

Moby-Dick

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

Day 19: Chapters 91-96

Halloween!



ADMIN

- Revision deadline 11/9
- Essay 2 deadline 11/16
- Thesis statement peer review on Thursday

Undergrad in an ECL class?
Drop in for free tutoring from
ECL's Writing Fellow!

DROP-IN WRITING TUTORING

Raine Porath
Office AL 232

Wed. 11:00pm – 2:00pm
Thurs. 2:00pm – 4:00pm

No appointment needed!



Brainstorming for Essay 2

- Essay=your insight about a particular passage in the text & argument about why it matters
- WHAT is the idea, concept about the text?
- WHERE is that idea located— what formal device, theme, passage?
- SO WHAT: **why** does that insight matter?

Midterm Evaluations responses

2) do the class meetings seem well structured?

- The class meetings are very inspiring. Each time I enter class I learned something that I never would've thought of.
- I really enjoy coming to class and learning not only from the professor, but also from fellow classmates
- Super inspiring! It puts together the parts I feel I missed

3) do the blog assignments facilitate your learning?

- The blogs are great. I enjoy looking at other people's thoughts.
- Yes. I'm consistently practicing close reading and engaging with others who are doing the same

4) What do you think you are learning?

- So what
- I'm learning how to analyze and look deeper into texts
- How to think critically
- How to close read
- I am quite literally learning how to read again

5) How does the class connect to other classes?

- The historical context of the novel
- The ocean and blue humanities
- Honestly, I've never had a class like this. I've never done this level of close reading.
- How the wet interacts with people of color and the consequences of those interactions
- It helps me with my skills in analyzing for other classes

6) What is your overall sense of the course?

- Enjoyable— I feel encouraged to read and share my thoughts in class
- Challenging, in a good way
- I love how it's formatted around classroom discussion
- Challenging but rewarding if you're willing to put in the effort
- A safe space
- Challenging in a nice way. Rewarding and confusing. I'm glad I'm taking it.

7) What is your overall sense of the professor?

- Good at leading discussion and provoking conversation
- I greatly enjoy the professor. I like her vibes and how greatly she cares about the topic and how well organized she is
- She really pushes me to ask “why”
- I've never left every class with this much inspiration as I do each Tuesday and Thursday. It's absolutely incredible
- Pushes us to do our best and it's opened all invoices and interpretations

8) Suggestions?

- A little more time in group discussions
- Nudge all students to speak out
- I want to hear more people speak
- A bit more thesis writing in class

Discussion

- Where to dive in today... and WHY?

Ch. 91: The Pequod Meets the Rosebud

- Ambergris



Ch. 92- Ambergris

Ambergris

National Museum of American History



Object Details

Description

Pound for pound, ambergris was the most valuable product produced by the whale. It was—and is—also the rarest and most enigmatic whale product. An opaque, waxy substance from a sperm whale's intestines, it was found occasionally in the stomachs of whales being processed on whale ships. More commonly, it was found floating on the surface of the world's oceans or washed up on the shore in pieces that could weigh several hundred pounds. It was used by western cultures as a fixative to prolong the scent of perfumes into the later 20th century.

But why it is formed—and from which end of a sperm whale it is expelled—remains unknown. Fragments of squid beaks are often found inside the pieces, and some scientists believe that ambergris forms around the sharp, indigestible squid beaks to prevent irritating or cutting a whale's intestines. Others consider it the cetacean equivalent of human gallstones.

ID Number

1991.0083.01

From your blogs- ch. 92

- ATHENA: “How hard these items are to obtain versus their mundane use in everyday life demonstrates the disparities between the working class and the upper class while also showcasing the upper classes’ intrinsic necessity and connectivity to the working class....The upper class is built on their labor, and to acknowledge it would mean to expose it and potentially alter their station or the very structure of the social order. “
- MARLEY: “Who would think, then, that such fine ladies and gentlemen should regale themselves with an essence found in the inglorious bowels of a sick whale! Yet so it is.” ..The reminder of how, while whaling may seem unethical and gross to us now, that wasn’t always the case....I think this quote and this constant reminder of how common something can be at one point and then be completely looked down upon could also represent the culture around slavery. W

Marxist/postcolonial appreciation in McCarthy era

“Ahab now utters words which strike at the very foundation of American civilization. He says, in effect, to hell with business and money” (1)
-a factory-like Pequod whose “captain of industry” leads the crew to their doom.

