

## IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS EXPLAINED

1. He no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy. Since the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea*, there has been much debate surrounding the story's symbols. Does the old man represent the author nearing the end of his career? Do the vicious sharks stand for cruel literary critics or the inevitably destructive forces of nature? While most readers agree that, as a parable, *The Old Man and the Sea* addresses universal life, the image of the lions playing on the African beach, which is presented three times in the novel, remains something of an enigma. Like poetry, the lions are supremely suggestive without being tethered to a single meaning. Indeed, the only thing that is certain about the image is that it serves as a source of comfort and renewal for Santiago. This passage, which describes Santiago's dreams on the night before he sets out for his fishing expedition (the first day that the narrative covers), simultaneously confirms and moves beyond Hemingway's immediately recognizable vision of the universe. Hemingway made his career telling stories about "great occurrences," "great fish," and "contests of strength." The fact that Santiago no longer dreams of any of these makes him unique among Hemingway's heroes. Of course, by dreaming of lions he is still in a recognizably "Hemingwayesque" world, but the lions here are at play and thus suggest a time of youth and ease. They are also linked explicitly to Manolin, a connection that is made apparent at the end of the novel as the boy watches over his aged friend as Santiago's dream of the lions returns.

2. Just then the stern line came taut under his foot, where he had kept the loop of the line, and he dropped his oars and felt the weight of the small tuna's shivering pull as he held the line firm and commenced to haul it in. The shivering increased as he pulled in and he could see the blue back of the fish in the water and the gold of his sides before he swung him over the side and into the boat. He lay in the stern in the sun, compact and bullet shaped, his big, unintelligent eyes staring as he thumped his life out against the planking of the boat with the quick shivering strokes of his neat, fast-moving tail. The old man hit him on the head for kindness and

kicked him, his body still shuddering, under the shade of the stern. This passage, which describes Santiago's hauling in of the tuna on the second day of the narrative, exemplifies the power and beauty of the simple, evocative style of prose that earned Hemingway his reputation as a revolutionary and influenced generations of writers to come. Hemingway's strength and mastery lies in his ability to render concrete but still poetic images using familiar words and simple vocabulary. The scene above is instantly familiar, even to the many readers who have no experience hauling in fish. For instance, the "compact and bullet shaped" fish is remarkably visible as it shivers and shudders on the floor of the skiff. Hemingway loads the passage with carefully chosen sounds. For instance, the repetition of the "k" and "s" sounds in the last sentence suggests a calm, rhythmic motion, like the breaking of waves against the boat or the side-to-side twitching of the fish's body. The passage also demonstrates the psychological depths Hemingway could access despite his incredible economy of language. When the old man hits the fish on the head, Hemingway qualifies the action with only two words: "for kindness." These two words, however, give the reader full insight into the old man's character. Hemingway renders Santiago's connection to, and respect and love for, the world in which he lives without reporting the old man's innermost thoughts. Instead, using two well-chosen words, he hints at a depth of feeling that makes Santiago who he is. Hemingway described this technique as the "iceberg principle," for he believed that the simplest writing, when done well, would hint at the greatest human truths, just as the tip of an iceberg hinted at the terrific frozen mass that rested underwater.

3. "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." Imagine if each day a man must try to kill the moon, he thought. The moon runs away. . . . Then he was sorry for the great 40 • The Old Man and the Sea fish that had nothing to eat and his determination to kill him never relaxed in his sorrow for him. . . . There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity. I do not understand these things, he thought. But it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true

brothers. This passage is found at the end of the third day related by the novella. As Santiago struggles with the marlin, he reflects upon the nature of the universe and his place in it. He displays both pity for the fish and an unflagging determination to kill it, because the marlin's death helps to reinvigorate the fisherman's life. The predatory nature of this exchange is inevitable, for just as hawks will continue to hunt warblers, men will continue to kill marlin, and sharks will continue to rob them of their catches. The cruelty of this natural order is subverted, however, because of the kinship Santiago feels for his prey. His opponent is worthy, so worthy, in fact, that he later goes on to say that it doesn't matter who kills whom. There is, in the old man's estimation, some sense to this order. Man can achieve greatness only when placed in a well-matched contest against his earthly brothers. To find glory, Santiago does not need to extend himself beyond his animal nature by looking to the sun or the stars.

4. Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skiff. The killing of the marlin, which occurs on the fourth day of the narrative, marks the climax of the novella. The end of the marlin's life is the most vital of moments, as the fish comes alive "with his death in him" and exhibits to Santiago, more strongly than ever before, "all his power and his beauty." The fish seems to transcend his own death, because it invests him with a new life. This notion of transcendence is important, for it resounds within Santiago's story. Like the fish, the old man suffers something of a death on his way back to the village. He is stripped of his quarry and, given his age, will likely never have the opportunity to land such a magnificent fish again. Nevertheless, he returns to the village with his spirit and his reputation revitalized.

5. You did not kill the fish only to keep alive and to sell for food, he thought. You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman. You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more? As Santiago sails back to his village on the fourth day of the novella, towing behind him the carcass of the decimated marlin, he tries to make sense of the destruction he has witnessed. He feels deeply apologetic toward the fish, which he sees as too dignified for such a wasteful end. He attempts to explain to himself his reasons for killing the fish, and admits that his desire to hunt the fish stemmed from the very same quality that led to its eventual destruction: his pride. He then justifies his behavior by claiming that his slaying of the marlin was necessitated by his love and respect for it. Indeed, when Santiago kills the fish, the loss of life is somehow transcendently beautiful, as opposed to the bold, senseless scavenging on the part of the sharks.