

"moby dick" by herman melville



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Herman Melville began working on his novel Moby Dick in 1850, intending to write a report about the whaling voyages. In Moby-Dick, the story revolves around young Ishmael. Ishmael sacrificed his life to find the whale who he lost his leg to.

He forces his men to help find Moby Dick, the Great White Whale. He is hopeless to find him, because he is hoping to get revenge. Melville's use of symbols like Moby Dick, Doubloon, and the coffin, helps the reader explore the theme of good vs evil. To do this he uses literary devices to accomplish the exploration of the theme.

In the novel Melville uses a vast amount of symbols in search for a true explanation of good vs evil, his relationship and his fate with god. One symbol Melville uses, is Moby-Dick. The white whale is associated with the theme, good vs evil. In this case he would represent evil. The whale symbolizes opposition to Ahab and mystery. The whale may represent the limits of man to control this wildness of the natural world. One example of how the author uses Moby Dick as a symbol is when he says Its a white whale I say a white whale. Skin your eyes for him, men; look sharp for white water; if ye see but a bubble, sing out.(Melville). This quote shows that the captain wanted to get revenge to the Whale. To show how Ishmael will get revenge he uses foreshadowing. This indicates how he was planning on getting revenge.

One other symbol used would be the doubloon. Ahab offers his crew members the reward of the doubloon if they spy Moby Dick. The doubloon, symbolizes the act of drawing everyone into the search of Moby Dick. By

using this coin to get everyone into finding Moby Dick, it motivates them to all help for the search of the whale. The coin represents the stable center of the ship that endangers of being destroyed. During the story, Melville shows what he uses the coin for by saying I was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer and clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul, With greedy ears I learned the history of that murderous monster against whom I and all the others had taken our oath of violence and revenge(Melville). This shows that the crew members were eager to be the one to get the coin. Melville's use of diction shows that he convinced his crew to help him get revenge on the white whale, which helps show the theme altogether.

Along with the whale and coin, another symbol would be Queequeg's coffin. This symbolizes life and death. Queequeg built the coffin when he was ill, but when he recovers, he has no use for it, so it becomes a chest to hold his belongings and an emblem of his will to live. The coffin further comes to symbolize life. By the end of the story, the coffin is what keeps Ishmael the only one alive. Melville foreshadows imminent death for Ahab employing the coffin imagery. In the novel when it says, I have forgotten to mention that, in many things, Queequeg placed great confidence in the excellence of Yojo's judgment and surprising forecast of things; and cherished Yojo with considerable esteem, as a rather good sort of god (Melville). This shows that the theme good vs evil. Melville uses allusions to show how the coffin is a good thing in the novel, because it's keeping people living.

Moby Dick is a story of adventure and determination. To sum it all up, Ahab's obsession with the white whale to get revenge fails. To show good vs evil, Melville used literary devices to show symbolism. By using the whale, doubloon, and the coffin as symbols the reader was able to explore the theme, good vs evil. Although in the novel, the focus has been shifted to the dangers of seeing things from only one point of view and to the struggle between good and evil, we are able to understand the exploration of the theme.