Teacher Guidebook

MOBY DICK

presented by THEATER TRIEBWERK
For over 130 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our area has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are strongly committed to is the education of our students. We are proud to support TPAC’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee Program. What an important sponsorship this is — reaching over 25,000 students and teachers — some students would never see a performing arts production without this program. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

Thank you, teachers, for giving your students this wonderful opportunity. They will certainly enjoy the experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.

Jim Schmitz
Executive Vice President, Area Executive
Middle Tennessee Area
Dear Teachers ~

Theater Triebwerk re-imagines and revitalizes the ancient art of storytelling in this brilliant work of narrative theater. With minimalist design elements and highly creative staging, the sea and ship surround the audience. Three actors play multiple roles, populating the play with Melville’s larger-than-life personalities. Two of those same performers are musicians who play the double bass and cello, evoking and illuminating the powerful emotions and environment.

Theater Triebwerk has graciously allowed us to use excerpts from their excellent guidebook. We have also included activities and a plot summary of the play in order that you may compare it to the novel. We ask that you do not give away the ending if your students don’t already know it.

Students will notice the German accents of the cast. We love that an American classic has been adapted by a German company. It confirms the universality and longevity of Moby Dick.

Enjoy the show!

TPAC Education
Main Characters - in order of appearance

Ishmael - the narrator, and a junior member of the crew of the Pequod
Peleg - a captain himself, one of the principal owners of the Pequod
Bildad - an ex-whaleman who also owns a large share of the Pequod
Peter Coffin - an innkeeper
Queequeg - a skilled harpooner who becomes Ishmael’s friend, he was once a prince from a South Sea island who stowed away on a whaling ship to see the world
Elias - a cryptic prophet
Stubb - the second mate of the Pequod
Starbuck - the first mate of the Pequod who questions Ahab’s judgment
Ahab - the egomaniacal captain of the Pequod.
Moby Dick - the great white sperm whale

The actors also occasionally drop character and speak as themselves.

Why Whaling?
Students may understand some of the themes of Moby Dick easier than they will understand the background of the story - the whaling industry. The opening lines of the play (at left) may help them connect to the essential reasons why whaling became a central arena of commerce in previous centuries. Sperm whale oil was not the only fuel for lamps, but it was one of the most sought-after, as it burned clean with a pleasant fragrance.

Ishmael:
Have you ever sat on a floating coffin in the middle of the Pacific Ocean? I have.
All sails set, we’d been sailing our whaler for a year and a half. Hunting whales all the while. (he produces an oil lamp.)
We were after their oil. Oil for lamps like this. Not many people know this now, but before electricity and electric light, everything – homes, streets, factories – was lit by oil lamps.
And before the discovery of crude oil, the oil people used was nothing other than sperm oil, oil from the whale. Without the whales there wouldn’t have been any light at night.
No light at night.
For light, the whale was hunted across all the oceans. That’s what this story is all about.
Scenes from the Play

Theater Triebwerk Adaptation of Moby Dick

Teachers, this summary is not to share with your students, but for your use in preparing them.

1 – Ishmael
We meet Ishmael and learn why whaling mattered in the culture and economy.

2 – Signing up with the Pequod
We meet Peleg and Bildad, owners who describe their ship, the Pequod. Ishmael signs on.

3 – At the Inn with Queequeg
We meet Queequeg. He and Ishmael begin a friendship, and Queequeg takes Ishmael under his wing.

4 – The Prophecy
The crew boards the Pequod. Elias warns of disaster for the upcoming voyage – claiming only one will survive.

5 – Departure
We meet Stubb and Starbuck. The Pequod sets sail.

6 – Lookout and Ocean
Ishmael discovers life on board ship, especially as the lookout from the crow’s nest.

7 – Lower Deck
We learn about life below deck and a great deal about whales through the device of a card game. We hear Ahab walking the deck above, back and forth, over and over.

8 – Ahab
We finally meet Ahab. The actor playing Ishmael slowly transforms into Ahab. The charismatic Ahab whips the crew into a frenzy of loyalty and shared obsession about Moby Dick.

9 – Whale Hunt
The Pequod’s first whale hunt of this voyage. Ishmael narrates a vivid picture of the hunt while the other two actors become Stubb and Starbuck, each taking a boat, using their instruments as active symbols of the boats.

10 – Flensing
After the whale hunt, the crew processes the parts of the whale for storage and eventual sale.

11 – The Cabin
Captain Ahab and Starbuck converse about their next course of action. Starbuck urges Ahab to honor the owners and their commercial purpose for the voyage. Ahab only cares to kill Moby Dick.

12 – Around the World
The Pequod sails south around the Atlantic and around Africa’s Cape Horn, the gateway to the Pacific.

