

Moby-Dick

ECL 522: American Lit 1800-1860

Professor Jessica Pressman

Fall 2025

Day 12: Chapters 28-33



October 29

Arts & Letters

Department of English and Comparative Literature

Q&A + OPEN HOUSE

Join ECL faculty & learn strategies for grad student success. Get your questions answered! Room AL-266.

12:00-1:00 PM

Meet + mix with ECL faculty, students, and organizations. Learn about 2026 courses. Get free candy! A&L Floor 2.

1:00-2:00 PM

Interested in tabling? Contact rporath@sdsu.edu.

ADMIN

- Added “NOTE ch” on Reading list... but that does not mean skip other chapters!
- Added 2 new extra credit offerings
- Changed reading schedule in last few weeks to give us a day of reflection and peer review after concluding the novel
- **PRO TIPS:** Consult images, diagrams, definitions in the back of your book
- Look up for more visual aid!

Midterm Essay

2 Short Close Reading Essays: 15% each (30%)-- You can revise each for a better grade. See the schedule for revision deadline.

Short Essay: Close Reading 1—Due Sunday 10/6 at midnight, posted to the blog

These short essays (approx. 1500 words= 3-4 pages) are an opportunity to focus on one aspect or passage from a single text from our syllabus, to provide an in-depth analysis and to practice close reading/ explication. This essay also intended as a scaffolding assignment, meaning it is there to support you in developing the thinking and writing skills to produce the final essay, to provide a benchmark for your writing (and grade). You can revise one of your blog posts or write new content that demonstrates your ability to 1) develop a thesis, and 2) use a text to support, through textual explication/ analysis/close reading, your argument. The short essay is an exercise in diving into the formal operations of a text to see HOW it operates and develop an argument about WHY that matters. You will

1) select a single short text or passage of a text

2) pursue a focused argument about that passage: what you see in it and why that matters (WHAT, HOW, SO WHAT)

YOU CAN REVISE these short assignments for a better grade, and you are encouraged to do so. Revision is due before next discovery is due



