

Herman Melville

MOBY DICK

Ishmael, a young sailor, tells this classic American story of the enormous white whale and its hunter, Captain Ahab. Start your journey across the seas in the whaling town of New Bedford, Massachusetts, and sail to unknown lands on the whaling ship Pequod. Meet Queequeg, the strange cannibal who teaches Ishmael what a true friend is; First Mate Starbuck, who shows us the meaning of loyalty and hard work. Experience life at sea – where man fights nature, but doesn't always win.

In this reader you will find:

- Information about Herman Melville's life
- Focus on sections
- Glossary of difficult words
- Comprehension and extension activities including B2 First style exercises
- Final test

Tags

Adventure Everyday life Sea life

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Herman Melville

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Book brief

- 1 *Moby Dick* is an adventure story written by American author Herman Melville and published in 1851.
- 2 The novel is set in the first half of the 1800s on the whaling ship the 'Pequod' in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans.
- 3 A young boy, Ishmael, who's a member of the ship's crew, tells the story of their voyage and Captain Ahab's obsession with Moby Dick, a great, white whale.
- 4 Ahab, the captain of the Pequod lost a leg due to Moby Dick in his last voyage, so he wants to hunt the whale down and kill it at all costs.
- 5 Main themes include whaling, fate and limits of knowledge.

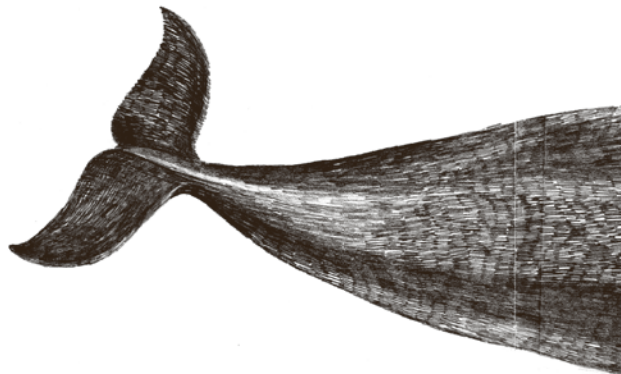
Herman Melville

Moby Dick

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For Review Only



Contents

6	Main Characters	
8	Before you Read	
10	Chapter One	Planning the Voyage
18	Activities	
20	Chapter Two	The Whaling Ship
27	Activities	
30	Chapter Three	Captain Ahab and his Quest
37	Activities	
40	Chapter Four	Whales
47	Activities	
50	Chapter Five	The Voyage Continues
56	Activities	
60	Chapter Six	Life at Sea
67	Activities	
70	Chapter Seven	Getting the Whale Oil
77	Activities	
80	Chapter Eight	The Carpenter and the Coffin
88	Activities	
90	Chapter Nine	Candles, Compasses and the Final Chase
100	Activities	
102	Focus on...	Herman Melville
104	Focus on...	The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
106	Focus on...	Whaling: Yesterday and Today
108	Focus on...	Moby Dick Goes to the Movies
110	Test Yourself	
111	Syllabus	

Main Characters

The captain of the whaling ship, the Pequod, he's out for revenge after losing half a leg to the great white whale during his last voyage.



Ahab

Ishmael



A young boy on the Pequod, he tells the story of life at sea on a whaling ship and his captain's hunt for Moby Dick.



The Pequod's First Mate, he questions the captain's judgment.

Starbuck



The Pequod's Second Mate, he's cheerful and popular.

Stubb

Tashtego

Queequeg

Stubb's harpooner, he's
a proud, pure-blooded
Indian from Gay Head.

Starbuck's harpooner
from the South Pacific and
Ishmael's best friend.

The Pequod's Third Mate,
he isn't very tall but strong
and argues with everybody.

Flask's harpooner, he's
a tall African who now
lives in Nantucket.

Flask

Daggoo

Before you Read

Vocabulary

- 1 The following adjectives are used to describe either people, places or the weather. Put each word into a group. Some of the adjectives can be used more than once. Use your dictionary to help you.

blue • anxious • damp • rainy • ~~sad~~ • cheerful • curious
wild • disappointed • afraid • astonished

People	Places	Weather
<i>sad</i>		

- 2 *Moby Dick* is about the search for a great white whale across the world's seas. Here are some words which you'll find in this story. Which of them are used to talk about ships and the sea and which are used to talk about whales and whaling? Use your dictionary to help you.

~~deck~~ • masthead • waves • seasick • drown • mast • harpoon
seawater • hull • stern • sink • crow's nest • harpooner
rope • hunt • sail • oil • hump • spout • bow

ships/the sea	whales/whaling
<i>deck</i>	

Writing

- 3 Write 4 sentences using the words from the previous two exercises (and any other necessary words).

Sailors aren't afraid of feeling seasick because they're used to high waves and rainy weather.

