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Literature Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Old Man and the Sea

by Ernest Hemingway

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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Objectives

By the end of the Unit, the student will be able to:

1. list the characteristics of the five plot elements: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution and relate them to this novella.
2. present an allegorical meaning for the story.
3. identify the symbolic nature of the marlin and the sharks.
4. recognize and discuss those points in the story that lead some critics to call Santiago a Christ-figure.
5. identify the setting.
6. identify and comment on at least two of Hemingway's major themes in this novella:
 - A. Man can be destroyed, but not defeated.
 - B. Pride is the source of greatness and determination.
 - C. A worthy opponent brings out the best in a warrior.
 - D. Luck plays a major role in one's life.
 - E. People should depend on themselves, not outside forces.
7. recognize that Manolin, although a very minor character, is an important one and undergoes a significant change in the course of the story.
8. identify and discuss the following motifs:
 - A. life from death
 - B. Joe DiMaggio
 - C. crucifixion imagery
 - D. lions on the beach
9. construct an interpretation of Santiago's dream about the lions on the beach.
10. consider the definition of a tragic hero and state the extent to which Santiago is a tragic hero.

Questions for Discussion or Essay

1. What makes a tragic hero? To what extent is Santiago a traditional tragic hero?
2. Identify and comment on four points of similarity between Santiago and Christ that lead critics to label Santiago as a Christ-figure. If Santiago is a Christ-figure, what, if anything, will he redeem through his suffering?
3. There are repeated references to Joe DiMaggio in the story. What significance does this simple baseball player have in this story?
4. Discuss the character of Manolin. Why is he extremely loyal to Santiago? Why does he cry when Santiago returns? What change, if any, does he undergo?
5. Santiago is determined to kill the fish, yet he feels sorrow, admiration, and respect (along with other emotions) for it. Explain Santiago's feelings.
6. This story is sometimes said to be allegorical. What abstract ideas or moral qualities do the characters, setting, and actions represent?
7. Using comments and incidents from the book, explain the major themes of the novella.
8. *Understand the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution in The Old Man and the Sea. Explain which incidents represent which terms.*
9. Characters are described as *static (flat)*, or *dynamic (round)*. Find examples in the story of how Hemingway develops his characters and identify which type the major characters are.
10. Find some similarities between Hemingway's life, his philosophy, and this novella.

1. What do the old man's eyes tell about his personality?

2. Locate and explain a simile on page 10.

3. In the context of the story, what does the narrator mean when he says: "He [the old man] was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride"? (Pgs. 13-14)

4. To what extent is the old man alone in life?

5. How does the boy feel about Santiago? Why?

31. Santiago repeats that it was too good to last, and he wishes it had been a dream. He concludes: "But man is not made for defeat... A man can be destroyed but not defeated." (Pg. 103) Explain what this quote means in terms of life and this story.

32. On page 107, what further comment is suggestive of Santiago as a Christ-figure?

33. On page 110, 115 and 116, Santiago refers to the distance he sailed to catch the fish as being " too far." Is this a sign of pride?

34. Identify the simile on page 119 and explain its meaning.

39. What changes in Manolin show that he is a dynamic character?

40. Relate the characteristics of the five plot elements: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, to the story.

41. Hemingway uses the marlin and the shovel-nosed sharks as symbols. What do the sharks symbolize?

42. From what viewpoint is the story told?
