

The Old Man and the Sea

Background Info

Author Bio

Full Name: Ernest Miller Hemingway

Pen Name: Ernest Hemingway

Date of Birth: July 21, 1899

Place of Birth: Oak Park, Illinois

Date of Death: July 2, 1961

Brief Life Story: Ernest Hemingway grew up outside a suburb of Chicago, spending summers with his family in rural Michigan. After high school, he got a job writing for *The Kansas City Star*, but left *The Star* after only six months to join the Red Cross Ambulance Corps during World War I, where he was injured and awarded the Silver Medal of Military Valor. Afterward, he lived in Ontario and Chicago, where he met his first wife, Hadley Richardson. In 1921 they moved to Paris, where he began a long friendship with F. Scott Fitzgerald and other ex-patriot American writers of the “lost generation.” After the 1926 publication of his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway divorced Hadley, married Arkansas native Pauline Pfeiffer, and moved to Florida. Hemingway’s father committed suicide in 1928, shooting himself. During the Spanish Civil War, Hemingway moved to Spain to serve as a war correspondent, a job which inspired his famous 1939 novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. After its publication, he met his third wife, Martha Gellhorn. In 1946 Hemingway married his fourth and final wife, Mary Hemingway, and the couple

spent the next 14 years living in Cuba. After a final move to Idaho, Hemingway took his own life in 1961, leaving behind his wife and three sons.

Key Facts

Full Title: *The Old Man and the Sea*

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

Antagonist: The marlin; the sharks

Point of View: Third-person omniscient, although largely limited to Santiago’s point of view

Historical and Literary Context

When Written: 1951

Where Written: Cuba

When Published: 1952

Literary Period: Modernism

Related Literary Works: 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.

Related Historical Events: Living in Cuba in the late 1940s, one of Hemingway’s favorite pastimes was fishing in his boat, *The Pilar*. This simple pastime contrasted greatly with the turbulent events of his life that preceded his time in Cuba. Hemingway served in World War I and World War II and witnessed the liberation of Paris and the 1945 schism within the Cuban Communist party. Having viewed death and hardship in many forms, Hemingway’s feeling of disillusionment was only magnified by his 10-year struggle with writing that preceded the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Extra Credit

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.

Plot Summary

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 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 exhaus-

tion. 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.

Characters

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, yet takes great pride in his work and himself, and is frustrated and embarrassed by his failures. He views his aging body as a kind of betrayer, and fondly remembers his younger days, when he was exceptionally strong and a successful fisherman. Other than fishing, Santiago’s greatest joys are the time he spends with his former apprentice, **Manolin**, and the time he spends talking about baseball, and, in particular, his favorite player, the “great DiMaggio.” Besides Manolin, Santiago considers his only friends to be the sea, the fish, and the stars. In his conquest over the marlin, Santiago exhibits exceptional determination and endurance in the face of physical and psychological pain. Although he loses the marlin to sharks, the entire struggle constitutes a spiritual triumph in which Santiago emerges as a Christ figure.

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 even though Manolin’s parents have forced Manolin to seek out a “luckier” employer. He is Santiago’s only human friend, and looks up to Santiago as a mentor and father-figure. Manolin exemplifies traits of fidelity, selflessness and compassion. He accepts hard work happily, never complaining.

The marlin – The giant, 18-foot fish that battles with Santiago in the middle of the ocean for three days and three nights. Although Santiago hooks the marlin on his first afternoon at sea, the marlin refuses to come to the surface and pulls Santiago farther and farther from land. Santiago admires the marlin’s beauty and endurance, and considers it a “noble” adversary and a brother, telling the fish repeatedly that though he loves him, he must kill him.

The shovel-nosed sharks – Scavengers and little more than swimming appetites, the shovel-nosed 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.

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.

Themes

In LitCharts, each theme gets its own corresponding color, which you can use to track where the themes occur in the work. There are two ways to track themes:

- Refer to the color-coded bars next to each plot point throughout the *Summary and Analysis* sections.
- Use the *ThemeTracker* section to get a quick overview of where the themes appear throughout the entire work.

Resistance to Defeat

As a fisherman who has caught nothing for the last 84 days, Santiago is a man fighting against defeat. Yet **Santiago** never gives in to defeat: he sails further into the ocean than he ever has before in hopes of landing a fish, struggles with the **marlin** for three days and nights despite immense physical pain and exhaustion, and, after catching the marlin, fights off the sharks even when it's clear that the battle against them is hopeless. Whenever the situation gets particularly difficult and despair threatens to overwhelm Santiago, he turns to a number of tactics to fuel his resistance to defeat: he recalls memories of his youthful strength; he relies on his pride by demanding that he prove himself a worthy role model for **Manolin** or by comparing himself to his hero Joe DiMaggio; and he prays to God, even though his prayers do nothing to ease his physical suffering.

Ultimately, Santiago represents every man's struggle to survive. And just as Santiago's effort to bring the marlin back to land intact is doomed, no man can ever escape death. Yet through Santiago's struggle, Hemingway makes the case that escape from death is not the issue. As Santiago observes near the end of his struggle with the marlin, "a man can be destroyed but not defeated." In other words, victory over the inevitable is not what defines a man. Rather, it is a man's struggle against the inevitable, even when he knows it is inevitable, that defines him. And the more difficult the struggle, the more worthy the opponent, the more powerfully a man can prove himself.

Pride

Pride is often depicted as negative attribute that causes people to reach for too much and, as a result, suffer a terrible fall. After he kills the first shark, **Santiago**, who knows he killed the **marlin** "for pride," wonders if the sin of pride was responsible for the shark attack because pride caused him to go out into the ocean beyond the usual boundaries that fishermen observe. Santiago immediately dismisses the idea, however, and the events of *The Old Man and the Sea* support his conviction that pride is not the cause of his difficulties.

