

The Character Analysis in Ernest Hemingway's Novel "The Old Man and The Sea"

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Abstract

This study examines the characteristics of the major and minor characters in Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Old Man and the Sea*. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research delves into the portrayal of human traits through the novel's characters. The findings reveal that Hemingway skillfully encapsulates various human qualities and struggles in his characters. Santiago, the protagonist, embodies perseverance and resilience despite facing prolonged adversity going eighty-four days without catching a fish. His eventual capture of the Marlin, a massive eighteen-foot-long fish, represents not just a personal victory but also the relentless struggle against forces beyond his control, as he ultimately loses the Marlin. Manolin, a minor character, is depicted as a loyal and compassionate boy who supports and cares deeply for Santiago. Their bond is marked by mutual respect and a shared passion for baseball, highlighting themes of mentorship, friendship, and intergenerational connection. Through these characters, Hemingway portrays the universal human experience of determination, loss, and the enduring strength of relationships.

Keywords: Major; Minor; Character; Ernest

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a personal expression of feeling, including experience, idea, motivation, and confidence in the concrete description by using language. It is the representation of the human condition against the effort to reach the purpose of living. The novel expresses some aspects of human love, life and existence because it tells within the human activities and describes what happened in the surroundings.

In the modern era, people can express their opinions in many ways. Literature is a place where people convey their ideas. That means with literature, people can bring their thoughts both in written and oral form, visual and non-visual, such as books, novels, poems, films, drama, Etc.

One of the literary works is a novel. Like any other literature, many people can accept and read a novel because it can be used for hobbies and daily activities and also give us information about human life. A novel is a literary work. "A literary work is constructed by some united aspects. Those aspects are the Intrinsic approach and the Extrinsic approach" (Fitra et al., 2022, p. 79). The intrinsic element is the element

that builds the literary work itself. Elements are what the literature presents as a work of martial arts. Intrinsic elements of a novel element (directly) participate and build the story. Extrinsic elements are the elements beyond the results of martial arts that indirectly affect the building or system of the organism's martial arts. Extrinsic elements of a novel must still be seen as something important.

Here, the researcher chose an intrinsic one to analyze the concerning novel. An intrinsic element has five main parts: theme, character, plot, setting, and point of view. One of these intrinsic main parts concerned with this writing is the characters. Characters are people who play in the novel. Characters are divided into two: major characters and minor characters. A major character is a person who gets large parts in the novel, and a minor character is a person who does not get a prominent role in the novel. The theme is the main idea of the novel. The plot is part of an intrinsic element, a chain in the novel. It begins with raising action, conflict, climax, falling action, and resolution. The setting is the place of each event, the events themselves, and the atmosphere in which scenes illustrate. Point of view is a technique an author uses to convey his writing.

The Old Man and the Sea was written by Ernest Hemingway in 1952. It is a short heroic novel about an old Cuban fisherman who hooks and boats a giant marlin after an extended struggle, only to have it eaten by voracious sharks during the long voyage home. Because of this novel, Hemmingway got the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Related Literature is an essential part of a research article that presents a summary and analysis of previous studies, theories, or concepts relevant to the topic under discussion. “A review of the research literature could help to inform a new study, such a review also could hinder if not bias it by creating an unwanted filter or lens” (Yin, 2016, p. 72). This section aims to provide an understanding of how previous research has addressed the topic and to identify gaps or unresolved issues. In doing so, researchers can demonstrate their study's novelty or offer a new perspective.

Moreover, the literature review helps build a theoretical foundation that strengthens the research arguments and methodology. Researchers do not merely summarize but also critically analyze and compare various findings or theories to show their relevance to the problem being studied. “The main purpose of the selective review is to sharpen your preliminary considerations regarding your topic of study, method, and data source” (Yin, 2016, p. 73). A well-organized literature review also makes it easier for readers to understand the research context, highlighting how the current study complements or fills gaps left by previous studies.

Novel

A novel is one of the literary works. It is prose, a product of the author's imagination and life experience. “A novel is a story or narrative carried by certain actors with certain roles, settings and stages and a series of stories that are based on the author's imagination so as to weave together a story” (Aminuddin, 2020, p. 56). Besides that, it also helps us learn more about human characteristics and how to face them. Danziger (1961:17) states that a “novel is a piece of literature which attempt to describe the universe in which we stay and tries to give a specific impression of this

universe. It has a special value, for we can learn much from it. It often presents something that we can learn about our world as well".

