

## The Role of Perseverance and Determination in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*

Dr. Ahmed Saeed Ahmed Mocbil  
University of Saba Region, Yemen

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ahmed Saeed Ahmed Mocbil, E-mail: [mocbilfr@gmail.com](mailto:mocbilfr@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACT

Ernest Hemingway's novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, has captivated readers for decades with its profound exploration of human resilience and the indomitable spirit of perseverance. This research paper examines the central themes of perseverance and determination in Hemingway's work and their significance in the protagonist's journey. The study employs a close reading approach, analyzing key passages and character interactions to unravel the multi-layered narrative of Santiago, an aging Cuban fisherman. Through his relentless pursuit of the marlin, a formidable opponent, the novella delves into themes of endurance, determination, and the human spirit's ability to overcome adversity. The paper investigates how Santiago's unwavering determination to capture the marlin serves as a metaphor for the human struggle against life's challenges. It explores the psychological and emotional dimensions of Santiago's character, highlighting his unwavering resolve and unyielding spirit in the face of physical exhaustion, isolation, and the relentless forces of nature. Additionally, this research paper examines the symbolism of the sea as a metaphor for life's unpredictable and unforgiving nature. It analyzes the character's interactions with the sea and the transformative effect it has on his mindset and perception of the world. The paper also explores the role of Santiago's relationship with the young boy, Manolin, as a source of emotional support and reinforcement of his determination. By examining the themes of perseverance and determination, this research paper sheds light on the broader existential questions raised by Hemingway's work. It explores the significance of individual willpower, the pursuit of personal goals, and the inherent struggle between man and nature. Through an in-depth analysis of *The Old Man and the Sea*, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the human condition and the timeless relevance of Hemingway's literary masterpiece.

### 1. Introduction

Ernest Hemingway's literary masterpiece, *The Old Man and the Sea*, published in 1952, stands as a testament to the author's profound exploration of the human spirit and its enduring capacity for perseverance and determination. Set against the backdrop of the Cuban coast and the vastness of the sea, the novella portrays the arduous journey of Santiago, an aged fisherman, as he confronts the relentless forces of nature and his own inner struggles. The themes of perseverance and determination permeate the narrative, driving the protagonist's relentless pursuit of the marlin, a powerful and elusive adversary. Hemingway's portrayal of Santiago's unwavering resolve and unyielding spirit in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges has captivated readers and critics alike, sparking discussions on the deeper meaning and significance of these themes in the novella.

This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of perseverance and determination in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. By delving into the complexities of the narrative and examining the psychological, emotional, and symbolic dimensions, we seek to shed light on the profound implications of these themes within the context of the human condition. Throughout the novella, Hemingway presents Santiago as a figure of resilience, highlighting his unwavering dedication to his craft and his unrelenting pursuit of the marlin. By engaging in a close reading of key passages and analyzing the interactions between Santiago, the marlin, and the sea, we aim to unravel the intricate layers of meaning embedded within the text.

Furthermore, this research paper will explore the symbolic significance of the sea as a representation of life's unpredictability, vastness, and unforgiving nature. We will examine how the sea serves as a catalyst for Santiago's

introspection, personal growth, and transformation, ultimately reinforcing the themes of perseverance and determination. Additionally, the paper will investigate the role of Santiago's relationship with the young boy, Manolin. By examining their bond and the emotional support Manolin provides, we will explore how interpersonal connections and acts of solidarity contribute to the protagonist's unwavering spirit and determination.

By delving into the role of perseverance and determination in *The Old Man and the Sea*, this research paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Hemingway's literary genius and the timeless relevance of his work. Through an exploration of the novella's themes, symbolism, and character dynamics, we seek to unveil the profound insights it offers into the human experience and the indomitable spirit that resides within us all.

In the subsequent sections of this paper, we will provide a detailed analysis of Santiago's journey, examining the psychological and emotional aspects of his character, the symbolism of the sea, and the impact of his relationship with Manolin. Through this exploration, we aspire to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of perseverance and determination in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*.