In fact, Santiago's pride is portrayed as the single motivating force that spurs him to greatness. It is his pride that pushes him to survive three grueling days at sea, battling the marlin

and then the sharks. Yet it is important to recognize that Santiago's pride is of a particular, limited sort. Pride never pushes him to try to be more than he is. For instance, when **Manolin** tells him, "The best fisherman is you," early in the story, Santiago humbly disagrees. Rather, Santiago takes pride in being *exactly* what he is, a man and a fisherman, and his struggle can be seen as an effort to be the best man and fisherman that he can be. As he thinks in the middle of his struggle with the marlin, he must kill the marlin to show Manolin "what a man can do and what a man endures." Santiago achieves the crucial balance between pride and humility—that "[humility] was not disgraceful and it carried no true loss of pride."

Friendship

The friendship between **Santiago** and **Manolin** plays a critical part in Santiago's victory over the **marlin**. In return for Santiago's mentorship and company, Manolin provides physical support to Santiago in the village, bringing him food and clothing and helping him load his skiff. He also provides emotional support, encouraging Santiago throughout his unlucky streak. Although Santiago's "hope and confidence had never gone," when Manolin was present, "they were freshening as when the breeze rises." And once he encounters the marlin, Santiago refuses to accept defeat because he knows Manolin would be disappointed in him.

Yet most of the novella takes place when Santiago is alone. Except for Manolin's friendship in the evenings, Santiago is characterized by his isolation. His wife has died, and he lives and fishes alone. Even so, just as he refuses to give in to death, he refuses to give in to loneliness. Santiago finds friends in other creatures. The flying fish are "his principal friends on the ocean," and the marlin, through their shared struggle, becomes his "brother." He calls the stars his "distant friends," and thinks of the ocean as a woman he loves. Santiago talks to himself, talks to his weakened left hand, and imagines Manolin sitting next to him. In the end, these friendships—both real and imagined—prevent Santiago from pitying himself. As a result, he has the support to achieve what seems physically impossible for an old man.

Youth and Age

The title of the novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, suggests the critical thematic role that age plays in the story. The book's two principal characters, **Santiago** and **Manolin**, represent the old and the young, and a beautiful harmony develops between them. What one lacks, the other provides. Manolin, for example, has energy and enthusiasm. He finds food and clothing for Santiago, and encourages him despite his bad luck. Santiago, in turn, has wisdom and experience. He tells Manolin stories about baseball and teaches him to fish. Santiago's

determination to be a good role model for Manolin is one of his main motivations in battling the **marlin** for three days—he wants to show Manolin "what a man can do."

Santiago's age is also important to the novella because it has made him physically weak. Without this weakness, his triumph would not be so meaningful to him. As Santiago says, he "had seen many [fish] that weighed more than a thousand pounds and had caught two of that size in his life, but never alone" and never as an old man. Santiago finds solace and strength in remembering his youth, which is symbolized by the **lions** on the beach that he sees in his dreams. He recalls these lions—slow, graceful but fierce creatures—from the perspective of an old man. In doing so, he realizes that he too, although slow, can still be a formidable opponent.

Man and Nature

Since *The Old Man and the Sea* is the story of a man's struggle against a **marlin**, it is tempting to see the novella as depicting man's struggle against nature. In fact, through **Santiago**, the novella explores man's relationship *with* nature. He thinks of the flying fish as his friends, and speaks with a warbler to pass the time. The sea is dangerous, with its sharks and potentially treacherous weather, but it also sustains him by providing food in the form of dolphins and shrimp. Finally, Santiago does not just see the marlin as an adversary, he loves it as a brother. In the middle of their struggle, Santiago says to the marlin, "Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who." Santiago's statement shows the depth of his admiration for the marlin and hints at the fundamental law of nature that unites man and animal: all beings must die, must kill or be killed. In this way, man and nature are joined in a circular system, in which death is necessary and fosters new life.

Christian Allegory

The Old Man and the Sea is full of Christian imagery. Over the course of his struggles at sea, **Santiago** emerges as a Christ figure. For instance: Santiago's injured hands recall Christ's stigmata (the wounds in his palms); when the **sharks** attack, Santiago makes a sound like a man being crucified; when Santiago returns to shore he carries his mast up to his shack on his shoulder, just as Christ was forced to bear his own crucifix; and Santiago's final position, resting on his bed, resembles Christ's position on the cross. More importantly, Santiago resembles Christ in that, like Christ, he transforms loss into triumph, faces the inevitability of death without complaint and, in doing so, transcends it. Christ literally is resurrected, while Santiago regains **Manolin** as an apprentice, providing both the companionship he had lost and the chance to pass his knowledge on to the next generation.

Symbols

Symbols are shown in **red** text whenever they appear in the *Plot Summary* and *Summary and Analysis* sections of this LitChart.

The Marlin

The **marlin** is Santiago's worthy opponent. Struggling against such an opponent brings out the best in an individual—courage, endurance, and love. At the same time, because **Santiago** comes to see the marlin as an alter-ego—he identifies the marlin as male and imagines the fish is old—the marlin comes to represent Santiago. In other words, Santiago's struggle with the marlin is in fact a struggle with himself. It is not a struggle of strength but rather of endurance, a refusal to accept defeat. Santiago's struggle with the marlin is in fact a struggle to face and overcome his own weaknesses as much as it is a struggle to subdue the great fish. In the process, by refusing to give in to the fish or the weakness of his mind and body, Santiago transcends those weaknesses.

Lions

Both in his bed in the village and in his boat, **Santiago** dreams of lions on the beaches of Africa, which he saw when he was a boy on a ship that sailed and fished the coast of Africa. The lions symbolize Santiago's lost youth as well as his pride (a group of lions is called a "pride"). Santiago's love for the lions, which are fierce predators, also mirrors his relationship with the **marlin**, whom he loves but whose death he feels is necessary to his survival. In this way, the lions also symbolize Santiago's affinity with nature. Now that Santiago is no longer young, and has lost his friends, family, and strength, he sees the lions only in his dreams. Santiago's dreams of the lions at the end of the novella suggest that in triumphing over the marlin, he has undergone his own rejuvenation.


The Shovel-Nosed Sharks

Scavengers who eat dead flesh, the shovel-nosed sharks stand in contrast to the marlin. Unlike the **marlin**, the sharks are not worthy opponents. The shovel-nosed sharks can 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.