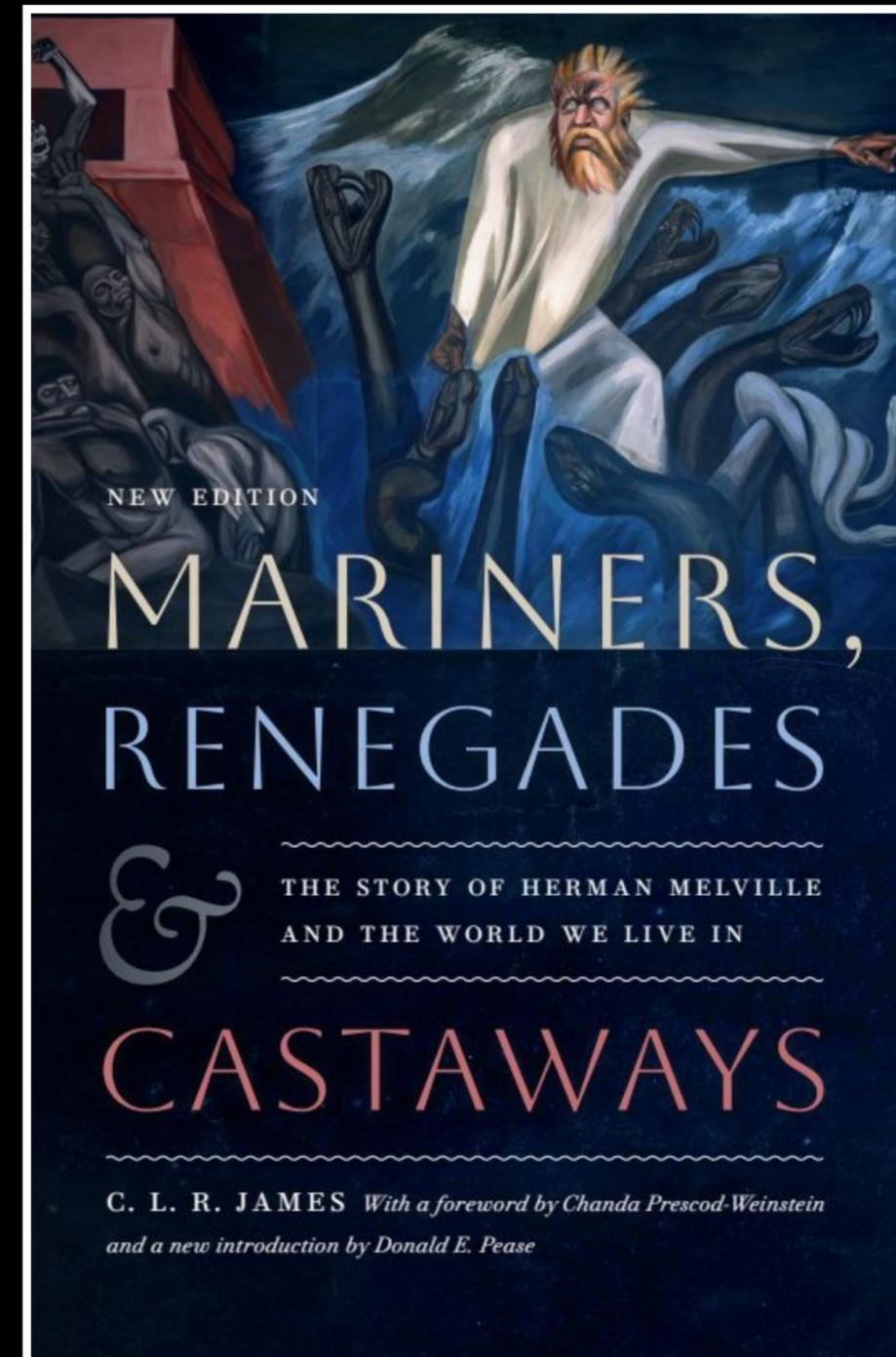
Melville ‘has painted a body of men at work, the skill and the danger’
(30)