Based on the definition, researchers conclude that a novel is a literary work in the form of a long prose narrative that depicts the lives of characters and events, whether real or imaginative, interconnected within the story. As a form of narrative fiction, a novel typically contains elements such as plot, characters, setting, conflict, and theme, which are explored more deeply than in short stories. Due to its length, a novel provides space to delve into character development and the complexity of the storyline, allowing readers to engage both emotionally and intellectually (Aminuddin, 2020, pp. 57–81).

Novels can encompass various genres such as historical fiction, romance, science fiction, mystery, or social realism, depending on the message or experience the author aims to convey. Beyond entertainment, novels often reflect certain social, cultural, or political viewpoints, encouraging readers to contemplate life issues from different perspectives. The history of novels spans from oral traditions to the modern form we know today, making it one of the most influential literary media in shaping societal awareness and perception.

Characters

In a novel, characters are individuals or entities that play key roles in the development of the story. "These characters can be humans, animals, or fictional beings portrayed through actions, dialogue, thoughts, and emotions" (Aminuddin, 2020, p. 69). They serve to introduce conflict, drive the plot, and convey the themes intended by the author. "Characters in novels are usually developed in greater depth, as the narrative provides space to explore their personalities, backgrounds, motivations, and emotional journeys" (Aminuddin, 2020, p. 69).

Additionally, there are supporting characters that enrich the narrative and static or dynamic characters that reflect the degree of change they undergo throughout the story. Character is involved in the story. Two kinds of characters are described in the literature. They are characters based on personalities and characters based on roles. Both of them always appear in a story. (Yuliani et al., 2013, p. 3) Well-developed, realistic characters help readers connect emotionally with the narrative, making the novel more engaging and meaningful.

The characters are fictional role players in literary work. "There are several types of characters in a novel, including the main character (protagonist), who is the central focus of the story, and the antagonist, who serves as the protagonist's opponent or source of conflict" (Aminuddin, 2020, p. 70). They involve the universal disposition played by the imaginative characters. As Nicholas Mars (1987:19) states, "The characters are the people in a text; they are part of the ordinary people you meet as you read.

Characters can be differentiated by their role in the story tale there are characters as follows:

1. The protagonist is the character who supports the story (Major character).
2. An antagonist is a character who is facing the story (Minor character).
3. Supernumerary is the character that keeps the protagonist and antagonist.

In the novel *The Old Man and The Sea*, Santiago is the protagonist or main character. This novel does not have an antagonist, and the supernumerary is Monalín. It has only two characters.

Characteristics

Characteristic is a process of putting the characters' traits in the story. A story, moreover, is made through characters. We follow all the events in the story through the entire attitudes and experiences of the characters. As Meredith and FitzGerald (1972:20) stated, "A character is a person in a novel, the characteristic is the use to which character puts the traits with which her or is endowed."

There are six ways to describe characteristics; 1) The physical description describes the character's temperament, gender, etc.; 2) The author describes the characters' thoughts in portraying thought stream or conscious thought; 3) In reaction to events the author describes the characters' reactions to some events; 4) In direct author analysis, the author directly describes the characters' traits; 5) In the discussion of environment, the author describes the situation around the characters for the readers to conclude the characterization (characters' traits) by themselves; 6) The reaction of others to the character, the author describes the main character's ideas and what other characters say about the main one.

Biography of the Author

Ernest Miller Hemingway, called Ernest H, was born July 21st, 1899, in Cicero (now in Oak Park), Illinois, U.S, died July 2nd, 1961, in Ketchum, Idaho, American novelist and short-story composer, awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. He was acclaimed both for the fierce virility of his writing and for his courageous and widely publicized life. His succinct and lucid prose influenced American and British fiction in the 20th century.

He was advised and encouraged by other American writers in Paris, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound. He began to see his non-journalistic work show up in print there, and in 1925, his first imperative book, a collection of stories called *In Our Time*, was published in New York City; it was initially released in Paris in 1924.

The writing of books had occupied Hemingway for most of the post-war years. He remained based in Paris, but he traveled widely for the skiing, bullfighting, fishing, and hunting that had become a unit of his life and rolled the background for much of his writing. His position as a grandmaster of short fiction had been led by *Men Without Women* in 1927 and assiduously established with the stories in *Winner Take Nothing* in 1933.