The Mast

At the end of *The Old Man and the Sea*, the exhausted Santiago removes his mast from his skiff, and haltingly drags it up the beach to his shack by resting one end of the cross on his shoulder. The position in which Santiago carries the mast exactly mirrors the position in which Jesus Christ was forced to drag his cross on the way to his crucifixion. The mast, then, becomes a symbol for the cross, and cements the parallel that Hemingway sets up between Santiago's ordeal and Christ's.

Summary and Analysis

The color-coded bars in *Summary and Analysis* make it easy to track the themes through the work. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the *Themes* section. For instance, a bar of  indicates that all six themes apply to that part of the summary.

Day One

Santiago is an elderly fisherman who has gone 84 days without catching a fish. For the first 40 days, a boy named **Manolin** worked with Santiago. But Manolin's parents forced him to leave Santiago and start working on a "luckier" boat. Even so, at the end of every day Manolin still helps Santiago carry his empty skiff (boat) in from the water.

Santiago's face and hands are deeply scarred from so many years of handling fishing gear and heavy fish. Everything about him is old, except his eyes, which are the same color as the sea and are "cheerful and undefeated."

After **Santiago's** 84th unsuccessful day, Manolin once again helps him to bring in his skiff and gear. **Manolin** tells Santiago that he has made a bit of money working on the "luckier" boat, and offers to rejoin Santiago. He says that his father lacks faith, which is why he forced Manolin to switch to the other boat. Santiago advises him to stay with the luckier boat, but the two agree that they have faith that Santiago will catch something soon.

Manolin offers to buy **Santiago** a beer on the Terrace, a restaurant near the docks. The other fishermen at the restaurant make fun of Santiago's troubles, but Manolin disregards them. He reminisces with Santiago about the time they first started fishing together, when Manolin was five years old. Manolin says he still wants to help Santiago and offers to get Santiago fresh sardines for bait. Santiago initially refuses, but then finally agrees to accept two pieces of bait.


Over their beers, **Santiago** tells **Manolin** that he will be fishing far out in the sea the next day. Manolin says he will try to get the man he is fishing with to go far out as well since the man has bad vision and will follow the boy's recommendations. Manolin wonders how Santiago's vision can be so good after so many years of fishing. Santiago replies, "I am a strange old man."

After they finish the beer, **Manolin** helps **Santiago** carry his equipment up the road to Santiago's sparsely furnished shack. On the wall are two paintings: one of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which belonged to Santiago's wife, and another of the patron saint of Cuba. Santiago has taken down a photograph of his wife that used to hang on the wall because it made him too lonely to see it.


After going through the same dinner ritual they follow every night: **Santiago** offers **Manolin** some food, which Manolin declines because Santiago doesn't really have any food at all.

They then sit on the porch and read about baseball in the newspaper. **Santiago** tells **Manolin** he will have a good catch the next day, his 85th day without luck, and Manolin jokingly asks why he isn't holding out for 87 days, to break his longest unlucky streak. Santiago replies that such an unlucky streak could not happen twice.


The novella's opening establishes the Santiago and Manolin's devoted friendship. The number 40 is significant in the Bible, and Santiago's 40 days of bad luck parallels Christ's 40 days in the desert.




Santiago's body betrays his age, but his eyes show that his mind and spirit are resilient and still youthful. That his eyes match the sea links Santiago to nature.




Santiago's faith in his own skills and abilities allows him to fight off the hopelessness that might otherwise come from his bad fishing luck. Manolin's offer to return to work with Santiago, despite the likelihood that working with Santiago would make him less money, shows the depth of their friendship.




The other fishermen see Santiago as a defeated old man. Manolin's faith in Santiago helps Santiago ignore these insults, just as later it helps him endure his struggle against the marlin. Santiago refuses Manolin's offer at first out of pride. He wants to be self-sufficient. His acceptance of the offer later shows his desperation.




Santiago's desire to fish far out shows his desperation to catch a fish, even at the risk of danger. If something dangerous occurs, there will be no help—it will be just Santiago and the sea. Santiago's good vision again emphasizes his youthful qualities despite his age.




The paintings suggest that Santiago's wife was more religious than he, but that he may have adopted her faith as a way of remembering her. That Santiago feels too lonely to even look at his wife's photograph shows how empty his life is, besides his friendship with Manolin.



The dinner ritual allows Santiago to play the role of gracious host and to resist the sense of defeat that might come from having no food.



Baseball is Santiago's pastime and distraction because, like fishing, it is a game of streaks and luck, and yet, in the end, a player's skill is most important.



Manolin leaves to get the sardines he promised **Santiago**. When he returns, it is dark and Santiago is asleep on the porch. Manolin covers him with a blanket, noticing that with the old man's eyes closed there is no life in his face. Soon Santiago wakes, and Manolin gives him some food that **Martin**, the owner of the Terrace, has provided as a gift. Santiago asks if Martin has given them food before, and Manolin says he has. Santiago sleepily says he must thank the owner by giving him the belly meat of a big fish.

Manolin reminds himself to bring **Santiago** water, soap, and a towel, as well as a new shirt, jacket and shoes.


Santiago then reminisces about his time as a youth on a ship that sailed to Africa, and about the **lions** he saw on the beaches there.

But **Manolin** wants to talk more about baseball. They talk about Joe DiMaggio, who is Santiago's favorite player and whose father was a fisherman. They then debate the best manager in baseball.

Manolin breaks in to say that he thinks **Santiago** is the best fisherman. Santiago humbly disagrees, but acknowledges that although he is no longer strong he has "tricks" and "resolution."

When **Manolin** leaves, **Santiago** wraps himself in the blanket and lies down on the newspapers that cover the springs of his bed. He no longer dreams of storms, women, fish, fights, or his wife. He dreams only "of places now and of the **lions** on the beach" in Africa.


That Santiago seems lifeless with eyes closed shows that his youthfulness is internal—in his mind and memories only. Santiago's inability to recall whether Martin has given him food shows how old he truly is, but his promise to repay the gift with good meat from a fish shows that he still has the pride and determination of a young man.




Manolin's devotion to Santiago is profound.




The powerful lions symbolize Santiago's youth. Also note that a group of lions is called a pride.




DiMaggio was revered for his grace, humility, terrific skill, and willingness to play through injury—traits Santiago shares.