“Their heroism consists in their everyday doing of their work” (30)

*Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways:
The Story of Melville and the World We Live in*

C.L.R. James

NY: 1963 (2025)



Ch. 93: The Castaway

From your blogs- ch. 93

- JESMOND: Pip comes from a tribe whose culture gives him a “pleasant, genial, jolly brightness,” but the “panic-striking business” in which he was “entrapped” had blurred that “brightness.”

Ch. 94: A Squeeze of the Hand

From your blogs- ch. 94

- RAYNE: I would like to argue that, while the blubber-room and its men are apart of the Pequod, and the Pequod being referenced as its own nation state, that the act of sawing and cutting at blubberous commerce and even at the risk of one's self, that the blubber-room and its men represents the self destruction of the people within the nation state. As America is at one of its worst points in history, clawing after the idea of white superiority at the expense of others, they are actively cutting through themselves and destabilizing the very foundation that they believe they have erected for themselves and the nation.
- OMAR: This chapter is memorable not because it praises whaling or the sea, but because it celebrates connection. In a simple task, Ishmael finds something that goes beyond its purpose. It reminds us that even in harsh situations, beauty can appear through care, routine, and touch. For Melville, the warmth found in this work is the truest kind of insight.



"CUTTING IN."



Ch. 95: The Cassock

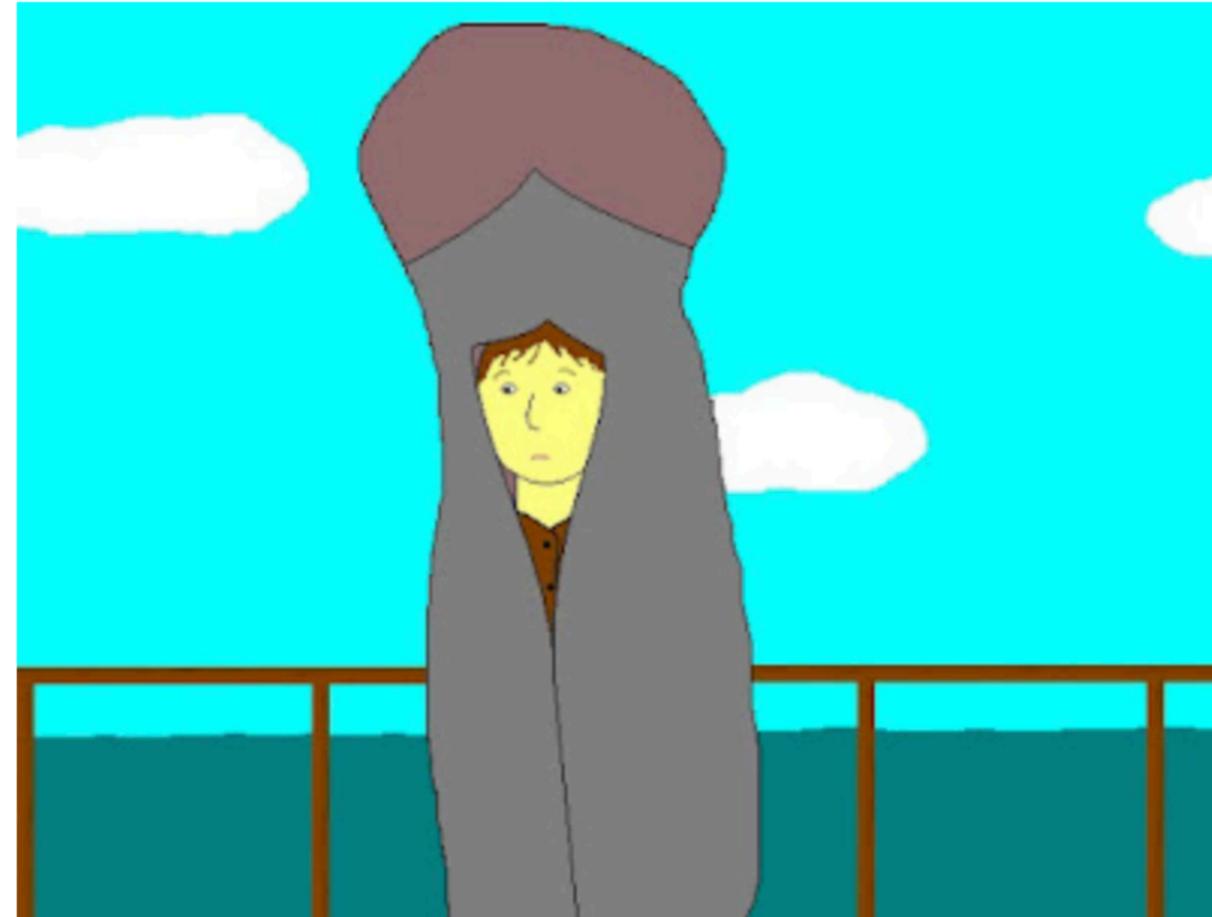


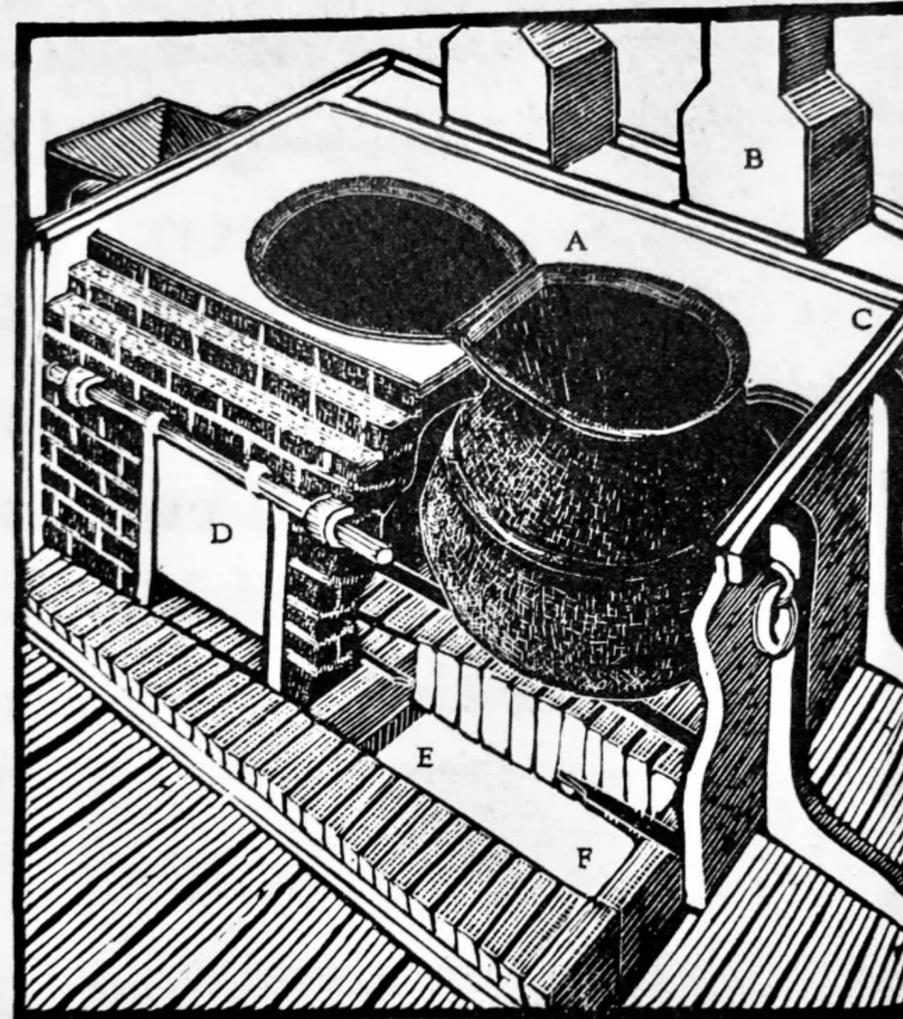
Plate 37 - The cassock of the Archbishoprick, is what Melville actually called this situation in his serious literary masterpiece

From [Moby Dick, Modern Illustrated Classics Edition](#). By Herman Melville, et al. Ill by Henry "Soupcan" Sanchez. Preorder your copy today!

