



Theme Of Survival And Optimistic Elements In Hemingway's 'The Old Man And The Sea'

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ABSTRACT-

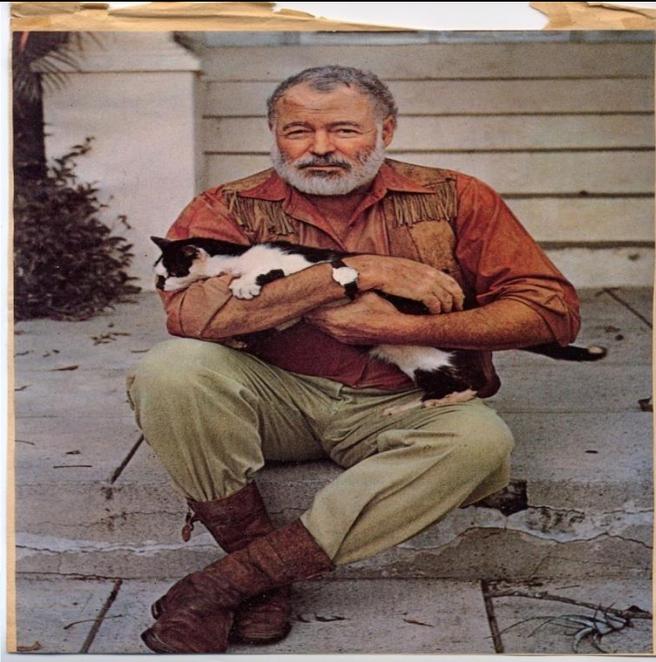
'The Old Man and the Sea' is a simple story consisting of only three characters Santiago, an old fisherman, Marlin, a huge fish and the minor character Manolin, a small boy. The whole story revolves around former two characters Santiago and Marlin. It shows the three days epic battle between a giant fish (Marlin) and a helpless old man (Santiago) who is struggling with his misfortune. After 84 days of bad luck Santiago is able to catch marlin on 85th day but she was not an ordinary fish. She was bulky enough to overturn Santiago's boat on the other hand Santiago was determined he will win over Marlin by hook or by crook. How Hemingway blended this beautiful story with the theme of struggle, survival and optimism is briefly explained in this article.

Keywords- Optimism, Giant, Companionship, existence, overturn and by hook or by crook.

"A Man Can be destroyed but not defeated" Said Santiago, This line indicate the strong will power of a man who is facing defeat again and again in his life. He had already lost his interest in life but still waiting for something good. He is struggling with his misfortune but does not want to accept the defeat. He is still trying to win the final match of his life.

Introduction

Ernest Miller Hemingway, the writer of this novel was an American journalist who published most of his work between the mid- 1920 and the mid- 1950. He won Nobel Prize in literature in 1954. His most of the works are considered as classics of American Literature. At the age of 18 Hemingway received Silver medal of bravery for rescuing the Italian soldiers. He has to go through failed marriages and career in his life only his writings brought fame to him. In 1960 he was suffering from mental illness. He shot himself with his favorite shotgun in the early morning hours of 2 July, 1960



Theme of Survival

In the beginning of the novel we can see Santiago, a 70 years old fisherman who has not been able to catch a single fish since 84 days. Manolin, a small boy who wants to learn the art of fishing from Santiago come to him with night suffer but Santiago refused to eat. He told Manolin that tomorrow I am going far in Gulf Stream to catch the fish. Next morning Santiago was driving his boat in the centre of the Sea. He watched a bird that goes under water and catches the small fish. Santiago also catches the small one but drops them. At noon, a big fish, which he knows is a marline, takes the bait that Santiago has placed one hundred fathoms deep in the waters. The old man expertly hooks the fish, but he cannot pull it in. Instead the fish begins to pull the boat. Finally the fish jump and Santiago can't believe on the fact that it was the biggest fish he ever caught. Santiago said to himself – **“I hope he doesn't know there is only one man against him, an old man”** This line of Santiago Proves that during the last days of his life, man only wants peace. When suddenly the struggle comes, he wants to win but not able to fight with full strength because of his physical weakness and the tiredness which life caused to him.