"Tricks" and "resolution" are psychological assets. Santiago's aging body may betray him, but his mind keeps him young.



Santiago's newspaper-covered bed shows he is very poor. Everything has been stripped from him, so that all he has left is a kind of inner lion, an inner pride.



Day Two

When **Santiago** wakes the next morning, he goes up the road to **Manolin's** house to wake him, as he does every morning. Santiago apologizes for disturbing Manolin's sleep, but Manolin responds, "It is what a man must do."


Santiago drinks his coffee, thinking how he will not eat all day because eating has bored him for a long time. **Manolin** helps Santiago load his boat, and they wish each other luck. As he rows into the water, Santiago hears the splashes in the dark of other boats nearby, but no voices. Fishermen rarely speak to each other in their boats.

Santiago rows over "the great well," where the ocean suddenly drops to 700 fathoms and where many fish congregate. He hears flying fish flapping around him. He thinks of these fish as his friends. He feels sorry for the birds trying to catch the fish and failing, knowing how hard these birds must work to survive.


Santiago thinks of the sea as "la mar," as a woman who can give or withhold great favors and changes with the moon. He doesn't understand the younger fishermen. They use motorboats instead of skiffs and call the sea "el mar," using the masculine noun as if the sea is their enemy.

Santiago decides to fish past the deep wells, because he caught nothing in the wells the previous week. By the time the sun comes out, he has found a good spot and has his bait in the water, on lines pre-measured to fall to different specific depths. He is proud that he keeps his lines straighter than any other fisherman and does not let them drift with the current. As the sun rises, he marvels at how his eyes are still good despite years of strong sun.


Both Manolin and Santiago take pride in meeting what they see as the requirements of being a man—duty, honor, facing difficult challenges without complaint.




Santiago's boredom with eating suggests his boredom with life—he is no longer interested in everyday pleasures. The habit of silence among fishermen and the fact that Manolin no longer fishes with reinforce how alone Santiago will be at sea.




Santiago feels a close connection to the creatures of the sea. He sees himself, a fisherman, not as one who conquers nature but as just another part of it, like the birds who survive by preying on the flying fish.



Younger fishermen do see themselves as conquerors of the ocean. It's not just Santiago who is growing old, but his entire generation. When he dies, his generation's knowledge and way of life will be gone.

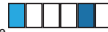


Santiago takes pride in his craft—unlike the younger fishermen who rely on strength and the brute force of technology. Santiago's clear vision symbolizes the wisdom he has gained as he aged, as well as his strength of mind.



Santiago sees a sea bird diving into the sea in the distance. He rows toward it, farther out into the ocean, knowing the dipping means the bird has seen fish. He sees a school of dolphins chasing flying fish nearby, another sign of fish, but arrives too late. He knows his big fish is out there somewhere.

Santiago is able to read the signs of nature. His initial failure (after 84 days of previous failure) is not enough to dampen his optimism.



In the late morning, one of **Santiago's** lines suddenly tightens and Santiago pulls in a silver, 10-pound tuna. He observes out loud that the tuna will make a beautiful piece of bait, then wonders when he began talking to himself. He concludes that it must have been when **Manolin** left, and thinks that if the other fisherman heard him they would think he was crazy, though he knows they would be wrong.

Santiago's small catch (his first in 84 days) marks the turning point in his luck. Talking to himself is a way to avoid loneliness and despair. Talking out loud as if Manolin was in the boat allows him to bring his friendship with Manolin with him even though Manolin isn't there.



Around noon, **Santiago** feels a tentative pull on one of his lines. He thinks it must be a **marlin** eating the sardine bait, 600 feet below. The marlin leaves, and then comes back, and Santiago becomes more and more excited, judging from the strength of the pull that the marlin must be a huge fish. Finally, when he thinks the marlin has gotten hold of the hook, Santiago tries to pull the marlin up. The fish doesn't budge.

Many years of fishing have honed Santiago's intuition and his ability to interpret even the smallest signs in the sea. From the strength of the pull he can immediately estimate the size of the fish. For the first time in the story he becomes animated instead of tired, acting much like a young man.



The **marlin** starts to move away, pulling **Santiago's** skiff with it. The marlin pulls the skiff all day, as Santiago braces in his skiff and holds tight to the line. The marlin continues to tow the skiff until Santiago can no longer see the shoreline of Cuba anymore. He is confident, however, that when the sun goes down he will be able to find his way back by following the glowing lights of Havana.

Pulled out so far that he can't even see the land, Santiago faces a fish far stronger than he is. As an old man with no available help, Santiago faces a serious and potentially dangerous challenge. But his pride won't allow him to accept defeat.



When the sun goes down, **Santiago** wishes **Manolin** could see his big catch and help him drag the **marlin** out of the water. But then he begins to pity the marlin, wondering if the fish is old, like him. He can tell by the way marlin took hold of the bait that it is a male fish. He realizes that he and the marlin are "joined together" far out in the ocean, "beyond all people in the world," with no one who can help either one of them.

Santiago finds both a friend and an enemy in the marlin. He has a fondness for the fish, even sees himself in it, and recognizes that both will fight to the death to prevail. Even though Manolin isn't there, the thought of him seems to give Santiago strength.



Santiago remembers when he and **Manolin** caught a female **marlin**, one of a pair. She fought desperately, and the entire time she was fighting the male fish never left her side. When Santiago dragged the female into the boat, the male marlin followed the boat.

The male marlin's reaction to his female companion's capture mirrors Santiago's own loneliness and sadness over his wife's death. Once again, this highlights the connection between men, and Santiago in particular, and nature.



Day Three

Before daylight, something takes hold of one of **Santiago's** other baits, which are still in the water. Santiago quickly cuts all of his other lines so that nothing interferes with the **marlin's** line.

In devoting himself to capturing the marlin, Santiago reveals that this struggle is all-important to him. It is a matter of pride, of proving and defining himself.



After **Santiago** cuts the other lines, the **marlin** makes a sudden, surging dive that pulls Santiago downward. He cuts his face, just below the eye, on the line. Santiago tells the marlin he will never give in, and will fight until one of them dies.

The physical injury that the marlin inflicts shows that this battle could result in injury or even death for Santiago. The injury only strengthens Santiago's resolve.