Following the war in Europe, Hemingway was back to his home in Cuba and began to work seriously again. He also traveled extensively, and on a trip to Africa, he was wounded in a plane crash. Soon after (in 1953), he won the Pulitzer Prize in fiction for *The Old Man and The Sea* (1952), a short heretic novel about an old Cuban fisherman who, after a protracted clash, hooks and boats a huge Marlin only to have it eaten by insatiable sharks due the long sail home. This book, which played an active in gaining Hemingway for the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954, was as an enthusiastically praised as his previous novel, *Into the Trees and Across the River* (1950), the story of a professional soldier who dies while on leave in Venice, had been damned.

METHOD

This research uses the qualitative descriptive design. The qualitative descriptive describes human uniqueness or social symptoms that statistical methods

cannot analyze. The qualitative approach emphasizes *verstehen* meaning and understanding, reasoning, the definition of a particular situation, and more research related to everyday life. Qualitative methods are more important in the process than the final result because qualitative research is a research method that can be used to explore and understand the meaning that comes from social or humanitarian problems (Farida, 2014, p. 25).

Source of Data

There are two sources of data in this research: 1) the primary data would be taken from the novel *The Old Man and the Sea* by reading conscientious and very thorough when analyzing the novel; 2) the secondary data would be taken from the internet as the additional information that had a relation with the objects such as some articles, references, in the library, journal, literary books, etc.

Data Collection

The researchers would use library research to collect data and information about the object of the research from the book. There are some steps to collect the data: 1) read Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* novel; 2) identify the character in the novel, the major character and minor character; 3) apply literary related to the topic; 4) found quotations in the novel are related to the topic, and discussing the problem statement.

Data Analysis

The research data are paragraph and dialogue quotations of the event in this research. The steps to analyze data are as follows: 1) prepare the novel, in this case, a novel "The Old Man and the Sea" by Ernest Hemingway; 2) review the data that had been collected carefully; 3) determine the parts of the characteristics of the novel; 4) classified the paragraph or sentence that was supporting the analysis of the major character and minor character of the novel; 5) interpret and describe the paragraph and the sentences as a result.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Major Character

Two characters are active in the whole of the story. Therefore, the major characters in the novel are:

1. The Old Man (Santiago): An old fisherman in Cuba who had lousy luck in the novel, *Salao*. Despite having expertise, he had been unable to catch a fish for eighty-four days. He was humble but did not show his abilities or knowledge of the Sea and its creatures. That was making him survive under any circumstances. The proof is the Marlin that he caught for three days, and it was his biggest challenge because it was eight feet long, even though he lost it because of the greedy shark on the way back to the mainland.
2. Marlin: Although he did not speak and we could not access his thoughts, Marlin was undoubtedly an essential character in the novel. Marlin was the big fish, eight feet long. Santiago spent the tracked, killed, and bought it on the mainland. Big Marlin must make Santiago fight hard to catch it.

Minor Character

Like the major character, the minor character also found the person who plays a part in the research. He is the boy or Manolin.

1. The boy, or Manolin, is a student and person who always accompanies Santiago. However, when Santiago experiences an awful thing, Manolin's parents forbid him from going out to Sea with Santiago. He was told to join another boat. However, Manolin still cared deeply for Santiago. He helped Santiago in his boat in the evenings and provided the old man with food and bait when Santiago needed it. Manolin loved Santiago when they discussed baseball.
2. Manolin's father or Papa, even though he did not appear in this novel app, is in the conversation between Santiago and Manolin. He forbids Manolin to join Santiago and asks him to join another boat.

DISCUSSIONS

The characteristics of the Major characters

1. The old man or Santiago

- 1.1 Intelligent

Because of Santiago's experience in fishing, he became someone who knew many things about fishing and the Sea, which made him intelligent. The description of this character is as follows:

"Now, the old man sought and saw the bird circling again. "He has found fish," he said aloud. No flying fish ruined the surface, and there was no scattering of bait fish. However, as the old watched, a tiny tuna rose in the air, turned, and stepped head-first into the water. The tuna shone silver within the sun, and after he had stepped back into the water, another rose, and they were jumping within all control, churning the water and leaping in long jumps after the bait. They were circling it and driving it. (EH:27)

Santiago is an intelligent one. He knew if there were fish by looking around and how to catch fish that always fight when hooked.

- 1.2 Hard work

Even though Santiago was not young anymore, he kept passionate about doing his work as a fisherman. The description of this character is as follows:

"Fish," he said softly, aloud, "I'll stay with you until I am dead."