Ch. 96: The Try-Works

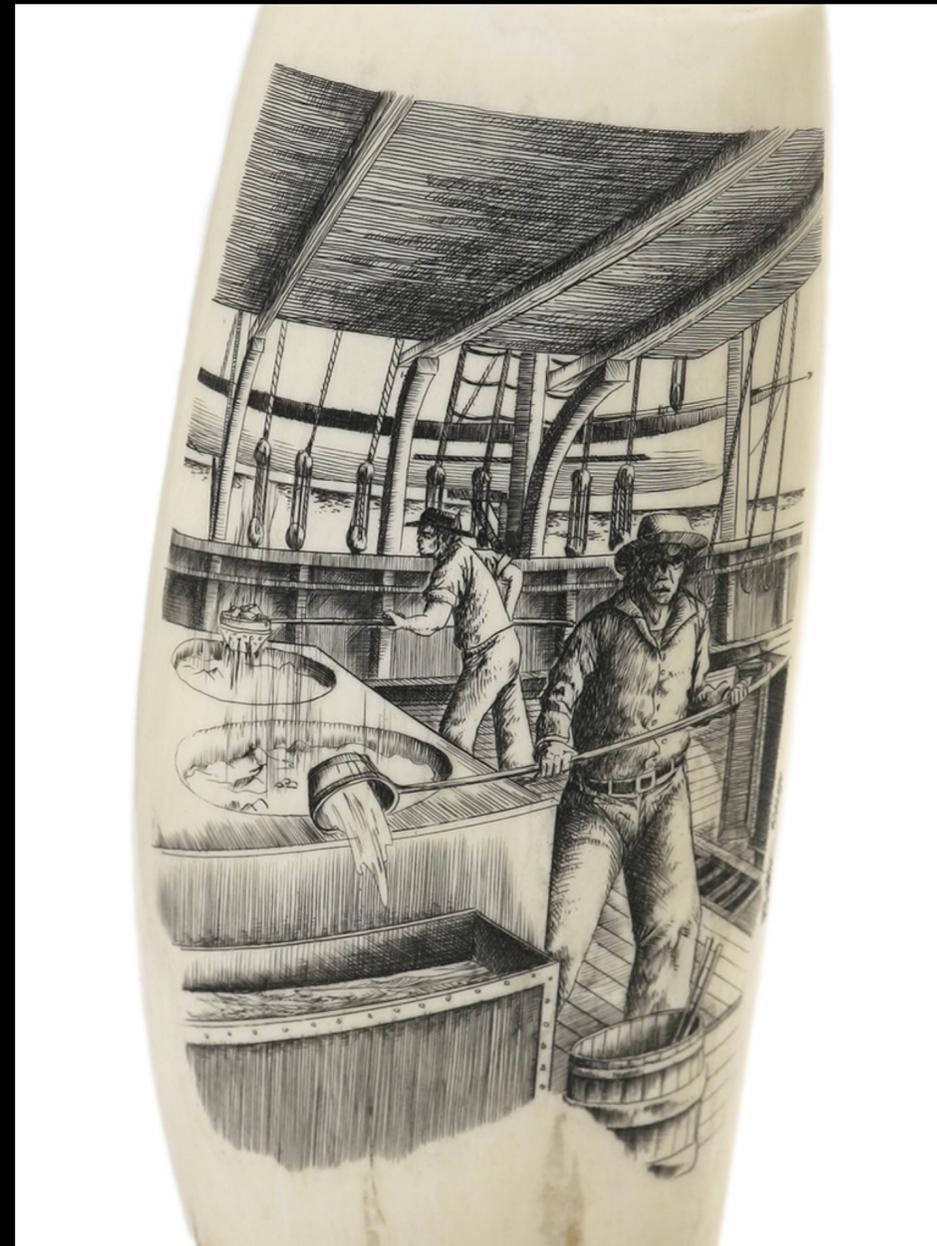
