



# *Moby-Dick*

ECL 522: American Lit 1800-1860

Professor Jessica Pressman

Fall 2025

Day 21: Chapters 110-132

# Peer Review

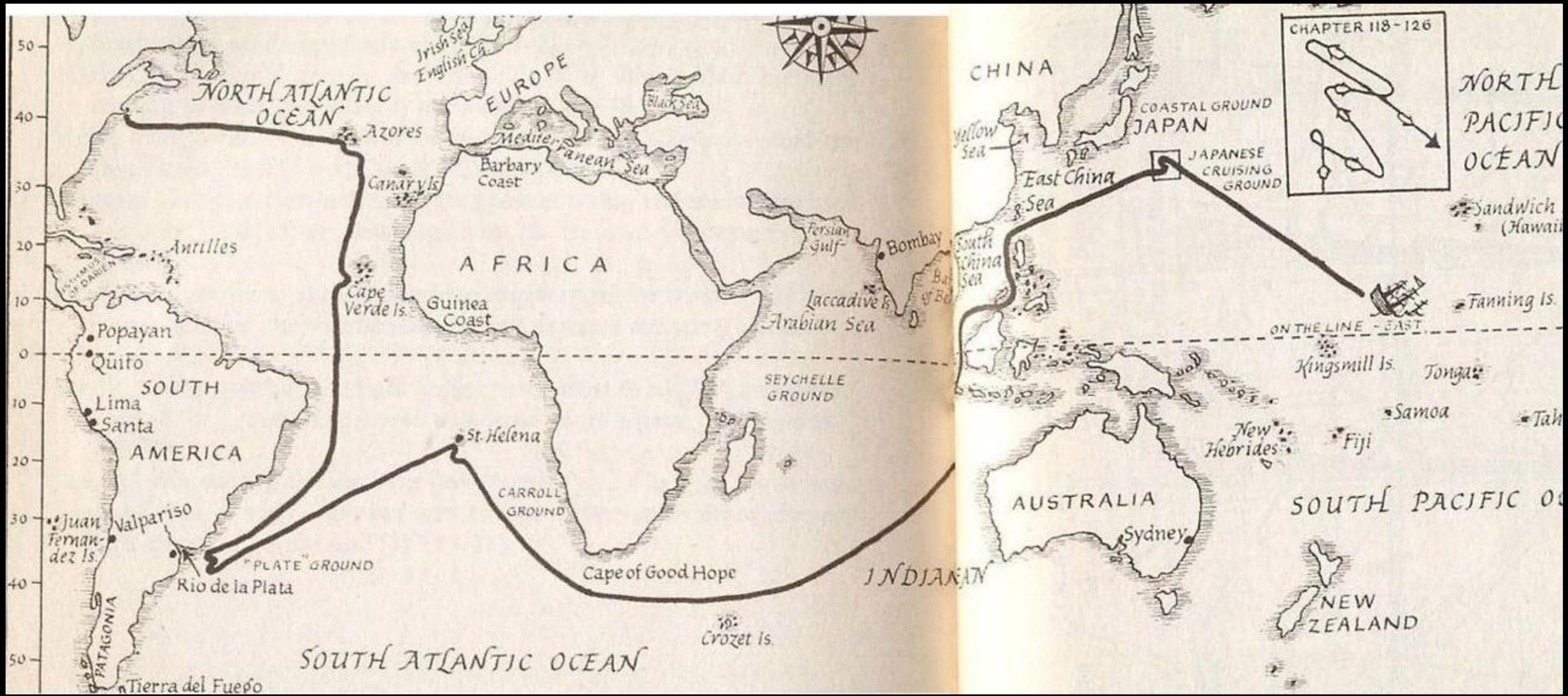
- WHAT do you see?
- WHERE do you see it?
- SO WHAT

# ADMIN

- REVISED ESSAY 1 — graded and grades sent by email. Let me know if you did NOT receive an email for a revision grade.
- Essay 2—due on Sunday 11/16
- SUGGESTIONS— have someone read your essay, for writing and grammar and clarity.

# Discussion

- How now, dear mateys?



# From your blogs- the need for mutiny and other offramps

- **ASHLEY:** If it was a mutiny story, the ship would be saved, everyone would live (well maybe not Ahab) and it would be a happy ending. A happy ending that may not even be equated with American systems. But being made aware of an account, that after a continued lack of intervention, leads to the doom of a perceived nation-state, forces Americans to recognize their current state of affairs. In this case murder justifies murder. If the war on slavery was going to be ignored, this ship we call America was doomed to capsize.
- **OMAR:** When Ahab smashes the quadrant, he is fighting against the order of the universe itself. He will not let anything measure, guide, or limit him, not the stars, not God, not even the truth. In this moment, Melville makes Ahab a symbol of human pride: someone so obsessed with control that he destroys the very things that could have kept him safe.

