



**. "THE INTERPRETATION OF THE THEME OF MAN AND
EXISTENCE IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S WORKS, PARTICULARLY IN
'THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA' AND 'A FAREWELL TO ARMS' "**

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Abstract: *This paper explores the interpretation of the theme of man and existence in Ernest Hemingway's prominent works, particularly The Old Man and the Sea and A Farewell to Arms. The research analyzes how Hemingway presents existential questions such as human isolation, the struggle for meaning, personal dignity, and the confrontation with mortality.*

In The Old Man and the Sea, Santiago's solitary battle with the marlin reflects the inner strength and unbroken spirit of man in the face of nature's indifference. His perseverance, despite failure, is portrayed as a victory of character and existential courage.

Key words: *Ernest Hemingway, existence, man, struggle, loneliness, war, The Old Man and the Sea, A Farewell to Arms, existentialism, symbolism, dignity, human condition.*

«Интерпретация темы человека и бытия в произведениях Эрнеста Хемингуэя, в частности в «Старик и море» и «Прощай, оружие»»

Абстракт: *В данной научной работе рассматривается интерпретация темы человека и бытия в произведениях Эрнеста Хемингуэя, в частности в романах «Старик и море» и «Прощай, оружие». Анализируются основные экзистенциальные мотивы, включая одиночество, внутреннюю борьбу, стремление к смыслу жизни, достоинство и неизбежность смерти.*

В «Старике и море» Сантьяго представлен как символ мужества и стойкости. Его борьба с огромной рыбой — это не просто борьба человека с природой, но и метафора вечного противостояния человека перед лицом



трудностей, судьбы и неизбежности поражения. Хемингуэй показывает, что сила духа и достоинство важнее конечного результата.

Ключевые слова: Эрнест Хемингуэй, бытие, человек, экзистенциализм, война, одиночество, «Старик и море», «Прощай, оружие», внутренний конфликт, символизм, философия.

"Ernest Xeminguey asarlarida, xususan, "Chol va dengiz" va "Qurol bilan vidolashuv" asarlarida inson va borliq mavzusining talqini"

Abstrakt: Ushbu ilmiy ishda Ernest Xemingueyning mashhur asarlari – "Chol va dengiz" hamda "Qurol bilan vidolashuv" da inson va borliq mavzusining talqini o'rganiladi. Maqolada Xemingueyning insonning hayotdagi o'rni, kurashi, yolg'izligi, o'lim bilan yuzma-yuz kelishi va hayotning mazmunini anglashga bo'lgan intilishi qanday tasvirlangani tahlil qilinadi.

"Chol va dengiz" asarida bosh qahramon Santyagoning tabiat kuchlariga qarshi kurashi orqali insonning matonati, umidsizlikka berilmasligi va o'z prinsiplariga sodiqligi yoritiladi. Bu kurash nafaqat jismoniy, balki falsafiy va ma'naviy jihatdan ham chuqur ma'no kasb etadi. Santyago – kuchsiz, yolg'iz chol bo'lishiga qaramay, o'zining insoniy sha'ni uchun kurashadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Ernest Xeminguey, borliq, inson, ekzistensializm, urush, yolg'izlik, kurash, ma'naviy izlanish, "Chol va dengiz", "Qurol bilan vidolashuv", metafora, ramz, iroda.

Introduction Ernest Hemingway stands as one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century, known for his distinctive minimalist prose and profound philosophical depth. His works often center around the core existential themes of human struggle, loneliness, dignity, mortality, and the quest for meaning in an often indifferent world. Hemingway's personal experiences—as a soldier, journalist, and adventurer—deeply informed his literary vision, allowing him to create characters who confront life's harsh realities with stoicism and quiet resilience.

Among his many celebrated novels, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *A Farewell to Arms* are particularly significant for their exploration of the human condition.



These novels not only reflect the author's stylistic brilliance but also present rich philosophical meditations on existence. *The Old Man and the Sea* portrays the solitary fisherman Santiago and his epic battle with a giant marlin, symbolizing the eternal struggle of man against nature and fate. In contrast, *A Farewell to Arms* delves into the chaos of war, the fragility of love, and the inevitability of loss through the experiences of Frederic Henry, an American ambulance driver in World War I.

