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SYNOPSIS

"Call me Ishmael."

With this famous opening line, the epic story of *Moby Dick* begins.

It is the 19th century and whaling is a booming industry in New England. With little money and not much to occupy his time, **Ishmael** decides to join a whale hunting expedition. Ishmael boards the ship, *The Pequod*, believing he is embarking on a great adventure. His unlikely friend Queequeg, a Pacific Islander, is also aboard the ship to see the world before he returns home to become king.

The Pequod is captained by **Ahab**. On a previous hunt, a giant white whale known as "Moby Dick" tore off Ahab's leg. Ahab is obsessed with revenge. He swears he will find and kill the whale.

Storms batter *The Pequod* and Ahab orders the ship toward terrifying waters. The expedition is watched over by the three Fates (see article). Are Ahab and Moby Dick destined to battle one another? Or has Ahab chosen his own path by seeking the white whale? Who will survive this expedition?

"I am tormented with an everlasting itch for something. For something, something else. To push off from these 'civilized' shores. To sail on forbidden seas And land on unknown coasts."

— Ishmael

MOBY DICK

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY **DAVID CATLIN**
FROM THE BOOK BY **HERMAN MELVILLE**
A CO-PRODUCTION WITH THE **ALLIANCE THEATRE** AND **SOUTH COAST REPERTORY**



NOW PLAYING IN THE KREEGER THEATER
NOVEMBER 18 - DECEMBER 24, 2016

Illustration by Ricardo Martinez.

Moby Dick is generously sponsored by Joan and David Maxwell.

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MEET THE AUTHOR AND THE ADAPTOR



Herman Melville (1819-1891) first set sail as a cabin boy at age 20. In 1840, he went on a three-year whaling expedition. Melville was a writer before this, but his time at sea inspired his most well-known works.

His first book, *Typee*, explored his experience of being kidnapped, joining a mutiny and being jailed. This earned him a reputation for sea novels. He published *Moby Dick* when he was 32. Critics hated it.

Melville continued to write, but spent much of his life as a customs inspector. He died of a heart attack in 1891. Like many artists, his work became popular after his death.



David Catlin adapted and directed this version of *Moby Dick*. He is a founding company member of Lookingglass Theatre in Chicago. He directs throughout the country and teaches theater at Northwestern University.

DRAMATIZING A CLASSIC



Photo by Greg Mooney.

Moby Dick is hundreds of pages long – probably the thickest book in high school required reading. Lookingglass Theatre's dramatic adaptation is a 70-page script. How is that possible?

Theater specializes in showing rather than telling. Using sets, lights,

costumes, sound, physicality and ingenuity, the world the audience experiences on stage can replace pages of description. Also, Melville's extensive details of whales and the whaling industry have been cut!

Lookingglass Theatre, where the show premiered, is known for its spectacular production elements. In their most famous play, *Metamorphoses*, the majority of the stage is a swimming pool. *Moby Dick* was made in association with the Actors Gymnasium. This physical theater group is known for its circus and aerial arts skills.



Without computer technology or special effects, how would you create a storm on stage? A ship? How would you dramatize a whale hunt? Brainstorm your ideas before seeing the show.

THE FATES

The Fates are three sisters from Greek and Roman mythology, deities who decide the destiny of mortals. One sister weaves the thread of life; the next determines how long each person will live. The final sister uses her scissors to cut that thread, determining when a person dies. They are often pictured as three old crones. They are not characters in the novel *Moby Dick*, but appear in the play. As you watch the play, consider: what is fate and what is free will?



A fragment of "A Golden Thread" by John Melhuish Strudwick, 19th century.



Read the Smithsonian article "The True-Life Horror that Inspired *Moby Dick*:" <http://tinyurl.com/theesex>

SPERM WHALE FACTS

Moby Dick is an albino sperm whale. Easily recognized by their massive, block-like heads, sperm whales get their name from a waxy oil in their heads called *spermaceti*. Whalers mistakenly thought it was sperm and, though we now know it isn't, scientists still don't understand the purpose of this substance.

Sperm whales are toothed whales, though they often swallow their food whole, eating 1 ton of squid and fish per day. Sperm whales can dive almost two miles and hold their breath for up to 90 minutes on these dives.



Sperm whales measure 49-59 feet (the length of 1½ school buses) and weigh up to 45 tons (the weight of about 7 African elephants). Though they are not the largest mammal, they have the largest brains of any mammal known to ever exist on earth. Their life span is approximately 70 years.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN WHALING

Native Americans hunted whales long before the arrival of white colonists. When shore whaling became a business during colonization, Native Americans manned these dangerous hunts.

Deep-ocean whaling became a commercial enterprise for American colonists in 1712 with the first documented sperm whale kill. By 1850, the whaling town of New Bedford, Massachusetts was the richest in the country, according to PBS's *The American Experience*.

According to *National Geographic*, "whaling in the United States hit its peak in the mid-1800s. New technologies, including gun-loaded harpoons and steamships, made whalers around the world more efficient. The American whaling fleet, based on the East Coast, operated hundreds of ships in the South Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Whaling was a multi-million dollar industry, and some scientists estimate that more whales were hunted in the early 1900s than in the previous four centuries combined."

Over time, demand sharply declined for whale products. In the mid-19th century, oil was discovered in Pennsylvania, which would replace whale oil in lamps. In the early 1900s, women's fashion changed, lowering the demand for corsets and other clothing with boning. Whaling became less profitable.