# Ch. 113: The Forge



# From your blogs — Pip's laughter

- MYLO” But then Pip's ‘piteous’ laugh came in, his laugh acts as a reminder to Ahab that he is not alone, and there will always be people around him, whether he accepts them or not. You guys are probably wondering: Why is Pip's laugh important? This is because Ahab considers this ship to be melancholy, empty, and dark. It reminded Ahab of the memories when he first became a whaleman, and Pip's pitiful laugh possibly balances out the creepy vibes that the ship is having. His laugh mocked everything that this ship stands for, and Ahab loves it.

## Ch. 113: “The Forge”

Fashioned at last into an arrowy shape, and welded by Perth to the shank, the steel soon pointed the end of the iron; and as the blacksmith was about giving the barbs their final heat, prior to tempering them, he cried to Ahab to place the water-cask near.

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‘No, no — no water for that; I want it of the true death-temper. Ahoy, there! Tashtego, Queequeg, Daggoo! What say ye, pagans! Will ye give me as much blood as will cover this barb?’ holding it high up. A cluster of dark nods replied, Yes. Three punctures were made in the heathen flesh, and the White Whale’s barbs were then tempered.

25

‘Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli!’  
deliriously howled Ahab, as the malignant iron scorchingly devoured the baptismal blood. (532)

# Letter to Hawthorne (1851)

"Your letter was handed to me last night on the road going to Mr. Morewood's, and I read it there. Had I been at home, I would have sat down at once and answered it. In me divine magnanimities are spontaneous and instantaneous – catch them while you can. The world goes round, and the other side comes up. So now I can't write what I felt. But I felt pantheistic then – your heart beat in my ribs and mine in yours, and both in God's. A sense of unspeakable security is in me this moment, on account of your having understood the book. **I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb.**" (N 545)