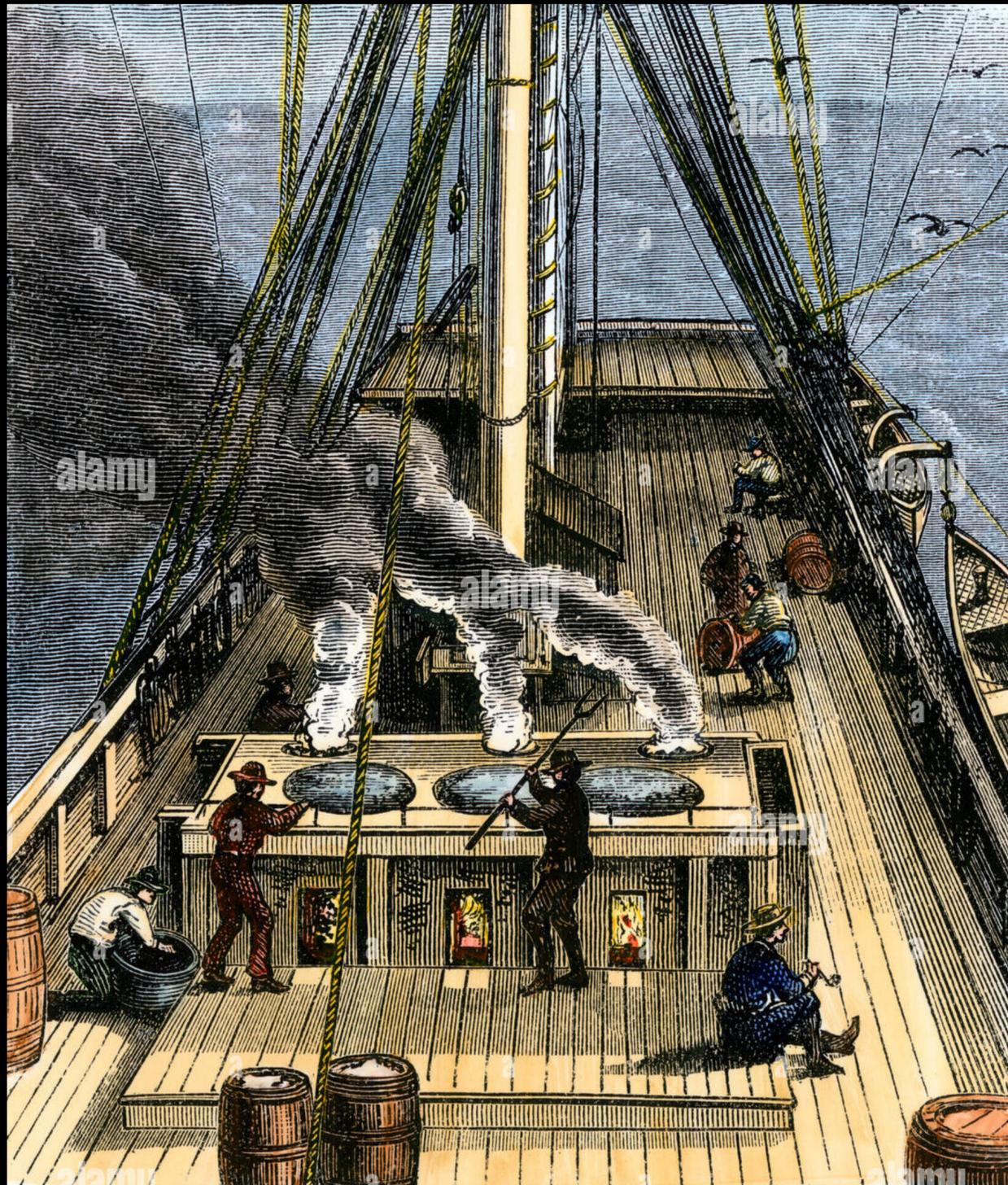


