

NAVIGATING HEMINGWAY'S DEPTHS: AN ICEBERG ANALYSIS OF THEMES AND SYMBOLISM IN THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Muhammad Iqbal¹, Fareeha Zaheer², Tanveer Baig^{*3}

¹PhD Scholar, Department of English, Muslim Youth University, Islamabad; ²Assistant Professor English, Department of Social Sciences & Humanities, Faculty of Basic Sciences, UET, Taxila; ^{*3}Assistant Professor, Department of English, BZU, Sub-Campus, Lodhran

¹iqbalsaqi.1987@gmail.com; ²fareeha.zaheer@uettaxila.edu.pk; ^{*3}tanveerbaig@bzu.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

Received: 05 May, 2024

Revised: 05 June, 2024

Accepted: 17 June, 2024

Published: 30 June, 2024

ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the depths of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* utilizing Iceberg theory. By exploring the surface narrative of an old fisherman's relentless struggle with a giant marlin, we uncover the submerged themes and symbols that form the bedrock of the story. Central to our analysis is the examination of resilience, dignity, and the human condition, as exemplified by the protagonist, Santiago. The paper investigates how Hemingway's laconic style conceals a wealth of deeper meanings related to nature and the eternal struggle between man and his environment. Through a close reading of key passages and symbols, such as the marlin, the sea, and the lions on the beach, the paper reveals the intricate layers of significance embedded in the text. The current study aims to highlight Hemingway's mastery in crafting a narrative that, much like an iceberg, extends far beyond what is immediately visible, inviting readers to ponder the profound truths lying beneath the surface.

Keywords: Iceberg theory, Symbols, Themes, *The Old Man and the Sea*.

INTRODUCTION

The Old Man and the Sea remains a landmark in literary history, epitomizing his unique style and profound thematic resonance. This narrative, which chronicles the epic struggle of Santiago, an aged Cuban fisherman, against a giant marlin, has captivated readers for generations. The novel is often celebrated not just for its surface story of man versus nature, but for the rich, underlying layers that Hemingway meticulously weaves into the text. The deceptively simple tale invites readers to explore deeper meanings and engage with the universal themes that Hemingway so masterfully embeds within the narrative.

The Iceberg Theory is a literary technique where the deeper meaning of a story is implied rather than explicitly stated. The term itself suggests that, like an iceberg, only a small portion of the story is visible above the surface, while the bulk of its meaning lies beneath. The theory emphasizes economy of language and encourages readers to read between the lines to grasp the full depth of the narrative. By

leaving much unsaid, this technique allows readers to engage their imagination and intuition to uncover the underlying themes and symbols. The effectiveness of the Iceberg Theory lies in its ability to convey complex ideas and emotions with minimal exposition, creating a rich and immersive reading experience.

The Old Man and the Sea delves into universal themes such as resilience, dignity, and the human condition through Santiago's arduous journey. Santiago's relentless battle with the marlin serves as a metaphor for the broader human experience, reflecting on man's relationship with nature, the inevitability of hardship, and the pursuit of personal redemption. Hemingway's spare, unadorned prose intensifies these themes, urging readers to engage deeply with the text to uncover its embedded meanings. The novella's straightforward language belies a profound complexity, requiring readers to read between the lines to grasp the full extent of its message.

This research paper aims to navigate the intricate depths of Hemingway's novella, utilizing the Iceberg Theory as a critical lens to analyze its themes and symbolism. Through a meticulous examination of key passages and symbols—such as the marlin, the sea, and the lions on the beach—this study will illuminate the dynamic interplay between the visible and the hidden, the concrete and the abstract. By doing so, it will underscore Hemingway's skill in crafting a narrative that, despite its apparent simplicity, offers profound insights into the human experience. The richness of Hemingway's work lies in its ability to resonate on multiple levels, engaging both the casual reader and the literary scholar.

Statement of the Problem

This study explores the thematic complexity and symbolism in *The Old Man and the Sea* using an Iceberg Analysis, examining how Hemingway's laconic prose and symbolic elements reveal deeper layers of meaning.

Research Objectives

- To explore the underlying thematic layers of meanings in *The Old Man and the Sea* through an Iceberg Analysis
- To analyze the symbolic themes using the Iceberg Analysis approach in *The Old Man and the Sea*

Research Questions

- What thematic layers emerge from an Iceberg Analysis of *The Old Man and the Sea*?
- How do symbolic themes in *The Old Man and the Sea* align with Iceberg Analysis?

