
Book Review: The Old Man And The Sea By Ernest Hemingway

One of the bookish resolutions that I took in 2018 was to read 10 classics. My progress wasn't noteworthy but I am determined to change it in the coming years.

I picked up *The Old Man and the Sea* because I am participating in an Instagram readathon in which the prompt was to read a book that is a part of a "100 books to read in a lifetime" list.

Needless to state, *The Old Man and the Sea* frequently graces many such lists and was therefore a good option.

What is the book all about and what to expect?

The Old Man and the Sea is a classic novel written in 1951 by Ernest Hemingway. It is considered to be the last major work by the eminent author to be published while he was alive.

The book is a short read (under 100 pages) which is set in Havana, Cuba. The story tells us the tale of an old fisherman, a young boy and a beautiful and brave fish.

What is the story like?

Santiago is an old fisherman who has gone 84 days without fishing. He has now been termed as "salao" by the local people, which means that he is suffering from the worst form of unluckiness.

Once a sturdy and healthy man, he was great at his job and would always catch the best fish. Now, he is an old and poor man with nothing much to keep his days and mind occupied.

Even the boy whom he loves dearly and had trained well is now forbidden by his parents to work with the old man because of his unlucky strike.

Manolin, the young boy, however, loves Santiago and cares for him. He often brings him food and tea and they talk about all things under the sun especially Santiago's favourite – the American baseball.

Determined to change his luck and bring home a catch big enough to get the town talking, the old man sets out on the sea on the 85th day. He goes out into the Gulf Stream and his bait soon gets taken by a big fish which he supposes is a Marlin.

But, the fish will not relent so easily. The old man is also determined and won't let go easily. What follows is a fight for life with both sides being equally brave and determined.

How good are the characters?

The characters are one of the most honest and brave ones that I have come across in a book in

recent times.

Santiago, the old man is strong willed. Though his body is weakened by the number of years he has seen, the same cannot be said about his resolve. That he is old schooled in his manners and in his treatment of the nature's elements only adds to his charms. Unlike, many younger fishermen he respects the sea and calls her La Mar, a term of endearment.

Santiago, for me, was a character that cannot be equaled. His respect for the Marlin is also noteworthy. Though he is determined to prevail, he still respects the fish and apologizes to it profusely. He calls it noble and brave, and sometimes laments about the futility of such an existence, which makes people do such horrible things to nature's beautiful creatures.

The author's writing style

I consider myself quite incompetent to comment on the author's writing style. The author chooses a very simple story and turns it into a masterpiece. If that is not wonderful, I don't know what else is.

I also liked the way a non-human i.e. the Marlin plays such an important role in the book.

The life lessons which the old man teaches while battling for his own existence is also something to look forward to in this book.

What I absolutely loved?

Undoubtedly, the climax is the best part of the book but more about that in the following paragraphs.

What did I not like?

The Old Man and the Sea is a difficult read for somebody who isn't familiar with all the fishing jargons, methods, techniques and equipment. This is probably one of the reasons most readers find it difficult to finish the book.

It also means that once you are through the book you emerge as a more informed reader. I personally found myself googling for a lot of information throughout the course of the book, and that is something that really makes me happy.

What about the climax?

The climax is what makes this book a winner. The magic of The Old Man and the Sea lies in its tragic ending and that is what elevates the book to its classic status.

The climax is mind boggling and, in the end, if you are a sensitive and emotional reader like me, you cannot help but shed a tear or two for the old man Santiago and his undying spirit.

How good was the entertainment quotient?

The book, though a short read, is not an easy one. It takes time for the reader to get into it and it

is also perceptibly slow towards the middle, but that doesn't take away the entertainment quotient.

Finishing the book does require some effort but, in the end, it is worth every minute that you spend reading it.