Marlin dragged the boat from the whole day and the whole night towards north until it tires and swims east with the current. The marlin was not an ordinary fish its height is more than Santiago's boat. Santiago had to

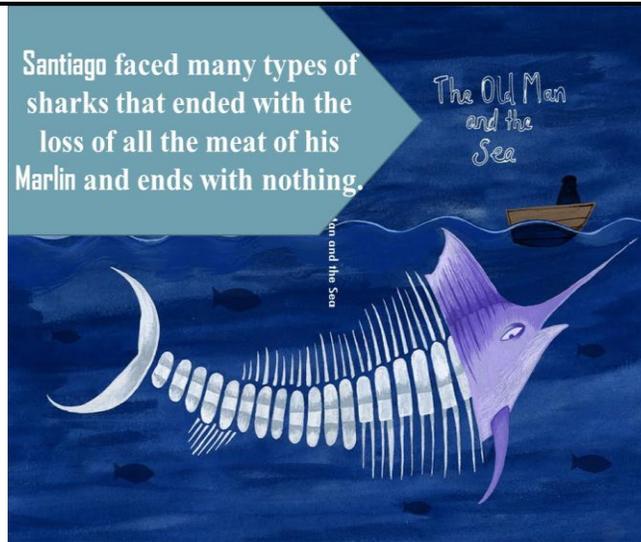
spend three days with the marlin in the Gulf Stream. The first two days battle between a fish and Santiago shows the endless effort of a man to achieve success and happiness in life. This story is just not a story of fisherman and the fish but it is the story of determination and existence of a man who wants to achieve great success, happiness and respect in his life. Before this incident Santiago was repeatedly taunted by his peers that he is an unworthy fisherman and this is the only wish of Santiago that he wants to prove himself perfect in his profession not only for his peers but for himself. Through this novel Hemingway tries to explain that every man wants respect and importance in the society in which he lives. Man wants to taste success in his life. But when due to misfortune he is not able to get that he must not lose hope and must make the same effort every day success will definitely come to him. In this story success come to Santiago in form of marlin which is very difficult to achieve but he is not ready to give up at any cost. He said to marlin, “I will stay with you until I am dead” this determination of Santiago proves that human being always posses the inner capacity of achieving something great in his life.

On the third day somehow Santiago manage to kill marlin with his harpoon and finally starts sailing with the fish towards his home but this is not the end of his struggle, smell of marlin’s blood attracted the sharks. Now a fresh competition between shark and Santiago started for the prize money (Marlin). Santiago tried his best to save the dead marlin from sharks but as he killed several sharks more and more appear, they ingest the precious meat, leaving only Skelton, head and tail for Santiago, though at the end Santiago lost half of his prize but he is able to secure respect of the village fisherman and valuable companionship of the boy Manolin for himself. He also realizes the fact that he will never able to endure such an epic struggle again.

Optimistic Elements in the novel

While reading this novel one can easily notice the theme of struggle and survival in the story. Struggle doesn’t happen in stories only but in real life too. It is certainly the optimistic attitude which helps man to carry and survive the struggle of life. Santiago, the protagonist of the play was an old man and he was suffering from his physical weakness, struggling with his misfortune of not able to catch a single fish for 84 days, still he hopes that his faith will change one day and with this optimistic attitude he went for fishing on the 85th day. It is usual that man faces defeat in his life for many unknown reasons. But facing defeat and accepting defeat both are different things. Santiago faced defeat but he never accepted it. He resolves to sail out beyond the other fisherman to where the biggest fish promise to be. The biggest fish is none other than marlin that Santiago catches and able to kill her after spending two days with her in the sea.

Santiago ties the marlin to the side of his boat and begins sailing back toward Cuba. During the homeward journey. 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. When Santiago returned with marlin skeleton the other fishermen astonish to see the giant size of the skeleton tied from Santiago’s boat. They believe that Santiago had caught the shark. After reaching his home Santiago went for sleep and that was the most peaceful sleep of his life. It is the true fact of everyone life that failure never allows us to sleep peacefully and that is why man struggles or yearns for success because it can be possible that we have no need of success but we want to remove the failures of our life and the entire period of struggle must tied up with the rope of optimism because negativity never allow us to see those good things which can help us to draw success out of the bottle.



Conclusion

At the last we can say, despite his old age Santiago has full faith on his strength. He is unlike the younger fishermen of his community who depends on their 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. He is able to read the signs of nature. His initial failure is not enough to dampen his optimism because optimism is something which comes from inside one cannot borrow or purchase optimism from anyone it comes from inside. Our strong will to win the battle of life reveal the inner optimistic attitude of our character. Actually through the story of Santiago Hemingway gives the message to his readers Failures and achievements are the essential parts of our life. Failure is not in our hand but our achievements are in our hand. There is only one way to get success that is never accepts the defeat.

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