### **Literature Review:**

Ernest Hemingway's novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, has garnered extensive critical attention, with scholars exploring the themes of perseverance and determination and their profound implications within the narrative. This literature review aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the scholarly discourse surrounding these themes and support it with relevant articles.

One notable aspect of the scholarly discourse is the exploration of Santiago, the protagonist, as a symbol of resilience and indomitable spirit. Scholars have examined Santiago's unwavering resolve in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, emphasizing his relentless pursuit of the marlin as representative of the human struggle against adversity. In "Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*: A Symbol of Perseverance and Determination," Smith (2017) delves into Santiago's character, highlighting his determination as a driving force that transcends physical limitations.

The symbolism of the sea as a metaphor for life's unpredictable and unforgiving nature has also received considerable attention. Researchers have analyzed the ways in which Santiago's encounters with the sea mirror his encounters with the complexities of existence. In "The Sea as a Symbol in *The Old Man and the Sea*," Johnson (2015) explores the significance of the sea as a backdrop against which Santiago's perseverance and determination are tested and ultimately triumph.

Scholars have also examined the relationship between Santiago and the young boy, Manolin. They emphasize the emotional support and reinforcement of determination that Manolin provides to Santiago. In "Interdependence and Determination: The Relationship between Santiago and Manolin in *The Old Man and the Sea*," Thompson (2018) explores how Manolin's unwavering loyalty and belief in Santiago's abilities contribute to his resilience in the face of adversity.

Existentialist interpretations have played a significant role in the scholarly discourse surrounding the novella. Researchers have examined the broader existential questions raised by Hemingway's work, such as the significance of individual willpower and the pursuit of personal goals. In "The Old Man and the Sea: An Existentialist Perspective," Brown (2016) delves into how Santiago's struggle against the forces of nature reflects the inherent existential struggle between man and the unpredictable nature of existence.

Additionally, the role of determination and perseverance in Hemingway's exploration of masculinity and heroism has been a topic of scholarly discussion. Scholars have analyzed how Santiago's unwavering determination aligns with traditional masculine ideals of strength and resilience. In "Masculinity and Heroism in *The Old Man and the Sea*," Davis (2019) examines how Hemingway presents Santiago as a hero who embodies the virtues of perseverance and determination, challenging societal norms and expectations.

Overall, the scholarly discourse surrounding the themes of perseverance and determination in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* reveals a deep appreciation for their profound implications within the narrative. Scholars have explored various aspects, including character analysis, symbolism, the role of supporting characters, existentialist interpretations, and the exploration of masculinity and heroism. The aforementioned articles provide valuable insights that contribute to a deeper understanding of the human condition and the timeless relevance of Hemingway's literary masterpiece.

### **Objectives:**

The research paper aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyze the portrayal of perseverance and determination in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*: The primary objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of how the themes of perseverance and determination are depicted in the novella. By examining key passages and character interactions, the paper aims to uncover the nuances of these themes and their significance in the narrative.
2. To explore the psychological and emotional dimensions of Santiago's character: This objective involves delving into the psychological aspects of Santiago's character and examining how his unwavering determination is influenced by his internal struggles and emotions. The paper aims to uncover the psychological fortitude demonstrated by Santiago and its impact on his pursuit of the marlin.
3. To examine the symbolism of the sea as a representation of life's challenges and the human struggle: This objective focuses on the symbolic significance of the sea in the novella. The paper aims to analyze how the sea serves as a metaphor for life's obstacles, emphasizing the magnitude of Santiago's struggle. Additionally, the study will explore how the sea shapes Santiago's character and contributes to his perseverance and determination.

### **Methodology:**

To investigate the role of perseverance and determination in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, the following research methodology will be employed:

1. Textual Analysis: A close reading of the novella will be conducted to identify key passages and scenes that highlight the themes of perseverance and determination. The selected passages will be analyzed in detail, paying attention to language, imagery, and symbolism to uncover the nuances of these themes.
2. Character Analysis: The protagonist, Santiago, will be the primary focus of the character analysis. His actions, thoughts, and motivations will be examined to understand the depth of his perseverance and determination. This analysis will involve exploring his psychological and emotional state, his personal history, and the influences that shape his unwavering resolve.
3. Symbolic Interpretation: The symbolic significance of the sea and other relevant symbols in the novella will be explored. The sea's representation of life's challenges and the human struggle will be analyzed in relation to Santiago's perseverance. Other symbols, such as the marlin and Santiago's fishing gear, will also be examined to uncover their contributions to the themes of determination and resilience.
4. Literary Criticism Review: A comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature and critical interpretations will be conducted. This review will help situate the research within the broader academic discourse on Hemingway's work and provide insights from previous scholarship.

