

**A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HUMAN
STRUGGLE AND MEANING IN DOXUNDA AND THE OLD MAN
AND THE SEA**

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a comparative of Sadriddin Ayni’s “Doxunda” and Ernest Hemingway’s “The Old Man and the Sea”, focusing on universal human struggles and the search for meaning across two contrasting literary traditions. Through the lens of comparative literature, the article analyzes thematic structures, character development, narrative technique, and socio-cultural contexts to understand how each text represents hardship and resilience. Despite their different environments and literary movements, both texts emphasize the human capacity to endure loss, confront adversity, and construct meaning in suffering. The study demonstrates that comparative reading highlights cross-cultural patterns of resilience and expands the interpretive possibilities of each text. This article argues that the juxtaposition of these works reveals how literature universally reflects the human experience while remaining deeply connected to specific cultural histories.

Keywords: Comparative literature, realism, modernism, human struggle, existential meaning,

INTRODUCTION

Comparative literature is a scholarly discipline that examines relationships and interactions between literary works across different cultures, languages, genres, and historical periods. It emphasizes cross-cultural dialogue, seeking to

uncover universal human concerns as well as culturally specific expressions of experience (Bassnett, 1993). Through this analytical framework, literary texts can be evaluated not in isolation but through connections that highlight thematic and stylistic patterns shared across traditions.

This study explores Sadriiddin Ayni's "Doxunda" and Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" to identify convergences and divergences in how each text portrays human struggle, resilience, and the search for meaning. "Doxunda" (Ayni, 1927) reflects the sociopolitical realities of Central Asian life under oppressive systems, emphasizing collective endurance and moral resistance. In contrast, "The Old Man and the Sea" (Hemingway, 1952) uses a minimalist modernist style to depict an individual's confrontation with nature, failure, and spiritual triumph.

Both texts, though separated by geography, literary movements, and historical context, articulate foundational human questions about suffering, purpose, and dignity. This comparative study aims to show how distinct literary traditions can illuminate shared existential themes.

Methodology. This research employs a qualitative comparative literary analysis with four core approaches:

1. Close Reading. Key passages from both texts are examined to analyze characterization, thematic development, symbolism, and narrative techniques (Guerin, 2011).
2. Comparative Framework. A systematic comparison is made between: realism vs modernism; social struggle vs personal struggle
 - collective identity vs individual identity
 - political symbolism vs existential symbolism
3. Contextual. Analysis. Historical and cultural backgrounds of Tajik/Central Asian society and mid-20th-century American literature are considered to understand authorial intentions.

4. Theoretical Support. Comparative literature theories by Bassnett, Damrosch, and Wellek are applied to justify cross-cultural connections. This methodological combination ensures both textual accuracy and broad interpretive depth.

Results and Discussion. Analyzes 2 books, we have concluded the following results. In fact, there are several themes:

1. Themes: Collective Oppression vs Individual Endurance

In “Doxunda”, the primary theme is socio-political oppression, showing how individuals and communities suffer under exploitative systems. The protagonist’s identity is shaped by injustice and communal struggle (Ayni, 1927).

By contrast, “The Old Man and the Sea” portrays solitary endurance, emphasizing Santiago’s personal quest for meaning through struggle (Hemingway, 1952).

- Similarity: Both protagonists confront powerful forces beyond their control.
- Difference: Ayni’s burden is social; Hemingway’s is existential.

2. Characterization

Ayni’s characters represent collective identity and the moral spirit of oppressed people. Their psychology is shaped by community and tradition.

Santiago, however, embodies the individualistic hero archetype, whose isolation is essential to his dignity and purpose.

“Doxunda” employs a realist approach with multi-layered characters grounded in everyday life.

Hemingway uses the “iceberg theory,” revealing only surface details while deeper emotions remain implicit (Hemingway, 1932)

3. Symbolism

Symbolism in each text reflects its cultural context.

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In “Doxunda”: Home → symbolizes belonging and the threat of displacement, Oppressors → symbolize structural violence, Poverty → represents collective suffering

In “The Old Man and the Sea”: The sea → life’s challenges

The marlin → ideal, purpose, spiritual reward, Sharks → destructive external forces, Despite the contrast, both authors use symbols to express struggle and loss.

4. The Search for Meaning

Both texts raise philosophical questions:

In “Doxunda”, meaning emerges through resistance and solidarity.

In The Old Man and the Sea, meaning comes through endurance and personal duty, even in defeat.

Santiago states: “A man can be destroyed but not defeated” (Hemingway, 1952, p. 103), underscoring the existential message.

Ayni implies that defeat occurs not when one loses, but when one stops resisting injustice.

5. Narrative Technique

Ayni uses detailed realism, social commentary, and traditional narrative rhythm.

Hemingway uses short sentences, symbolic minimalism, and psychological depth.

Both styles capture emotion but through different literary philosophies.

6. Cross-Cultural Insights

This comparison shows:

Literature across cultures expresses universal human truths.

Oppression and struggle differ in form but share psychological impact.

Meaning can be social or individual, but the human need for meaning is constant.

This supports Damrosch's (2003) theory that world literature gains value when read comparatively.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of Sadriddin Ayni's "Doxunda" and Ernest Hemingway's "The Old Man and the Sea" demonstrates that despite differences in cultural background, literary movement, and narrative approach, both works explore universal human themes centered on suffering, resistance, and the search for meaning. Ayni's realist depiction of collective hardship complements Hemingway's modernist portrayal of individual endurance, revealing contrasting yet interconnected perspectives on human resilience. The cross-cultural reading of these texts enriches the understanding of each work, highlighting how literature across the world reflects shared emotional and philosophical experiences. This study reaffirms the importance of comparative literature in bridging cultures and expanding interpretive possibilities

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