Based on the character's description, Santiago would only give up once he got fish. Even it needed much power to catch it.

- 1.3 Kind

Santiago is an old man who is kind to anyone, even though it is only a bird. The description of this character is as follows:

"Take a nice rest, tiny bird," he said. "Then go within and take your chance like any man, bird, or fish. "It encouraged him to talk because his back had stiffened at night, and it now hurts. "Stay at my house if you intend, bird," he replied. "I am sorry I could not hoist the sail and take you within with the small breeze that is rising. But I am with a friend." (EH:40)

Santiago is a kind person, which can be proven from the monologue above, where Santiago cared for the bird that stopped in his boat.

1.4 Thin

Santiago is a thin old man, as can be seen by how the author describes Santiago in the novel. The description of this character is as follows:

"The old man was gaunt with deep wrinkles on his neck. The brown blemishes of the benign skin cancer the sun carries from its contemplation on the tropical Sea were on his cheeks. The blemishes ran well down the sides of his face, and his hand had deep-creased scars from handling fish on the cords. But none of these scars were green. They were as old as erosions within a fishless desert." (EH:5)

As described by the author in the novel *"The Old Man and the Sea,"* it could be known that Santiago is thin.

2. Marlin

2.1 Strong and big

Marlin is a fish caught by Santiago that is eight feet long. The description of this character is as follows:

"He was happy feeling the gentle pulling, and then he felt something hard and unbelievably heavy. It was the weight of the fish and let the line slip down, down, down, unrolling the first of the two reserve coils. As it went down, slipping lightly through the old man's fingers, he still could feel a great weight, though the pressure of his thumb and finger were almost imperceptible." (EH:31)

Marlin is a solid and big fish. The novel describes how Santiago captured Marlin, which was difficult and required much effort because the Marlin took the fight and had great weight.

The characteristics of the Minor characters

1. Manolin

1.1 Kind

Manolin is a kind person who always helps Santiago in everything. The description of this character is as follows:

"When they reached the old man's shark, the boy took the rolls of line within the crate, and the weapon and gaff, and the old man carried the mast with the twisted sail on his shoulder." (EH:18)

Manolin is always kind to the old man. He helped Santiago to carry fishing gear. He also gave and serviced Santiago's food. Even though his father forbade Manolin to join Santiago's boat, he always accompanied Santiago.

1.2 Careful

Manolin is very careful with Santiago. He always asks what Santiago needs. There are some of Manolin's characteristics shown in the script are:

"No," the old man said. "But we have. Haven't we?". "Yes," the boy replied. "Can I overture you a beer on the Terrace, and then we'll take the stuff home." "Why not?" the old man said. "Between fisherman." (EH:6) Manolin is a young boy who always cares deeply for the old man. He knew everything that Santiago needed and always helped Santiago. He was very attentive to Santiago's food.

2. Manolin's father (Papa)

2.1 Easily affected

Manolin's father is a person who is easily influenced by the words of others, who say that Santiago is Salao. The description of this character is as follows:

"Santiago," the boy talked to him as they climbed the bank from where the canoe was hauled up. "I might go with you again. We've made some value." The old man had shared the boy to fish, and the boy loved him. "No," the old man said. "You are with a lucky boat. Vacate with them." "But don't forget how you drove eighty-seven days without fish, and then we snapped big ones every day for three weeks." "I remind," the old man replied. "I know you did not leave me because you doubted." "It was Papa who drove me to leave. I am a boy, and I have to obey him." "I know," the old man replied. "It is quite normal." "He hasn't much faith." (EH:6)

Based on the script, it could be seen that he believed what other people said about Santiago, which made Manolin not permitted to join Santiago's boat and join another boat.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of characteristics in this novel, the researchers conclude that: 1) characteristic in the novel *The Old Man and the Sea* tells us about an old fisherman, Santiago, who could catch any fish after eighty-four days. Even though he saw a big Marlin, he lost it. Marlin is eight feet long. At the novel's end, we learn many things about becoming a good fisherman, such as patience, hard work, and affection. 2) This novel has two characters, a major character and a minor character. Santiago and Marlin are major characters. Manolin is a minor character. Santiago, through various trials both in coughing and carrying Marlin to the mainland; 3) Manolin, as a minor character, also has an important role in this novel. Manolin is a student of Santiago who always helps and cares for Santiago. Even though in the end, Manolin could not join Santiago's boat because his father forbade him.

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