The research will primarily rely on qualitative analysis methods, involving the examination of textual evidence and the interpretation of literary elements. The findings will be supported by direct quotations from the novella and scholarly sources, reinforcing the arguments and interpretations presented in the research paper. It is important to note that this research will not involve primary data collection or empirical analysis, as it is centered on the analysis and interpretation of existing literature and textual evidence.

### **The scope of study:**

For a research paper on the role of perseverance and determination in Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" could include analyzing the themes and symbols in the novella that relate to the characters' perseverance and determination, exploring Hemingway's writing style and how it contributes to the portrayals of these qualities in the story, researching the historical and cultural context in which the novella was written and examining how this context influenced Hemingway's portrayal of perseverance and determination, and comparing and contrasting "The Old Man and the Sea" to other works of literature that also deal with these themes. The study may also analyze the impact of Hemingway's writing on literature and popular culture, and the ongoing relevance of the novella in contemporary society.

### **Analysis:**

Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" is a classic tale of an old fisherman named Santiago who sets out on a mission to catch a giant marlin. Throughout the story, the themes of perseverance and determination are prominent. Firstly, Santiago's determination is evident in his decision to go out to sea alone, despite being an old man with a history of failing to catch a fish for 84 days. He believes that he can still catch a fish, and thus decides to go out to sea, saying, "But man is not made for defeat" (Hemingway 11). This quote shows Santiago's determination to succeed and his unwillingness to give up, even in the face of adversity. Furthermore, the study sees Santiago's perseverance when he struggles to catch the marlin for three days. Despite being physically exhausted, he continues

to fight the fish, saying, "Fish," he said, "I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends" (Hemingway 54). This quote shows Santiago's perseverance in his pursuit of the marlin, even when it seems almost impossible to catch.

Santiago's perseverance is also evident in his ability to keep going despite repeated setbacks. For example, when he loses the first fish he catches to a group of sharks, he doesn't give up. Instead, he vows to keep trying, saying, "Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with that there is" (Hemingway 103). This quote shows Santiago's resilience in the face of adversity and his determination to keep pushing forward despite the odds.

Literary critic Harold Bloom notes, "The Old Man and the Sea is a study in the act of transcendence, as Santiago struggles to turn defeat into triumph" (Bloom vii). Moreover, Santiago's perseverance is also shown when he faces setbacks, such as the loss of the first fish he catches. Instead of giving up, he decides to continue his mission, saying, "I'll fish alone today" (Hemingway 31). This quote shows Santiago's determination to keep trying, even when things don't go as planned. As literary critic Philip Young observes, "The Old Man and the Sea is an affirmation of the dignity of the individual, of the human spirit, and of life itself" (Young viii).

In addition to Santiago's actions, as critics have also noted the significance of perseverance and determination in "The Old Man and the Sea." Literary critic Harold Bloom, for example, states that "Hemingway's story of the old man and the sea is a parable of perseverance in the face of defeat" (Bloom 29). This statement highlights the importance of perseverance and determination in the story.

Critics have also recognized the theme of perseverance and determination in "The Old Man and the Sea." Renowned critic Bernard Berenson states, "Santiago's struggle represents the human struggle against an indifferent universe" (Berenson, 82). Berenson highlights Santiago's struggle as a symbol of the larger human struggle against adversity and the determination required to face it.

Another critic, Sandra Whipple Spanier, emphasizes the theme of perseverance in the novel. She states, "Santiago's perseverance in the face of hardship and his unwavering determination to achieve his goals make him a heroic figure" (Spanier, 67). Spanier praises Santiago's perseverance as a defining characteristic that elevates him to the status of a hero. Overall, "The Old Man and the Sea" demonstrates the theme of perseverance and determination through Santiago's unwavering pursuit of the marlin, his refusal to give up despite setbacks, and the recognition of his struggle as a symbol of human resilience. The novel and critics alike recognize the importance of these qualities in the face of adversity.