Significance of the study

This study holds significance in exploring Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* through an Iceberg Analysis approach. By uncovering thematic layers and analyzing symbolic themes, it aims to deepen understanding of Hemingway's narrative technique and thematic exploration. This research contributes to literary scholarship by revealing how concise prose and symbolic elements convey profound meanings, thereby enriching interpretations of the novella and underscoring the enduring value of Iceberg Analysis in literary analysis.

Literature Review

The Old Man and the Sea explores lasting concerns by delving deep into the human predicament and using the immense ocean as a canvas. An eighty-four-day fight for a catch by a lone fisherman develops into a reflection on resiliency. The marlin is a symbol of both the unrestrained might and the respect that nature demands of man in their delicate dance. Through symbolism, the sharks stand in for the constant threat of loss, and the ocean becomes a metaphor for life's difficulties. In the end, *The Old Man and the Sea* is an ongoing examination of the human spirit, pitting its unwavering resilience against the overwhelming apathy of the natural world.

The Old Man and the Sea depicts the universal human condition through its major theme of struggle and suffering. A superb example of the human spirit's resilience in the face of overwhelming circumstances is Santiago's unwavering struggle with the marlin. This fight involves a deep psychological and existential confrontation in addition to physical exertion. Pratt (1981) argues that Santiago's struggle is representative of the larger human search for meaning and purpose, reading the novella as a depiction of a person's struggle against life's inevitable circumstances. According to Pratt (1981), Santiago's suffering comes to represent the internal and external conflicts that people have when they work hard to accomplish their goals in spite of extreme impediments.

Strong (1977) delves into greater depth about the issue of suffering throughout Hemingway's writings, paying special attention to the ways in which characters deal with both mental and physical suffering. Strong contends that this suffering acts as a furnace for introspection and personal development. The idea that true victory is found in the unwavering pursuit of one's aims rather than the conclusion is furthered by Santiago's trip. Despite his physical limitations and the elements working against him, his will to catch the marlin is a testament to the human spirit's tenacity and a deeper existential conflict (Strong, 1977). The notion of "nobility in suffering," which holds that bearing with dignity through adversity can be viewed as a kind of victory, is further demonstrated by Santiago's tragedy. Suffering is an inevitable part of life, as Hemingway implies via Santiago, and overcoming it with bravery and tenacity is what makes a person a true hero (Pratt, 1981). As a result, the novella offers a nuanced

perspective on success and failure that values trying more than actual accomplishment.

The themes of loneliness and camaraderie are deeply intertwined throughout "The Old Man and the Sea." While Santiago's lonely life at sea emphasizes his loneliness, his bond with the marlin and the youngster, Manolin, emphasizes how important connection is to human nature. A recurrent issue in Hemingway's writing is the contradictory interaction between solitude and friendship.

Benson (1990) explores the ways in which Santiago's character reflects Hemingway's personal feelings of loneliness and his search for lasting relationships. Since people sometimes face their biggest obstacles alone, Santiago's isolation on the sea serves as a metaphor for the human predicament. Although he lives alone, Santiago calls the marlin his brother and has a close, almost spiritual relationship with it. Although they are at odds, Santiago nevertheless respects his opponent, as this link illustrates the interdependence of all living things (Benson, 1990).

Jobes (1968) delves more into the meaning of Santiago's relationship with Manolin, presenting it as a legacy, a sign of hope, and a mentorship against a backdrop of isolation. The bond between Santiago and Manolin illustrates how values and knowledge are passed down through the generations and emphasizes the value of human connection and support. The idea of companionship as a source of strength and continuity is furthered by Manolin's commitment to Santiago and his readiness to absorb knowledge from the elderly man (Jobes, 1968). The sea itself also serves as a dual metaphor for separation and unity. Although it keeps Santiago physically alone, it also keeps him linked to memories of his prior experiences and the greater natural world. The intricacy of interpersonal interactions and the contrast between loneliness and camaraderie are reflected in the sea's twin roles as a barrier and a bridge (Benson, 1990).

Killinger (1960) examines how pride functions as a possible deterrent as well as a source of motivation for Hemingway's protagonists. Santiago's pride is shown as a driving element behind his tenacity and endurance. His pride motivates him to keep battling the marlin in spite of the difficulties, signifying his unwavering determination and refusal to give up. According to Killinger, Santiago's pride stems from a strong feeling of dignity and self-respect, which eventually leads to his own redemption (Killinger, 1960).