# Ch. 118: The Quadrant



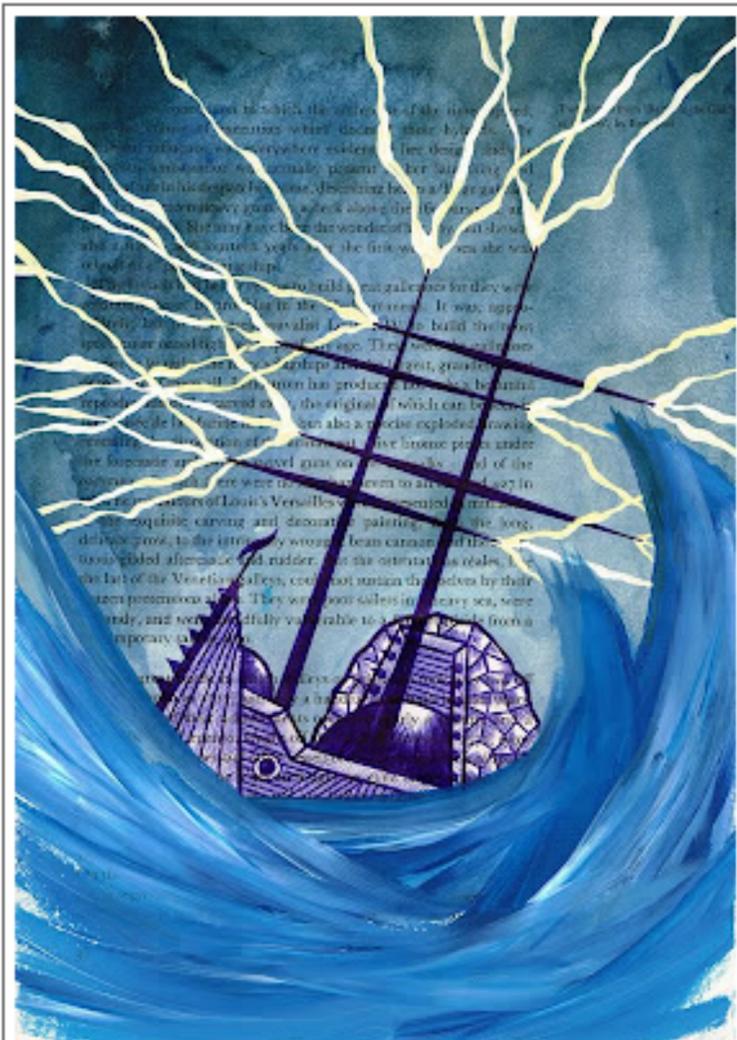
# Ch. 119 The Candles

- Matt Kish

7.5 inches by 11 inches

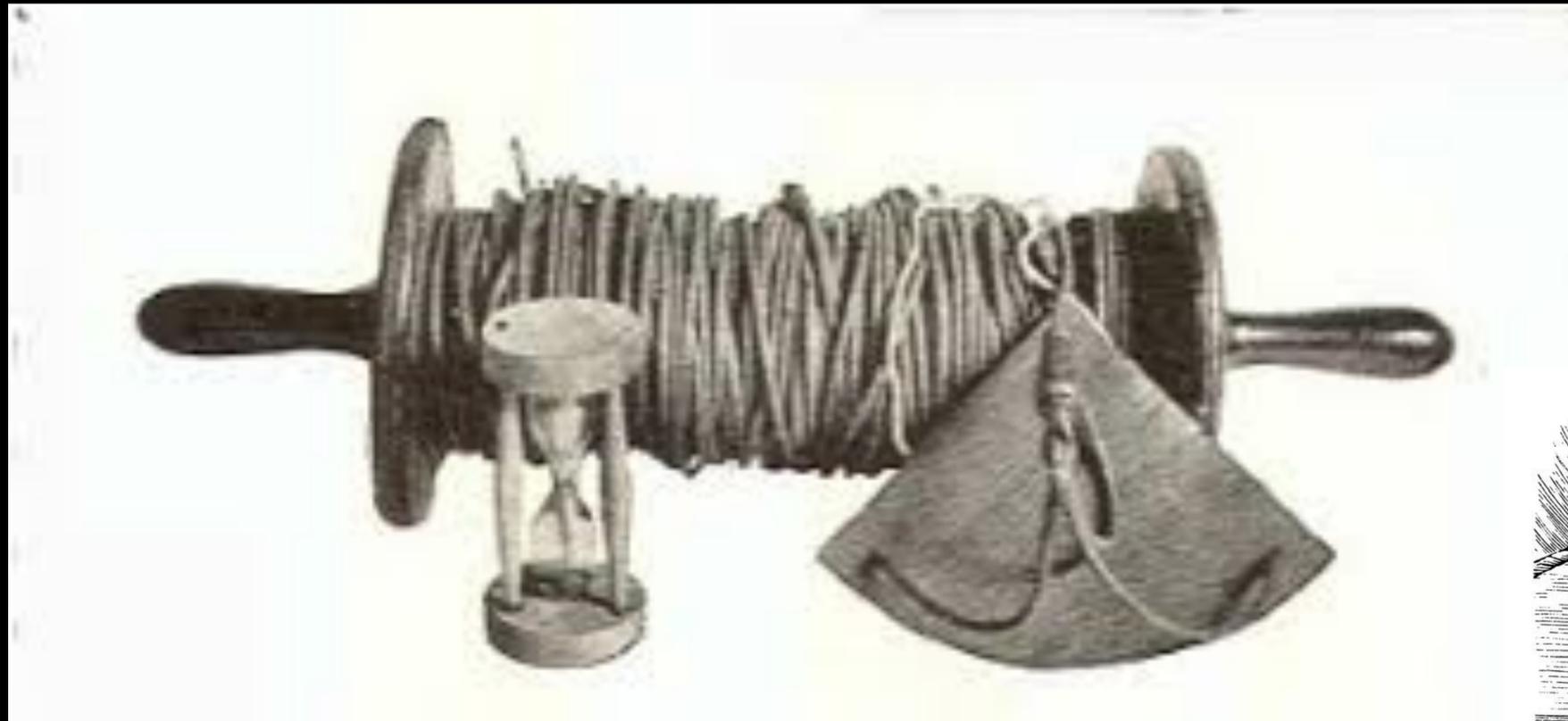
acrylic paint and ballpoint pen on found paper

December 8, 2010



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# Ch. 125: The Log and Line



SHIP LOG

# Ch. 132: “The Symphony”- Ahab & Starbuck

"Oh, Starbuck! it is a mild, mild wind, and a mild looking sky. On such a day--very much such a sweetness as this--I struck my first whale--a boy-harpooneer of eighteen! Forty--forty--forty years ago!--ago! Forty years of continual whaling! forty years of privation, and peril, and storm-time! forty years on the pitiless sea! for forty years has Ahab forsaken the peaceful land, for forty years to make war on the horrors of the deep! Aye and yes, Starbuck, out of those forty years I have not spent three ashore. When I think of this life I have led; the desolation of solitude it has been; the masoned, walled-town of a Captain's exclusiveness, which admits but small entrance to any sympathy from the green country without--oh, weariness! heaviness! ..... away, whole oceans away, from that young girl-wife I wedded past fifty, and sailed for Cape Horn the next day, leaving but one dent in my marriage pillow--wife? wife?--rather a widow with her husband alive! Aye, I widowed that poor girl when I married her, Starbuck; and then, the madness, the frenzy, the boiling blood and the smoking brow, with which, for a thousand lowerings old Ahab has furiously, foamingly chased his prey..... Behold. Oh, Starbuck!"

# Ch. 132— Ahab “averted”

But Ahab’s glance was averted; like a blighted fruit-tree he shook, and cast his last, cindered apple to the soil.

16

‘What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it; what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? But if the great sun move not of himself; but is as an errand-boy in heaven; nor one single star can revolve, but by some invisible power; how then can this one small heart beat; this one small brain think thoughts; unless God does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not I. By heaven, man, we are turned round and round in this world, like yonder windlass, and Fate is the handspike.

\*

# Is this a religious book? A wicked book?

\* Melville's letter to Hawthorne: 1851

"Your letter was handed to me last night on the road going to Mr. Morewood's, and I read it there. Had I been at home, I would have sat down at once and answered it. In me divine magnanimities are spontaneous and instantaneous – catch them while you can. The world goes round, and the other side comes up. So now I can't write what I felt. But I felt pantheistic then – your heart beat in my ribs and mine in yours, and both in God's. A sense of unspeakable security is in me this moment, on account of your having understood the book. **I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb.**" (N 545)

# Take Aways?