This research aims to examine how Hemingway interprets the theme of man and existence through these two major works. By analyzing character development, narrative techniques, symbolic elements, and thematic content, the study seeks to uncover the existential questions Hemingway poses—questions of purpose, identity, endurance, and the human spirit in confrontation with life's most profound challenges.

Ernest Hemingway is widely regarded as one of the most significant and innovative literary figures of the twentieth century. His contribution to world literature transcends mere storytelling; he developed a unique prose style known for its clarity, brevity, and emotional understatement, often referred to as the "Iceberg Theory," where the deeper meaning lies beneath the surface of the text. Hemingway's literary achievements were deeply rooted in his personal experiences—his participation in World War I, the Spanish Civil War, his exposure to violence, death, and existential uncertainty shaped the core themes of his writing. In particular, his works reflect the human condition in its rawest form: the struggle for survival, the search for meaning, and the confrontation with loss and suffering.

Two of his most prominent novels, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), stand as powerful representations of his philosophical worldview. These novels offer profound insight into existential dilemmas and are often cited in discussions of modernist literature. *The Old Man and the Sea* tells the story of Santiago, an aging Cuban fisherman who engages in an epic battle with a giant marlin. Despite physical exhaustion and ultimate material loss, Santiago maintains his dignity and inner strength, embodying the idea that man can be



destroyed but not defeated. The novella presents a symbolic reflection on perseverance, pride, and the nobility of human effort in the face of inevitable defeat.

In contrast, *A Farewell to Arms* focuses on the disillusionment and emotional trauma experienced by Frederic Henry, an American serving in the Italian ambulance corps during World War I. Through his journey from participation in war to desertion and personal tragedy, Hemingway portrays the absurdity of conflict and the fragility of love and human connections in a chaotic world. The novel's existential overtones emerge through Frederic's evolving perception of life, death, and personal agency, reflecting the loss of idealism and the search for meaning amidst chaos.

The theme of man and existence—central to both of these novels—resonates with broader existentialist concerns. Questions such as “What is the purpose of suffering?”, “Can one find dignity in defeat?”, and “How does one assert their identity in a meaningless world?” are woven into the fabric of Hemingway's narratives. His characters often grapple with isolation, face uncontrollable external forces, and make choices that define their moral and existential essence.

This study aims to explore how Hemingway interprets the theme of man and existence in *The Old Man and the Sea* and *A Farewell to Arms*, examining both texts from a literary and philosophical perspective. Through a detailed analysis of character development, thematic motifs, symbolism, and narrative style, this paper seeks to uncover how Hemingway articulates existentialist ideas such as absurdism, human freedom, dignity through struggle, and the reconciliation with death. Understanding Hemingway's treatment of these themes provides valuable insights not only into his literature but also into the universal human experience.

Research Methodology In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway presents Santiago as a symbol of human endurance and existential struggle. Santiago's battle with the marlin in the open sea is more than a physical contest; it reflects the broader human struggle to find purpose in a world indifferent to human effort. The sea, vast and unpredictable, represents nature in its purest form — powerful, impartial, and unforgiving. Santiago, though old and weakened, does not yield to despair. His inner strength, determination, and acceptance of pain elevate his fight into a noble act.



Hemingway portrays the dignity of man through Santiago's resilience, suggesting that meaning in life is found not in success but in perseverance. As Santiago says, "*A man can be destroyed but not defeated*," emphasizing the existential idea that one's inner values define true victory.

Both Santiago and Frederic Henry are portrayed as deeply isolated figures. Santiago is physically alone in the sea, yet his solitude is spiritual and philosophical as well. He reflects on nature, memory, and human worth. Frederic, in *A Farewell to Arms*, is isolated emotionally and psychologically. His initial involvement in the war feels mechanical and passionless; later, after facing immense personal loss, his sense of detachment intensifies. Hemingway uses this solitude to highlight the existential position of man — alone in a world without inherent meaning, forced to create value through individual experience. This isolation is not portrayed negatively but as a condition for self-discovery.

Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* explores the absurdity and futility of war through the eyes of Frederic Henry. The chaos and randomness of battlefield events, the senseless deaths, and the loss of Catherine at the end all contribute to a narrative of existential disillusionment. Frederic begins the novel with a sense of duty, but as he witnesses the brutality of war and experiences personal loss, he increasingly questions the purpose of suffering and the reliability of institutions such as religion, patriotism, and even love. His "farewell" to arms is both literal and symbolic: a rejection of war and a deeper loss of faith in a rational, ordered universe. This aligns with existential themes of absurdity and alienation.