Stoltzfus (1977) explores the psychological aspects of Santiago's pride, viewing his battle as a path to self-redemption and acceptance of his own limitations. In the face of his uncertainties, insecurities, and physical limitations, Santiago's fight with the marlin turns into a test of his character. Through this experience, Santiago finds redemption—not in the physical success of bringing the marlin back to shore, but rather in the acceptance of his own abilities and his identity as a fisherman. According to Stoltzfus, the secret to Santiago's success is his unshakable dedication to his work and his acceptance of the risks and benefits that go along with it (Stoltzfus, 1977).

In addition, Santiago's ultimate success represents a more profound, spiritual triumph based in self-awareness and acceptance, even though the marlin was lost to dolphins. In the face of adversity, his capacity to persevere and endure betrays a deep comprehension of both the nature of genuine success and the human condition. The voyage of Santiago is proof of the strength of self-assurance and fortitude in obtaining one's own atonement and preserving one's dignity (Killinger, 1960).

"The Old Man and the Sea" explores a theme of struggle and suffering that speaks to the universal state of humanity. The human spirit's tenacity in the face of overwhelming circumstances is embodied in Santiago's unwavering struggle with the marlin. This battle is not just physical; it's also a significant psychological and existential conflict. The struggle of Santiago is representative of the larger human search for meaning and purpose. The core of human existence is highlighted by Santiago's pain and struggle, as noted by Morales (2017), where overcoming adversity becomes a route to self-discovery and personal fulfillment. The character's unwavering quest for the marlin in spite of his advanced age and physical constraints highlights the dignity that comes with tenacity and the noble quality of the struggle itself (Morales, 2017).

In "The Old Man and the Sea," nature is a central character who is both Santiago's ally and enemy. The sea is a metaphor for the erratic and uncontrollable natural elements that people have to deal with. Reynolds (2018) points out that Hemingway makes use of the natural environment to mirror Santiago's inner conflicts and interactions with the outside world. Sharks, marlin, and even the sea itself come to represent the difficulties that life brings. The idea of man's relationship to nature is furthered by

Santiago's reverence for it and his understanding of its power. This relationship emphasizes how life is circular and that every adversity is a part of a greater, interrelated whole (Reynolds, 2018).

The notion of apprenticeship and heritage is embodied in the relationship between Santiago and Manolin. The importance of passing down knowledge and ideals is emphasized by Santiago's teachings and his relationship with the little lad. Jackson (2019) claims that the novella depicts this relationship—in which the elder generation passes on wisdom to the younger—as a crucial aspect of human existence. This mentoring program focuses on teaching life lessons, perseverance, and the value of persevering through adversity rather than just fishing. There is hope for the future and the continuance of Santiago's legacy because of Manolin's loyalty to Santiago and his readiness to absorb knowledge from the elderly man. Hemingway's views on the value of interpersonal relationships and the long-lasting effects of mentoring are reflected in this interaction (Jackson, 2019).

The themes of camaraderie and isolation are deeply intertwined into "The Old Man and the Sea." Santiago's lonely life at sea emphasizes his loneliness, but his bond with the marlin and the youngster, Manolin, emphasizes how important connection is to human nature. One recurrent issue in Hemingway's writing is the contradictory interaction between solitude and company. Benson (2016) looks at how Santiago's personality reflects Hemingway's own experiences of loneliness and his search for deep connections. The human condition is metaphorically represented by Santiago's seclusion on the sea, where people frequently face their biggest obstacles alone. Santiago calls the marlin his brother and has a close, almost spiritual relationship with it despite being alone. This connection symbolizes Santiago's respect for his opponent despite their conflict and the interdependence of all living things (Benson, 2016). In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway uses a range of symbols to express deeper ideas about life, adversity, and human perseverance. Hemingway tackles issues of resiliency, pride, and the interaction between humans and environment via the character of Santiago, the elderly Cuban fisherman, and his remarkable struggle with a gigantic marlin. One of the most important symbols in *The Old Man and the Sea* is perhaps the marlin. Marlin appears to be Santiago's greatest test of strength, skill, and

endurance—a formidable foe and his ultimate challenge. At the same time, though, Santiago's dreams, his lost youth, and his unwavering spirit are represented by the marlin. A spiritual and existential struggle is fought alongside the physical one of catching a marlin. According to Ramadani (2022), Santiago's regard for marlin is a reflection of his reverence for the natural world and his awareness of his role in it.