The **marlin** continues to pull the boat to the northeast. **Santiago** senses that while the fish doesn't seem to be tiring, it is swimming at a shallower depth. Santiago hopes the fish will jump, so that its air sacs will fill, stopping it from diving so deeply. If the fish died while deep underwater, Santiago knows he would not be strong enough to pull it up. Santiago holds tight to the line and occasionally pulls it taught, but he is fearful to pull on it because the line might snap or the hook might pull free from the marlin. He tells the marlin that he loves and respects it, but vows to kill it before the end of the day.

Santiago carefully and skillfully practices his craft, pitting his decades of knowledge as a fisherman against the marlin's greater strength. He loves and respects the marlin because it is a worthy opponent, but he must kill it for two reasons: 1) to fulfill his role as a fisherman, and 2) to prove his strength despite his age by overcoming such a worthy adversary.



A warbler (small song bird) flying south lands on the **marlin's** line. **Santiago** talks to the bird, wondering why it is so tired. When he considers the hawks that the bird will have to escape when it comes near land, though, he tells it to take a nice rest and then go "take your chance like any man or bird or fish."

Santiago again feels an affinity with an animal. His advice to the bird hints at his belief that all living things struggle against mortality, and that how one faces that struggle, rather than whether one survives it, is what defines a person.



As **Santiago** is talking to the bird, the **marlin** lurches again and the bird flies away. Santiago notices that there is blood on the line—the pull of the line has cut his left hand. He thinks that the marlin must itself have been injured to lurch in that way. He berates himself for letting the bird distract him, and vows not to lose focus again. Santiago washes his cut hand in the salt water, then carefully positions himself and eats the tuna he caught earlier in order to keep his strength up. Even so, his left hand soon cramps.

The injuries to Santiago's hand evoke Christ's stigmata (the crucifixion wounds in Christ's hands). The injury inspires Santiago to work harder and stay focused, even though the cramping shows his body's age and frailty. Notice that Santiago continues to sense a connection with the marlin, believing it also must have been injured just when he was.



As he tries to nurse his cramped hand, **Santiago** sees a flock of wild ducks in the sky and realizes that no man is ever alone on the sea. He continues to try to uncramp his hand, and thinks of the cramp as a betrayal by his own body. He wishes that **Manolin** were there to rub his hand for him.

Santiago's body betrays him, just as Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ. Yet Santiago does not despair. He derives strength from his connection to nature and from Manolin's friendship.



Suddenly, the **marlin** jumps out of the water. The magnificent fish is dark purple and huge, two feet longer than the length of the skiff with a sword as long as a baseball bat.

Purple, a royal color, suggests that the marlin is a kind of "king of the sea." In his Christ-like role, Santiago is also regal, as Jesus was King of the Jews.



Santiago holds the line with both hands to keep the fish from breaking the line. He thinks that if he were the **marlin** he would give a final pull on the line until something broke. He gives thanks that fish are not as intelligent as men, although he thinks that they are "more noble and more able."

Santiago recognizes his superior intelligence, but he does not see himself as a superior being to the marlin. His thought about what he would do as the marlin shows his resistance to defeat.



Santiago has seen many fish over 1000 pounds and caught two fish of that size in his life, but never when he was alone and out of sight of land. And this **marlin** is bigger than any he had ever heard of or seen. He thinks that to catch this fish will be a great accomplishment.

Santiago recognizes that he has given himself a nearly impossible job, but he focuses on the immensity of the achievement rather than the immensity of the task.



Although **Santiago** is not religious, he promises to say 10 Hail Marys and 10 Our Fathers if he catches the **marlin**. He says the prayers, and feels better, though the pain in his back and cramped hand is just as strong.

Faith is belief in the absence of evidence or proof. Santiago's prayers don't alleviate his pain, but they do help him to feel better despite his pain.



Realizing it will be dark soon, **Santiago** decides to rebait a small line to catch some more food. He thinks about why he wants to catch and kill the marlin: To show "what a man can do and what a man endures" and to prove to **Manolin** that he is indeed a "strange old man."

Santiago, who was bored of eating, now has a reason to eat and live. He wants to defeat the marlin out of pride, and to prove that Manolin's faith in him is not in vain.



As the day approaches its end, **Santiago** wishes he could sleep and dream of the **lions** again. Then he wonders why the lions are the only things left for him to dream about.

Since the lions represent Santiago's youth, here he is beginning to realize all that he has lost as he has aged.



Eventually **Santiago's** hand uncramps, but he feels tired. He hopes that the marlin also feels tired. If it isn't, he thinks, then it is a very strange fish.

Another connection between the marlin and Santiago, a self-described "strange old man."



To distract himself, Santiago thinks about baseball. He tells himself that he must try to be worthy of the great DiMaggio, "who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur in his heel." He wonders if DiMaggio would stay with the **marlin** as long as he will stay with it, and knows that DiMaggio would.

In 1949, when The Old Man and the Sea is set, DiMaggio was recovering from career-threatening bone spurs and playing as well as ever. Santiago challenges himself to overcome defeat, to live up to his hero.



It occurs to Santiago then that men may be inferior to the "great birds and beasts." For a moment, Santiago wishes that *he* were the marlin. That is, unless **sharks** were to come. If the sharks come, Santiago thinks, both he and the marlin would be in trouble.

Again, Santiago displays his deep respect for and connection to nature. His thoughts of sharks foreshadows the arrival of the sharks later in the story.



To prop up his own confidence, **Santiago** remembers when, as a young man in Casablanca, he arm-wrestled a great “negro” who was the strongest man on the docks. The battle lasted an entire day, and finally Santiago won. For a long time after that he was known as “The Champion.”

Just before dark, **Santiago**’s small line is taken by a dolphin. He pulls the dolphin into the boat and clubs it to death. It seems to Santiago that the marlin has begun to pull with a bit less strength. He positions himself so that the line puts less stress on his back. He feels confident because he’s learned how to handle the line and because he has recently eaten and will eat again soon, while the **marlin** hasn’t eaten anything.

When it becomes completely dark, the stars come out. **Santiago** thinks of the stars as his friends. The **marlin** is also his friend, he thinks, but he must kill it. Santiago is glad that men do not have to kill the sun, the moon or the stars as they do their fellow creatures. He feels sorry for the fish, and thinks there is no one worthy of eating him.

