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What would you do if you were a fisherman who has gone eighty four days without taking a fish? Would you simply give up and accept your fate? Or would you keep trying despite the discouragements that you receive from your fellow fishermen? This dilemma sums up the struggle that the old fisherman faces in the fiction by Ernest Hemingway, "The Old Man and the Sea." Stuck between a rock and a hard place, the brave old man chooses the latter without hesitation. He continues to sail far out into the sea and eventually catches a great marlin. Although in the end, the marlin gets eaten by the sharks, the old man is still able to prove his skills and earn the respect from the other fishermen. Ernest Hemingway tells this inspiring story through the use of different literary devices, style, themes, and an accurate presentation of the time period in which the book is written and his own personal background. Without doubt, this book is astonishingly well written and a quality work.

Ernest Hemingway utilizes numerous literary devices throughout the book to keep the readers captivated and to convey the different themes. The prevalent use of foreshadowing in the story builds up suspense and helps the readers predict what will happen. In the beginning of the book, Hemingway introduces the characters: the old fisherman named Santiago who is unlucky and has trouble taking a fish and the boy called Manolin who sometimes accompanies the old man. One day, the boy offers to buy the old man a beer and they sit on the Terrace to enjoy the drinks. They drink and watch the other fishermen work busily. Hemingway describes the people working with the marlin, "The successful fishermen of that day were already in and had butchered their marlin out and carried them laid full length... to the fish house..." and with the sharks, "Those who had caught sharks had taken them to the shark factory..."(Hemingway 11). The detailed descriptions of the marlin and shark foreshadow the old man's destined encounter with them. Hemingway dedicates a lengthy paragraph to depict the butchering process of the marlin and the shark, and this makes the readers wonder why there are so much details about two sea animals that seem insignificant to the plot. Using foreshadowing, Hemingway successfully gives hints to the readers about the important roles that the marlin and the shark will later play in the story. Hemingway continues to employ foreshadowing in the book. When the old man is out in the sea, one of his baits finally attracts a marlin that is of extraordinary size. However, since the marlin is so strong, the old man needs to wait for a perfect timing to kill it. During the few days that the old man spends observing the marlin, he begins to see the marlin as a worthy opponent and admires it for its beauty and nobility. Unfortunately, as a fisherman, the old man has to kill the marlin in the end. He drives the harpoon through the marlin and it "rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty" and then "fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skiff" (Hemingway 94). The old man views the marlin as his alter ego, and therefore the death of the marlin foreshadows Santiago's destruction by the sharks later in the story. It is obvious that the marlin and the old man are linked when Hemingway describes them as both old but strong and perseverant. The readers can easily predict that the mission of the old man to protect the marlin will ultimately fail because similar to the marlin, the old man is fated to be destroyed by bigger enemies - the sharks. Hemingway uses foreshadowing so well that it flows and goes along with the storyline and gives clues to the readers about upcoming events in the book. To make the story more interesting, Hemingway incorporates the use of symbolism within his writings

The novel is full of symbols. The sea, the marlin, the old man's love for baseball, the sharks, and the lions all have their own meanings. With the help of symbolism, Hemingway is able to present his message to the readers. The symbols are all related to the cycle of life. To begin with, the sea is an important symbol, and it helps with the setting because majority of the book takes place at the sea. The sea represents the life that every man has to experience, whether it is a wonderful or a brutal one. While observing the birds hunting for fish, the old man ponders about the moody behavior of the sea, "She is very kind and beautiful. But she can be so cruel and it comes so suddenly and such bird that fly, dipping and hunting with their small sad voices are made too delicately for the sea"(Hemingway 29). Life is like the capricious ocean. Sometimes it is kind and gives people rewards, similar to how the sea contributes fish to the fishermen. At other times life can be harsh and stops people from achieving their goals, and in the same way the sea forbids the birds from catching their prey. Another symbol is the gigantic marlin. It is the ideal opponent of the old man and represents the struggle of life. In order to prove his self worth and earn respect from the other fishermen, the old man must defeat the marlin and bring it home for everyone to see. After discovering the great size of the marlin, the old man sighs, "'I must save all my strength now. Christ, I did not know he was so big'"(Hemingway 66). The old man has to put in all his energy and hard work to conquer his opponent. Although the marlin gets eaten by the sharks in the end, the 18 feet skeleton of the marlin still wows the fishermen and gives the old man the praise that he deserves. Likewise, there are many obstacles in life and it is necessary for people to overcome those obstacles. Rewards will always await for them at the finish line. During the stalemate between the old man and the marlin, the old man thinks of Joe DiMaggio, a famous baseball player. He represents the hope and endurance that people need in difficult times. The old man tries to motivate himself, "...I must have confidence and I must be worthy of the great DiMaggio who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur in his heel"(Hemingway 68). DiMaggio and the old man are so similar. Joe DiMaggio's father is also a fisherman and despite his bone spur, he continues to play baseball. The old man sees Joe DiMaggio as his equal. Although he is old, the inspiring story of DiMaggio encourages the old man to continue fighting his battle with the marlin. Next, the sharks that attack the old man's skiff represent the misfortune that ruins people's success. The triumphant old man plans to take the fish back to Havana and sell it for a good amount of money. When he is so close from succeeding, the sharks appear and each tries to get a bite of the tasteful marlin. The man gives up on fighting the sharks. "But by midnight he fought and this time he knew the fight was useless. They came in a pack and he could only see the lines in the water that their fins made and their phosphorescence as they threw themselves on the fish"(Hemingway 118). They one by one devour the entire marlin leaving behind only the bones. Misfortune happens and it is unavoidable. The old man attempts to kill off the sharks but it is pointless when the sharks are much stronger. Finally, the old man arrives home and rests. In his dream, he sees the lions in Africa. The lions represents the youth of the old man. The old man may seem defeated after the marlin gets eaten buy the sharks, but he is in reality triumphant on the inside for successfully conquering the marlin and overcoming his internal struggle. There are many symbols within the novel and they all link with each other to create the big image of the cycle of life. Hemingway does a good job of writing the symbols with two purposes: to reveal his message to the readers and to use them as objects that help to create the story. He intentionally includes each symbol and they all play an important role. They work together to tell the audience the message that good and bad coexist in life and most of the times there will be struggles and misfortune. However, people should always hold on to hope and there will be rewards. Besides foreshadowing and symbolism, Hemingway's unique writing style is another tool that helps to develop the story.

