

Old man and the sea



Jolene Wold English 102-002 6 April 2011 Victory or Defeat Ernst

Hemingway's story, *The Old Man and the Sea*, the main character Santiago faces many challenges during his time at sea. Ultimately, *The Old Man and the Sea* is a tale of victory shown through Santiago's attitudes and actions. For instance, Santiago's confidence makes him victorious. Manolin is not allowed to fish with Santiago because his father does not have faith Santiago will catch any fish. Santiago reassures Manolin he will again be lucky. Santiago convinces Manolin he can take on a large fish by himself because he is strong and has tricks.

Before sailing off for his fishing trip, Santiago tells Manolin, " I feel confident today" (Hemingway 634). Santiago knows he is going far out and embraces the adventure by leaving the land behind and welcoming the smell of the ocean. When Santiago first sees his pole dip and holds the line he knows what is biting. Santiago is old and has fished the ocean for many years. Dwight Eddins of the *Hemingway Review* says Santiago will use " the strength of his spirit and his determination to sustain him. " (Eddins 70). Santiago is confident in his strength and skills which makes his journey a victorious one.

Santiago shows *The Old Man and the Sea* is a story of victory because he fought off sharks in order to bring his catch back to shore. Although, others may view the story as one of defeat since Santiago came back to shore empty handed. According to Clinton S. Burhans Jr. and Harold Bloom of Bloom's *Modern Critical Interpretations*, " For in killing the great marlin and losing him to the sharks, the old man learns the sin into which men

inevitably fall [into] by going far out beyond their depth, beyond their true place in life" (Bloom and Burhans Jr 45.).

When the sharks come, Santiago sees their arrival as a punishment for killing the great fish. After killing the marlin Santiago begins to feel remorse and does not feel a sense of accomplishment or victory. The marlin became Santiago's equal, his brother, and in the end Santiago betrayed him by killing him. Santiago came back to shore empty handed even though he was able to fight off three sharks with cut and bleeding hands, intense exhaustion, and little food or water. After losing his harpoon to the Mako shark, the only weapon Santiago possessed was a knife he fashioned onto an oar.

Having nothing but a small knife to defend off two sharks from the marlin, Santiago was able to defeat them without any help. Santiago may have returned to shore with nothing more than a skeleton, but he was able to prove the great struggle he had faced while at sea and was able to receive respect again from the other fishermen. However, *The Old Man and the Sea* is a story of victory because Santiago is determined and prideful. After the sharks have torn apart Santiago's catch, the old man may look like a failure in the eyes of the townspeople and other fishermen.

Even though the old man has failed in bringing the marlin back to shore, Santiago does come back with proof that pride triggers men to greatness. Santiago realizes he killed the marlin largely out of pride. Pride is what motivates Santiago and he does not back down. Since Santiago has so much pride, pride becomes one of his greatest strengths. The narrator says, " He

felt very tired now and knew the night would come soon and he tried to think of other things. He thought of the Big Leagues. ” (Hemingway 647).

Santiago looks up to and is inspired by the great baseball player, Joe DiMaggio. Athletes have to be self-motivated and determined. Those heroic characteristics are what inspired Santiago to never give up. Santiago felt better knowing he could compare himself to his hero and they share the same determination. Even when Santiago was tired and struggling to keep a hold of the marlin, he meets every challenge with the same unwavering determination. Santiago is so determined he is willing to die in order to battle the reckless sharks.

With determination and his “ never give up” attitude, Santiago does not accept defeat. Although people believed Santiago no longer has the skill required to be a great fisherman, he believes in himself. The triumph and honor he accrues does not come from the battle itself, but from his pride and determination to never give up. Furthermore, *The Old Man and the Sea* is a story of victory because Santiago is independent in his actions. He brings himself far out at sea, “ beyond all people”, “ beyond all people in the world” (Hemingway 641).

Santiago’s individualism leads him to travel further out than any other fisherman had yet to venture and to the greatest catch of his life. Also being alone at sea gave Santiago the opportunity to connect with the marlin on a degree at which he has never experienced before. While at sea Santiago was facing all elements of the sea without any help. While alone, Santiago saw the beauty in the marlin through the epic struggle the fish put forth. The

marlin's fight made Santiago respect him and consider him an equal.

Santiago faces a struggle in the most difficult of times and proves people will fight to the death.

Santiago would never have been able to defeat the marlin without the individual characteristics he possesses. Even though he is independent in his actions, Santiago proves he can triumph in the toughest of situations.

Santiago's story in *The Old Man and the Sea* is one of victory. Santiago achieves his goal of catching a fish because of his attitudes and actions.

Santiago is confident, determined, prideful, and independent and these characteristics are what make him victorious. Work Cited Hemingway, Ernest. *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Fiction 100 An Anthology of Short Stories, 5th ed. Eds. James H. Pickering. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988. 627-667. Web. Burhans Jr. , Clinton S. , and Harold Bloom. ' *The Old Man and the Sea*': Hemingway's Tragic Vision of a Man. " Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: *The Old Man & The Sea* (1999): 45-52. Literary Reference Center. Web. 28 Mar. 2011. Eddins, Dwight. " Of Rocks and Marlin: The Existentialist in Agon in Camus's the Myth of Sisyphus and Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. " Hemingway Review (2001): 70. Web. 31 Mar. 2011.