



MOBY-DICK; or, THE WHALE

The Rosenbach of the Free Library
May 21, Jun 18, Jul 16, Aug 20, Sep 17, Oct
15 6:00 – 7:45 p.m.

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Course Description

The course provides an opportunity to read, study, and discuss Herman Melville's 1851 novel, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*. The story tracks two parallel quests: Captain Ahab's to kill and thereby take revenge on the white whale; and Ishmael's to know and understand the white whale. We'll examine the novel for its literary qualities, including the sometimes-elusive nature of its narrator, the density of its symbols, and the multiple different texts it incorporates. Beyond that, we'll think about the novel's many arguments about its world (and, indeed, ours), which range from the perils of demagoguery to the politics of race and white supremacy to the nature of God to the tragedies of human-caused species extinction and environmental crisis. Our time together will include some brief lectures, but mostly we'll use our sessions to discuss and explore this tremendous novel together.

Course Texts

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (Longman Critical Edition)*

* I like this edition for its notes, its font size (which isn't quite so tiny as it is in the Norton Critical Edition), and its descriptions of how Melville's British editors revised the text before publishing it in London.

Note: Many readers also find it easier to follow Melville's lengthy sentences when listening to his works rather than reading them. Several audio editions of the novel are available through the Hoopla app, which links to your Free Library account.

Course Schedule

May 21

“Etymology” – Chapter 23 (“The Lee Shore”)

June 18

Chapter 24 (“The Advocate”) – Chapter 42 (“The Whiteness of the Whale”)

July 16

Chapter 43 (“Hark”) – Chapter 60 (“The Line”)

Guest lecturer & a tour of the Rosenbach's Melville collection

August 20

Chapter 61 (“Stubb Kills a Whale”) – Chapter 86 (“The Tail”)

September 17

Chapter 87 (“The Grand Armada”) – Chapter 114 (“The Gilder”)

October 15

Chapter 115 (“The Pequod Meets the Bachelor”) – “Epilogue”