

Extended reading



Read the introduction to Ernest Hemingway and his novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. Then read the excerpt from the novel.

Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961), an American writer of novels and short stories, is well thought of for his unique writing style. He is extremely good at describing the adventures of tough men who he believes “can be destroyed but not defeated”. *The Old Man and the Sea* tells the story of a fisherman named Santiago. After coming in empty-handed for eighty-four days, Santiago attempts to catch a huge fish. The story below describes his struggle with the fish.

The Old Man and the Sea

The fish was coming in on his circle now calm and beautiful looking and only his great tail moving. The old man pulled on him all that he could to bring him closer. For just a moment the fish turned a little on his side. Then he straightened himself and began another circle.

5 “I moved him,” the old man said. “I moved him then.”

He felt faint again now but he held on the great fish all the strain that he could. I moved him, he thought. Maybe this time I can get him over. Pull, hands, he thought. Hold up, legs. Last for me, head. Last for me. You never went. This time I’ll pull him over.

10 But when he put all of his effort on, starting it well out before the fish came alongside and pulling with all his strength, the fish pulled part way over and then righted himself and swam away.

“Fish,” the old man said. “Fish, you are going to have to die anyway. Do you have to kill me too?”

15 That way nothing is accomplished, he thought. His mouth was too dry to speak but he could not reach for the water now. I must get him alongside this time, he

thought. I am not good for many more turns. Yes you are, he told himself. You're good for ever.

20 On the next turn, he nearly had him. But again the fish righted himself and swam slowly away.

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.

25 Now you are getting confused in the head, he thought. You must keep your head clear. Keep your head clear and know how to suffer like a man. Or a fish, he thought.

"Clear up, head," he said in a voice he could hardly hear. "Clear up."

Twice more it was the same on the turns.

30 I do not know, the old man thought. He had been on the point of feeling himself go each time. I do not know. But I will try it once more.

He tried it once more and he felt himself going when he turned the fish. The fish righted himself and swam off again slowly with the great tail weaving in the air. I'll try it again, the old man promised, although his hands were mushy now and he could only see well in flashes.

35 He tried it again and it was the same. So he thought, and he felt himself going before he started; I will try it once again.

A *In pairs, discuss the following questions.*

- 1 How would you describe the old man's character? Support your view with details from the excerpt.
- 2 What do you think of Hemingway's writing style? Use examples from the excerpt to support your view.

B *Hemingway writes in The Old Man and the Sea, "A man can be destroyed but not defeated." How do you understand this sentence?*