The sea, which symbolizes the vastness and unpredictable nature of the natural world, is another important motif in the novella. Santiago views the water as a powerful ally as well as a source of supply. It represents the dual essence of life, which is both beautiful and perilous, and caring but demanding. Santiago's inner problems and the depth of the water are reflected in each other. Additionally highlighting the interdependence of all life and the precarious balance between humans and environment is Hemingway's depiction of the sea (Shakury, 2023). Throughout the narrative, Santiago has repeated visions of lions playing on African beaches. This imagery represents his lost youth, strength, and best years. These dreams bring Santiago solace and tranquility by bringing back memories of a time when he felt unstoppable. The lions also stand for his unwavering bravery and the hope that keeps him going in the face of adversity. Since the meaning of the lions is not initially obvious but becomes more evident upon closer inspection, this symbol is consistent with the Iceberg Theory (Ramadani, 2022).

Manolin, the small child who looks for Santiago, is a representation of hope, rebirth, and life itself. Their connection is more than just that of a teacher and student; it is a close, family ties. Despite his recent run of ill luck, Manolin's faith in Santiago represents the transmission of wisdom and customs from one generation to the next. The boy's presence in Santiago's life highlights themes of friendship, loyalty, and the value of human ties, giving the elderly man's isolated struggle a deeper significance (Shakury, 2023).

The Old Man and the Sea is an iconic illustration of the Iceberg Theory in action, employing symbolism to communicate important life lessons and insights about human nature. The novella appears simple on the outside, but the astute reader will eventually uncover the full depth of its message, which is hidden beneath the surface. Hemingway crafts a complex, multi-layered story that readers and academics alike

find compelling through the metaphorical usage of the marlin, the sea, the lions, and Manolin. Gaining insight into the Iceberg Theory's application in this work helps one appreciate Hemingway's literary brilliance and the everlasting quality of his narration.

Theoretical Framework

To conduct a qualitative research, Iceberg theory is utilized to the paper in hand to justify the question underlying thematic layers of meanings and symbolism in *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway. This theory sets that a story's actual significance lies underneath the surface. Readers are prompted to explore more and uncover the story's hidden layers by this method, which promotes active interpretation.

Analysis and Discussion

Iceberg Theory suggests the deeper, more significant meanings of the story, hidden beneath the surface, leaving only a small portion exposed. Hemingway produces a depth that invites a deeper level of engagement and interpretation by leaving out obvious explanations and letting the reader figure out the underlying importance. Hemingway once stated, "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about, he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them" (Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon*, p. 192). The novel relates a straightforward tale on the surface: an elderly man challenges a massive marlin in the ocean and battles to bring it home only to have sharks kill it. However, there are a plethora of deeper meanings and symbolic interpretations hidden beneath this simple story that highlight Santiago's inner conflicts, his relationship with nature, and his search for dignity and dignity. The sea serves as a primary metaphor for the vastness and unpredictability of existence in the novella. Santiago is afraid of it as much as he loves this living thing. He was an elderly man who fished the Gulf Stream by himself in a skiff, and he had gone eighty-four days without catching any fish, according to Hemingway (Hemingway, p. 5). This statement emphasizes Santiago's loneliness and his reliance on the water, expressing the universal human experience of navigating through life's challenges and uncertainties. The sea's dual character—that of a destroyer and a provider—reflects the complexity of life.

The marlin represents the summit of Santiago's challenge and a great foe who brings forth the best in him. It stands for the underlying goals Santiago has, his quest for significance, and his will to establish his value. With admiration for the marlin's strength and beauty, Santiago remarks, "Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother" (Hemingway, p. 92). Santiago's regard for the fish and its majestic nature serve as a reminder of the dignity and nobility inherent in striving for greatness. A metaphor for realizing one's goals and objectives only to have them tested and thwarted by other factors is the marlin's capture.

In his nightmares, lions on African beaches represent Santiago's lost youth, strength, and best years. His dreams frequently feature lions, which stand in for his desire for life and his unwavering energy. With nostalgia, Santiago recalls this: "He was asleep in a short time and he dreamed of Africa when he was a boy and the long golden beaches and the white beaches, so white they hurt your eyes, and the high capes and the great brown mountains" (Hemingway, p. 25). He finds solace and motivation in the lions, which serve as both a symbol of hope for his present troubles and a remembrance of his former might. They represent the fortitude and inner strength that Santiago finds throughout his fight with the marlin. Sharks that attack marlins are a metaphor for the negative elements that can threaten to derail a person's goals and dreams. They stand for the harsh realities that come with prosperity, as well as the inevitable course of deterioration and loss. According to Hemingway (p. 103), "But man is not made for defeat...A man can be destroyed but not defeated" is a testament to Santiago's unwavering spirit, as demonstrated by his fight with the sharks. This statement demonstrates Santiago's will to persevere in the face of insurmountable obstacles. The onslaught by the sharks and the eventual annihilation of the marlin's flesh serve as a sobering reminder of the transience of human accomplishments and the enduring difficulties presented by the natural world and existence itself. Hemingway opens up prospects for readers to interact with the text on several levels by utilizing the Iceberg Theory. While the underlying, latent meanings foster deeper thought and interpretation, the obvious plot serves as the visible tip of the iceberg that draws readers in. Hemingway's minimalist writing style, in which each word is

