

DAY FIVE

Summary From Manolin bringing the old man coffee to the old man's return to sleep to dream, once again, about the lions Early the next morning, Manolin comes to the old man's shack, and the sight of his friend's ravaged hands brings him to tears. He goes to fetch coffee. Fishermen have gathered around Santiago's boat and measured the carcass at eighteen feet. Manolin waits for the old man to wake up, keeping his coffee warm for him so it is ready right away. When the old man wakes, he and Manolin talk warmly. Santiago says that the sharks beat him, and Manolin insists that he will work with the old man again, regardless of what his parents say. He reveals that there had been a search for Santiago involving the coast guard and planes. Santiago is happy to have someone to talk to, and after he and Manolin make plans, the old man sleeps again. Manolin leaves to find food and the newspapers for the old man, and to tell Pedrico that the marlin's head is his. That afternoon two tourists at the terrace café mistake the great skeleton for that of a shark. Manolin continues to watch over the old man as he sleeps and dreams of the lions.

Analysis Given the depth of Santiago's tragedy—most likely Santiago will never have the opportunity to catch another such fish in his lifetime—*The Old Man and the Sea* ends on a rather optimistic note. Santiago is re30 • *The Old Man and the Sea* united with Manolin, who desperately wants to complete his training. All of the old man's noble qualities and, more important, the lessons he draws from his experience, will be passed on to the boy, which means the fisherman's life will continue on, in some form, even after his death. The promise of triumph and regeneration is supported by the closing image of the book. For the third time, Santiago returns to his dream of the lions at play on the African beaches. As an image that recalls the old man's youth, the lions suggest the circularity of life. They also suggest the harmony—the lions are, after all, playing—that exists between the opposing forces of nature. The hope that Santiago clings to at the novella's close is not the hope that comes from naïveté. It is, rather, a hope that comes from experience, of something new emerging from something old, as a phoenix rises out of the ashes. The novella states as much when Santiago reflects that “a man can be destroyed but not defeated.” The destruction of the marlin is not a defeat for Santiago; rather, it leads to his redemption. Indeed, the fishermen who once mocked him now stand in awe of him. The

decimation of the marlin, of course, is a significant loss. The sharks strip Santiago of his greater glory as surely as they strip the great fish of its flesh. But to view the shark attack as precipitating only loss is to see but half the picture. When Santiago says, “Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive,” he is pointing, once again, to the vast, necessary, and ever-shifting tension that exists between loss and gain, triumph and defeat, life and death. In the final pages of the novella, Hemingway employs a number of images that link Santiago to Christ, the model of transcendence, who turned loss into gain, defeat into triumph, and even death into new life. Hemingway unabashedly paints the old man as a crucified martyr: as soon as the sharks arrive, the narrator comments that the noise Santiago made resembled the noise one would make “feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood.” The narrator’s description of Santiago’s return to town also recalls the crucifixion. As the old man struggles up the hill with his mast across his shoulders, the reader cannot help but recall Christ’s march toward Calvary. Even the position in which he collapses on his bed—he sleeps facedown on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up—brings to mind the image of Christ suffering on the cross.

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CRITICAL READINGS T he Old Man and the Sea is a story told so simply and precisely that it invites the reader to fish (pardon the pun) for secondary meaning. After the novella was published, Hemingway urged a friend against such readings, insisting, “I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea and a real fish and real sharks.” Yet this seems rather disingenuous, especially given the famous “iceberg principle” that governed Hemingway’s writing for decades. (See “Hemingway’s Style” below.) The very simplicity of the story suggests that it is a parable meant to illustrate a moral lesson. But the nature of the lesson is not obvious. The Hemingway scholar Philip Young offers a compelling answer to this question when he suggests that the novel is a parable, but one for life itself, and thus readers who search for other allegorical meanings inevitably reduce the grandeur of the text. But, of course, alternate readings persist. Paraphrased below are several prominent interpretations of symbolism and metaphor in *The Old Man and the Sea*.