13 – Whale Paradise
The Pequod sails into a pod of hundreds of whales. They launch Stubb’s boat to pursue, and they come across mothers and babies. The sailors are in awe: some wanting to enjoy the sight and some wanting to hunt.

14 – An End to the Whaling
Because none of the whales is Moby Dick, Starbuck follows Ahab’s command and orders the crew to move on without a kill. Stubb resists strongly.

15 – Queequeg and Mutiny
The Pequod hits dead calm in the ocean with no current and no wind. Queequeg, distressed by the absence of whaling, decides to stop eating and wills himself to die. At his request, they build him a waterproof coffin. Eventually, Ahab orders the sailors to take to the boats and tow the Pequod. They row for days until they find wind again. Starbuck proposes mutiny. Stubb is not convinced.

16 – The Rachel
The Pequod meets another ship. Its captain begs Ahab to help search for his son, lost on one of their whaling boats after an attack by a white whale. Ahab refuses, monomaniacally focused on pursuing Moby Dick.

19 – Harmony
Ahab searches his soul for his own motivations. Starbuck is tempted to kill Ahab to save the crew, but he cannot.

20 – The End
Queequeg smells land and remembers Elias’ prophecy of disaster at the scent of land where there is none. They sight Moby Dick. The crew attacks; the whale attacks, and Ishmael is left alone floating in Queequeg’s coffin on the Pacific Ocean.
Theater Triebwerk was set up in 1995 as a narrative theatre group in Hamburg. The group is a community of self-employed theatre-makers who come together to work on projects, to draft concepts, and to prepare productions. Theater Triebwerk does not have its own performance venue.

Theater Triebwerk’s productions are targeted primarily at children, but are also made for young people and adults. Focal areas in common with all their work are the use of live stage music as a theatrical element, an interest in bringing narrative theatre to life, and the space they make for improvisation and discovery of the linguistic, musical and choreographic elements.

Theater Triebwerk’s narrative theatre takes a very musical approach. In its work, the collective tries to discover the energies that are created when human organs of perception influence one another. They see theatre productions and performances in their entirety as musical events. Thus, music is not only a means to create moods and atmospheres, but becomes a third narrator, on an equal footing with the text and the acting.

www.theater-triebwerk.de/wordpress/en/
Did you know?

Herman Melville, the author of the novel, *Moby Dick*, on which the play is based, was a sailor himself. His books used the firsthand knowledge he gained serving on a merchant ship and then on two whaling ships, both of which he deserted.

Did you know?

The whale, *Moby Dick*, may be based on a specific animal that actually lived. Whalers called it Mocha Dick. Mocha survived more than 100 encounters with whalers between 1810 and the 1830s. “This renowned monster, who had come off victorious in a hundred fights with his pursuers, was an old bull whale, of prodigious size and strength. From the effect of age, or more probably from a freak of nature... a singular consequence had resulted – he was white as wool!”


Did you know?

*Moby Dick* is based on real events? Aside from Melville’s own experiences on the whaling ship *Acushnet*, he may have been inspired by the sinking of a Nantucket whaling ship called the *Essex* in 1820 (allegedly rammed by an enraged sperm whale) and an article by Jeremiah N. Reynolds that appeared in the *Knickerbocker* in May of 1839 describing a sea captain obsessed with hunting a legendary white whale.

With thanks to the Theater Triebwerk guidebook

Did you know?

The real-life tragedy of the *Essex* and the fictional story of *Moby Dick* continue to be told not only through theatre, but in film as well. As recently as December 2015, *In the Heart of the Sea*, directed by Ron Howard and starring Chris Hemsworth, was playing in movie theaters. It begins the story of the *Essex* with the character of Herman Melville asking about the tale from the lone survivor.

Theater Triebwerk Team

Book:
Erik Schäffler + Thomas Bammer
Uwe Schade + Heino Sellehorn

Lyrics: Heino Sellhorn
Direction: Erik Schäffler
Set Design: Zazie Knepper
Composition: Uwe Schade + Heino Sellehorn
Translation into English: Karen Waloschek
Helpful Websites


- [www.girlonawhaleship.org](www.girlonawhaleship.org) ~ The amazing journals of Laura Jernegan, who sailed on a whaling ship with her family in 1868.


- [www.americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/3_7.html](www.americanhistory.si.edu/onthewater/exhibition/3_7.html) ~ The terrific Smithsonian website to accompany their exhibit, “On the Water.”


