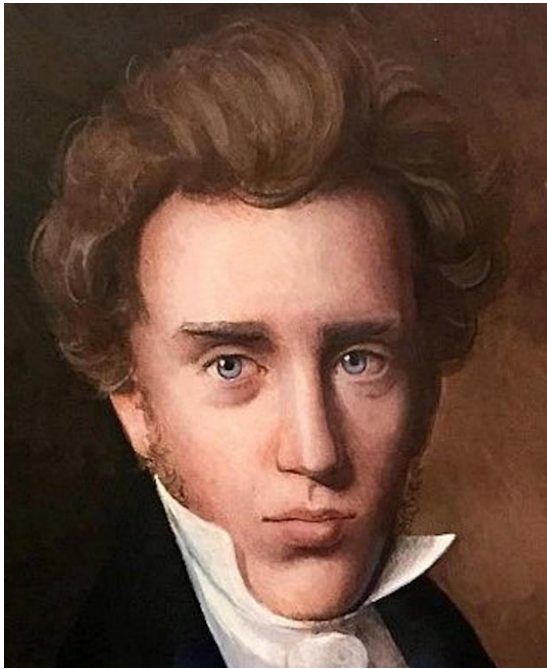


## Lecture Sheet

### Existentialism in *The Old Man & The Sea*

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Existentialism is a philosophical movement that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries, particularly in response to the increasing disillusionment with traditional beliefs and systems, such as religion and rationalism. It focuses on individual existence, freedom of choice, and personal responsibility for one's actions. Existentialists emphasize the subjective experience of individual existence and the inherent anxiety and absurdity of human life. Key existentialist thinkers include Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus.

"The Old Man and the Sea" by Ernest Hemingway can be analyzed through an existentialist lens, as the novel delves into the essence of human existence, individualism, and

the struggle for meaning in the face of adversity. Santiago, the protagonist, embodies several existentialist themes throughout his journey:

**Freedom and Choice:** Existentialism places a strong emphasis on individual freedom and choice. Santiago's decision to venture out into the sea, face the challenges of fishing alone, and persist in his pursuit of the Marlin exemplifies the existentialist idea that individuals are free to make choices that shape their existence.

**Authenticity and Individuality:** Santiago's authenticity is evident in his refusal to conform to societal expectations or the discouragement of others. He persists in his solitary quest, expressing his individuality in the face of external pressures to conform.

**Struggle and Absurdity:** Existentialism acknowledges the inherent struggles and absurdity of human existence. Santiago's relentless battle with the sea, the Marlin, and the sharks reflects the absurd nature of life. The three-day struggle with the Marlin, which he initially sees as a brother, highlights the complex relationship individuals have with their challenges and the choices they must make to survive.

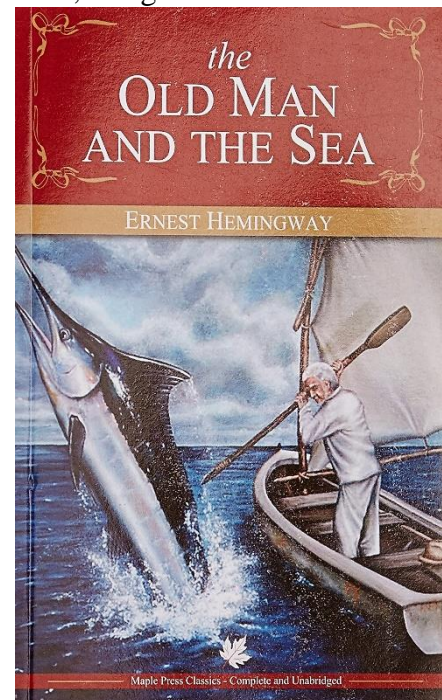
**Meaning and Personal Responsibility:** Existentialism suggests that individuals must create their own meaning in life. Santiago finds meaning in his struggle against the forces of nature and his determination to catch the Marlin. His sense of personal responsibility and pride drive him to face the challenges head-on.

**Isolation and Solitude:** Existentialist themes often involve a sense of isolation and solitude. Santiago's days at sea without a catch, his physical and emotional struggles, and his ultimate triumph against the sharks depict the isolating nature of the human condition.

Santiago's journey in "The Old Man and the Sea" aligns with existentialist principles, illustrating how an individual can find meaning, authenticity, and purpose in the face of adversity. The novel portrays the existentialist notion that life's challenges, no matter how daunting, can be confronted with courage and resilience, ultimately shaping the individual's authentic existence.

Ernest Hemingway has made significant contributions to literature through his extensive production of novels and short stories. However, his novel "The Old Man and the Sea" stands out as his most influential work, widely recognized and read across the globe. This novel serves as a remarkable embodiment of Existentialism, exploring the underlying aspects of individualism and providing insights into the individualist's perception of Liberty.