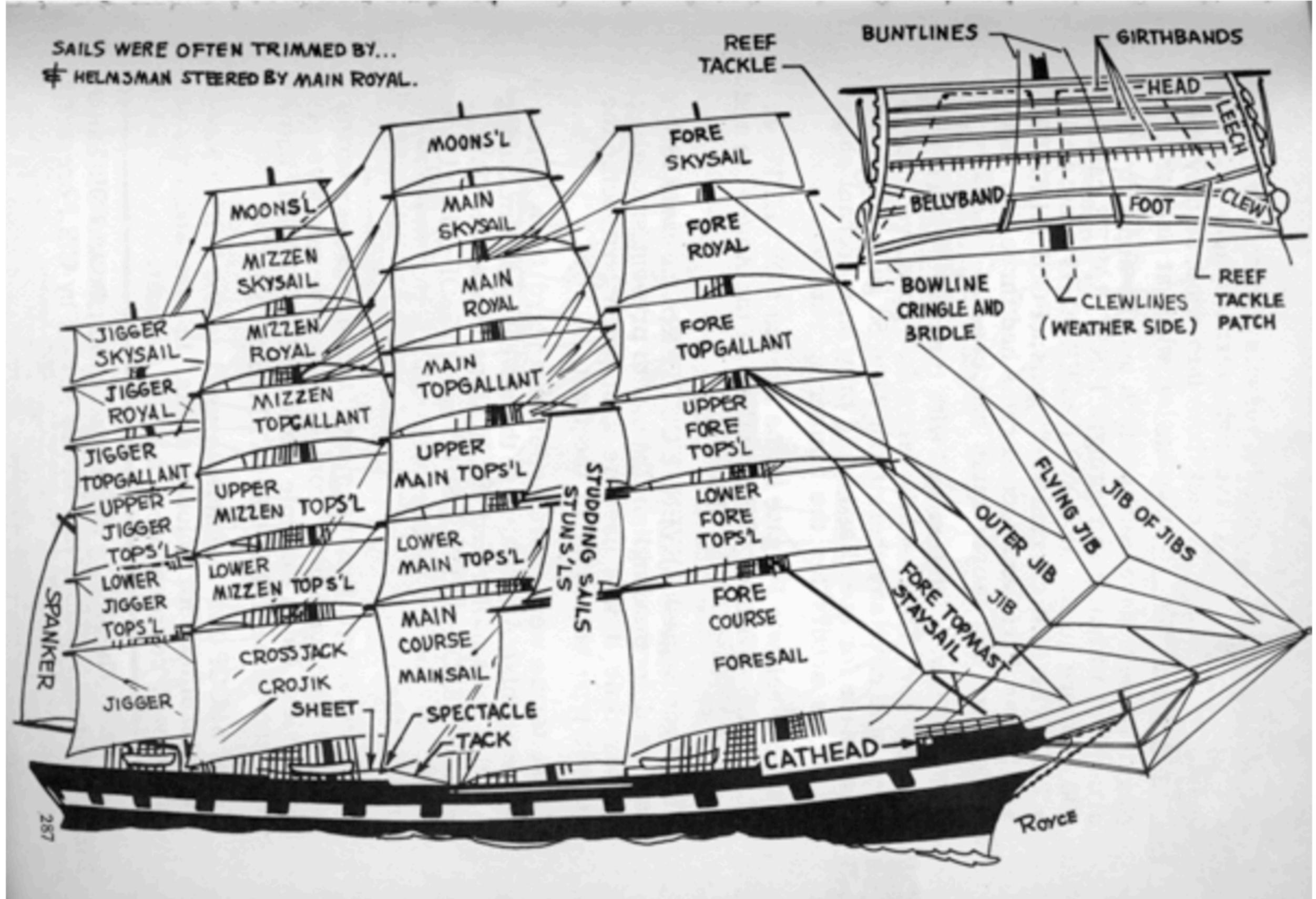


Diagram of 19th century square-rigged ship's sails by Patrick M. Royce, from the 8th edition of his book *Sailing Illustrated* (Marina del Ray: Western Marine, 1986). Image provided courtesy of [ProStar Publications](https://www.prostarpublications.com/).

Quick Write for Midterm

- 1) What topic/theme/formal aspect of the novel do you plan to write about? AND/OR What section (chapter, passage) do you want to close read
- 2) Why that selection?
- 3) What do you plan to say/argue/show about that selection?

Peer review thesis

- WHAT is the writer looking at in the text and saying about it?
- WHERE/HOW is the writer planning to prove that insight?
- WHY is the writer focusing there, in order to argue what larger point? SO WHAT?

