quivering fish aboard, the old man thinks it a good omen.

Toward noon, a marlin starts nibbling at the bait which is one hundred fathoms down. Gently the

old man plays the fish, a big one as he knows from the weight on the line. At last he strikes to settle the hook. The fish does not surface. Instead, it begins to tow the skiff to the northwest. The old man braces himself, the line taut across his shoulders. He is skilled and knows many tricks; he waits patiently for the fish to tire.

The old man shivers in the cold that comes after sunset. When something takes one of his remaining baits, he cuts the line with his sheath knife. The fish lurches suddenly, pulling Santiago forward on his face, cutting his cheek. By dawn his left hand is stiff and cramped. The fish has headed northward; there is no land in sight. Another strong tug on the line slices Santiago’s right hand. Hungry, he cuts strips from the tuna and chews them slowly while he waits for the sun to warm him and ease his cramped fingers. That morning the fish jumps. Seeing this leap, Santiago knows he has hooked the biggest marlin he has ever seen. Then the fish goes under and turns toward the east. Santiago drinks sparingly from his water bottle during the hot afternoon. Once an airplane drones overhead on its way to Miami. Trying to forget his cut hand and aching back, he remembers the days when men had called him El Campion and he had wrestled with a giant man in the tavern at Cienfuegos.

Close to nightfall, a dolphin takes the small hook Santiago has rebated. He lifts the fish aboard, careful not to jerk the line over his shoulder. After he rests, he cuts fillets from the dolphin and also keeps the two flying fish he finds in its maw. That night he sleeps. He awakes to feel the line running through his fingers as the fish jumps. Feeding line slowly, he tries to tire the marlin. After the fish slows its run, Santiago washes his cut hands in seawater and eats one of the flying fish. At sunrise, the marlin begins to circle. Faint and dizzy, he works to bring the big fish nearer with each turn. Almost exhausted, he finally draws his catch alongside and drives in the harpoon. He drinks a little water before he lashes the marlin to the bow and stern of his skiff. The fish is two feet longer than the boat. No catch like it has ever seen in Havana harbor. It will make his fortune, Santiago thinks as he hoists his patches sails and sets his course toward the southwest. Religious faith is a confounding proposition which stifles the simple mind of Santiago. The usual “Our Fathers” and “Hail Marys” mechanically uttered moment trarily relieve him but there is no relief

from suffering he has to go through, which escalates even further. (Eddins, 2001).

An hour later, Santiago sights the first shark. It is a fierce Mako and it comes in fast to slash with raking teeth at the dead marlin. With failing might, the old man strikes the shark with its harpoon. The Mako rolls and sinks, carrying the harpoon with it and leaving the marlin mutilated and bloody. Santiago knows the scent will spread. Watching, he sees two shovel-nosed sharks closing in. He strikes at one with his knife lashed to the end of an oar and watches the scavenger slide down into deep water. He kills the other while it tears at the flesh of the marlin. When the third appears, he thrusts at it with the knife, only to feel the blade snap as the fish rolls. The other sharks come at sunset. At first, Santiago tries to club them the tiller from the skiff, but his hands are raw and bleeding and there are too many in the pack. In the darkness, as he steers toward the faint glow of Havana against the sky, he hears them hitting the carcass again and again. Yet the old man thinks only of his steering and his great tireness. He has gone out too far and the sharks have beaten him. He knows that they will leave him nothing but the stripped skeleton of his great catch. Hemingway (2009), goes further in his discussion of the concept of the sin and grace. "Perhaps it was a sin to kill the fish"...You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him or is it more".

All lights are out when he sails into the little harbor and beaches his skiff. In the gloom, he can just make out the white backbone and the upstanding tail of the fish. He starts up the shore with the mast and furls the sail of his boat. Once he falls under their weight and lays patiently until he can gather his strength. In the shack, he falls on his bed and goes to sleep. There the boy finds him later that morning. Meanwhile, other fishermen, gathered about the giant marlin, eighteen feet long from nose to tail. Manolin returns to Santiago's shack with hot coffee, and the old man wakes up. The boy, he says can have the spear of his fish. Manolin tells him to rest, to make himself fit for the days of fishing they will have together. All that afternoon, the old man sleeps, the boy sitting by his bed. Santiago is dreaming of lions. Hemingway's heroes act superbly strange pressures and finally reach a state of tranquility

which is also called Santa Rasa (Fernando,2003), according to classical Indian Scholars.

In Moby Dick, Ismael who narrates this story becomes friend with Queequeg, a big dude who kills whales. They go on a whaling ship together called the Pequod. Ahab is the Captain of the ship. He stays in his cabin because of some random sickness. Ismael and Queequeg meet the others on board. When Ismael sees Ahab for the first time, he gets creeped out. Ismael describes all the different sorts of whales. Ahab tells the crew that the whole reason they are there is to find this one whale, the Great White whale (Moby Dick) and kill it. When Ishmael says captain Peleg why he wants to go whaling the old retired whaler mocks him, directing the native sailor to the front of the ship to see what he could do of the world from that vantage. Pointing to the open ocean, the "prospect was unlimited, but exceedingly monotonous and forbidding.(Moby-Dick,71-72).

I want to see what whaling is.I want to see the world

Moby Dick is an evil huge whale that acts up when he is attacked. In search goes on for the whale. All over the world Ahab and his crew go looking for Moby. They run into other whaling ships and men who have seen the whale. In a big storm the Pequod suffers some damage. Ahab grows more and more focused and nutty about finding the whale. He ignores others boats that need his help and just moves on in his search. Finally Ahab sees the big whale. The crew tries to harpoon Moby but the whale smashes the boats and gets away. The next day, they lose a crew member. The next day, Ahab spears Moby's side. The other boats, in trouble, go back to the main ship. Ahab stays to fight the whale. Moby is pissed and wrecks the Pequod. Ahab tries again but his own harpoon rope kills him and the Pequod sinks. Ishmael is the only one who gets out alive. He is rescued by another boat, the Rachel.

## Conclusion

Finally we prove that Santiago is the greatest River Monster in the world. Nobody can win the victory without Santiago against the big fish like monster and against the sea. Santiago can be destroyed but not defeated. Hemingway creates a character who is the leader of all fishermen and proved himself as a Great River Monster.

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