Previously working as a journalist, Hemingway adopts a succinct writing style. He prefers writing simple sentences that can directly express his ideas. The brief and concise sentences keep the novel at a relatively short length comparing to many other classic novels. Hemingway does not even separate his book into different chapters but simply continues his narration. This helps the readers to read at a faster paced and have a better understanding of the story when the book is short and does not include too much unnecessary details. Sometimes, a too flowery writing style can be distracting and deviates the readers from the main story line. This book is straightforward and keeps the readers' attention because only the important details are included. This journalistic style of writing gives the novel a factual tone and tells the story without much emotions. This is great because instead of forcing his own emotions onto the readers, Hemingway allows them to react to the story with their own feelings. The readers can create their own scenarios inside their minds and not be programmed into feeling the emotions the author has. This unique writing style makes the novel outstanding. The great qualities of the book are not just confined to the well used literary devices; there is something more special to the book such as the theme.

Theme is an important component to a well written novel. Multiple themes are discussed throughout this story and they help to teach the readers valuable lessons. First of all, Hemingway expresses his message that internal youth and spirit are more important than outer appearance with the descriptions of the old man's unusually healthy eyes, the contrast between the old man's childish action and the young boy's mature behavior, and the symbolism of the lions. In the beginning of the book, Hemingway describes how almost every feature of the old man is old except for his strangely "cheerful and undefeated" eyes (Hemingway 10). Later, when the old man and the boy talk about how turtle-ing ruins the eyes. The boy casually comments, "'But you went turtle-ing for years off the Mosquito Coast and your eyes are good'"(Hemingway 14). There is a famous quote, "Eyes are the windows to the soul" which states that the eyes can accurately reflect a person's heart. The old man's perfectly healthy eyes reveal how the he may have an old appearance, but deep inside, he has a youthful mind. Next, the boy goes to get sardines for the old man. When he comes back to the shack, he sees that the old man is asleep. He wakes up the old man and says, "'Keep the blanket around you... You'll not fish without eating while I'm alive'" (Hemingway 19). It is interesting how the boy takes care of the old man and reminds him to eat. The boy behaves like a father and the old man is the like the child. Hemingway depicts this ironic scene to establish the old man as someone who appears old but has a young and childish heart. Finally, Hemingway mentions the old man's dreams about lions several times. He does not dream of his wife, his adventures, or anything else, but of lions from Africa. Lions are usually a symbol for youth and strength and the old man's dreams about lions furthermore represent the old man's internal youth. Hemingway states the theme very well with these three details. He teaches the readers that whatever is on the inside is more important than the outside. It is okay to be old because inner youth is what matters the most.

Another message that is clearly depicted in the book is that companionship is important and this is shown through the repetition of the old man's thoughts and the dialogue between the boy and the old man. During the three days that the old man is out at the sea, he faces numerous challenges. Every time that he is in a difficult situation or feels lonely, he thinks to himself, "I wish the boy was here"(Hemingway 50). The phrase is repeated several times throughout the text. The man does not want to be alone and wants help from the boy. Perhaps if the boy had been there to fish with the old man, he would have caught the marlin in a shorter time and protect it from being eaten by the sharks. In the end, when the old man returns home looking exhausted, the boy cries and asks the old man to fish with him next time, and the old man agrees. The lucky boy has caught three fishes on his sail. With the luck from the boy, maybe the old man in salao will finally catch some fish. Hemingway's description of the old man's miserable fishing experience is an epitome of how doings things alone can give people disadvantages and it is always better to have a partner.