Peer Review of Thesis Statements

- *WHAT*
- *HOW*
- *SO WHAT*

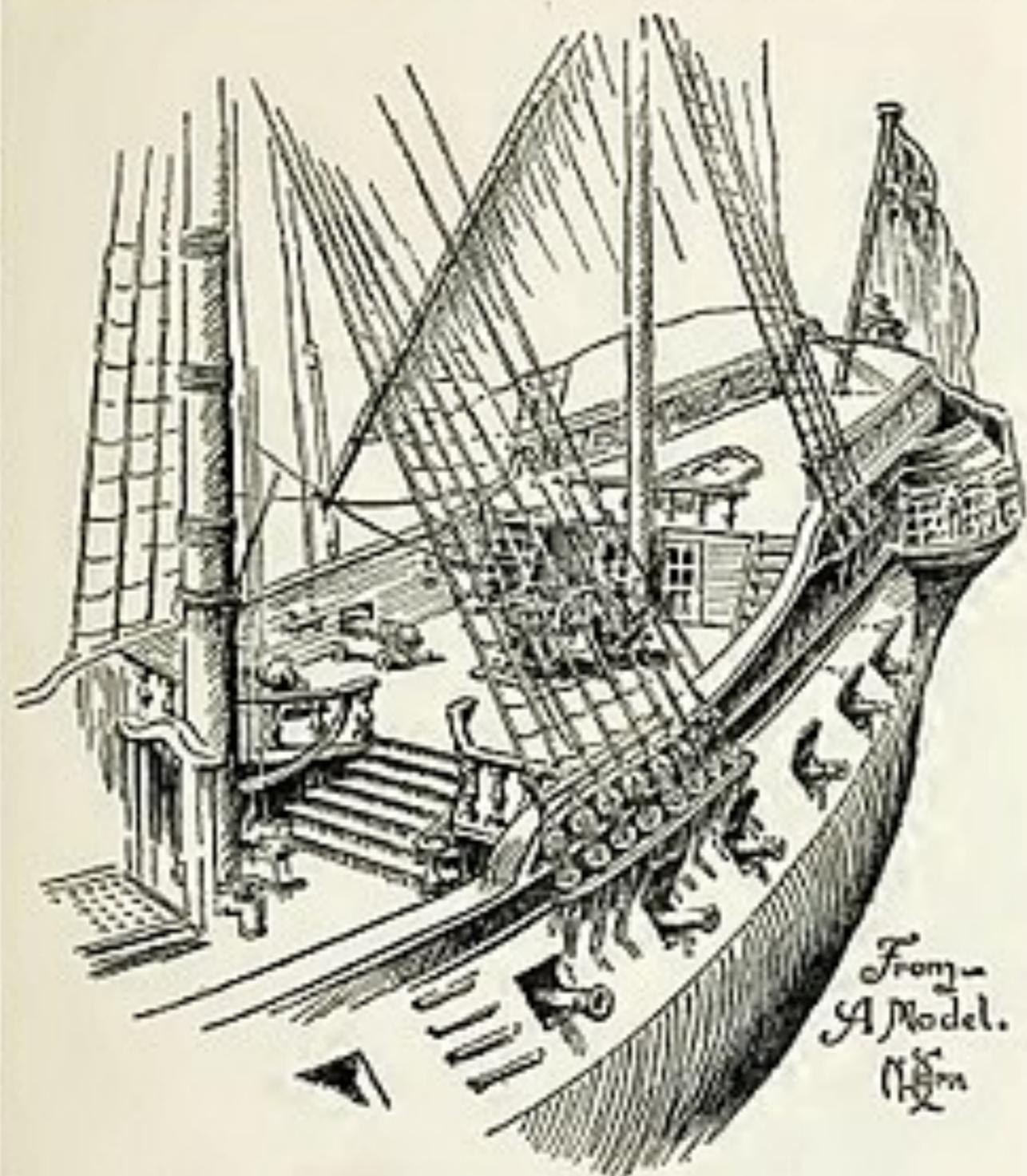
1) What do you see?: This is your insight

2) Where do you see it? How is it being done?: This is where you use specific elements from the work to support your insight

3) Why is this relevant? So What?: This is where you explain why your insight is relevant, where you make an argument about what the work is saying/doing with and through your insight. This is where you push your insight to larger conclusions about the work as a whole.

Discussion

- Main insights
- places to dive in

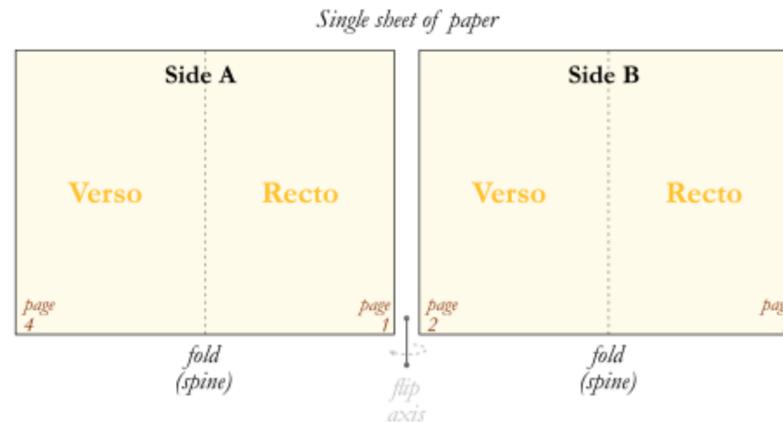


QUARTER-DECK OF AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRIGATE.
Showing the steering wheels in use.

Ch. 32: Cetology— what is a whale/book?

