

The Old Man and the Sea
Socratic Seminar 2013

For each of the following prompts/questions, prepare a response by considering Hemingway's intentions in writing *The Old Man and the Sea*. Provide at least two textual examples along with a 3-4 sentence analysis for each topic. You may also pose questions that relate to the prompt. Remember, your task will be to engage in a meaningful conversation with your peers about two of these prompts.

1. What does Hemingway mean by the idea that "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" Considering the text, what is Hemingway's definition of defeat? Is Santiago's fishing excursion a moment of **defeat** or **success**?
2. Is Santiago a tragic hero with a tragic flaw (pride/hubris)? Does his pride ultimately lead him to defeat or triumph?
3. Why did Santiago express such deep-seeded reverence for nature? Who was Santiago truly battling during these days on the boat?
4. What is the difference between humiliation and humility? Which best characterizes the old man and how do these ideas contribute to the theme of the novella?
5. In what way does the presence of Manolin help to define Santiago?
6. Consider again the characteristics of the Hemingway CODE Hero, consider how Santiago both represents and refutes the definition prescribed by Hemingway. What is your final determination of Santiago given these criteria?
7. Given your knowledge of Ernest Hemingway's life at the time he wrote this novella, how is Santiago a reflection of both the author's greatness and declining nature? The novella was published in 1952; Hemingway died in 1961.
8. According to Hemingway, "The time to prove what you're made of is not when you're at the top of your game, but when you've been knocked on your ass." Consider this in the context of the novella, the short story, the A&E Biography, and the article. **Do you agree with this sentiment? How does this apply to Santiago, the overall message of the novella, and Hemingway himself?**
9. In Hemingway's *Farewell to Arms*, he writes the following: "If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry" (Hemingway 249). **Does the world break everyone? Has Santiago been broken by the world?**
10. Hemingway once said that *The Old Man and the Sea* is the "epilogue to all [his] writing and what [he has] learned, or tried to learn while writing and trying to live." **Considering the text, how does this novella serve as some of Hemingway's final words?**
11. By killing the fish, Santiago becomes one with it as the ambiguous "half of him had been destroyed." It is not just that he has taken life, but also that he has experienced what it is like to die. Is it **more painful to die or is it more painful to live?**
12. At least four times Santiago expresses that he wishes catching the marlin had only been a dream. The question he raises is perhaps one of the central questions of the novel: **Is it better to have achieved something only to have it taken away or to have never achieved it at all?** What do you think? Which response would Hemingway support?