Santiago rests for two hours, after which he decides to eat the dolphin he caught. When he cuts the dolphin open to fillet it, he finds two fresh flying fish in its belly. He eats half the dolphin and one of the fish. When he runs his hand through the water after skinning the fish, he notices that his hand has left a trail of phosphorescence in the water.

Finally **Santiago** falls asleep. He dreams at first of a vast school of mating porpoises leaping in the water. Then he dreams of sleeping in his bed in the village, with a north wind blowing coldly over him and his hand asleep from having slept on it. Finally, his dreams turn to the **lions** walking along the long yellow beach in the early dark, and he is happy.

Santiago purposely recalls this memory in order to try to regain the youthful strength he needs to defeat the marlin. His memories may not literally give him strength, but he uses them to fuel his determination.

Santiago’s reverence for nature and animals is not at all an unwillingness to kill, as his clubbing of the dolphin shows. Instead, it’s an acknowledgment of his role within nature as a man. He has tired the marlin not through strength but through his endurance and skill as a fisherman.

Santiago considers his struggle with the fish noble because its stakes are so high: life or death. In fact, Santiago has come to see the struggle as an end in itself, and sees any purpose other than winning, such as eating the fish, as secondary or unworthy.

As Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed the thousands who had gathered to hear him, Santiago has multiplied the fish he has caught. The phosphorescence given off by his hand suggests that the act of preparing food is a sacred act.

Santiago’s dreams of the porpoises and his cold bed set up a contrast between the fertile splendor of the sea and the emptiness of life on land. Yet, even in sleep, rather than giving in to despair, Santiago gains strength from his dreams of his youthful pride.

Day Four

The **marlin** suddenly surges, waking **Santiago**. In the darkness, he sees the marlin jump from the water, again and again. The jumps jerk the line, pulling Santiago face-first into the leftover dolphin meat from his meal. Santiago desperately holds onto the line with his back and hand. His left hand is cut open again, and Santiago wishes that Manolin were with him to wet the lines to reduce their friction.

Desperate not to lose his strength from nausea, **Santiago** wipes the dolphin meat from his face. He examines his hands, which look almost like raw meat, and tells himself that “pain does not matter to a man.” He eats the second flying fish to regain his strength.

As the sun rises, the **marlin** begins circling the skiff. **Santiago** now slowly fights the fish for line, pulling it closer to the boat inch by inch. The struggle takes hours. Santiago begins to feel faint and black spots appear before his eyes. As the marlin passes beneath the skiff, Santiago gets a glimpse of its full size and is awed by how big the marlin is. He pulls the fish in closer and closer in order to harpoon it. The effort is immense, and it seems to Santiago that the fish is killing him. He tells the fish, “Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.”

As the **marlin** comes in closer, **Santiago** takes out his harpoon. He tries several times to harpoon the marlin, but misses, growing weaker and weaker. Finally Santiago draws all his strength, pain, and pride together and plunges the harpoon one last time, driving it into the marlin’s heart. The marlin makes a final leap, glistening in the light, then falls into the water, dead. The marlin’s blood stains the water red.

The reopening of the wound in Santiago’s hand again evokes Christ’s stigmata, linking Santiago’s struggle to Christ’s. Neither Santiago nor Christ sought to escape their suffering. Instead, each chose to endure it, and in the process, transcend it.

Santiago again uses his pride in himself as a man to derive the strength he needs to endure the pain in his hand.

The struggle between Santiago and the marlin reaches its climax. Santiago’s faintness and the marlin’s slowly shrinking circles indicate that both are tiring and approaching death. Santiago considers the struggle more important than its outcome: the struggle to survive and overcome is more important than actually living or dying.

Stabbing the marlin in the heart symbolizes Santiago’s love for the marlin. It also shows that to Santiago the marlin’s death is essential. The mixing of the marlin’s blood with the water alludes to a wound Christ received while on the cross that bled water and blood.

Santiago estimates the marlin weighs about 1500 pounds, too big for Santiago to pull inside the boat. Santiago lashes the marlin alongside the boat.

As he works, **Santiago** thinks about how much money the marlin will bring, then imagines how proud of him DiMaggio would be. He wonders if his injured hands are comparable to DiMaggio’s bone spur.

Santiago begins sailing southwest, toward Cuba. He is hungry, and eats some tiny shrimp he finds living in a patch of yellow Gulf weed floating in the water. He takes the second-to-last gulp of water from his water bottle. Nonetheless, he becomes light-headed and wonders if he is bringing in the **marlin** or if it is bringing in *him*. He keeps glancing at the marlin as he sails. His injured hands prove that his struggle with the marlin was no dream.

An hour after **Santiago** killed the **marlin**, a big Mako shark appears, having caught the scent of the marlin’s blood. As the shark bites the dead marlin, Santiago rams his harpoon into the shark’s head. The shark thrashes, dies, and sinks, but the harpoon rope breaks and Santiago’s harpoon is lost with the shark.

The shark’s bite took a 40-pound hunk of flesh from the marlin. More blood now pours from the marlin into the water, which **Santiago** knows will only attract more **sharks**. It seems to Santiago that his battle with the marlin was worthless, since the sharks will just come and eat the marlin. But Santiago quickly reminds himself that “a man can be destroyed but not defeated.”

Santiago tries to remain hopeful. He considers it silly, or even sinful, to not be hopeful. But he begins to wonder whether it was a sin for him to kill the **marlin**. He knows that he did not kill the marlin just to feed himself and others, but also out of pride and love. He wonders whether it is more or less of a sin to kill something you love. He feels no guilt, however, for killing the **shark**, because he acted in self-defense. It occurs to him that “everything kills everything else in some way,” but then he reminds himself that it is **Manolin** who keeps him alive.

Santiago leans over, strips off a piece of the **marlin** from where the shark bit it, and eats it. The meat is of the highest quality and would have fetched a good price. He sails on, eating pieces of the marlin in order to remain strong.

Two hours later, two shovel-nosed **sharks** approach. When he sees them, **Santiago** makes a noise that the narrator describes as a sound a man might make as he felt a “nail go through his hands and into the wood.”