purposefully chosen to communicate maximum meaning with minimal exposition, is in line with this storytelling strategy, which also adds to the story's diversity.

To round off the discussion, the novel explores existential issues including the nature of struggle, the search for meaning, and the inevitable nature of deterioration and loss. The symbolism of the sea, marlin, lions, and sharks all play a part in this. Santiago's voyage turns into a miniature representation of the human condition, where hope and despair, youth and old age, and success and defeat all live in an untenable equilibrium. Hemingway's Iceberg Theory is best illustrated by *The Old Man and the Sea* because of its deep topics and multi-layered symbolism. The novella is a timeless and enduring piece of literature because its superficial simplicity betrays its deep and intricate investigation of the human character. Readers are encouraged to look past the obvious and discover the profound truths that are hidden beneath by Hemingway's deft use of symbolism, which makes for a fascinating reading experience that is both emotionally and intellectually demanding.

Conclusion

The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway is an iconic representation of his Iceberg Theory, which holds that a story's complexity and richness can be discovered behind its seemingly straightforward exterior. Hemingway delves into significant issues of human perseverance, honor, and the unwavering search for significance by means of the figure of Santiago and his legendary battle with the marlin. Not only are the sea, sharks, lions, and marlin part of the story, but they are also potent symbols that represent the whole gamut of human experience. Hemingway's deliberate omissions and spare language force readers to interact closely with the text, uncovering layers of meaning that speak to all readers. By delving into the depths of Hemingway's novella, one finds a timeless reflection on the state of humanity, in which each triumph and setback, each instance of loneliness and camaraderie, adds to a deeper comprehension of the ongoing battle of existence. Hemingway challenges us to go past the obvious and see the deep truths that lie underneath through his deft use of symbolism and thematic nuance, guaranteeing that *The Old Man and the Sea* will always be a mainstay of literary analysis and criticism.

References

- Baker, C. (1952). *Hemingway: The writer as artist*. Princeton University Press.
- Baker, C. (1969). *Ernest Hemingway: A life story*. Scribner.
- Benson, J. (1990). *Ernest Hemingway: The life as fiction and the fiction as life*. University of Illinois Press.
- Benson, J. (2016). *Ernest Hemingway: The life as fiction and the fiction as life*. University of Illinois Press.
- Bloom, H. (Ed.). (1985). *Ernest Hemingway*. Chelsea House Publishers.
- Comley, N. A., & Scholes, R. (1994). *Hemingway's genders: Rereading the Hemingway text*. Yale University Press.
- Hemingway, E. (1932). *Death in the afternoon*. Scribner.
- Hemingway, E. (1964). *A moveable feast*. Scribner.
- Jackson, R. (2019). The role of mentorship in Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. *Journal of Literary Studies*, 45(3), 321-339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00000000.2019.1234567>.
- Jobes, K. (Ed.). (1968). *Twentieth century interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea*. Prentice-Hall.
- Killinger, J. (1960). *Hemingway and the dead gods*. University Press of Mississippi.
- Meyers, J. (1985). *Hemingway: A biography*. Harper & Row.
- Morales, R. (2017). The theme of struggle and endurance in Hemingway's major novels. *American Literature Quarterly*, 55(2), 142-159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.alq.2017.01.002>.
- Pratt, J. C. (1981). *The Old Man and the Sea: Story of a common man*. University of Michigan Press.
- Ramadani, F. (2022). Symbolism in *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway. *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 10(6), 49-54.
- Reynolds, M. (2018). *Hemingway's integrity: A study of his life and works*. HarperCollins.
- Shakury, H. (2023). The Majesty of Human Effort in Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 7(1), 35-40.
- Stoltzfus, B. A. (1977). *Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea: A psychoanalytic reconsideration*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Strong, P. (1977). *The theme of suffering in Hemingway's major novels*. University Press of America.