

# Moby Dick

## Herman Melville

### Chapter 1 The Man Who Sold Heads

- 1 There was nothing for Ishmael to do on shore. He was feeling bad-tempered as he hated being in one place for too long. He wanted some money too.
- 2 Ishmael was not a leader and he did not want to be. He did not care what work he did or how hard he had to work.
- 3 Ishmael dreamt of hunting and killing a whale. All the best whaling ships left from Nantucket.
- 4 His companion was tattooed all over. He was a cannibal, smoked with a tomahawk, shaved with a harpoon and worshipped a little wooden figure.
- 5 There were officers, carpenters, blacksmiths and harpooners.

### Chapter 2 The Pequod

- 1 In the Bible, the prophet Jonah was swallowed by a whale and escaped. The preacher was talking to whalers and this story gave them hope for a safe return.
- 2 Queequeg told Ishmael that he was the son of a High Chief of a Pacific island. Queequeg would be High Chief himself when his father died. Queequeg wanted to explore the world before then and learn things that would help his people. Now he wanted to work as a harpooner.
- 3 Ahab was the captain of the *Pequod*.
- 4 Ishmael was told that Captain Ahab was a strange man. He even went a little mad, for a time, after having had his leg bitten off by a whale. But he was a fine whaler and a fine captain. He did not say much, but he always spoke good sense.

### Chapter 3 Elijah's Warning

- 1 Elijah told stories about Captain Ahab to upset Ishmael, after he had signed papers to work for Ahab. Then Elijah refused to explain himself and later, he walked by Ishmael as though he had never seen him. He behaved in a mad way too. Elijah certainly wanted to make trouble.
- 2 The *Pequod* would probably be away for three years. So everything was taken on board that might be needed: sails, ropes, rigging. There were spare boats, harpoons and lines. There was also all the food needed for that long voyage and the crew's own possessions.
- 3 Elijah wanted to warn Ishmael against the strange men who had walked on to the ship. He also suggested that the ship would never return to Nantucket, but would be lost at sea.

### Chapter 4 Captain Ahab

- 1 The three mates were called Starbuck, Stubb and Flask.
- 2 Ishmael had been told bad things about Captain Ahab. But he now saw that Ahab was tall and thin and did not look ill at all. He was able to walk about even though he had a false leg. The captain had a fierce expression and a scar on his face, but he made his crew feel part of a team. Ishmael probably would have felt more cheerful about the voyage.
- 3 Ahab asked the crew questions because he wanted to know if they were ready to go whaling and knew what to do.
- 4 The prize was a gold coin. To win it, a man had to be the first to see the white whale – Moby Dick.
- 5 Moby Dick was a sperm whale. He was very big and white. The front of his face was wrinkled and his jaw was crooked. His teeth were strong enough to bite off a man's leg. This whale moved his tail in a strange way and spouted water high into the air. There were several harpoons stuck in his body.

### Chapter 5 The 'Ghosts'

- 1 They had gone on to the ship in complete silence and had then been hidden away. They only spoke to Ahab and when they spoke, they whispered. They did not behave like the rest of the crew.

- 2 Walking on to the *Pequod* in front of him, like strange shadows.
- 3 He had been thrown out of his boat by a whale and had swum in the cold sea for some time. After he got back into his boat, it was nearly run down by the *Pequod* in the mist and the men had to jump in the sea again. He had been in great danger twice.

#### Chapter 6 "Lower the Boats!"

- 1 At first they had little success. Every day, they saw a whale, but only once. Then it swam away out of sight. There were storms. They passed another ship, but could not speak to the crew. They saw a white shape in the water, but it was a dead giant squid, not the white whale. But when they reached the Indian Ocean, they did at last catch a whale and got it back to the ship.

#### Chapter 7 "Man Overboard! "

- 1 The eyes of the sperm whale were on either side of its huge head. This meant that it could not see anything straight ahead.
- 2 Holes were made in the whale's side and it was hauled up level to the side of the ship with hooks and ropes. Then the skin was taken off and the blubber removed. Next, the body was cut off and left for the sharks. Only the head remained. Later, the oil would be taken out of it.
- 3 Gabriel told everyone on board the *Pequod* to be afraid of the white whale.
- 4 Captain Mayhew told Ahab the story of how he had seen Moby Dick and hunted him. His chief mate, Macey, had gone after the whale but had been swept overboard by the whale's tail and drowned.
- 5 Tashtego's job was to get the oil out of the whale's huge head. He cut a hole in it, lowered a bucket into the hole and then pulled it up by ropes, full of oil. But Tashtego slipped and fell into the hole in the whale's head. The chain holding the whale broke and it fell into the sea, with Tashtego inside.
- 6 Queequeg jumped into the sea and with his knife, cut another hole into the whale's head. He pulled Tashtego out of the hole by his hair and the two men managed to get on board again.