Books on Whales & Whaling

Grade 4 - 8 (recommended from the Theater Triebwerk guidebook)

- Black Hands, White Sails (Coretta Scot King, Scholastic Press, 1999)
- Whale Port (Mark and Gerald Foster, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2007)
- Whales in American History (Norman D. Graubart, Powerkids Pr, 2014)
- Canadian Flyer Adventures #8, A Whale Tale (Frieda Wishinsky, Owlkids Books, 2008)
- Thar She Blows: American Whaling in the Nineteenth Century (Stephen Currie, Lerner Publishing Group, 2001)
- Whale Ships and Whaling: A Pictorial History (George Francis Dow, Dover Publications, 2012)

Grade 9-12 (recommended from the Theater Triebwerk guidebook)

- Petticoat Whalers: Whaling Wives at Sea, 1820-1920 (Joan Druett, UPNE, 2001)
- In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex (Nathaniel Philbrick, Penguin Book, 2001)
- The Yankee Whaler (Clifford W. Ashley, Dover Publications, 2014)
- The Whaler (Steve Roach, 2011)
- Harpoon: Into the Heart of Whaling (Andrew Darby, Da Capo Press, 2009)
Minimalism in the arts, including theater, is a movement from the 1960s that focuses on simplicity of design, form, and content choices. The design aspects of production especially are pared down to what the artists consider to be essential. The set, costumes, and props in Triebwerk’s *Moby Dick* are excellent examples of a minimalist approach to design.

Three poles, corresponding to the three masts on the *Pequod*, form the set. The three actors each play more than one character, using a costume or prop element when they switch characters – not entire costume changes. The rest of the character transformations are achieved with terrific acting. A trunk that a sailor might take onboard ship to hold his few belongings is also a repository for these simple costume pieces and props. At times it becomes different parts of the ship, such as a bunk in the crowded crew’s quarters below the deck. Many props aren’t there at all; for example, when Queequeg demonstrates his prowess with a harpoon, he pantomimes it by creating the action of throwing a harpoon without using a real one. Neither are there ropes for Ishmael to climb to the crow’s nest – he convinces us with his actions and emotional expressions that he is climbing very high to the crow’s nest (the observation platform on the highest mast).

There are only two instruments, not a full orchestra, and both the cello and the double bass become individual whaling boats. Realistic characters and the credibility of set and props are all powered in the minds of the audience as they visualize the action of the story. Minimalism in theater requires the audience to fully participate with their imaginations, guided by the actors’ vocal and physical choices and the director’s staging. The actors consistently behave as if all of it: the sea, the ship, the whale - is really there – and we believe it’s there because they do!

### Short Exploration: Innovative Staging

- Ask groups of students to set a scene with creative and minimalist staging for a story. They will not be acting out a full tale, but merely the first line.
- Ask them to think of how to capture that first line in a representational way before, during or after it is said. Use the following line as an example:
  
  “Once in the shadow of high, snow-covered mountains...”

- One choice might be to draw triangles on the board for mountains. Another might be to use some object in the room as a prop, perhaps open binder notebooks with edges on the desk and spines to the ceiling. Students might have several people in the group stand up and place their arms over their heads with fingertips touching to make mountain shapes. How would students represent the snow on the mountains?
- The trick is to challenge students to come up with three-to-five solutions very quickly that give a visual reference and share one. Some of their choices can be completely silly, as long as they reference that first line in some way. The activity should be fun, with no “wrong answers.” Teachers will find those two elements will free up student creativity.
- Afterwards, discuss the effectiveness of these techniques. Do they engage the viewer? Do they set a mood for the story? Was it hard to choose only one to perform?

More first lines to work with:

*Once in a deep, dark cavern...*  
*Far away from Earth on a tiny planet...*  
*Walking along a sunny, forest trail...*  
*In a secluded stone cottage, covered in moss...*  
*Sailing through a vicious storm on the ocean...*  
*Traveling across the vast, dry desert...*
What does a soundscape add to storytelling?

Objectives: Students will explore enhancing the mood, atmosphere, and creating an environment for a play by adding elements of sound to the performance of a short scene from the script of *Moby Dick*.

Materials needed:
Copies of the text, instructions for each small group (on the next page,) an assortment of “found sound” instruments: anything in the room with which it is appropriate to make sounds in the students’ performances. Also think about using percussion and other easily transported instruments if they are available.

Teacher Tip: All five groups will be working with the same text from *Moby Dick* so that they can compare, contrast, and discuss the different choices made by each group. It will be helpful if the groups can move away from each other to create and rehearse.

Share with Students:
A soundscape is an atmosphere or environment for a theatrical scene created by using sounds of all kinds. The performers of Theater Triebwerk use music and sound as much as words to tell the story of *Moby Dick*. They not only play melodies on the bass and cello, they also add to the atmosphere, environment, or mood of a scene by making the sounds of the ship, the sea – and even sounds to represent the emotions of the characters. They also make non-verbal sounds and sound effects with their voices and with their bodies – things like snapping fingers, stamping feet, and creating the “whoosh” of a harpoon. All of this creates a soundscape that is an integral part of their storytelling.

