

Herman melville's "moby dick": the understanding of the white whale



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The perception of the white whale, Moby Dick, in Herman Melville's Moby Dick conveys a message that becomes specific to the reader. The profundity of the white whale, when taken into closer consideration, can embody several meanings that bring depth and further understanding of what the author is attempting to portray. In many cases, Melville introduces Moby Dick in such a manner that it becomes open for interpretation by the reader.

There is such an instance where the whale can represent the text itself due to its complexity and structure of which it is composed throughout the narrative. The reader can sense the feeling of frustration regarding the intricate textual structure containing several hidden meanings in relevance to the whalers' struggles for encountering the white whale and obtaining its ever so precious oil. In addition, the image of oneself can be interpreted as belonging to the white whale. This is discovered while the whalers ultimately see themselves in Moby Dick and witness the darkness of their soul within. Essentially, the significance of the white whale can denote an assorted amount of connotations and is perceived as a multivalent representation capable of exemplifying diverse symbolic implications.

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What may seem to be the simplest literary structure, the story of a journey, as seen in Melville's narrative, Moby Dick, is turned into an elaborate approach to incorporate various significant suggestions that are tied to the white whale. Melville attempts to communicate the feelings such of a man at sea hunting for the white whale and the valuable oil it possesses. The author goes at this by creating and diving into sometimes lengthy sentences that

can be found rather unclear as to how they are constructed and for extracting a sense of what he is trying to bring into the novel. Certainly, when the sense of his descriptions come forward, they become open for interpretation.

Found at the beginning, Melville starts the narrative with a simple, " Call me Ishmael." (Melville 3) this opening is short and to the point. He directly follows that with, " Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail a little and see the watery part of the world." (Melville 3). Instantly, the distinction between the two styles utilized by the author can be recognized based on the general size of the sentence. In addition to length, the use of detail is very much increased to pronounce the main idea. He goes into such detail by creating a list of features that consecutively become more minuscule in terms of how one would regularly perceive them, but significant in the form of their contribution to the style of literature. The use of this style is intended to make the audience stumble and repeat sentences just as a whaler at sea would strive to find Moby Dick and prove himself worthy.

The white whale, when mentioned in the novel, is referred, mostly, as an object that exists, but must be found and claimed for it lies within the immense sea that drives the difficulty to ultimately locate it. When " There she blows!—there she blows! A hump like a snow-hill! It is Moby Dick!" (Melville 595) is shouted from the whaling ship, the eagerness and excitement are demonstrated solely in the action of yelling it at the top of the lungs for every crew member on board to be aware that, after all the <https://assignbuster.com/herman-melvilles-moby-dick-the-understanding-of-the-white-whale/>

hunting and tracking of the white whale, it has finally been found. It gives an aspect of immediate thrill due to the distress and risk that was experienced to reach a certain point in time of spotting the white whale. The same can be said for the text in Melville's Moby Dick itself.

It is the moment when fictional Moby Dick becomes one with the physical text that creates such frustration for the reader. The white whale is embodying the text and the moment it becomes difficult to understand, or read, is that of the whaler's struggle to pinpoint Moby Dick's location in the unexplored seas of the world. When Melville seeks to produce frustration to slip or cause confusion in the reader's mind by stringing a sequence of details in the form of a list, he is defining the white whale. It represents frustration and anguish that comes along the journey of whaling. Herman Melville provides the best experience of whaling within the text as the audience attempts to find and claim Moby Dick in the hunt for the valuable meanings of his interpretations that are embodied by the white whale, Moby Dick.

The whale serves as a mirror for human nature and directly depicts the relation between man and whale. Throughout the entire narrative, the whale is perceived as evil and a beast that must be killed due to its darkness. Also, the whalers which we all know go out to sea with a passion for its oil and are too seen with a darker side, because they crave the challenge of finding the whale and take joy in its butchering. These whalers, however, don't make themselves aware of such action as being a dark or homicidal one. The act of killing the whale for its oil is seen regular for its setting in time. There is a point, nevertheless, that proves how the white whale, that is perceived as a <https://assignbuster.com/herman-melvilles-moby-dick-the-understanding-of-the-white-whale/>

killer and beast, is turned into what is a caring and loving animal, but most importantly it is seen through the eyes of the whaler, who typically sees it as evil, therefore encounters himself in the white whale and the white whale embodies the human nature.

