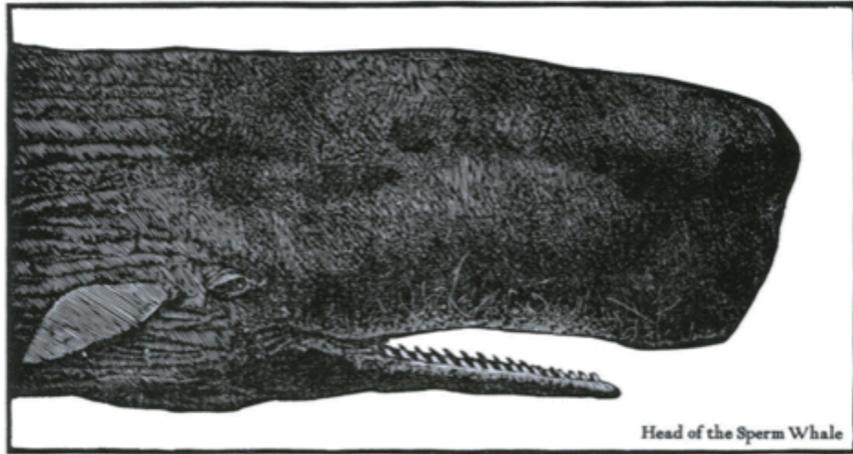


# MOBY-DICK



*or, The Whale*

BY HERMAN MELVILLE

# *Moby-Dick*

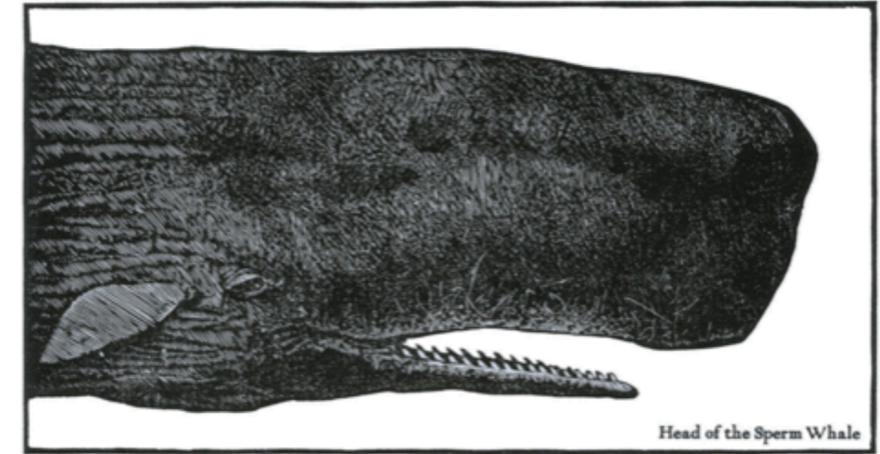
ECL 522: American Lit 1800-1860

Professor Jessica Pressman

Fall 2025

Day 13: Chapters 34-36

# MOBY-DICK



*or, The Whale*

BY HERMAN MELVILLE

# ADMIN

- At MIDTERM:
- Blogs— some of you are way under the count for blog completion at midterm. Please see me if you have questions. Remember- intros do NOT count towards your total.
- -remember late posts DO NOT count (after Sunday at midnight)

# Thesis Drafts

- **From thesis statements I have seen:**
- need to focus on WHERE and HOW
- Connect the dots between your thoughts
- Don't Zoom out too far or generalize; stick to the text!

# 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.

# Examples of thesis statements

- Melville's multi-country description of the Pequod creates a lack of national identity in a transient vessel, and brings into question how national identities are formed in the American melting pot.
- *WHAT*
  - *HOW*
  - *SO WHAT*

# Examples of thesis statements

- In depicting the storm, Ishmael's jacket, and the small congregation of sailors and widows, Melville critiques the illusion of heroism by revealing how human courage is both admirable and futile before nature's overwhelming power. Rather than celebrating endurance, the passage uses imagery of faith and protection to expose the irony of seeking meaning or mastery in a world governed by forces beyond human control
  - *WHAT*
  - *HOW*
  - *SO WHAT*

# Examples of thesis statements

- In chapter 10 of *Moby-Dick*, Melville uses the unlikely friendship between Ishmael and Queenqueg to challenge the social norms of his time, explaining that genuine connection is possible between people of different cultures when they allow themselves to open their minds
  - *WHAT*
  - *HOW*
  - *SO WHAT*