BAILING CASE

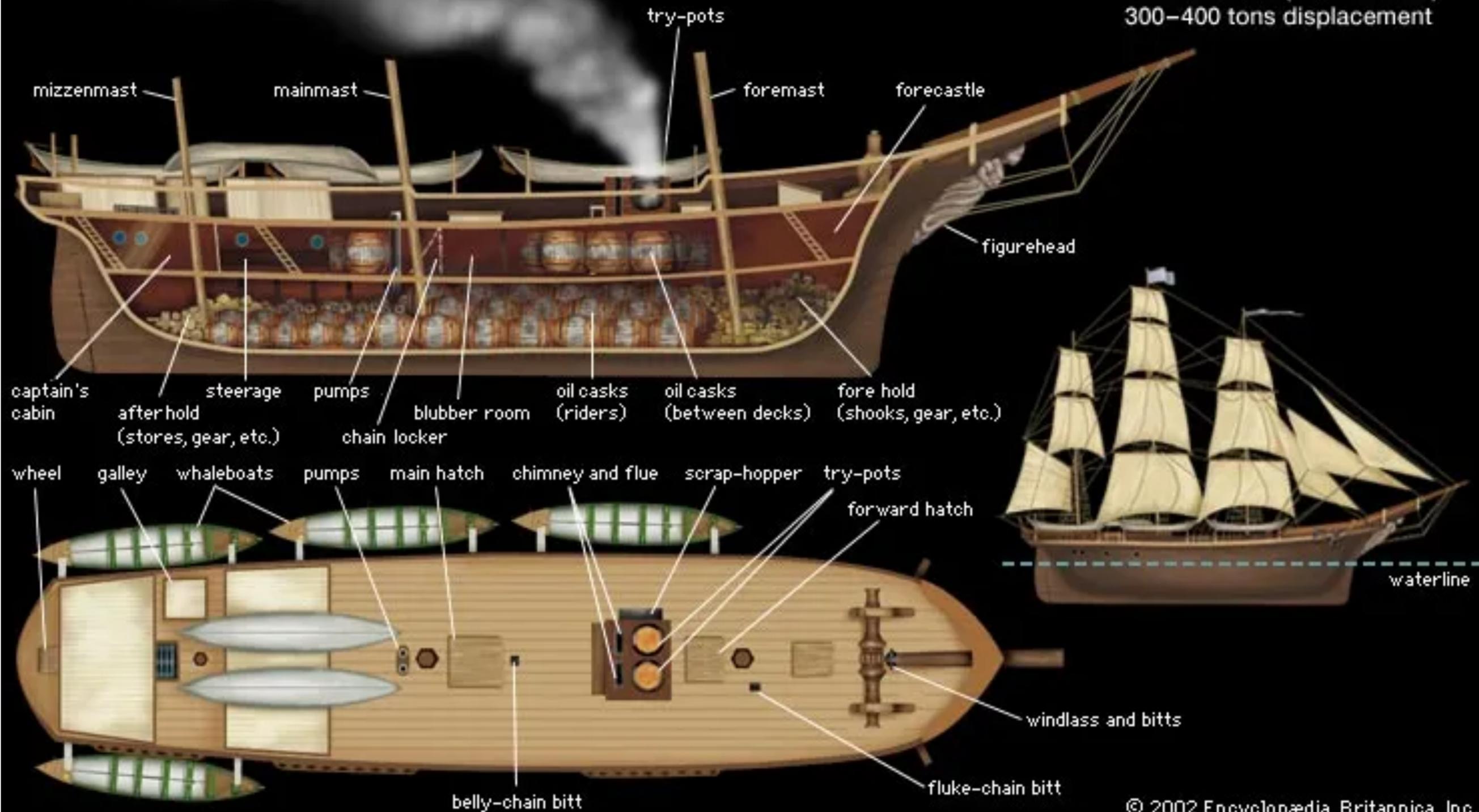


The Try-works: A. Trypots, B. Flues, C. Iron sheathing, D. Fire door, E. Fire brick, F. Troughs filled with water protect decks from the heat of the hearth.

Ch 96: The Try-Works



early 19th-century whaler
30–45 metres (100–150 feet)
300–400 tons displacement



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Take Aways?