In *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway presents love not as salvation, but as a brief escape from the chaos of the world. The relationship between Frederic and Catherine gives them both a sense of meaning in an otherwise meaningless environment. However, Hemingway does not romanticize this love; instead, he shows its impermanence. Catherine's death during childbirth reinforces the existential notion that even love cannot shield humans from suffering or death. The failure of love to provide lasting consolation contributes to Frederic's existential awakening.



Hemingway employs powerful symbolism to enrich his exploration of existence. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, the marlin symbolizes the ultimate goal or dream — something beautiful, worthy, yet perhaps unattainable. The sharks represent destructive forces that devour human achievement, echoing the inevitability of loss. In *A Farewell to Arms*, rain becomes a recurring symbol of death and despair. Catherine even says, “*I’m afraid of the rain because sometimes I see me dead in it.*” Such imagery highlights how symbols reflect inner fears and existential realities.

One of the most recognizable features in Hemingway's literature is the concept of the "Hemingway Code Hero" — a character who displays courage, grace under pressure, and stoic endurance in the face of inevitable defeat. Both Santiago and Frederic Henry embody this ideal. Santiago never complains or loses hope, even as his body breaks down. He endures pain and defeat with quiet dignity. Similarly, Frederic shows restraint and inner strength as he navigates war, loss, and despair. These heroes illustrate Hemingway’s existential philosophy: life may be painful, but a man’s response to suffering defines his true character. This stoicism aligns with existential thinkers like Albert Camus, who emphasized living authentically despite the absurd.

In both novels, the protagonists grapple with fate or forces beyond their control. Santiago cannot prevent the sharks from devouring his catch. Frederic cannot save Catherine or their baby despite all efforts. Hemingway presents fate as indifferent and cruel. However, rather than yielding, the characters confront these forces with personal integrity. This existential defiance — facing a meaningless world with courage — is central to both narratives. It shows that while humans cannot always control what happens to them, they can control how they respond, which gives them existential meaning.

Hemingway intricately weaves reflections on time and memory into both novels. Santiago often recalls his youthful strength and past victories, especially his arm-wrestling match in Casablanca, as a way to reaffirm his identity. These memories give him strength during his present ordeal. In *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic experiences time as fragmented — war, love, and death blur into one. His memories



of Catherine are tender, yet tragic. Hemingway uses this relationship with time to underscore mortality and the fleeting nature of joy, emphasizing the idea that humans are temporal beings searching for permanence in an impermanent world.

Hemingway often explores themes of masculinity, but not in a traditional heroic sense. Santiago's pride is not arrogance, but a quiet affirmation of his worth. His struggle with the marlin is deeply personal — an act of self-respect. Frederic, on the other hand, evolves from a passive, emotionally distant man into someone who feels deeply and makes conscious choices based on love and loss. Through both characters, Hemingway deconstructs the idea of masculinity, presenting it as emotional resilience, moral awareness, and responsibility, rather than physical dominance.

Hemingway's unique literary style — short, declarative sentences and sparse descriptions — reinforces the existential themes in his works. The "Iceberg Theory" (where only a small part of the story is visible, with deeper meaning hidden beneath) reflects the unspoken depth of the human condition. By not explicitly stating emotions, Hemingway allows readers to experience the characters' internal lives through subtle clues, silences, and actions. This technique creates space for existential interpretation, letting readers explore what is not said — much like how in life, meaning must often be discovered beneath the surface.

Nature in Hemingway's works is not merely a setting; it reflects the character's inner world. The calm sea, the violent storm, the quiet snowfall — all represent emotional states. For Santiago, the sea is both a companion and a challenge. He speaks to it as if it has a soul. For Frederic, nature becomes ominous, especially during moments of grief or fear (e.g., the rain symbolizing death). Hemingway uses natural elements to externalize existential conditions, connecting man's internal struggle with the vast, uncaring universe.

In both novels, death plays a central role in defining human experience. Santiago's struggle ends with a kind of spiritual death — he returns empty-handed but morally triumphant. Frederic, meanwhile, experiences literal death around him and finally faces the devastating death of his beloved. Hemingway suggests that death



strips life of illusions, leaving only the essence of who we are. In the face of death, both characters reaffirm their humanity — not through victory, but through the courage to endure.