# Discussion

- Main insights
- places to dive in

# From your blogs: ch. 34- The cabin table

- LIZ: in Chapter 34, Ishmael gives us a glimpse into the dining hierarchy under Ahab's silent, oppressive presence. He writes, "Nor did they lose much hereby; in the cabin was no companionship; socially, Ahab was inaccessible." (166) Melville uses this sentence to critique isolation and the destructive nature of obsession through Ahab and the Pequod. **..Melville critiques not only Ahab but the hierarchy structures that create power with detachment.**

# From your blogs: ch. 35- The Mast Head

- **CAITLIN:** There you stand, lost on the infinite series of the sea, with nothing ruffled but the waves. The tranced ship indolently rolls; the drowsy trade winds blow; everything resolves you into languor.” .. It evokes a sense of peace and surrender, which contrasts sharply with the restless energy Ishmael displays at the start of the novel..the ocean becomes a space of restoration and reconciliation for him, allowing him to detach from the pressures and anxieties of life on land.
- **DIANNA:** On another note, there’s also something about standing up from a high place and looking down at the world as something to be conquered. Even though the vast majority of the sea is unknowable, there’s this idea of high and mightiness based on the position of the mast-head on the Pequod.

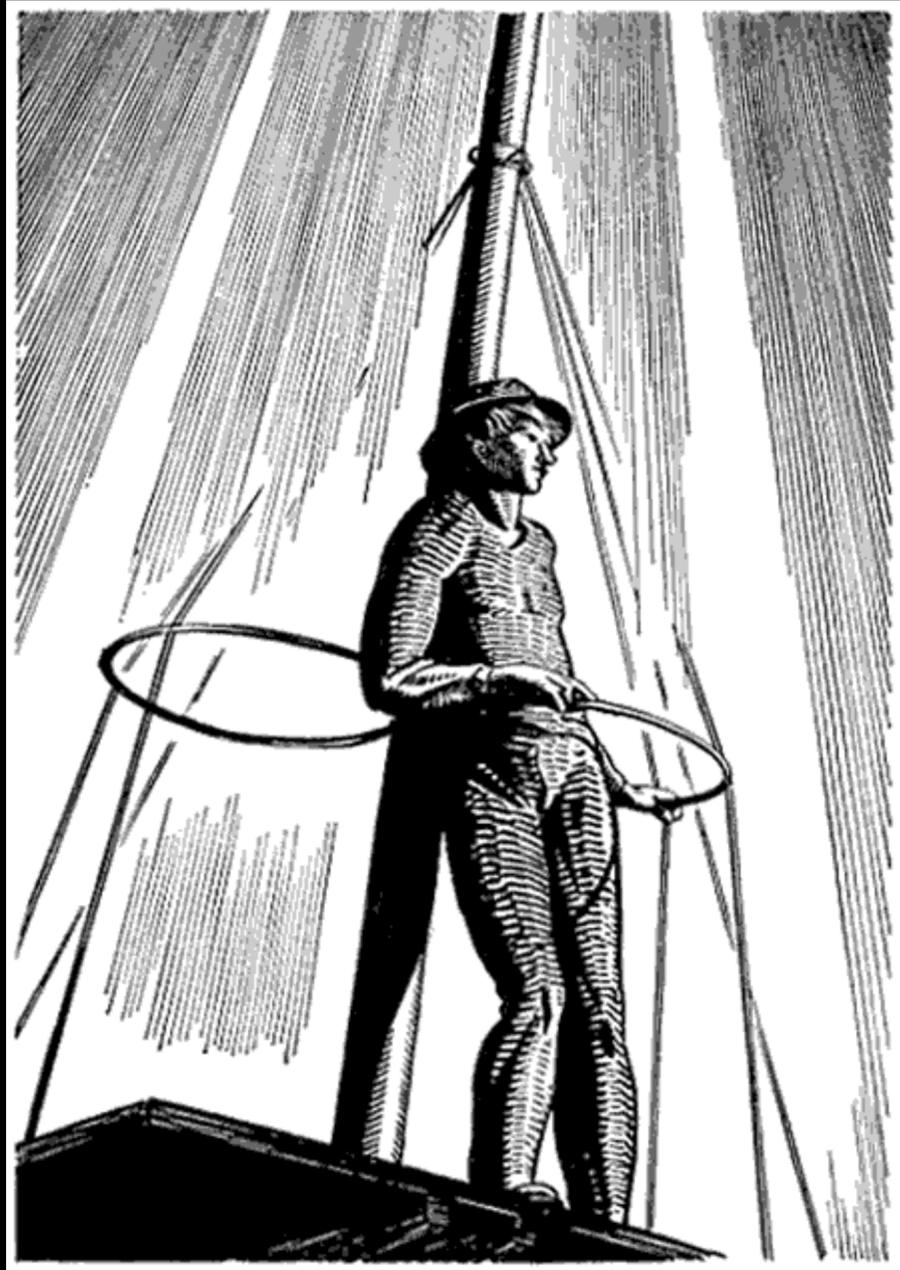
# From your blogs: ch. 35- The Mast Head