Santiago kills the **sharks** using a knife that he’s lashed to an oar, but not before the sharks have eaten a quarter of the **marlin**. He feels no pride in killing the shovel-nosed sharks, which he considers dirty scavengers. The marlin is now drained of blood and completely silver in color. Santiago wishes that he had not killed the marlin, and apologizes to the marlin for having gone out so far from land. He can’t bear to look at the marlin’s body, only half of which remains.

A lone shovel-nose **shark** attacks. **Santiago** kills it with his knife, but loses the knife in the process. Two more sharks attack just before sunset. Santiago fights them off with the club he uses to kill bait fish. Exhausted and sore, he dares to dream that he might make it back with the half of the **marlin** that remains, and he believes that when darkness falls he will see the glow of Havana. He wonders if **Manolin** has been worried about him.

In death as in life, the marlin is Santiago’s companion, literally traveling by Santiago’s side.

Santiago’s thoughts about money are dwarfed by his pride in his ability to fight off pain and resist defeat.

It’s clear that Santiago remains connected to the marlin, even in death. In fact, at times Santiago seems to think that he is the one that has died after the ordeal. The injuries that plagued him are now the only things that he can count on as real.

Santiago’s stabbing of the shark in the head, rather than the heart, suggests that he does not feel the same emotional connection or affinity with the shark as he did with the marlin.

When Santiago was battling the marlin, hope inspired him. Now Santiago sees that he has no hope of getting the marlin, the proof of his triumph, back to shore. Yet in deciding to struggle anyway, he is deciding that the struggle against defeat is what’s important, not the prize.

Santiago begins to question whether his struggle was justified and worth the sacrifices he made. The marlin that he battled and now considers a friend will soon be little more than shark food. At this moment, when despair might overtake him, Santiago’s thoughts of Manolin sustain him.

When Santiago eats the marlin, he and the fish become one, and the marlin lives on through Santiago. This recalls the Eucharist, in which Christ asks his followers to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood.

Nails were driven through Christ’s hands when he was crucified. Here the sound marks both the death of Santiago’s hope and his continued insistence on enduring pain.

The sharks do not struggle with worthy opponents. They eat the dead remains of them. Drained of blood, the marlin loses its regal purple color and becomes a more deathly silver. Once again, doubts and regrets overwhelm Santiago.

Santiago’s ordeal becomes more difficult as more sharks come and he loses his weapons. At first he turns to hope to save him—the hope that he might make it back to see Havana. Then he uses Manolin’s concern for him to help fuel his determination to get back to land.

When it finally gets dark, however, **Santiago** can't see Havana. He tells God he still owes him many prayers that he will say when he's not too tired, and he wonders if he "violated" his luck when he went too far out to sea. He again apologizes to the **marlin** for killing it, and promises to fight off the sharks even if it kills him. Around 10pm, he sees the glow of the harbor.

Around midnight, a pack of **sharks** attacks the skiff. **Santiago** uses all his strength to fight them off with his oar and club, and finally, when those have been lost, he breaks off the tiller of his skiff and uses that to club the sharks. But by the time he kills or drives off all the sharks, no meat remains on the **marlin**.

Santiago spits blood into the water and tells the **sharks** to dream that they ate a man. He checks his skiff, and sees that only the rudder is damaged, and can be fixed. He sails toward the harbor, thinking that the sea contains both enemies and friends. Utterly exhausted, he wonders for a moment what it was that defeated him. He decides that nothing beat him. He just went out too far.

It is still dark when **Santiago** sails into the harbor. The lights on the Terrace are out, and he knows everyone is in bed. As he steps out onto the rocks, he looks at his boat and sees the giant white skeletal tail of the **marlin** lit by the reflection from the streetlight.

Santiago removes the mast of his skiff and wraps the sail around it. He rests the mast on his shoulders and drags it back up to his shack. It is so heavy that he is forced to stop and rest several times. When he reaches his home, he falls asleep on his bed facedown with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up.

Even with his hope of seeing Havana dashed, Santiago prays to God. He does not blame or demand anything of God, and does not give in to hopelessness. Instead he promises to fight despite certain failure.



Santiago can't possibly defeat the sharks, yet he does not surrender the marlin to them—he faces the sharks. This mirrors Christ, who redeemed mankind not by avoiding the cross but by suffering through it.



Santiago's own blood mixes with the water, and by extension with the marlin's blood. He realizes that he pushed himself to the limits of endurance, and though success was impossible, he never gave up the struggle.



The marlin's skeleton is a reminder that Santiago did in fact achieve a seemingly impossible goal—he defeated the marlin and brought it to land.



Santiago carries the mast just as Jesus was forced to carry the cross, and falls to sleep in the position of the crucified Christ on the cross. This parallel suggests that Santiago's struggles are meant to represent the struggles of mankind in general.



Day Five

Santiago is asleep when **Manolin** comes to his shack in the morning. Though relieved to see that Santiago is breathing, Manolin cries when he sees Santiago's cut hands. He goes outside to get Santiago some coffee.

Manolin's weeping, like the weeping of the women at Christ's crucifixion, suggests that Manolin recognizes the scope of the struggles Santiago endured.



Near the water, many fisherman have gathered to look at the marlin's skeleton attached to **Santiago's** skiff. They estimate its length at 18 feet. When they see **Manolin**, they ask him how Santiago is doing, feeling guilty for all the times they laughed at Santiago.

The marlin's skeleton is proof of Santiago's triumph and defiance of defeat. In death, the marlin gives Santiago a new life in which he is respected by his fellow fisherman.



When **Santiago** wakes up, **Manolin** is at his side with the coffee. Santiago tells Manolin to give the head of the **marlin** to **Pedrico** to use in the fish traps, and offers the spear to Manolin.

When he couldn't catch a fish, Santiago was forced to live off the kindness of others. Now he repays his debts.



Manolin tells **Santiago** that the coast guard and search planes looked for him for days. Manolin then says that he will return to fish with Santiago, no matter what his family says. Manolin asks Santiago how much he suffered while he was at sea, and Santiago responds, "Plenty." Manolin then goes out to bring Santiago food and the daily papers.