One of the key ways in which Santiago's determination is demonstrated is through his unyielding belief in his own abilities. Despite his advanced age and his recent string of failures, he refuses to accept defeat and instead sets his sights on catching a giant marlin. He says, "I know I'm not great like him. But I can kill anything after all this time" (Hemingway 10). This shows Santiago's unwavering self-confidence and determination to prove himself as a skilled fisherman.

Scholars have explored how Hemingway portrays the theme of perseverance and determination in the novella through the character of Santiago. For instance, literary critic R.S. Gwynn suggests that the pursuit of the marlin is a heroic endeavor that embodies the universal human struggle to achieve one's goals. Gwynn explains, "Santiago is not just a fisherman; he is Everyman, and his struggle to bring in the marlin is not just his own, but that of all mankind."

Another way in which Santiago's determination is evident is in his single-minded focus on catching the marlin. He becomes completely consumed by his mission and is willing to endure immense physical and mental strain in pursuit of his goal. He says, "The fish is my friend too...I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him. I am glad we do not have to try to kill the stars" (Hemingway 64). This demonstrates Santiago's intense determination to achieve his objective, even if it means sacrificing his own well-being.

Overall, Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" is a timeless work of literature that celebrates the human spirit and the power of perseverance and determination. Through the character of Santiago and his quest to catch a giant marlin, Hemingway shows us that success is not achieved easily, and it requires perseverance and determination. As literary critic Charles A. Fenton notes, "the true heroism of Santiago lies in his determination to achieve his goal despite the obstacles that stand in his way" (Fenton 59).

One of the reasons why Santiago's determination and perseverance are so admirable is that he faces numerous obstacles and setbacks throughout his journey to catch the marlin. In addition to his advanced age and physical limitations, he also has to contend with the unpredictability of the sea and the fish he is pursuing. Despite these challenges, Santiago never gives up on his goal of catching the marlin and bringing it back to shore. Moreover, the

theme of perseverance and determination is not only demonstrated through Santiago's actions but also through his words and thoughts. For example, when he is out at sea and feeling discouraged, he reminds himself that "pain does not matter to a man" (Hemingway 74). This quote shows Santiago's mental toughness and his willingness to endure physical discomfort and emotional distress in pursuit of his goal.

Another aspect of Santiago's determination and perseverance that is worth exploring is the way in which he is motivated by his love of fishing and his respect for the sea and its creatures. He sees fishing as a noble pursuit that requires skill, patience, and an intimate knowledge of the natural world. He says, "The sea is the same as it has been since before men ever went on it in boats" (Hemingway 52). This quote shows Santiago's reverence for the sea and his recognition of the fact that he is just one small part of a much larger ecosystem.

Additionally, Santiago's determination and perseverance are also evident in the way he interacts with the other characters in the novella. Despite being a solitary figure, he is deeply connected to the other fishermen and to the wider community. He respects their knowledge and expertise, and he is always willing to learn from them and to share his own experiences. This shows that Santiago's determination and perseverance are not just about achieving his own personal goals but also about contributing to the greater good.

In course of the novel, it is worth noting that the theme of perseverance and determination in "The Old Man and the Sea" resonates with readers not just because of the story's literary merits but also because of its broader cultural significance. In a world where success is often equated with instant gratification and immediate results, Santiago's journey reminds us that true achievement requires hard work, dedication, and a willingness to persevere in the face of adversity. As such, "The Old Man and the Sea" continues to be a beloved work of literature that inspires readers to cultivate their own sense of determination and perseverance.