Step One:
Ask students to stand and take three deep breaths. Have them explore simultaneously the different choices they can make with their voices, pushing the limits as far as possible: high and low; loud and soft; short, sharp sounds; long, connected sounds; very fast and very slow sounds. Experiment with vocal textures: raspy, yelling, nasal, rough, smooth, lilting, whooshing.

Step Two:
Ask students to explore sounds they can make with their bodies – snapping fingers, stamping feet, slapping their legs, clapping, clicking tongues, smacking lips. Ask them to make a variety of sounds with the objects around them: pencils on chairs, crumpling paper, thumping desks.

Step Three:
Divide students into small groups and hand out the “Soundscape Instructions” on the next page. Read through the instructions and the text together, checking for comprehension. Allow students time to create and rehearse a first draft of their soundscapes. When the work is well established, make the instruments available to students, asking one student from each group to choose several instruments. Incorporate these into the soundscapes.

Step Four:
Share, compare, and contrast. Each group will perform the lines with their soundscape for the rest of the class. Ask students in the “audience” to look for the choices made by the performing group: where and when did they use voices, instruments, and other sounds? After each performance, briefly discuss what students most noticed about it. Make notes on the board or chart paper. After all have performed, compare and contrast the performance choices of the different groups.
Soundscape Instructions

The Story So Far...
The ship, the _Pequod_, has found its first whales. Two small boats, rowed by six men each, are launched from the ship and approach the huge whale. In each boat, a leader tells the rest what to do and the harpooner stands ready to harpoon the whale. They row right up to the whale and pierce it.

Create the scene and the soundscape:
• One or more students will read the lines (you may take turns).
• Everyone else creates the soundscape.
  • First, create the sounds of what’s actually going on in the scene.
  • Add additional sounds (instruments, voices, bodies, “found sound” instruments) that express the mood and tone of the lines.
  • Don’t forget to add places of silence for dramatic impact. Silence has its own kind of sound, too.
• You may or may not act out parts of the scene. Remember that in addition to the actor(s) reading the lines, the men in the boat are probably making sounds, too, as they work and as they express the emotions they are feeling. Imagine being that close to an actual whale; it would be both exciting and terrifying.

Create your soundscape for the following lines. Perform the lines and the soundscape together. The last two lines are disturbing, but they are an important part of the story, and true to life as it was then. Nevertheless, you may leave them out if you prefer.

  The line is fast!  A huge jolt!
  The whale runs away with us in tow.
  It throws us up, then down into a trough, up on the other side – we slam down!
  The men hold on with all their might, trying not to go overboard.
  We fly over the crests of the waves!
  All the men pull the line in. We’re coming closer and closer to the whale’s huge, black flank.
  I can feel the steam coming from his breathing hole.
  One man raises his lance, and jabs…stabs…and stabs…fountains of blood.
  The whale is blowing blood.
Lesson Two: Stories Come Alive

How do stories come to life with facial expressions, body language, and pantomime?

Objectives: Students will explore facial expression, body language, and pantomime as vital parts of the storyteller’s toolbox. They will create a short, pantomimed vignettes through improvisation, acting out emotions, and actions without words. Each exploration may stand alone, but all three together will have more impact.

Share with Students: The actors in Theater Triebwerk create highly energetic, narrative storytelling, through the precise and expressive use of their faces and bodies. They play multiple characters by changing their physicality for each one. They act out the story, when they are narrating as well as when they become the different characters. They express different emotions clearly through facial expressions and body language. In keeping with the minimalist approach to staging, they pantomime many actions.

Tell students that they are going to explore choices they can make with their bodies and faces to convey information without words.

EXPLORATION ONE:
Physical Range

Divide the class into two groups. Ask the first group to move across the floor at their normal walking pace and then to make some alterations. As they walk, ask them try the following:

• Stretch as high as they can, then get their bodies as low as they can.
• Walk in straight lines and angles on the floor while making lines and angles with your body.
• Walk in spirals and loops on the floor while making spirals and loops with their bodies.

Ask the second group to try the following:

• Walk very slowly, and then very fast.
• Walk with tight, intense, contracted movements.
• Walk with loose, flowing, free movements.

Discuss what the students noticed, both the watchers and the walkers, about the different manners of walking, and which type movements they might choose for specific characters from Moby Dick.

