



The Old Man and The Sea

By Ernest Hemingway

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The Old Man and the Sea is one of Hemingway's most enduring works. Told in language of great simplicity and power, it is the story of an old Cuban fisherman, down on his luck, and his supreme ordeal -- a relentless, agonizing battle with a giant marlin far out in the Gulf Stream.

Here Hemingway recasts, in strikingly contemporary style, the classic theme of courage in the face of defeat, of personal triumph won from loss. Written in 1952, this hugely successful novella confirmed his power and presence in the literary world and played a large part in his winning the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature.

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The Old Man and The Sea By Ernest Hemingway Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Here, for a change, is a fish tale that actually does honor to the author. In fact *The Old Man and the Sea* revived Ernest Hemingway's career, which was foundering under the weight of such postwar stinkers as *Across the River and into the Trees*. It also led directly to his receipt of the Nobel Prize in 1954 (an award Hemingway gladly accepted, despite his earlier observation that "no son of a bitch that ever won the Nobel Prize ever wrote anything worth reading afterwards"). A half century later, it's still easy to see why. This tale of an aged Cuban fisherman going head-to-head (or hand-to-fin) with a magnificent marlin encapsulates Hemingway's favorite motifs of physical and moral challenge. Yet Santiago is too old and infirm to partake of the gun-toting machismo that disfigured much of the author's later work: "The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords." Hemingway's style, too, reverts to those superb snapshots of perception that won him his initial fame:

Just before it was dark, as they passed a great island of Sargasso weed that heaved and swung in the light sea as though the ocean were making love with something under a yellow blanket, his small line was taken by a dolphin. He saw it first when it jumped in the air, true gold in the last of the sun and bending and flapping wildly in the air.

If a younger Hemingway had written this novella, Santiago most likely would have towed the enormous fish back to port and posed for a triumphal photograph--just as the author delighted in doing, circa 1935. Instead his prize gets devoured by a school of sharks. Returning with little more than a skeleton, he takes to his bed and, in the very last line, cements his identification with his creator: "The old man was dreaming about the lions." Perhaps there's some allegory of art and experience floating around in there somewhere--but *The Old Man and the Sea* was, in any case, the last great catch of Hemingway's career. --*James Marcus*

Review

Short novel by Ernest Hemingway, published in 1952 and awarded the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Completed after a 10-year literary drought, it was his last major work of fiction. The novel is written in Hemingway's characteristically spare prose. It concerns an old Cuban fisherman named Santiago who finally catches a magnificent fish after weeks of not catching anything. After three days of playing the fish, he finally manages to reel it in and lash it to his boat, only to have sharks eat it as he returns to the harbor. The other fishermen marvel at the size of the skeleton; Santiago is spent but triumphant. -- *The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*

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