When the whales approach, " Like household dogs they came snuffling round us, right up to our gunwales, and touching them; till it almost seemed that some spell had suddenly domesticated them. Queequeg patted their foreheads" (Melville 423), they whalers do not attack or attempt to kill them for their oil, even though they are baby whales and most likely easier to kill than a fully grown one. They do not attack because they feel empathy towards the whale. Much like Queequeg pats the whale on the head, one would pat a baby on back, because that is what these are, baby whales, seen as small relatable humans to the whalers who are not concerned with killing them at all.

When the whalers looked to the sea after having encountered the harmless baby whales they saw that " suspended in those watery vaults, floated the forms of the nursing mothers of the whales, and those that by their enormous girth seemed shortly to become mothers. The lake, as I have hinted, was to a considerable depth exceedingly transparent; and as human infants while suckling will calmly and fixedly gaze away from the breast, as if leading two different lives at the time; and while yet drawing mortal nourishment be still spiritually feasting upon some unearthly reminiscence;— even so did the young of these whales seem looking up towards us; but not at us, as if we were but a bit of Gulf-weed in their new-born sight." (Melville 423). Melville notes that a baby whale will gaze and stare, even with its <https://assignbuster.com/herman-melvilles-moby-dick-the-understanding-of-the-white-whale/>

newborn eyesight, just as a human baby will look up in search for another pair of eyes to stare into. The pregnant whales are compared to women expecting soon to be mothers and gives a great deal of sense to just how similar the great beast, known as the whale, is to oneself because it is an equal representation of human nature. The instant the whale is interpreted as the human, the whale embodies the human and therefore the symbol of purity and evil intertwine to create a new purpose.

The protagonist and antagonist have now almost completely changed positions where the evil of the whale and the horrible speculation that comes along with it can be seen with oneself. The whaler can reflect into himself and see the dark and gruesome work that he has done for the treasure that they claim to be the oil of the well-known sperm whale by traveling across the sea, but in that moment of him gazing into the eyes of the baby whale, he sees the light of the innocent within where he finds that there lies no corruption and decides not to inflict pain because it is pure and unmarked by the evil actions of the whaler. In a certain manner, the whaler finds himself within that baby whale because he considers himself pure and virtuous in comparison to the wicked Moby Dick. The concept of human nature includes that humans are known to be well civilized and act rationally unlike wild animals.

The whale, typically known as the immoral figure in the narrative, is changed here because it is replaced with the characteristics of the whaler which is seen as the complete opposite and the same is said for the whaler. If the whaler sees himself in the whale, that signifies that he truly has a dark soul while the whale embodies a counterfeit sort of purity that is interpreted by <https://assignbuster.com/herman-melvilles-moby-dick-the-understanding-of-the-white-whale/>

the whaler himself in the result of his ignorance and supposed absence of wickedness. The whaler is attempting to escape his darkness and the author, Herman Melville, is giving him a fake sense of purity by allowing the innocent whale to become the symbol of the whaler

The whale in Melville's Moby Dick is a powerful representation of a symbol that can efficiently possess numerous possible interpretations as long as the reader is willing and able to produce them throughout the text. The white whale can be interpreted as, the text, Moby Dick itself and it can embody the mirror of oneself. These are solely a couple of examples for the interpretations of the whale that have been demonstrated. Melville's inclusion of compact details packed within large sentences and, in contrast, short sentences with very direct messages entail the embodiment of the text itself in the white whale known as Moby Dick. When mirroring oneself into the whale, Melville uses the affection of love, which is the most human-like remark that could be used in the sense of nursing mothers for a comparison between the loving human as we know it and the despicable Moby Dick. Ultimately, Moby Dick's white whale, when made possible by the reader, can be interpreted in a constant amount of appearances that are clear enough for the audience to decide exactly which form is suitable for their understanding in the connotation of, Moby Dick, the white whale.