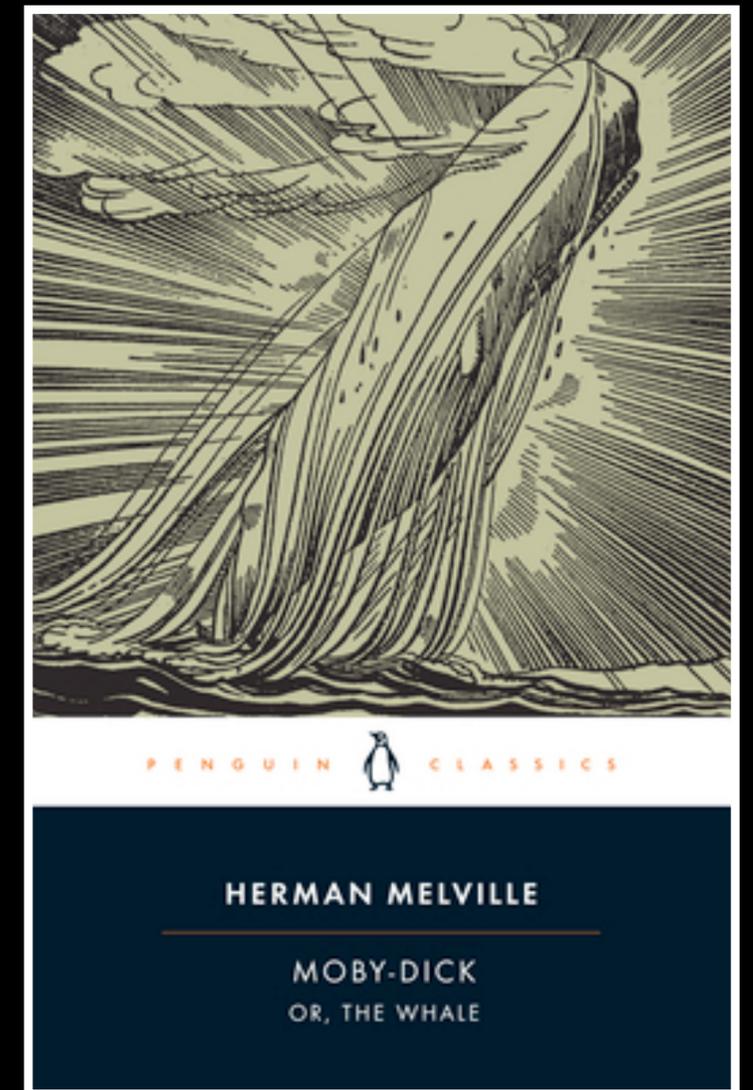


# *Moby-Dick*

ECL 522: American Lit 1800-1860  
Professor Jessica Pressman  
Fall 2025



Day 9: “Etymology” and “Extracts”, Chapters  
1-3

# ADMIN

- More extra credit: podcasting workshops
- Add CATEGORIES for posts!
- Don't forget to add Comment by Thursday at 2. Try to off constructive feedback which might serve the close reading essay.
- Reading *MD* pro-tip: Look up words and images!

# ADMIN

- Strategies for blog post and close reading essays: What, How, Why?  
Diving deeper into analysis and explication
- THESIS — example from the blogs= Omar's post this week!
- THESIS STATEMENTS and explications
- ESSAY DUE 10/19— start sending me thesis statements!

# In the Beginning

- \* “It is a book that begins by refusing to begin” (Andrew Delbanco)
- \* Dedication
- \* Etymology
- \* Extracts

# Discussion

- Why the extracts and etymology sections?

- “it is a book that struggles to maintain its narrative drive against the impulse to digress and mediate and play” (xii)
- **“It is a book that begins by refusing to begin,** deferring to its own story by requiring the reader to forge a passage through the ‘extracts’, which of the debris of other stories. It is a book that undercuts all its own conclusions.” (Xxvii)

Andrew Delblanco, “Introduction” (1992) to Penguin edition of *Moby-Dick*



# etymology

NOUN

- Factsheet
- Etymology
- Meaning & use
- Pronunciation
- Forms
- Frequency
- Compounds & derived words

## QUOTATIONS

Hide all quotations

## CONTENTS

1. The facts relating to the origin of a particular word or...
- ▶ 2. The process or practice of tracing the origin of a word so...
3. Grammar. A branch of grammar which deals with the formation...
4. The etymological sense of a word; the literal meaning of a...
5. The branch of linguistics which deals with determining the...

