Academic Communication Skills

Reflective writing

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The Old Man and the Sea is a short novel by Ernest Hemingway. In it, author describes the story of Santiago, an aged Cuban fisherman who, having gone without a catch for eighty-four days, embarks on an extraordinary three-day hunt for a giant marlin. The story presents the marlin as a worthy and formidable adversary, showing how Santiago feels great awe and respect for the creature, which he later even refers to as his brother. Santiago sees the marlin as strong and robust, much like himself.

Whilst on the surface, the novel’s plot appears to be simply on the pursuit of a marlin, it is actually much more of a tapestry. Throughout the story, one can observe the tender feelings of the fisherman for the marlin and at the same time, a driving desire to catch and slaughter it. This notion is clearly seen in the old man’s saying: “Fish, I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends.”. The way I personally came to the approbation of fisherman’s complexion is by recognizing that the marlin was born to be a prey, and Santiago grew to be a hunter. They are still brothers in the inevitability of their dispositions, they still share that mutual kinship but only locked in natural cycle of prey and predator.

Throughout the novel, Hemingway repeatedly shows protagonist’s vehement feelings for the fish, his admiration for the marlin’s strengths, dignity and commitment. This feeling is first aroused by the marlin’s unusual pulling of a hook, which makes Santiago instantly realize that this was undoubtedly the largest fish he has ever caught. Later, the fish’s acts of pulling the boat farther from the shores, and its use of intelligence instead of force, among others, all prolong the hunt for three whole days, strengthening Santiago’s respect for the fish’s refusal to accept defeat. He finds that the marlin’s qualities are akin to his own, as both fight fiercely for their goals.

Fishermen’s kind regard for the marlin is clearly represented in his fight for the protection of the marlin’s carcass. After Santiago captures and leaves with the marlin, its blood forms a trail on the sea, attracting sharks. First, he strongly fights the mako shark and kills it with his harpoon, though it does not end with that one only. Upon successive attacks by other sharks, the fisherman gets heavily wounded, but remains determined to protect the fish’s carcass. His loud saying, “Fish, I’ll stay with you until I am dead.”, really shows how resolute he remained, in spite of his near-death exhaustion. Although, at the of a day the marlin gets cleaned by sharks with only its skeleton remaining, such feat by fisherman shows his exceptional bravery and perseverance.

In conclusion, Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" expands the simple narrative of a fisherman's pursuit of a marlin to the extent of a rich tapestry of human passion and interconnectedness with nature. Santiago's adventure not only represents the tireless pursuit of his prey, but also the deep sense of kinship and mutual respect that exists between hunter and prey.