EXPLORATION TWO:
Emotional Expression

• Ask all students to move across the floor at their normal walking pace and then to FREEZE and turn toward you. Explain that you are going to call out different emotions one at a time, and then say “Go!” Start with things like: angry, happy, sad, disgusted, fearful, terrified, excited, playful, disdainful, horrified, exhausted, curious, or any other emotions from Moby Dick, a piece of literature you are studying, or from everyday life.
Lesson Two: Stories Come Alive

- When you say “Go!” students will quickly improvise a frozen statue that expresses that emotion with their faces and whole bodies.
- As students are frozen, give them feedback by describing the choices you see in how they are using their faces and bodies to express that emotion. Ask them to make a small and significant adjustment as they are frozen in the emotion.
- Encourage them to picture specifically what they see, that you do not, that has caused the emotion. They must use their imagination and concentrate on the image they see in their mind.
- Challenge them to make you believe they “see” that something, and give them feedback on the difference from their first freeze. It also helps to figure out where in the room this imaginary vision resides (far away, close-up, up high, down low, to the left or right?)

EXPLORATION THREE: Imaginary Objects

- Next, have them pantomime some familiar actions that use everyday objects. Start with things like eating breakfast, throwing a ball, shoveling snow, or writing on the board.
- Encourage specificity in pantomime. Tell them to imagine that they are actually holding an object in their hands. As they pantomime using the object, tell them to feel the shape, the weight, and the texture of it. Discover what they have to do – precisely – to convey this information to the audience.
- You might also include some actions from Moby Dick (rowing a boat, throwing a harpoon, climbing a rope ladder to the crow’s nest on the top of the main mast) or from another piece of literature that you are studying.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER:

- Divide students into small groups.
- Ask them to choose one walk, one emotion freeze and one object pantomime to combine together in any order to create a short scene. The one requirement is to make the audience believe it, to “see” what the performers are seeing.
- Invite the rest of the class to make, as the audience, helpful observations about the performers’ choices.

What did students observe?
What guesses can they make about these characters?
What do they think happened just before the short performance?
**ABOUT THE NOVEL**

**THE AUTHOR**

**Herman Melville** (1819-1891) was one of eight children born to Allan and Maria Gansevoort Melville in New York City. In 1839, Melville took his first sea voyage as a crewmember of the St Lawrence – a merchant ship which sailed from New York City to Liverpool. This experience informed Melville's fourth book *Redburn: His First Voyage* (1849). In 1841, worked as a crewmember on a whaling ship the Acushnet. He stayed on the Acushnet for 18 months before deserting ship with a shipmate in the Marquesas Islands. His adventures aboard the Acushnet and among a Polynesian tribe – the Typees – are described in Melville's first novel *Typee* (1846). Melville left the Typees aboard another whaling ship only to desert that ship in Tahiti. Melville used his time exploring Tahiti and Moorea as inspiration for his novel *Omoo* (1847).

Melville eventually found his way back to the United States in October 1844. Inspired by his sea adventures, he became one of the most popular writers of his time. Aside from the popular success of *Typee, Omoo*, and *Redburn*, Melville also wrote *Mardi* (1849) and *White-Jacket* (1850). Melville wrote *Moby Dick* (originally called *The Whale*) in 1851 and changed the direction of the book after meeting **Nathaniel Hawthorne**. The two became fast friends and Hawthorne inspired Melville to turn *The Whale* from a lighthearted whaling adventure into the dark masterpiece it is today. Melville dedicated *Moby Dick* to Hawthorne – “In token of my admiration for his genius, this book is inscribed to Nathaniel Hawthorne.”

*Moby Dick*, however, was a commercial failure. The novel was either ignored or misunderstood by critics and readers and marked the decline of Melville's popularity. Interestingly, Melville and Hawthorne's friendship cooled in 1852 after the failure of *Moby Dick*. Melville made several other writing attempts including short stories and the novels *Israel Potter* and *The Confidence-Man* (1856) but with little success. Melville gave up writing after *The Confidence-Man* and worked as a customs inspector.

After his death in 1891, the manuscript *Billy Bud Sailor* was published in 1924 spurring a revived interest in his work. Melville was finally recognized for his literary genius in the 1940s.
ABOUT WHALES

FAST FACTS ABOUT SPERM WHALES

- Binominal Name: Physeter macrocephalus
- Other names: Leviathans
- Animal Type: Mammal
- Location: Most of the world's oceans excluding the High Arctic
- Population: Considered vulnerable due to whaling
- Size: 49 to 59 ft (15 to 18 m) with the head represent one-third of it's length.
- Weight: 35 to 45 tons (31.8 to 40.8 metric tons)
- Depth: Dive up to 3280 ft (1000 m) underwater holding its breath for up to 90 minutes.
- Lifecycle: Over 70 years
- Teeth: Largest teeth of any whale
- Social Unit: Females and young males live in groups of about 6 to 9 whales but can sometimes live in groups of up to 20
- Diet: Carnivore, eats hundreds of pounds of squid, octopus, and other fish —about one ton (907 kg) per day.
- Vocalization: Produces loud clicking sounds used to communicate and as a form of echolocation that whales use to see in the dark and to hunt
- Predators: Humans, Orca (Killer Whales), and occasionally Sharks