## EARLIER VERSION

1. The facts relating to the origin of a particular word or the historical development of its form and meaning; the origin of a particular word. a1398-

*figurative* in quot. 1864.

- (a1398)** Tyn hatte *stagnum*..and hap þat name of **ethimologie** of grew.  
 J. Trevisa, translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (MS BL Add. 27944) (1975) vol. II. xvi. xcii. 873 ...  
 [Composed a1398]
- 1447** Yf we hem dewly kun applye And ordenelly aftyr the **ethimologie**.  
 O. Bokenham, *Lives of Saints* (MS Arundel) (1938) I. 1566 (Middle English Dictionary) ...
- 1581** Dagon..as maie be iudged by the **Etimologie** of the word, was some God of the Sea. For *Dag* in Hebrue signifieth a fish.  
 J. Marbeck, *Booke of Notes & Common Places* 276 ...
- 1583** The **etymologie** of this English worde Priest, cometh from Presbyter.  
 W. Fulke, *Defense Translations of Scriptures* vi. 186 ...

MOBY-DICK;

OR,

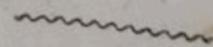
THE WHALE.

BY

HERMAN MELVILLE,

AUTHOR OF

"TYPEE," "OMOO," "REDBURN," "MARDI," "WHITE-JACKET."



NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.

LONDON: RICHARD BENTLEY.

1851.

First American edition

[https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/  
article/moby-dick-context-and-  
resources](https://beinecke.library.yale.edu/article/moby-dick-context-and-resources)



# Ishmael

- **Genesis 16:11: son of Abraham and Hagar**
  - Hagar sent was away with infant baby; Abraham's first wife= Sarah.
  - Hagar in desert prays to God; God promises to make a great nation from baby Ishmael, provides water.
- Brother Isaac becomes father of Jews; Ishmael becomes father of Arabs
- orphans, exiles, and social outcasts

**Ishmael**  
NOUN

Factsheet Etymology **Meaning & use** Pronunciation Forms Frequency

(The name of) the son of Abraham and Hagar, taken as the type of an outcast or exile; a person whose relationships with others are characterized by mutual hostility. **1587-**

With reference or allusion to Genesis 16:12: 'his hand will be against euery man, and euery mans hand against him' (King James Bible).

and Hagar,

**1587** Al are become **Ismaels**. Euery mans hand against them, and theirs against all other.  
J. Penry, *Treat. Aequity Humble Supplic.* 50 ...

# Discussion

- How do we begin in this narrative? And why?

# From your blogs- extracts

- SAM: Melville outright lets the reader know that he isn't reliable and to read between lines. TO CLOSE READ! It's genuinely insane how much thought went into the extracts as a warning to readers to NOT take his word seriously as you would the bible. "Therefore you must not in every case at least, take the higgley-piggledy whale statements, however authentic, in these extracts, for veritable gospel cetology. Far from it." (Extracts, paragraph 1) This warning gives a whole new meaning to reading the book and what it means to simply read any book.
- LIXIA: A book that challenges the pre-established rules of what constitutes a piece of literature and simultaneously claims that America is so unlike any nation like the ones on this handkerchief that it necessitates the breaking of the rules that can be found in these grammar books. Melville signals to the reader, that just like the dying usher, these classical rules are also fading. But this does not mean nothing else will rise to replace it in its stead.

# From your blogs- extracts= a THESIS!

- OMAR: Before *Moby-Dick* even begins its story, the “*Extracts*” overwhelm us with fragments: verses from the Bible, lines from Shakespeare, and snippets of travelogues and natural accounts. At first glance, they read like noise, a jumble of borrowed words that delay the narrative before it even begins. But Melville is doing this deliberately. By bombarding us with quotations, he insists that any single perspective cannot capture the whale. Instead, it exists at the intersection of voices, always slipping out of reach.

# Humans and the Sea

\* Why men are called to sea:

“Surely all this is not without meaning. And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all” (Ch. 1)

# Take Aways?