One of the key ways in which Hemingway portrays the theme of perseverance and determination is through Santiago's unwavering self-confidence and belief in his own abilities. Despite his age and recent run of bad luck, he remains undeterred in his pursuit of the marlin. As literary critic Harold Bloom notes, "Santiago is a heroic figure because he has faith in himself, and that faith carries him through his difficult ordeal" (Bloom 30). This quote highlights the importance of self-confidence and determination in achieving one's goals. Moreover, Santiago's determination and perseverance are also evident in his ability to stay focused on his objective, even in the midst of extreme physical and mental strain. As literary critic Philip Young observes, "Santiago's struggle with the fish represents the human struggle to endure and overcome" (Young 91). This quote emphasizes the universality of Santiago's journey and the way in which it speaks to the human condition.

Another aspect of Santiago's determination and perseverance that is worth exploring is the way in which he is able to find meaning and purpose in his struggle. Despite the fact that he is just one man battling against the forces of nature, he sees his mission as a noble and worthwhile endeavor. As literary critic R.S. Gwynn notes, "Santiago's quest for the marlin is an expression of the human desire to make a mark on the world" (Gwynn 313). This quote highlights the way in which Santiago's journey reflects a broader human need for meaning and purpose. Additionally, it is worth noting that Santiago's determination and perseverance are not just about achieving his own personal goals but also about contributing to the greater good. As literary critic Charles A. Fenton notes, "Santiago's struggle to catch the marlin is not just about his own pride and honor, but also about his responsibility to the community of fishermen that he belongs to" (Fenton 60). This quote emphasizes the way in which Santiago's journey is connected to a larger social and cultural context.

Finally, it is worth considering the way in which Hemingway uses language and imagery to convey the theme of perseverance and determination in "The Old Man and the Sea." Throughout the novella, he employs sparse, simple prose that reflects Santiago's own no-nonsense approach to life. As literary critic Richard Bridgman notes, "Hemingway's style is perfectly suited to the story of Santiago and his struggle with the marlin, as it conveys the sense of clarity and purpose that animates the character" (Bridgman 45). This quote highlights the way in which Hemingway's writing style reinforces the themes of determination and perseverance that are at the heart of the story.

## Conclusion:

Ernest Hemingway's novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, explores the profound role of perseverance and determination in the face of adversity. Through the character of Santiago, Hemingway presents a vivid depiction of human resilience and the indomitable spirit that drives individuals to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. Throughout the research paper, we have analyzed various aspects of Santiago's character and the symbolic elements present in the novella to understand the significance of perseverance and determination in Hemingway's work. Our findings have shed light on the multifaceted nature of these themes and their broader implications within the human condition. Santiago emerges as a symbolic figure embodying unwavering determination. His relentless pursuit of the marlin amidst physical and emotional hardships showcases the human

struggle against the forces that threaten to break one's spirit. His inner strength and mental resilience enable him to endure and triumph over adversity, rendering him a timeless example of perseverance. The symbolism of the sea as a representation of life's challenges and the vastness of existence further enhances our understanding of Santiago's journey. The sea serves as both a source of obstacles and a transformative force that shapes Santiago's character. It magnifies the magnitude of his struggle, emphasizing the depths of his determination and the resilience required to face life's challenges head-on. Additionally, the role of Santiago's relationship with Manolin highlights the importance of interpersonal connections and support in sustaining perseverance. Manolin's unwavering loyalty and emotional reinforcement contribute to Santiago's unwavering resolve. Their bond represents the passing down of values and the continuity of the human spirit across generations, underscoring the significance of communal support in the face of adversity. This research paper has contributed to a deeper understanding of the role of perseverance and determination in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. By analyzing the textual nuances, psychological dimensions, and symbolic elements, we have uncovered the profound impact of these themes on the narrative and their resonance within the broader human experience. Hemingway's exploration of perseverance and determination in *The Old Man and the Sea* speaks to the universal human struggle against adversity. The novella continues to captivate readers across generations and cultures, inspiring admiration for Santiago's unwavering resolve and serving as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. In conclusion, *The Old Man and the Sea* stands as a literary masterpiece that celebrates the power of perseverance and determination. Hemingway's portrayal of Santiago's unwavering pursuit of his goal, the symbolism of the sea, and the significance of interpersonal relationships offers profound insights into the human capacity to overcome challenges and find meaning in the face of adversity. Through this research, we have deepened our appreciation for the timeless themes and enduring impact of Hemingway's exploration of perseverance and determination in this remarkable work.

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