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sperm_whale_head_anatomy_%28transverse_%2B_sagittal%29.svg
ABOUT WHALING

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF WHALING IN AMERICA

Native American: Pacific Northwest tribes, Eastern woodland tribes used whales that washed up on the shores

Colonial Shore Whaling: 1644 – Southampton, Long Island – small boats launched into the surf when whales sighted offshore

Deep-Sea Voyages: Whales decline off coasts of Cape Cod and Nantucket in the 1720s. Sloops followed whales west of Greenland. Technological advance allowed for processing on board. Bigger sturdier ships allow for longer voyages: Schooner - smallest whaler six months; Brigs, Barks and other large ships traveled for three to four years.

Longest Known Voyage: Ship Nile reportedly whaling for eleven years between the years 1858 to 1869

Departure: American Ports such as New Bedford, Massachusetts, and Nantucket

Destinations: Bigger boats traversed the North and South Atlantic as far as Guinea in Africa, and the Arctic

Equipment: Small light whaleboats for the harpooning of whales, plus the technology for processing, storing, and preserving their catch

Processing Equipment: Tryworks: two iron pots in a brick furnace that boiled the oil. Oil was stored in casks below deck.

Peek of Whaling: 1814 through to the 1860s

Decline: Petroleum discovered in Pennsylvania 1859 and American Civil War (1861-1865) and Norwegian advances in whaling technology

DID YOU KNOW?

“Nantucket Sleigh Ride” was the term sailors used for the roller-coaster ride they experienced after harpooning a whale. It was common for harpooners to be dragged by the fleeing whale for two or three hours before tiring. Once the whale tired, it was killed, taken to the ship, cut up and its blubber boiled down for oil.
In the 18th century Sperm whales were prized by whalers for the waxy substance found in their head called Spermaceti. Spermaceti was refined into spermaceti wax or into sperm oil. Due to the waxy nature of sperm oil, it was used differently than other whale oils and highly valued. Spermaceti and its derivatives were used in cosmetics, leather working, candles, soaps, machine oils, lamp oils, pencils, crayon, leather waterproofing, rust proofing, and pharmaceutical compounds.

Baleen was also extracted from whales. Sometimes considered the “plastic of the 1800's”, it is a bone-like substance used in women's corsets, hairbrushes, buggy whips, collar stays and other products.

About one percent of Sperm whales also produced ambergris – a solid, waxy, flammable substance – highly valued by perfumers for allowing scents to last much longer. Scientists believe ambergris may be produced by the whale's gastrointestinal tract to ease that passage of hard, sharp object the whale may have eaten such as the beaks of giant squids. Ambergris can still be found in various perfumes from around the world although now it is either found at sea or washed up on beaches.

DID YOU KNOW?

Ancient Egyptians burned ambergris as incense, while in modern Egypt ambergris is used for scenting cigarettes. The ancient Chinese called the substance “dragon's spittle fragrance”. During the Black Death in Europe, people believed that carrying a ball of ambergris could help prevent them from getting the plague. This substance has also been used historically as a flavouring for food and is considered an aphrodisiac in some cultures. During the Middle Ages, Europeans used ambergris as a medication for headaches, colds, epilepsy, and other ailments.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambergris

Resources
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trywork
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baleen
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spermaceti
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambergris
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ZKnH5bkjg
http://www.eyewitnesshistory.com/whaling.htm
http://www.whalingmuseum.org/learn/research-topics/overview-of-north-american-whaling/life-aboard
**Life Aboard a Whaling Ship**

**An isolated society**
The whaleship was an isolated community that roamed the oceans of the world on journeys that lasted for years. In Etchings of a Whaling Cruise (New York, 1846), J. Ross Browne describes the crew's quarters called the forecastle, or, in sailor's parlance, the fo'c'sle:

"The forecastle was black and slimy with filth, very small and hot as an oven. It was filled with a compound of foul air, smoke, sea-chests, soap-kegs, greasy pans, tainted meat," sea-sick Americans and foreign ruffians. The ruffians were "smoking, laughing, chattering and cursing the green hands who were sick. With groans on one side, and yells, oaths, laughter and smoke on the other, it altogether did not impress [me] as a very pleasant home for the next year or two. [I was] indeed, sick and sorry enough, and heartily wish [myself] home."

- J. Ross Browne 1846

**How long is long?**
The larger a vessel, the greater distances it could travel. The whaling schooner, the smallest whaler, generally undertook 6-month voyages, while brigs, barks, and ships might be at sea for three or four years. The longest whaling voyage is believed to be that of the Ship Nile from 1858 to 1869 – eleven years!