Ernest Hemingway, born on July 21, 1899, in Chicago, hailed from a family with a physician father and a mother who was a musician. He faced personal struggles due to his mother's insistence on dressing him as a girl and learning to play the cello. For this, in his novels, Hemingway explores themes of violence, individuality, and death, using them as central motifs that symbolize the essence of life. His writings strongly reflect the influence of Existentialism, particularly evident in his short stories and novels that consistently embody this philosophical ideology. Many literary scholars consider "The Old Man and the Sea" as one of the most successful existential novels. The story exemplifies the principles of Existentialism through Santiago's unwavering decision to secure his existence and triumph over the sharks by catching the fish, thus ensuring Manolin's belief in him. This narrative encourages individuals to persevere with courage in the face of life's challenges until their aspirations are fulfilled, ultimately portraying the various struggles of humanity and its ability to overcome obstacles hindering the pursuit of goals. The novel highlights the intertwined dreams of freedom and self-awareness, ultimately leading to the fulfillment of one's authentic existence. Sartre holds that *"Authenticity is a form of a story about self-shaping. It contains fact and consciousness"* (Heter, 2006)



Santiago, the protagonist in the novel, epitomizes the concept of human authenticity through his willingness to confront life's challenges, demonstrating his existence and essence. His resilient nature is exemplified in his triumphant journey as a fisherman. Despite enduring 84 days at sea without a catch, Santiago's unwavering determination reflects his very being. His profound connection with nature inspires his dreams and fuels his indomitable spirit. The essence of existentialism is evident in the external conflicts Santiago faces with fellow

fishermen and in his struggle against the fish. This struggle holds both literal and metaphorical significance, highlighting the fundamental aspects of Santiago's journey. Each day, he persists in his quest to catch a fish, undeterred by the frustration of his companions. Motivated by the freedom of choice, Santiago's internal conflict drives him forward. While the sea may be perceived as a harsh and isolating environment, he steadfastly refuses to succumb to nature's cruelty. His resilience and imagination become his primary tools, transcending any circumstance he faces. His clashes with both the fishermen and the fish elevate him to the status of a hero in the eyes of Manolin.

Despite encountering adversity, Santiago's unwavering charisma shields him from negative influences, reinforcing his authenticity and determination. The author has emphasized Santiago's resilience by saying: *"Now is no time to think of what you do not have. Think of what you can do with what there is."* (Hemingway,110)

Individualism plays a pivotal role in Santiago and Manolin's lives, as it highlights the importance of realizing one's own potential. The story begins with the word "salao," the epitome of misfortune. This causes Manolin's parents to forbid him from working with the old



man, while Santiago's streak of bad luck prevents him from catching a fish. Despite these setbacks, Santiago remains steadfast in his pursuit of his dreams. His aspirations embody the subconscious, according to Freud. The appearance of lions ignites his will to live and serves as a symbol of the human spirit. The struggle for individuality is exemplified in his fight

against a shark, using meager tools such as an oar, spear, and knife, despite his parched throat and numerous wounds. The novel reaches its climax when sharks devour Santiago's prized fish, prompting him to fight with unwavering resolve and dignity, refusing to give in.

*"But man is not made for defeat," he said. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated."* (Hemingway,38)

Santiago, the protagonist in "The Old Man and the Sea," is undefeated psychologically but physically broken. Inspired by his journey and guided by his belief in Christ, Santiago rests before shouldering his tools, nest, mast, and spear. This parallels the story of crucifixion. Existentialism, particularly in Kierkegaard's religious existentialism, can incorporate theistic viewpoints. It provides room for individuals to seek meaning through a connection with God, emphasizing personal responsibility and autonomy. In contrast, Absurdism posits that belief in a higher power is a form of philosophical self-deception, whereas an Existentialist may derive meaning from their faith and the choices they make in accordance with their spiritual journey.

The narrative commences with the sea, symbolizing life and the universe. Santiago feels isolated and finds solace in the Spanish term "La mar," which portrays the sea as a nurturing mother carrying sustenance for all creatures. While some fishermen view the sea as a male and an adversary, Santiago's romantic perception identifies it as a female provider.

The true struggle begins when Santiago hooks a powerful Marlin, representing strength and resilience. The marlin reflects the old man's own image of himself. The battle spans three days, with Santiago initially expressing empathy for the fish, seeing it as a brother. However, he recognizes that he must kill it to survive, symbolizing his individuality. The encounter with the Marlin also signifies Santiago's struggle against the forces of evil, represented by the sharks. Although they destroy the marlin's meat, they cannot consume its skeleton or Santiago's victory. Armed with simple tools, Santiago perseveres against the sharks, fueled by his pride and contrasting himself with the baseball player Dimaggio. Hemingway's story demonstrates that man is not meant to be defeated and Santiago embodies this ethos as he fights to the end, despite his physical exhaustion and injuries, ultimately achieving his goal.