

# Free essay on the old man at the bridge

[Environment](#), [Animals](#)



## **English: Essay**

### Response Essay on

The short story "The Old Man at the Bridge" is written by Ernest Miller Hemingway and describes the story of an old man and a storyteller during the Spanish Civil War. The writer himself the narrator of the story relates his experiences of working as a war correspondent for North American Newspapers Association. For this particular event, the writer preferred to write a short story instead of writing a report. In this paper, an effort has been made to write a response essay covering the major themes of the story.

The story deals with an event during the Spanish Civil War. The war goes on and soldiers and people flee from the area to avoid being killed by the Fascist military. There sits an old man with glasses who looks exhausted and dirty. He does not move as the rest of the people move forward. The storyteller describes his own mission to cross the bridge and find out the extent of enemy bridgehead in the area in order to assess the enemy positions. After they both talk, the storyteller comes to know that old man worries about the safety of his animals that he left behind. The animals included two goats, a cat and four pairs of pigeons. The old man tells that he was told to leave the animals in order to save his life from artillery fire. The old man remains worried about his animals throughout the conversation between the two and storyteller assures him about the safety of animals. The storyteller remains worried for the safety of the old man and suggests him to mount the trucks going to Barcelona. The old man does not have any

one known to him in Barcelona; he tries to get up and move, however, sits back due to no strength and total exhaustion. The story ends with the reporter taking a sigh and thinking the old man's only luck; that there was no attack by the Fascist military on that day due to overcast and his cat was able to look after herself from the artillery fire of Fascist artillery.

The story is inspired by the writer's travel as a war correspondent in 1930s during the Spanish Civil War when he was working for the North American Newspaper Association. The story has the usual themes of depression, death and submission that are common to the Ernest Miller Hemingway's writings. The old man seems to have submitted to his fate and does not have the energy to move and save his life as he is too old and tired. The writer feels the death of old man is evident in the face of Fascist advancing military and their artillery fire. The writer thinks that the life of old man is only protracted for another day as there is no attack coming that day due to the weather conditions.

The Hemingway's writings are mostly preoccupied with the idea of already decided fate and filled with the ideas of death and total submission to the situation. At the closing of the story when the storyteller bemoans the sure death of the old man, he does not have the moral courage and responsibility to help old man walk to the trucks and help him mount one in order to save his life. Why could not he take him along as he was also moving to Barcelona? There appears no justification of the narrators despair about the old man's future especially when he can help him and make him sit in some truck moving to Barcelona. Also, there is no point with the old man to submit to the fate as nothing other than leaving behind the animals have happened

to him yet and he is still safe and alive. There is one positive thing about the story when the narrator asks about the uncaging of the dove cage as the dove is the symbol of peace during the wartime. The writer discussed earlier the pigeons and there is no mention of dove, however, mentioning of dove at this stage means he wants to convey the message of peace from a war front.

The story by Hemingway's project the despair and no hope. There is not many positives found out in this particular story. And this has become a trademark of Hemingway's writings as does not project hope in his stories and most of them relate to death, despair and submission to the fate. If given a chance, I would have suggested Hemmingway to project positivity in his stories.