1
.....
2
.....
3
.....
4
.....

Vocabulary

- 4 These are words you'll find in the first chapter. Match each word to the correct definition. Use your dictionary to help you.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 ☐ purse | a sing a tune quietly, with closed lips, not using any words |
| 2 ☐ dismal | b a religious leader |
| 3 ☐ ominous | c type of tool or weapon similar to a small axe first used by Native Americans |
| 4 ☐ embalmed | d the noise a person makes every time they breathe when they're sleeping |
| 5 ☐ tomahawk | e sad, gloomy, depressing |
| 6 ☐ snore | f when a dead body is preserved by using chemicals or spices |
| 7 ☐ sermon | g suggesting that something bad is going to happen |
| 8 ☐ chaplain | h make something from a piece of wood by repeatedly cutting or slicing it |
| 9 ☐ whittle | i a talk on a moral or religious subject usually said by a religious person |
| 10 ☐ hum | j small bag made of leather for carrying money |



Planning the Voyage*

- 2 Call me Ishmael. Some years ago – it isn't important exactly when – I had very little money and nothing to do so I decided to sail around the world. Travelling makes me feel healthy. Whenever I feel sad, whenever it feels like a damp, rainy November in my soul, I know it's time to get to sea as soon as possible.

Now, when I say that I'm in the habit of going to sea whenever this bad mood occurs*, I don't mean to say that I ever go as a passenger. To go as a passenger means you must have a purse, and a purse is no good unless you have something in it. Besides, passengers get seasick. They fight with each other, they don't sleep well at night and don't enjoy themselves very much. No, I never go as a passenger. I always go to sea as a sailor, especially because I'm paid for it. Passengers are never paid a single penny that I've ever heard of. Another reason I go to sea as a sailor is for the healthy exercise and the clean air around me.

The most important of my reasons for going to sea however, is the incredible idea of the great whale itself. Such an important and mysterious monster makes me extremely curious. The wild and distant seas where this gigantic* creature swims – I'm tormented* with a constant desire* for these far-away places. I love to sail in

voyage a long journey by sea or in space
occur happen
gigantic huge

torment make you suffer greatly
desire a strong wish

Moby Dick

dangerous seas, and land on wild coasts. For all these reasons, the whaling voyage was very exciting.

I packed a shirt or two, and an extra pair of trousers into my old suitcase and went to New Bedford, in Massachusetts. It was a Saturday night in December when I arrived. I was disappointed at the news that I'd missed the last ferry to Nantucket Island, the place where the most important and best whaling ships departed from. Since there wouldn't be another boat to that famous old island until Monday, I had a night, a day and still another night to spend in New Bedford. Finding a place to eat and sleep soon became a serious concern. It was a very dark and dismal night, bitterly cold and cheerless*, and I knew no one in the place. With slow steps I walked up and down the streets, looking for accommodation. I passed a few inns* that looked too expensive. Then at last I saw a dim* light, not far from the docks* and, looking up, saw a sign over the door with the name The Spouter-Inn: Peter Coffin. It seemed a rather ominous name to me. "Spouter? Coffin?" Coffins* are for dead people, but it's a common name in Nantucket. It seemed an odd sort of place, but it didn't look expensive so I went in.

As I entered, I found a group of young seamen sitting around a table. I looked for the landlord* and told him I wanted a room. He told me that his inn was full – there wasn't a free bed. "But look, if you have no objections to sharing a room with another sailor, you can stay here. If you're going sailing, you'll have to get used to that sort of thing." I told him that I never liked to sleep two in a bed; that if I did, it'd depend completely on who the harpooneer might be but if he (the landlord) had no other room for me, and the harpooneer wasn't horrible, I'd put up with sharing the room. "I thought so," said the

During the first half of the 19th century, this American city was one of the world's most important whaling ports.

Herman Melville got the idea for this novel from the last voyage of the Nantucket whaler called Essex, which was attacked and sunk by a whale in the Pacific Ocean in 1820.

cheerless depressing

inn a place where people stopped to eat and sleep during a journey

dim not bright

docks an enclosed area of water in a port where ships can be loaded

coffin a long box used to bury a dead person

landlord the person who owns or runs an inn

landlord. "All right, take a seat. Supper? – you want supper? Supper will be ready directly."

After a while*, four or five of us men went to supper in the room next door. It was as cold as Iceland – no fire at all – the landlord said he couldn't afford it. We had to button up our jackets and hold cups of boiling tea with our freezing fingers. There was a lot of food though – not only meat and potatoes but dessert too!