The theme of manhood is apparent in the story. By describing the actions that a man ought to take, Hemingway reveals his idea that being a man means taking responsibility and persevering in difficult times. Working as fishermen is tough because they have to wake up early to prepare the equipments necessary for fishing. In the same way, the old man wakes boy up early in the morning on a fishing day. The old man apologizes to the boy because he probably has interrupted the boy's good sleep. However, the boy simply replies with "'Que vá... It is what a man must do'"(Hemingway 26). The boy does not complain to the old man about the loss of sleeping hours and instead he understands that rising early to prepare for fishing is a responsibility that comes along with his job. Although he is probably not an adult yet, he knows that this is what a man should do. Later, the boy and the man go on different skiffs. The old man is all by himself now. At this moment, the man encounters a problem with this fishing lines and he wishes that the boy is here to help him out. Then he gets angry at himself for having this absurd though, "But you haven't got the boy... You have only yourself and you had better work back to the last line now, in the dark or not in the dark, and cut it away and hook up the two reserve coils"(Hemingway 52). As a man, he must endure and try to overcome the difficulties. Even when there is no one to help him, he cannot give up because this is what a man must do. Hemingway's portrayal of the old man and the boy's mature way of dealing with unfavorable situation displays their responsibility and perseverance.

The final message that Hemingway delivers to the readers is that a man can be destroyed physically, but as long as he does not give up he is cannot be defeated. Santiago faces many troubles in his life: not catching any fish for 84 days, encountering a great marlin that takes three days to kill, and getting attacked by the sharks. In the end, he comes home with nothing in his hand and gets exhausted and destroyed from the few days of battle with the marlin and the sharks. However, Santiago thinks that he is not defeated and ponders, "But a man is not made for defeat. A man can be destroyed but not defeated"(Hemingway 103). Santiago still has hope in his heart that he will catch a fish next time he sails at the sea. He is not defeated because he has not given up yet. This theme flows through the entire story. From the beginning to the end, Santiago keeps running into difficulties that may seem to defeat him but he does not give up. Hemingway wants his readers to think the same way that Santiago does. The qualities that make a book worth reading do not stop at the effective use of literary devices and variation of themes, it also has to reflect on cultural values and author's background.

The story of this Cuban fisherman takes place in the 1950s and many events in the book accurately reflect the Cuban culture during this time period and Hemingway's own life. To start off, the frequently mentioned topic of baseball and the old man's idolization of the famous baseball star Joe DiMaggio reflect how baseball was gaining popularity in Cuba and becoming a national sport in the 1950s. According to PlazaCuba.com's history of Cuban baseball, baseball was first introduced to Cuba about 100 years before the 1950s and many people liked it and it spread quickly throughout the island. However, after the first Cuban War of Independence against colonial Spanish rulers, baseball was banned and people were expected to participate in bullfighting instead. This ban had the opposite impact that the government thought it would have though and made more people like baseball. People thought of baseball as the freedom from Spanish control. Cuban players also started to play in major leagues in the U.S. The Cuban league operated soon became one of the longest lasting baseball league besides that of the U.S. In 1947, the Cuban league had an agreement with the U.S. league and many U.S. players were sent to Cuba during their "off seasons" to train and recover from injury. Many talented American baseball players played in Cuba. Joe DiMaggio was one of the best American baseball players around that time. Joe DiMaggio is not just a symbol for the old man's hope during his struggle with the marlin, most importantly it represents the growing love for baseball in Cuba. The fact that the old man and the young boy include baseball in most of their conversations and that the old man still thinks of baseball while he is at sea prove that baseball is a national sport during the 1950s. Since the book accurately reflects the culture of baseball in Cuba, this helps to establish a realistic setting. Secondly, this book is more like a reflection of Hemingway's own life rather than a cultural reflection. There are many similarities between Santiago and Hemingway. Santiago is a perfectionist because unlike the other fishermen, he likes to be precise and keeps track of where his lines with baits are located whereas the other fishermen just let their lines flow with the current. In a similar way, Hemingway liked to edit his papers over and over again. According to his biography, he could sit patiently and rewrite his papers until they are perfect. In the book, Santiago is an unlucky old man who has gone 84 days without catching a fish. He also gets a cramp in his hand because he is too tired from holding on to the fish line. Likewise, Hemingway experienced a difficult time and did not produce publish any work for about ten years. The cramp in Santiago's hand probably symbolizes Hemingway's writer's block. Other fishermen look down on Santiago for not catching any fish for such a long time. Similarly, as a writer, Hemingway had people who criticized him and disliked his writing styles. Santiago is a reflection of Hemingway himself and the book is mainly about how Hemingway faces challenges as a writer just like every common man on earth. He does a good job of telling a fascinating story and relating the events of the book back to his life and Cuba.

"The Old Man and the Sea" is a good book because Hemingway effectively writes the story with a variety of literary devices, themes, and accurately reflects on both the Cuban cultural values and his own background. He make sure the story flows and at the same time is able to mix in all the other elements. This is incredible and he deserves recognition for creating such a great story.

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