Just as Christ's struggle led to resurrection, Santiago's struggle leads to the resurrection of his friendship with Manolin. Now Santiago can pass on his knowledge, skill, and way of life to Manolin, and can live on through Manolin after he dies.



A group of tourists notices the giant skeleton of the **marlin** in the water. They ask a waiter at the Terrace what it is. Attempting to explain what happened, the waiter says "Tiburón" (shark). The tourists think that he meant that the skeleton is that of a shark.

This scene suggests that Santiago's victory may not be remembered over time. But what is important was the struggle itself, not its legacy.



When **Manolin** returns to **Santiago's** shack, Santiago is sleeping. Manolin watches over Santiago as Santiago dreams of playing **lions**.

Santiago's earlier dreams were of the lions walking. That they are now playing suggests that he has been rejuvenated.



Important Quotes

Day 1 Quotes

Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated.

"There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only one you." —Manolin to Santiago

He no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy.

Day 2 Quotes

Why did they make birds so delicate and fine as those sea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel? She is kind and very beautiful. But she can be so cruel and it comes so suddenly and such birds that fly, dipping and hunting, with their small sad voices are made too delicately for the sea.

But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favors, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought.

He is wonderful and strange and who knows how old he is, he thought. Never have I had such a strong fish nor one who acted so strangely... He cannot know that it is only one man against him, nor that it is an old man.

Now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either of us.

Day 3 Quotes

"Fish, I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends."

The clouds were building up now for the trade wind and he looked ahead and saw a flight of wild ducks etching themselves against the sky over the water, then blurring, then etching again and he knew no man was ever alone on the sea.

"If I were him I would put in everything now and go until something broke. But, thank God, they are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and more able."

But I must have the 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.

"It is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers."

Day 4 Quotes

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.

"Gold help me endure. I'll say a hundred Our Fathers and a hundred Hail Marys. But I cannot say them now."

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skiff.

You did not kill the fish only to keep alive and to sell for food, he thought. You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman. 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?

"A man can be destroyed but not defeated."

He stopped for a moment and looked back and saw in the reflection from the street light the great tail of the fish standing up well behind the skiff's stern. He saw the white naked line of his backbone and the dark mass of the head...

He started to climb again and at the top he fell and lay for some time with the mast across his shoulder.

Day 5 Quotes

"How much did you suffer?"
"Plenty," the old man said.

"To hell with luck," the boy said. "I'll bring the luck with me."

"What's that" she asked a waiter and pointed to the long backbone of the great fish that was now just garbage waiting to go out with the tide.

ThemeTracker™

The LitCharts ThemeTracker is a mini-version of the entire LitChart. The ThemeTracker provides a quick timeline-style rundown of all the important plot points and allows you to track the themes throughout the work at a glance.

Themes	Chapter
	<p>Day 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Elderly fisherman Santiago returns from his 84th day without catching a fish. Manolin helps Santiago carry his gear and buys him a beer at the Terrace. – Manolin offers to join Santiago's boat again, but Santiago knows Manolin's parents will not allow Manolin to fish with such an unlucky fisherman. – Manolin walks Santiago to his shack, and they talk about baseball. Manolin reminds himself to bring Santiago clothing and supplies for the winter. – Manolin goes out to get Santiago dinner and some bait for the next day. When he returns, Santiago is asleep on the porch. Manolin wakes him up and gives him dinner.
	<p>Day 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Santiago walks up the road to Manolin's home and wakes him up for work. Manolin helps Santiago load his boat. – Santiago rows into the ocean alone and decides to fish farther out than he has been fishing the previous week. – Santiago sees a bird dipping into the sea, having spotted fish, but he arrives at the spot too late. Finally he is able to catch a small tuna. – In the afternoon, Santiago feels a tug on his line and realizes that a huge marlin has caught his hook. Santiago tries to pull the marlin up, but he is not strong enough. – The marlin drags Santiago's skiff northwest, away from land. As night arrives, Santiago continues holding the line so that the marlin will not break it.
	<p>Day 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Santiago holds onto the line through the night. He cuts all other lines and focuses only on landing the marlin. – A bird lands on the line. Santiago talks to it. The bird flies away when the marlin lurches suddenly, cutting Santiago's hand. – Santiago finally sees a glimpse of the marlin and is astonished at its size. – Santiago uses all his failing strength to hold the line. – Santiago recalls how when he was a young man he was known for his strength and his ability to arm wrestle. – Santiago prays to God to give him the strength to kill the marlin. – Santiago lets out a small line and catches a dolphin to eat. – When night arrives, Santiago rests for a few hours and dreams of porpoises, his cold bed, and lions.
	<p>Day 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Santiago wakes up to the marlin jumping frantically. Santiago realizes the marlin is tired, but he too is exhausted and growing weaker. – As the sun rises, the marlin stops towing the boat and begins circling it instead, close to the surface. Santiago prays to kill the marlin. – When the marlin passes close to the boat, Santiago harpoons the marlin in the heart, killing him. – Santiago ties the marlin to the side of his boat and begins sailing home. – An hour after he turns homeward, a giant Mako shark attacks the boat, trying to eat the marlin. Santiago kills it but loses his harpoon in the process. – A few hours later two more sharks attack. Santiago kills them both with his knife attached to the oar. But by the time the sharks are dead they have eaten half of the marlin. Santiago apologizes to the marlin for catching it. – At midnight, a pack of sharks attack. Santiago wards them off, but they have eaten all of the marlin. – Santiago pulls into the harbor, utterly exhausted. He removes the mast from the boat and carries it back to his shack, where he falls asleep.
	<p>Day 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Manolin comes to Santiago's shack in the morning and cries at Santiago's injuries. A group of fisherman marvels at the size of the marlin's skeleton. – When he wakes up, Santiago tells Manolin to give the marlin's head to Pedrico. Manolin tells Santiago he has decided to fish with Santiago again no matter what his parents say. – Manolin goes out to get Santiago some food. Tourists marvel at the skeleton of the marlin. Santiago goes back to sleep and dreams of lions.

Theme Key

- Resistance to Defeat
- Pride
- Friendship
- Youth and Age
- Man and Nature
- Christian Allegory