Later, animal activists protested whaling as a cruel practice that endangered species of whales. With the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the United States ended commercial whaling in 1972. The International Whaling Commission declared a worldwide moratorium in 1982, but some countries, including Iceland, Norway and Japan, continue whaling.

See PBS's detailed timeline of whaling: <http://tinyurl.com/pbswhaling>.



In 1820 a whale stove (smashed a hole in) a ship, The Essex. This incident inspired *Moby Dick*.

WHALE PRODUCTS

lamp oil · corsets · hoop skirts and other fashion with boning · high-quality candles · carriage springs · perfume · soap (a byproduct of whale processing)

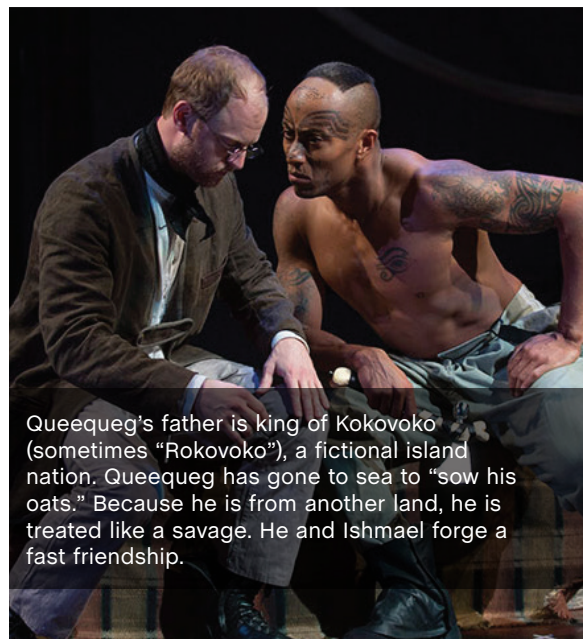


Learn more about whale products through the New Bedford Whaling Museum: <http://tinyurl.com/whaleproducts>.

VOCABULARY

Leviathan | A large sea creature, often referring to whales or sea monsters

Scrimshander | One who carves into harvested whalebone, especially 18th and 19th century whalers



Queequeg's father is king of Kokovoko (sometimes "Rokovoko"), a fictional island nation. Queequeg has gone to sea to "sow his oats." Because he is from another land, he is treated like a savage. He and Ishmael forge a fast friendship.

A WHALE HUNT

“There she blows!” A sailor would yell and the hunt was on.

According to the New Bedford Museum of Whaling, smaller rowboats were then launched into the water to find the whale. Often they could not see it. Whales have excellent hearing so whalers would have to row hard, but also keep quiet.

In his article “Stove By A Whale,” Michael R. Harrison describes a 19th century whale hunt:

“Just think about it: Men in 20-foot rowboats wielded iron spears against 70- or 80-foot whales in the middle of the vast ocean thousands of miles from home.”

Hunters drove their harpoons into the whale’s back not to kill it, but to keep it close to the boat. These weapons were attached to strong lines that could hold a whale as it thrashed in pain. When the whale was exhausted, the crew would drag it to the boat and kill it by stabbing its heart or lungs. The whale would later be processed for its valuable products.



ACTIVITY

Read a detailed description of whale hunting via the New Bedford Whale Museum:
<http://tinyurl.com/newbedfordwhale>.

JONAH AND THE WHALE

Before he leaves Nantucket, Ishmael hears Father Mapple preach about Jonah and the Whale – the other famous whale tale. In this Old Testament story, Jonah tries to flee the Lord on a ship. The Lord sends a storm and, knowing he is responsible, Jonah has his shipmates throw him into the sea. He is swallowed by a giant fish, which is often called a whale. Inside its belly, he worships the Lord, who commands the fish to spit him onto dry land, unharmed. Jonah learns he cannot escape the Lord nor does he wish to.



“Jonah and the Whale” by Pieter Lastman, 1621.

THREE BIG QUESTIONS

1

Are our lives governed by fate or choice?

2

What is the price of obsession?

3

What does the white whale symbolize?

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THEATER AUDIENCES

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience. To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes early.
- Visit the restroom before the show starts.
- Sit in the exact seat on your ticket. Ask the usher for help finding it.
- Before the show begins, turn off your phone, watch alarms and any other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, turn it off immediately.
- Do not use your phone for texts, calls, games or pictures.
- You cannot take pictures or make recordings in the theater, even before or after the play.
- There is no food allowed in the theater.
- Do not talk, whisper, sing or hum, unless invited by the performers to do so.
- Keep your feet on the floor and off the seat in front of you.
- Avoid getting up during a show. If you must leave, wait for a scene change and exit quietly and quickly.
- Respond to the show; you can laugh, cry and gasp. However, don't repeat lines out loud or talk to the performers on stage.
- Be sure to applaud at the end!

RESOURCES

“Big Fish: A brief history of whaling,” National Geographic
<http://tinyurl.com/bigwhaling>

GreekMythology.com: The Fates
<http://tinyurl.com/threefates>

Biography.com: Herman Melville
<http://tinyurl.com/hermmelville>

“The History of Whaling in America,” *The American Experience*: PBS
<http://tinyurl.com/whalingtimeline>

“Jonah 1 & 2,” The Bible

New Bedford Whaling Museum
www.whalingmuseum.org

“The Sperm Whale,” National Geographic
<http://tinyurl.com/spermwhale1101>

“Stove by a Whale,” *N Magazine*
<http://tinyurl.com/stovebya>



the mead center
for american theater

1101 Sixth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: 202-554-9066
Fax: 202-488-4056

Written by: Rebecca Campana
and Lizzie Hughes

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