It was now about 9.00pm and I wanted to go up to my room. No man likes to sleep two in a bed, and when it comes to sleeping with an unknown stranger, in a strange inn, in a strange town, and that stranger is a harpooneer, then your objections multiply*. The more I thought about this harpooneer, the more I hated the idea of sleeping with him. It was fair to expect that being a harpooneer, his clothes wouldn't be the cleanest and certainly not the finest. I began to shake all over. "What kind of man is this?" I asked the landlord. It was now 12 midnight and he hadn't returned. "Generally he's an early bird*", said the landlord, "but tonight he went out to sell his head." "Sell his head?" I asked, "Are you telling me this man is actually trying to sell his head around the town?" "That's exactly it," replied the landlord, "but I told him he couldn't sell it here, the market's overstocked*." "With what?" I shouted. "With heads to be sure; aren't there too many heads in this world?" the landlord replied. "Landlord," I said, "you must stop teasing* me, who and what is this harpooneer?" "Well, this harpooneer has just arrived from the South Seas, from New Zealand where he bought a lot of embalmed, human heads to sell here. He's not a dangerous man," the landlord told me. I was so exhausted that, despite my fears, I decided to go upstairs to my room.

after a while some time later
multiply become more and more
an early bird a person who gets up early

overstocked when there's more of something than is necessary
tease make fun of

Moby Dick

I'd just managed to fall asleep when I was awakened by the sound of heavy footsteps entering the room. Lord save me, I thought, as a tall, dark-skinned man walked into the room, holding a New Zealand head. At first I couldn't see his face, then suddenly he turned round. What a sight, such a face! It was dark purple in color, with some yellow parts, completely covered in tattoos! I'd never seen a face like that before. Ignorance* is the parent of fear and I was so afraid of him that I didn't have the courage to say anything. He began to get undressed; I saw the same colored tattoos covering his arms and chest. He didn't see me however, and when he got into bed, he suddenly felt me lying there next to him. "Who the devil are you?" he said, "You no speak, I kill you!" He grabbed his tomahawk and began waving it at me. "Landlord, landlord, Peter Coffin, help me!" I screamed as I jumped out of the bed. "Speak-ee, tell-ee me who you are," shouted the cannibal, again waving his tomahawk in the air. At that moment, thank God, the landlord came into the room, carrying a light.

"Don't be afraid now," the landlord said with a laugh, "Queequeg won't hurt a hair on your head." "Stop laughing," I yelled, "why didn't you tell me that my room-mate was a cannibal?" "I thought you'd have known, once I told you he was walking around the town, selling heads!" He turned to Queequeg, the cannibal, and said, "Do you understand, this man sleeps with you, understand?" "I understand, plenty," said Queequeg, who was smoking a pipe and sitting in the bed. "You get in," Queequeg said, pointing to the bed with his tomahawk and throwing his clothes to one side. He did this in a very civil* way, he was also really kind and charitable*. I looked at him for a moment. For all his tattoos, he was, on the whole, a clean, decent*

ignorance lack of knowledge
civil well mannered

charitable generous or who judges
someone fairly
decent acceptable



looking cannibal. What's all this fuss* I've been making, I thought to myself, the man's a human being just as I am: he has just as much reason to fear me as I have to be afraid of him. Better to sleep with a sober* cannibal than a drunken Christian. I got into bed, turned over and never slept better in my life.

When I woke up in the morning, Queequeg was still sleeping. I felt trapped in the bed – if I moved, he'd wake up. I had to get up however, so I tried to shake him. "Queequeg!" but his only response was a snore. I kept calling his name and moving my arms and legs until finally he woke up. He rubbed* his eyes and looked at me, as if he didn't completely remember how I came to be there. When at last he understood the situation, he got out of bed quickly and using gestures* in a kind of sign language, made me understand that he'd dress first and then leave me to dress, in private. He's treating me with great respect, I thought, while I've been rudely staring at him. You don't find a man as polite and respectful as Queequeg every day. I decided this was going to be a very interesting voyage.

Later I decided to take a walk around the town of New Bedford. The night before, seeing a man like Queequeg, with tattoos from head to toe and dressed in strange clothes, had been astonishing, but that was only the beginning of astonishing sights in this seaside city. There were people from all around the world – Mediterranean sailors whistled at frightened ladies, sailors from Malaysia and Bombay walked the streets and actual cannibals stood chatting at street corners. All of this made a stranger like me stare.

But New Bedford isn't just famous for its people. It's famous for whales! Had it not been for whalemens like myself, New Bedford might

make a fuss cause needless confusion
sober (here) not having drunk too much
 beer or other strong drinks

rub (here) move your fingers back and
 forwards
gesture when you move your hands or head
 to express an idea



have been forgotten, but thanks to whale hunting, thanks to the quest* for precious* whale oil, it was a very important and expensive place to live.