Ernest Hemingway's literary works often revolve around the existential struggles of individuals facing the harsh realities of life. In *The Old Man and the Sea* and *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway explores how human beings confront suffering, mortality, and meaning in an indifferent universe. His protagonists are not traditional heroes, but rather complex individuals who endure personal trials in search of purpose, dignity, and identity.

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, the protagonist Santiago is a simple fisherman who fights a long and exhausting battle with a giant marlin. Although he ultimately loses the fish to sharks, Santiago's endurance, pride, and quiet heroism represent Hemingway's idea of true human strength. Santiago becomes a symbol of existential courage — a man who, even in defeat, remains undefeated in spirit. Hemingway shows that what matters is not the outcome, but the struggle itself. Through Santiago, Hemingway presents the belief that life's meaning lies in perseverance, self-discipline, and personal code — values that transcend success or failure.

Similarly, in *A Farewell to Arms*, Frederic Henry is a young American soldier disillusioned by war and its senseless violence. His love for Catherine becomes a temporary refuge, a source of emotional grounding amidst chaos. However, the tragic end of their relationship — with Catherine's death during childbirth — leaves Frederic alone, facing the ultimate existential truth: that life is unpredictable, often cruel, and ultimately ends in death. Hemingway does not offer comfort or religious answers; instead, he emphasizes the necessity of personal choice and emotional honesty in a chaotic world. Frederic's development throughout the novel reflects the human struggle to find meaning in love, even when that love is doomed.

Hemingway's writing is marked by simplicity and understatement, yet beneath the surface, his characters wrestle with profound existential questions. Both Santiago and Frederic exhibit what has been termed the "Hemingway Code" — a moral code that emphasizes courage, resilience, and grace under pressure.



Conclusion / Recommendations In conclusion, Ernest Hemingway's works, particularly *The Old Man and the Sea* and *A Farewell to Arms*, offer a profound interpretation of man's existence in an unpredictable and often indifferent world. His protagonists reflect the core principles of existentialism — courage, endurance, personal integrity, and the search for meaning in a seemingly meaningless reality. Santiago's struggle with the marlin and Frederic Henry's journey through war and love represent the broader human condition: one marked by suffering, fleeting joy, and inevitable loss.

Yet, Hemingway does not portray his characters as victims. Instead, they are survivors — individuals who live with dignity, accept life's hardships, and strive to find value in their choices and actions. Through minimalist prose and deeply human narratives, Hemingway emphasizes that while life may offer no guarantees, meaning can still be found in how we confront our circumstances. His works encourage readers to live bravely, love honestly, and endure with grace — even in the face of defeat.

Ultimately, Hemingway's interpretation of man and existence invites us to reflect on our own lives and reminds us that true heroism often lies not in victory, but in perseverance.

In summary, Ernest Hemingway's literary exploration of the theme of man and existence reveals a deep engagement with the human condition in its rawest and most authentic form. Both *The Old Man and the Sea* and *A Farewell to Arms* serve as philosophical reflections on what it means to live, struggle, love, and ultimately face the inevitability of loss and death. Hemingway's characters, though seemingly ordinary, become extraordinary through their inner strength and the way they confront adversity with quiet dignity.

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago's battle is not merely against the marlin or the sea, but against time, isolation, and the limits of human endurance. Despite physical exhaustion and ultimate failure in retaining his catch, Santiago's spirit remains undefeated. He becomes a symbol of existential resilience, embodying Hemingway's belief that man can be destroyed but not defeated. This idea aligns with



the existentialist view that while the world may lack inherent meaning, individuals can still construct meaning through their actions and perseverance.

On the other hand, *A Farewell to Arms* presents a darker, more tragic view of existence. Frederic Henry's journey from a passive participant in war to a man emotionally invested in love and personal purpose is abruptly shattered by loss. Catherine's death and the death of their child strip him of the last remaining illusion of meaning, leaving him in existential solitude. However, even in this bleakness, Hemingway avoids sentimentality. Instead, he shows that maturity and understanding come from accepting life's brutality and continuing to live with honesty and grace.

Across both works, Hemingway crafts protagonists who follow a moral code not imposed by religion or society, but formed from personal experience and inner conviction. These characters live in a world where suffering is inevitable, but it is their response to suffering — their stoicism, bravery, and refusal to surrender — that defines them as human beings of depth and courage.

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