- AURORA: At the end of Chapter 35, “The Mast-Head,” Ishmael closes his reflection on watchkeeping with a haunting sentence: “There is no life in thee, now, except that rocking life imparted by a gently rolling ship: by her, borrowed from the sea; by the sea, from the inscrutable tides of God.” (Melville 173) It’s a moment that collapses the sailor’s physical existence into a more spiritual chain of dependence. **Melville ties the ship, sea, and God together in a rhythm that both sustains and erases individuality...I think that Ishmael’s meditation at the masthead mirrors one of the novel’s central paradoxes: the ocean as both cradle and grave, revelation and oblivion.**

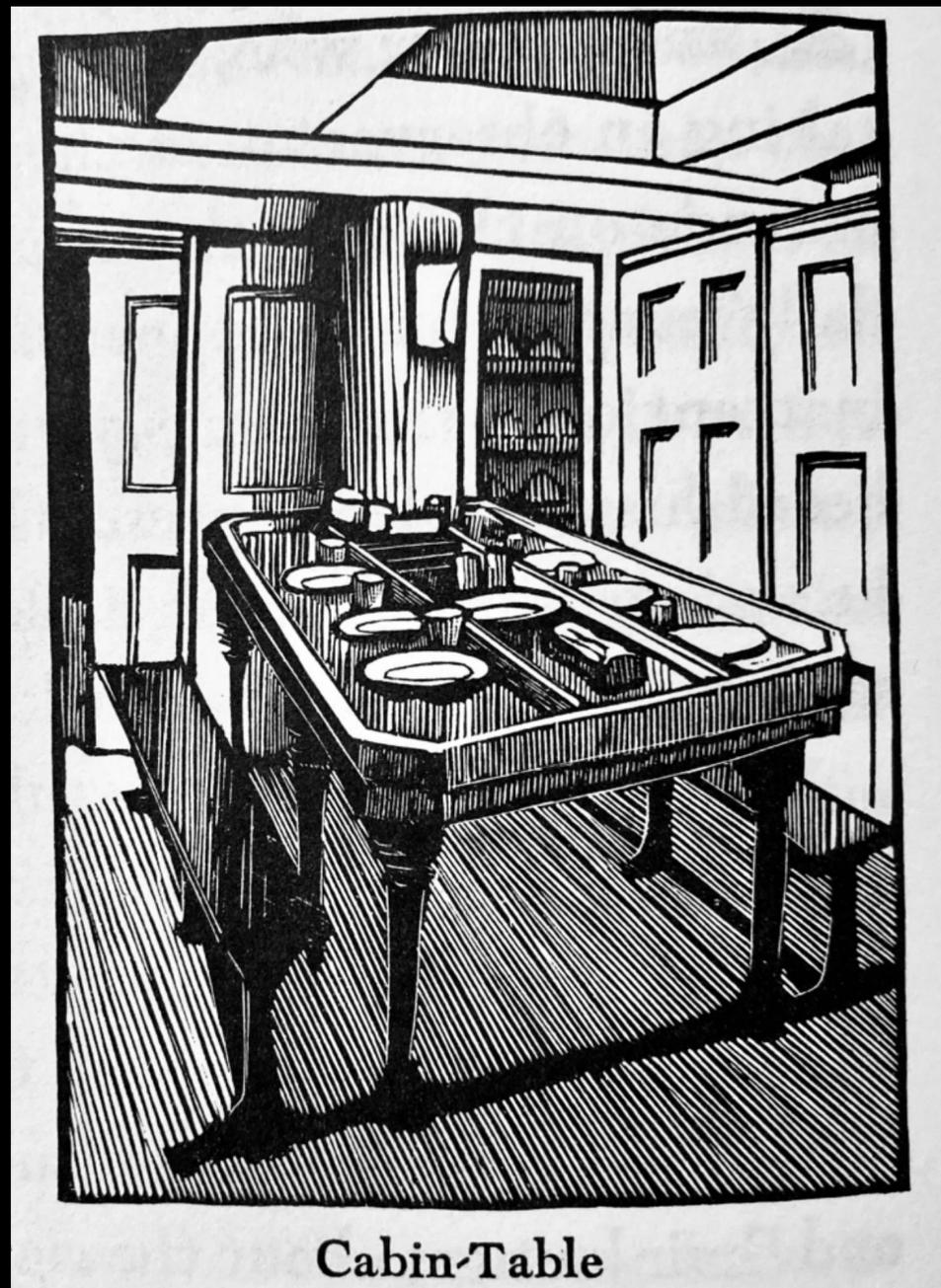
# From your blogs: ch. 36

- ALYSSA N: Within Ahab's long winded speech Melville turns the white whale into a symbol of vengeance, taking something of nature and demonstrating how humans often create their own meaning that turns violence onto something rather innocent. It feels that Melville is proving a point to readers by showing us how humans can turn nature into a reflection of their own fears and need for control by creating this thought process that justifies their actions.

