

BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS AND SYMBOLISM IN THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

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ABSTRACT:

The text “The old man and the sea” written by Hemingway describes the battle between the old man Santiago and the fish Marlin. The Old man and sea can be analyzed based on biblical influence which create biblical allusions certainly. There are many symbols portrayed in this story which proves that “Man can be Defeated but not destroyed”. In this novel the protagonist is in the search of identity, and he tries to prove himself as a fisherman. His determination and hope let him to explore his expedition with the witness of life lessons and struggles.

INTRODUCTION:

The old man and sea can be categorized under the stream of African American literature. This prose piece is comprised of several themes like hardship of life, loneliness, depression, revival of hope, determination, search for identity and acceptance of reality. The protagonist Santiago is an old and frail man who strive to prove himself as a successful fisherman. In the process of his hard work and determination to become a successful fisherman, he faces the struggles and pain. In the beginning he is regarded as an unlucky fisherman who is capable of nothing. He feels bad and inferior about him but later his assistant motivates him and give him hope, new version of him during the expedition. There is the expression of symbolism in this prose piece: sea, Marlin’s skeleton, Santiago, Marlin, Shark, Joe Di Maggie are the symbols which uniquely describes all the aspects of life in a subtle way. And there is also the evidence of biblical allusion in this work. This work also states that old age has no limits, even at the end of the life man can explore through the essence of life.

KEYWORDS:

Biblical allusions, symbols, hope, struggles, determination.

EVIDENCE OF BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS:

Human beings are taught and grown up with the teachings of religious holy books. It is common that we all are influenced with the good learnings of moral values learnt from Bible. Hemingway’s invention of stories has biblical influence and symbolism in a general way. In this

work, if we analyze based on biblical influence there is allusion of two major personalities. Allusion refers to the description or usage of the past legendary personality referred in the text or any work of literature. Biblical allusion literally means the reference of the legendary personality related to the holy book: Bible. The description of the old man Santiago itself contributes to find him as a biblical allusion. Hemingway describes that Santiago has a young eye and though he was certainly defeated he never gave up and stood up strongly and faced with the brighter approach of life. Santiago is portrayed as God figure that is his traits is the reflection of Jesus. Manolin who is the apprentice of Santiago was a faithful follower. Though Manolin's parents resisted him to follow the unlucky Santiago he was determined to follow his master and remained supportive to him in all his circumstances. The description of Manolin refers to allusive person Pedrico is Saint Peter the closest disciple of Jesus and a great fisherman. The way how Jesus helped Pedrico with fish and preaching of life in the same way Manolin helped Santiago with the fish. Thus, the influence of bible and religious learning is expressed in this prose piece.

SYMBOLISM:

Symbols play a major role in the literature as it broadly creates attention among the readers to understand and co relate the symbol with the relevant meanings. After analyzing the symbols, we come across several meanings and expansion of thoughts. The term symbol is derived from the Latin word which means "token of Sign". With the help of symbols, readers understand the depth of literary creations. Symbolism is related to the aesthetic movement which gave importance to art as they quote "art for art's sake". Symbols are merely the art of meanings which are meant deeply inside the text. They lead to several different ideas and interpretations. The following are the symbols in the novel "The old man and the sea":

SEA:

Sea in the fiction where Santiago goes for expedition is a significant symbol. Santiago travels to the Gulf of North Cuba to catch fish and in that expedition, he acknowledges the meaning of life. Sea is the symbol of "Journey of Life", the journey teaches a lot of lessons in everyone's life. As an individual everyone has their own uniqueness but in the whole, they need to struggle and live in solitude. In the village Santiago was a fisherman but was not the successful one. He faced many rejections and hardships but still he managed to move on and work hard to succeed in his life as fisherman. He was determined in his process of journey of life while catching Marlin, Santiago was so much determined that he brings the skeleton along with him. Though Santiago is defeated by sharks, he is not destroyed and strive to work hard in his life forever.

MARLIN:

Marlin is the symbol of the "Struggles of life", the protagonist faces a lot of struggles in his expedition while catching Marlin. Santiago was named as unlucky fisherman who was not capable of anything so to overcome this inferiority. Marlin is a fish which makes Santiago to stay determined despite of his old age and weakness. In order to achieve, Santiago catches Marlin- the great fish in the first two days, he tries to kill it and on third day he uses his weapon harpoon and kills it. Pathetically the wild sharks in the sea eat the flesh of Marlin leaving its skeleton. This shows the struggles which he faced during the expedition.

SHARK:

Shark is the symbol of the “Opponent” which resists Santiago to catch Marlin. Sharks tries to evoke the hidden strength and dedication of Santiago in indirect way. Shark is also symbolism of those people who tears of the success of the people. They are so furious that they don’t accept the growth of people they easily grab the golden opportunity of the person from them. The opponent sharks are similar to the enemies do things to put people down and don’t let them to rise up to the heights. To achieve success in life, one should overcome all such opponents and prove themselves. Though Santiago was disappointed after returning to his village only with the skeleton of Marlin. His apprentice Manolin supported and encouraged him to catch more fish and stay determined to become a successful fisherman.

MARLIN’S SKELETON:

Marlin’s skeleton is the symbol of the “old man Santiago”, both Marlin and Santiago struggled for their life. Santiago struggled to catch marlin and Marlin struggled to live its life by escaping from Santiago. But the irony is that Santiago also failed to catch the whole Marlin, he was left only with the skeleton of Marlin. And Marlin was tried hard to save his life from the harpoon of Santiago and from the dreadful sharks, but he was killed, and his flesh was eaten by the sharks. Though Santiago was upset that he returned only with the skeleton of Marlin, he was appreciated by the tourists and strangers for his ability to catch such a huge fish’s skeleton. This again proves that man can be defeated but cannot be destroyed.

MANOLIN:

Manolin is the apprentice of Santiago and who always supports and guards his master. He is also referred to the closest disciple of Lord Jesus who stayed with Lord Jesus and was a fisherman. Manolin is also interpreted as the support system of Santiago, in life people faces many obstacles and criticism from the opponents but with existence of well-wishers and supporters a person may overcome difficulties and hope to live a great life ahead.

OTHER FISHERMEN:

Other fishermen are symbols of people who never appreciate the success or hard work of person and always demotivates the actions of the person. Santiago is constantly criticized by other fisher men’s for being the unlucky fisherman and don’t have the capacity to catch a fish in the sea. And when Santiago after long hard work and struggled returned to the village with the huge bone of Marlin, tourists were appreciating Santiago. But the other fisher men were mocking him by saying that he just returned with the skeleton of fish. These criticizing men can be suggested as the stepping stones of life who keeps on criticize and stay in the same place whereas people keep on moving and doing their best to reach the heights and success. Santiago was initially very disappointed but later with the motivation of his assistant he was confident again to go on the expedition and catch a fish.

JOE DI MAGGIE:

A baseball player who inspired Santiago to learn leadership and great qualities. Though this player was physically handicapped but still capable of playing baseball and teaching life lessons to many audiences. Santiago also has a defect like Joe Di Maggio, he was handicapped whereas Santiago was old and frail man. Santiago learned that age can never be a barrier to stop his journey to success.

CONCLUSION:

The Old man and the sea have various symbols and thoughts which describe the life and journey of man. Though Santiago was called unlucky man, but still his young apprentice believed him and at the end of the novel, Santiago is appreciated for catching the great Marlin, though not alive but still it was the achievement. Through all symbols, thus it is evident that man can be defeated but not destroyed. Santiago is again given hope by Manolin to catch big fish in the future.

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