**Men on board**
The size of the crew depended on the size of the vessel and the number of whaleboats it carried – ranging from sixteen up to at least 36 on the largest ships. These men were organized in a rigid hierarchy of officers and crew:

- The **captain** was absolute master of this strange floating world
- The **officers** – three or four mates – were next in rank, each commanding a whaleboat
- The **boatsteerers** were the harpooneers and enjoyed more privileges than the rest of the crew; the blacksmith, carpenter, cook, cooper (cask maker), and steward also ranked higher than ordinary crewmen – when the crew chased a whale, these men remained behind as shipkeepers
- The foremast hands were the ordinary crewmen

**How they were paid**
Each man received a "lay" – a percentage of the profits – instead of wages, the size depending upon his status. The captain earned the largest share, perhaps 1/8th, and the green hand (inexperienced crewman) the least, as little as 1/350th. An ordinary crewman might earn only $25 for several years work.
Earning less than nothing
The crew might receive nothing on a voyage where profits were low. Even on a profitable trip, a whaleman might end up in debt to the ship-owners. Cash advances for his family or to spend in ports of call, and any tobacco, boots, or clothes he purchased from the ship's store were charged against his lay. In debt as they sailed into home port, many men immediately signed on for another voyage.

Sleeping and eating
Meals and quarters reflected the ship's class structure:

- The captain slept in a stateroom and enjoyed a cabin with a sofa and chairs in the stern (rear) of the ship. He ate the best meals on shipboard. Ducks, pigs, and chickens were often carried in crates to provide meat for his table;
- The mates had smaller cabins in the stern and ate meals with the captain in the main cabin.
- The boatsteerers (harpooneers) and the more skilled members of the crew, such as the blacksmith and cooper, had bunks in the steerage – an irregular-shaped compartment in the middle of the ship (midship). They ate in the main cabin after the captain and mates left, usually being served the same meals, except for butter and sugar. Like ordinary hands, they used molasses to sweeten their coffee or tea.
- The foremast hands – ordinary crewmen – slept in the forecastle, a narrow triangular-shaped room under the deck in the bow (front) of the ship, in narrow bunks that lined the walls. The only seats were the men's sea chests. In fair weather, the cook's helper carried tubs of food to the deck and the crewmen ate there, retreating below deck during foul weather.

An appetite for salt horse
Although the crew's rations ranged from unpleasant to revolting, hard work gave them good appetites, even for greasy pork, hard biscuits, and cockroach-laden molasses. Other fare included "salt horse" (heavily salted beef, pork, or horse), beans, rice, or potatoes. The chance to eat something fresh was a treat. At ports of call, fresh water, fruits, and vegetables were taken aboard. Cooks became used to preparing sea turtles, dolphins, sea birds, and fish. A ship cruising off the African coast once harpooned and ate a hippopotamus.

Living with accidents, vermin, and punishment
Apart from the dangers of the hunt, life on a whaleship could be unpleasant:

- Rats, cockroaches, bedbugs, and fleas were facts of life, perhaps because of the oil and blood that were not removed from the decks by scrubbing. The men endured these creatures in their food, in their bunks, and on their bodies - Sharp-edged tools, hostile natives, and shipboard arguments led to injuries. It was usually the captain who dealt with illnesses, using limited knowledge and supplies from the medicine chest. Occasionally, a captain's wife on board would nurse ailing crewmen.
- Punishments included being "put in irons" and flogging (whipping). If a man disobeyed orders or otherwise displeased captain or mate, he suffered one or the other. The "cat-o'-nine-tails" (a whip of nine knotted lines) was often used. It was painful for the crewman who experienced it, and frightening for others to watch.
Boredom on Ship
Being aboard a whaling ship for years on end, with sometimes days and months between whale sightings, crews often spent their days employed in various duties like washing the deck or changing the number of sails on the mast. After the work of the day, crews often came on deck to socialize, read, mend clothes, and later sing and dance. Holidays and other celebrations were at the whim of the Captain. The crew would mark the day with singing, firing guns, and whaleboat races. The captain and officers would enjoy a special meal with generous captains extending these festive treats to all hands.

Whalemen would sometimes use these hours to create homecoming presents for loved ones in the form of **scrimshaw** (carvings and engravings usually on bone or ivory or other left over materials).

Meeting another whaleship on the high seas was cause for celebration. A “gam” was held where all crew members were ferried on whaleships between the ships so all crewmen could exchange news and socialize. Gams could last a day or a week with the ships eventually parting ways.

Seagoing Wives
Whaling was very much a male occupation, leaving families separated for years at a time. This changed in 1822, when Mary Hayden Russel and her young son joined her husband Captain Joseph Russell under took their first whaling voyage. Other families followed suit and scholars have identified several hundred seagoing wives. Wives washed clothes, cooked, sewed, educated children, wrote diaries, tended the sick, calmed their husbands, and occasionally called out “There she blows!”