# Ch. 35: The Mast-head

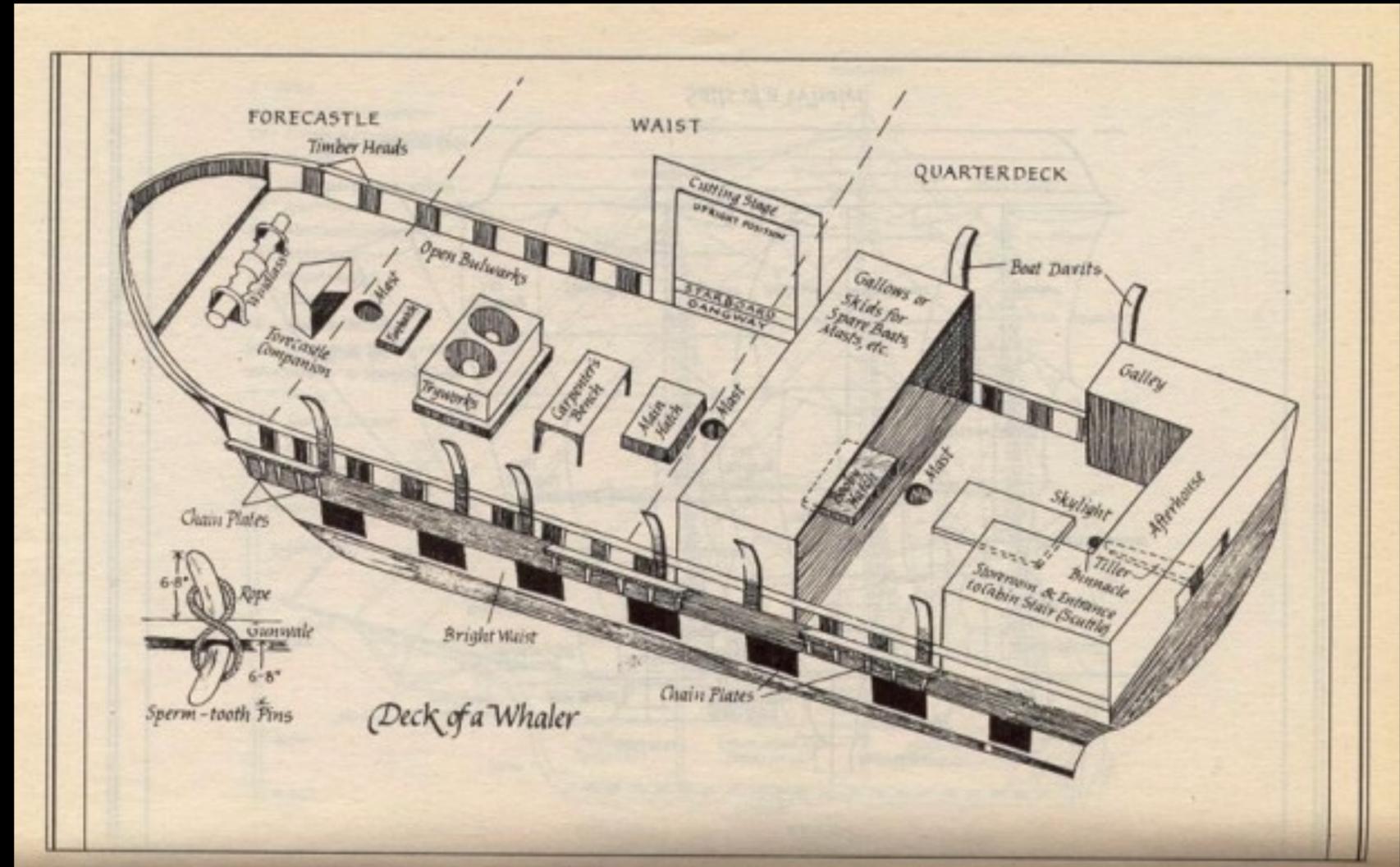
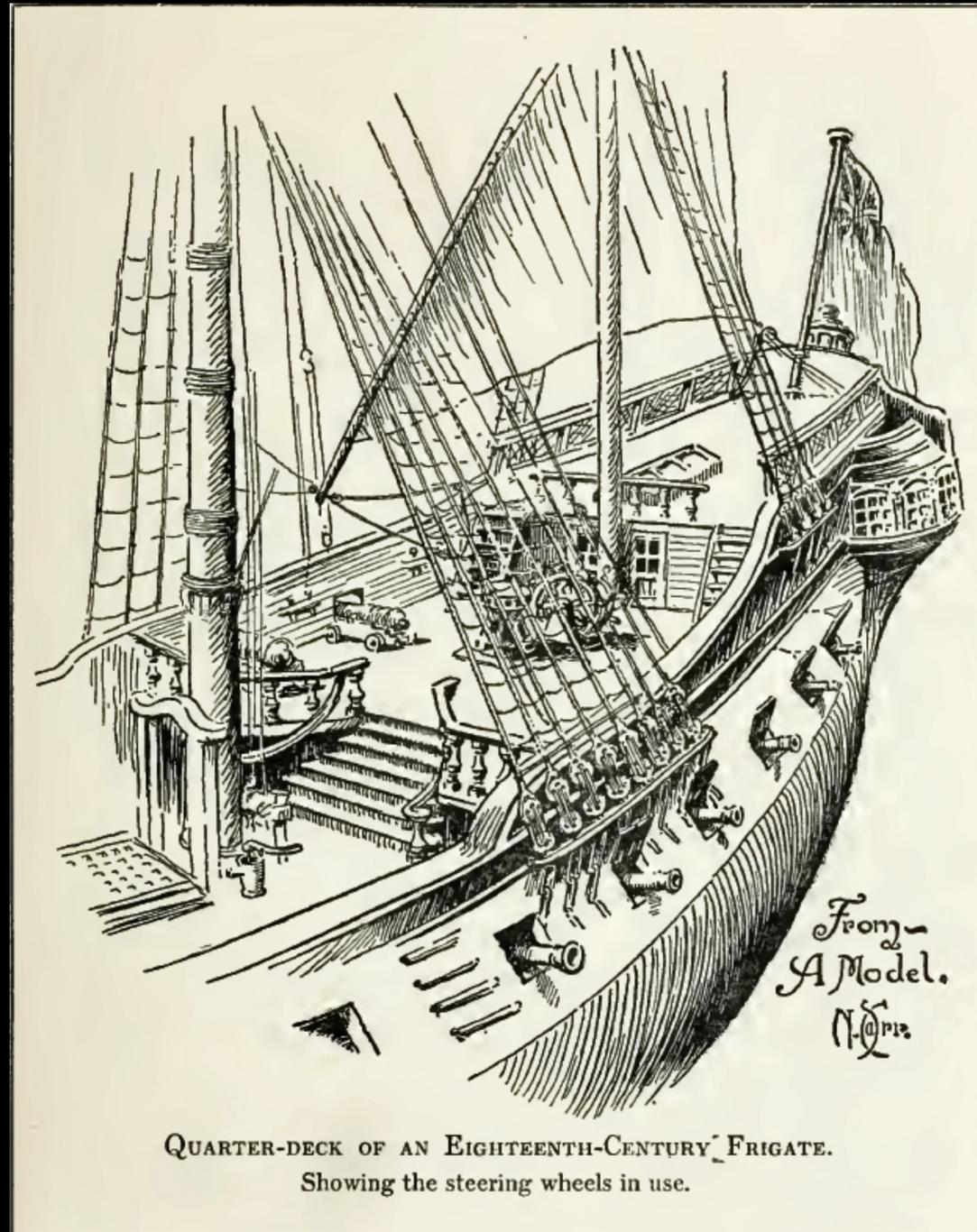


# Ch. 34: The Cabin-Table



Cabin-Table

# Ch. 36: The Quarter-Deck



# Take Aways?