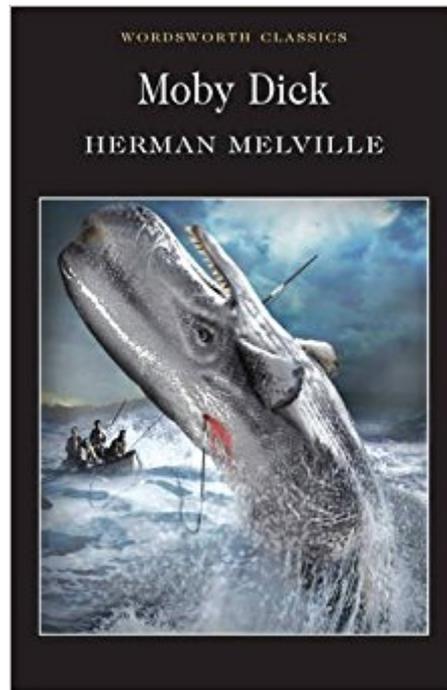


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Moby Dick (Wordsworth Classics)



Synopsis

With an Introduction and Notes by David Herd. Lecturer in English and American Literature at the University of Kent at Canterbury Moby-Dick is the story of Captain Ahab's quest to avenge the whale that 'reaped' his leg. The quest is an obsession and the novel is a diabolical study of how a man becomes a fanatic. But it is also a hymn to democracy. Bent as the crew is on Ahab's appalling crusade, it is equally the image of a co-operative community at work: all hands dependent on all hands, each individual responsible for the security of each. Among the crew is Ishmael, the novel's narrator, ordinary sailor, and extraordinary reader. Digressive, allusive, vulgar, transcendent, the story Ishmael tells is above all an education: in the practice of whaling, in the art of writing.

Book Information

Paperback: 544 pages

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Customer Reviews

Unless you are a naval historian or a Melville scholar, you probably won't have a rewarding (or even comprehensible) time with Moby-Dick at this remove unless the edition you're using comes with a good set of footnotes. Here's the skinny on the various editions currently on shelves: THESE HAVE FOOTNOTES ON THE PAGE ITSELF: * Charles Feidelson, Jr.'s annotated edition. Unquestionably the most all-around useful edition of Moby-Dick ever printed. Generous and highly useful footnotes right on the page, covering lexical, allusional, and cross-referential items. Two disadvantages: you may at times feel put upon by Feidelson's interlarded interpretations, and the thing is totally out of print. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964. ISBN: 067260311X * The "Norton critical" edition, edited by Parker and Hayford. The edition most widely employed by scholars. Stingier with the footnotes than Feidelson, but still a good second choice. Many useful essays at the end. The layout of the text is a

bit hard on the eye, though. Make sure you get the SECOND edition, from 2001. ISBN: 0393972836* The "Barnes and Noble Classics" edition. The footnotes for the most part are skimpy and confined to obscure vocabulary, not cultural and literary allusions. ISBN: 1-59308-018-2THESE HAVE A FOOTNOTES SECTION IN THE BACK OF THE BOOK:* The "Oxford World Classics" edition. About 11 pp. at the end. ISBN: 0-19-283385-5* The "Modern Library" edition. About 13 pp. at the end. ISBN: 0-679-78327-X* The "Penguin Classics" edition. About 15 pp. of notes at the end by Tom Quirk. ISBN: 0-14-24.3724-7 (This is their fancy hardbound version: see next item.)* The "Penguin Classics" edition. About 15 pp.

Finishing "Moby Dick" goes up there with my greatest (and few) academic achievements. It was a gruelling read, but---in the end---completely worthwhile. I've been reading it for 6 months. I started over the summer, during an abroad program in Oxford, and I remember sitting outside reading when one of the professors came over, saw what I was reading, and said: "It's a very strange book, isn't it?" Looking back, that might be the best way to describe it. The blurb from D.H. Lawrence on the back cover agrees: Moby Dick "commands a stillness in the soul, an awe...[it is] one of the strangest and most wonderful books in the world." Now there are those who will say that the book's middle is unbearable---with its maddeningly detailed accounts of whaling. Part of me agrees. That was the hardest to get through. But, still, even the most dull subject offers Melville an opportunity to show off his writing chops. He's a fantastic writer---his text most resembles that of Shakespeare. And, like one Shakespeare's characters, Melville sees all the world as a stage.

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