FOLIO

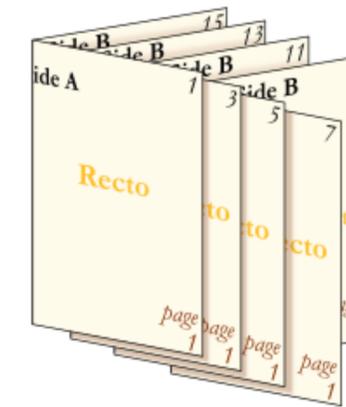
abbreviated
fo 2°



- 4 pages of printed text
- 2 on each side
- 1 fold
- creates 2 leaves
- each leaf is 1/2 size of the original sheet

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folio>

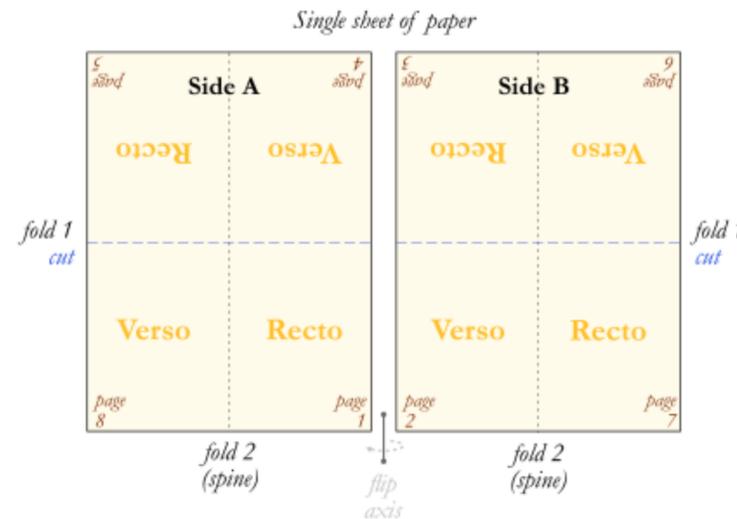
Example of a Folio Gathering



Folios would be inserted within each other to form, for example, gatherings of 8 leaves (above). Gatherings are sewn through the central fold prior to binding the book. Multiple gatherings are stacked and made into a book.

QUARTO

abbreviated
Qto, 4to or 4°

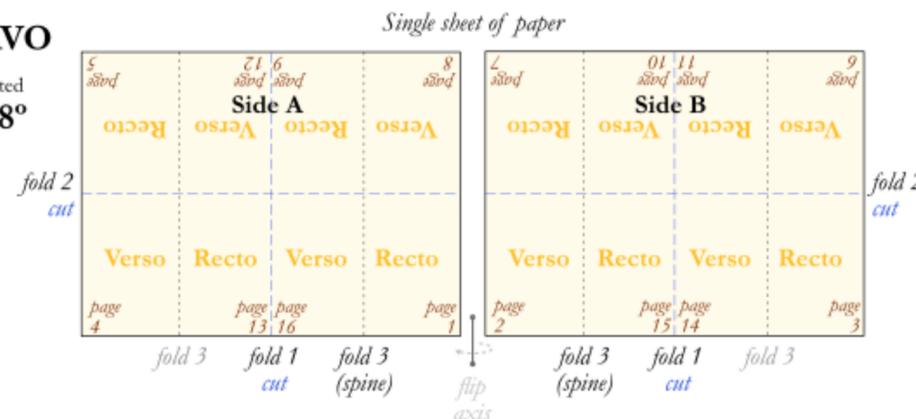


- 8 pages of printed text
- 4 on each side
- 2 folds, 1 cut
- creates 4 leaves
- each leaf is 1/4 size of the original sheet

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quarto>

OCTAVO

abbreviated
8vo, 8°



- 16 pages of printed text
- 8 on each side
- 3 folds, 2 cuts
- creates 8 leaves
- each leaf is 1/8 size of the original sheet

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Octavo>

For "left-to-right reading" books.

Transcendentalism

A strain of Romanticism that took root among writers in mid-19th-century New England. Ralph Waldo Emerson laid out its principles in his 1836 manifesto *Nature*, in which he asserted that **the natural and material world exists to reveal universal meaning to the individual soul via one's subjective experiences**. He promoted the poet's role as seer, a **“transparent eyeball”** that received insight intuitively through his or her perception of nature. Henry David Thoreau was an early disciple of Emerson's philosophy.

—<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/education/glossary/transcendentalism>

Transcendentalists advocated **the idea of a personal knowledge of God, believing that no intermediary was needed for spiritual insight**.

-<https://www.history.com/topics/19th-century/transcendentalism>

Take Aways?