New Bedford also has a small church – a Whalemen’s Chapel. All men who are planning to go whale hunting make a Sunday visit to the chapel. After returning from my morning walk, I again went out, this time to go to a church. I saw a small group of sailors, sailors’ wives and their widows*, sitting in the church. The priest hadn’t arrived yet but there was silence everywhere. Everyone was waiting for Father Mapple, who’d once been a sailor and a harpooneer himself. I sat next to the door and was surprised to see Queequeg near me. The pulpit* was the strangest I’d ever seen – it was very high like most pulpits, but instead of having a wooden ladder to get to the top, there was one made of rope – just like those you find on a ship! When Father Mapple arrived, he grabbed the rope and climbing hand over hand, went straight up into the pulpit of his ‘ship’!

Father Mapple started talking. He spoke about Jonah and how he was swallowed* by a whale. I understood why he was telling us the story, but it frightened me quite a lot.

After the church service, I returned to the Spouter Inn and found Queequeg there, sitting on a bench by the fire, whittling on his little wooden idol* and humming to himself in his devilish way. I sat watching him with much interest. Even though he was a savage, with his face ruined – at least to my taste – by his tattoos, he had an agreeable, friendly appearance. You can’t hide the soul. Despite all his pagan* tattoos, I thought I saw the signs of a simple honest heart. He looked courageous and honest. Perhaps it’s ridiculous but his face

quest a long difficult search for something
precious of great value, not to be wasted
widow a woman whose husband has died
pulpit where the priest stands

swallow make something pass down the throat
idol an image or object like a god that people believe in
pagan other beliefs not concerning God

Moby Dick

reminded me of George Washington – he was George Washington turned into a cannibal.

I sat down with him and we tried to talk as best we could about all the sights to see in New Bedford. I began to feel the warmth of a new friendship, and even though a man of my closed, reserved* world would have thought it too soon to become friends, with this man those old rules didn't matter here.

Queequeg told me about himself. He was from an island in the South Pacific, an island far away to the West and South. His father was a High Chief, a King, his uncle a High Priest. His mother and his aunts were related to* noble warriors*, there was royal blood in his veins*. He wasn't interested in being a king however – he wanted adventure, he wanted to be a whaler and visit Christian lands. He didn't want to be a Christian though, he'd learned they could be just as bad as the people they tried to convert*!



reserved slow to show emotions or opinions

related to relatives of

noble warriors brave fighters

veins the tubes in your body which carry blood

convert (here) make people become Christians

After-Reading Activities • Chapter One

Reading Comprehension

1 Answer the following questions about Chapter One.

- 1 Who's the narrator of the story?
- 2 Where's he going?
- 3 Why does he decide to leave?
- 4 Who's the cannibal?
- 5 In what way does the narrator's opinion about Queequeg change?

Grammar B2 First

2 Read the text below. Use the word in capitals at the end of each line to form a word that fits the gap in the same line.

The whale Moby Dick isn't a normal character because we can't know its thoughts, feelings or (1)
It's an (2) force which has been considered in many different ways by literary experts. Moby Dick might be a religious symbol which is all powerful and (3) or a metaphor which represents the (4) aspects of life. Ishmael tells us he can't see the whale because it swims under the water. The reader doesn't know much about Ishmael either. We know he goes (5) when he feels sad, but we never learn what has caused his (6)
The story of Moby Dick is very (7) but not everything makes (8) sense.

**INTENT
PERSONAL**

**MYSTERY
HIDE**

**SAIL
HAPPY
ROMANCE
LOGIC**



Grammar

- 3 Put the correct form of the verb to choose or the noun (choice) into each sentence.**

Ishmael, the narrator of *Moby Dick*, made an important **(1)** when he decided to go to sea on a whaling ship.

In Chapter one he told us that he **(2)** whaling because he needed to change his life. He could have **(3)** something else such as becoming a soldier, but instead he **(4)** a very dangerous job as a sailor.

What would you have **(5)** if you'd been Ishmael?

The **(6)** of whaling means Ishmael will travel all around the world, but he won't be comfortable and he could be in danger. If he'd **(7)** to be a soldier, he wouldn't have been any safer.

Speaking

21st Century Skills

- 4 In Chapter One, we see how Ishmael's first impression of the cannibal changes. Discuss these questions with a partner.**

- 1 When you meet a person for the first time, do you trust your first impression? Why / Why not?
- 2 How much does a person's physical appearance affect your judgment?
- 3 How long does it take you to really trust people and consider them good friends?
- 4 What do you look for in a friendship?
- 5 How difficult or easy is it to become friends with someone from a totally different cultural background from yours?

Pre-Reading Activity • Chapter Two

Vocabulary

- 5 Match the correct word from the list on the left to the definition.**

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 ☐ Ahoy There! | a A statement that tells what will happen in the future. |
| 2 ☐ To hire | b When you show pity or forgive someone who's done something bad. |
| 3 ☐ Mercy | c To employ someone for a job or period of time. |
| 4 ☐ Prophecy | d What sailors say to get the attention of other sailors. |