Beginning in the 1860s, the Norwegian sealing captain-entrepreneur Svend Foyn pioneered revolutionary methods for hunting and processing whales. Instead of the rickety, old fashioned sail- and oar-powered whaleboats favored by traditional Yankee whalers, Foyn introduced mechanized, steam-powered catcher boats equipped with bow-chaser deck cannons and heavy-caliber harpoons that exploded on impact. These increased efficiency and volume, enabling the harvest not only of all of the species that had been hunted for centuries (notably, Northern and Southern right whales, sperm whales, Arctic bowheads, humpbacks, and gray whales), but also blue whales and finbacks—the largest species, which, by reason of their speed in the water, had eluded all previous hunting technologies.

The Norwegians first exploited their own coastal waters. Later, between 1904 and 1940, they established shore-whaling stations on six continents (including on the American Northwest Coast) and pioneered pelagic factory-ship expeditions to the vast, hitherto unexploited grounds of Antarctica, employing entire fleets or a dozen or more vessels for months-long voyages to high South Latitudes. Many technological innovations followed, including stern slipways on factory-ships for hauling entire carcasses aboard, integrated fleets of vessels with specialized tasks of catching, towing, processing, and bunkering, spotter aircraft and radio communications to track migrating whales, and remarkable advances in ordnance, food chemistry, and processing machinery. Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, China, Korea, Argentina, and Japan followed Norway into pelagic factory-ship whaling; two factory-ships partly owned in the United States and technically registered at Wilmington, Delaware (which had also briefly been a conventional whaling port in the 1840s), were also sent whaling in Antarctica in the 1930s.

It was this relentlessly efficient technology, and the failure of the whaling nations to adhere to protective quotas regulating the catch, that in the decades following World War II devastated several species to the point of extinction. International treaties were negotiated in the 1930s to regulate the hunt, and the International Whaling Commission was established in 1949, with an expert Scientific Committee to monitor population and abundance. However, lack of enforcement authority, inherent administrative flaws, and persistent international disputes, combined with clandestine over-fishing and under-reporting of the catch (notably by the Soviet Union), fatally weakened IWC effectiveness. In 1972 the United Nations called for a cessation of whaling and the United States Congress passed an Endangered Species Act; whale sanctuaries were declared in the 1970s and ‘80s, and a general moratorium on commercial whaling, adopted by the IWC in 1982, took effect in 1987—measures intended to protect whales from ultimate annihilation. Nevertheless, some nations have resumed limited whaling outside the jurisdiction of the IWC (taking species that are not generally considered to be critically endangered). The condition of several species—the North Atlantic right whale, the Arctic bowhead, and the Pacific blue whale—remains critical.


Resources
http://www.whalingmuseum.org/learn/research-topics/overview-of-north-american-whaling/whales-hunting#Modern
1. Captain’s Log
   Activity: Have students write and research their own captain’s log. Imagining they the captain of a whaling ship. They should consider:
   - Information about the port of departure
   - Descriptions of the people who signed on for the expedition
   - Information about where the ship will travel and why
   - Information about how the crew spends its day waiting for whale sightings

   Alternately, students can imagine they are marine biologists, naturalists or photographers instead of whalers.

2. Exploring Cetaceans and Culture
   Discussion: What do students know about cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises)? What do they think about the idea of hunting whales? Is it acceptable to kill animals for food and resources? If not whales, why chickens? What products were produced from whales? Did commercial whale products make whaling justifiable? Are their other cultures that value whales (and other animals) differently?

   Activity: Write a short essay about a product of the whaling industry. Suggest alternatives that wouldn’t involve hunting and killing whales. Alternatively, write a short essay or break into teams to engage in a controlled debate about whether people have the right to hunt and kill other animals on this planet.

   Resources
   http://iwc.int/aboriginal
   http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/conservation/issues/whaling1.htm
   http://history1800s.about.com/od/whaling/f/whaleproducts01.htm

3. A Day in the Life: A Letter from the Past
   Discussion: How has daily life changed since the 18th-19th century? What industries were prominent? What did people do for work? What did people do with their free time? How have gender roles and racial tensions changed?

   Activity: Have students write a letter to themselves – from the past! “Imagine you are your own distant relative, living in the 18th-19th centuries. Where do you live? What do you do for work? What are the working conditions? How do you spend your free time?” This is a great opportunity to discuss how gender roles have changed, and how society in general has changed. You might also task students with the option to write themselves a word of caution or warning from the past, for example: “In the future you should do a better job than we are doing right now taking care of the planet, including the animals. We’ve nearly killed all the whales, and it would be a shame if your grandchildren don’t ever to get to see one of these majestic creatures alive.”
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