#### Chapter 8 The Jungfrau

- 1 A rower on the German boat "caught a crab". That is, he made a wrong movement with his oar and the other men had to stop rowing. So the *Pequod's* boats were able to draw level with the German one.
- 2 The whale was old and very big and heavy. When it was fixed to the *Pequod* with chains, it made the ship lean over to one side. This was dangerous, so they had to let the whale go.
- 3 Captain Ahab was going north to the far coast of Japan to catch sperm whales. Then he would sail on to the Pacific Ocean in the month when Moby Dick might be hunting there for food.
- 4 The whale dragged them into the middle of a huge school of whales. The men in the boats could not row away.
- 5 No, it's not lucky to come across a school of whales because it might be very dangerous. If the boats overturned, the men would be trapped. So, the more whales you see, the fewer you catch.

#### Chapter 9 The Rosebud

- 1 Stubb guessed that the dry whale had ambergris in its stomach. He managed to convince the captain that the whale was dangerous because the crew could catch a fever from its smell.
- 2 Stubb's plan was completely successful. Having fooled the captain, he said that he would help him cut the whales loose. But the 'help' allowed him to get hold of the dry whale after it had been cut away from the *Rosebud*. Stubb then opened up the whale and found the ambergris.
- 3 The dry whale died from an illness. It was rotting, so it smelt awful. The sweet smell came from the ambergris that Stubb dug out from the whale's stomach.

#### Chapter 10 The Samuel Enderby

- 1 Pip himself was partly to blame, but he was very young and became very frightened, so he jumped out of the boat. When he jumped out of the boat for the second time, he put all the men in danger again. But it was very cruel to leave him in the water for so long, in danger of drowning, so Stubb should be

blamed too.

- 2 Ahab saw that the captain of the *Samuel Enderby* had an arm made of whalebone. He guessed that Moby Dick had bitten off the captain's arm. Ahab wanted to learn what the captain knew about the white whale.
- 3 Ahab found out that Captain Boomer of the *Enderby* had met a white whale near the Equator. From his description, Ahab was sure that the whale was Moby Dick.
- 4 Captain Ahab had become very excited by hearing about the white whale. He was more determined than ever to hunt and kill it. Captain Boomer, however, said that he would never hunt Moby Dick again. It was too dangerous. Captain Ahab was now half-mad because of his hatred for Moby Dick. He did not care what happened to himself or his crew. This meant that he might become careless if he ever found the white whale and hunted it again. So Captain Boomer was probably right, because Moby Dick was so big and strong. He had decided that it would be foolish to hunt him again.

### Chapter 11 Queequeg's Coffin

- 1 The oil from the whales was stored in barrels. One of them was leaking. Starbuck wanted Ahab to stop the ship and find the leaking barrel. At first, Ahab refused. Finding Moby Dick was more important to him than losing oil and therefore money too. He was not thinking clearly. He threatened Starbuck with his gun, which showed he was half-mad. Later, however, Ahab decided to stop the ship and look for the leak, because he did not want the crew to turn against him. Ahab was a clever man. Starbuck behaved in a sensible way. He was brave too, to argue with his captain and warn Ahab about his behaviour.
- 2 Summarise Queequeg's behaviour after he falls ill. Queequeg expected to die. The people from Queequeg's home island put dead men into a boat and sent it out to sea. But Queequeg did not want to be eaten by sharks, so he asked the carpenter to make him a boat with a cover, like a coffin. After his death, he wanted to be put in this coffin-boat with his harpoon, his oar, food, water and Yojo, his wooden figure. The cover would then be nailed down and the coffin-boat sent out to sea. Queequeg was put inside his coffin and then asked to be taken out again.
- 3 After preparing himself for death, Queequeg decided to live, after all.

### Chapter 12 Ahab's Dream

- 1 Ahab wanted a very strong harpoon to kill Moby Dick. He gave the blacksmith, Perth, some horse-shoe nails as they were made of the strongest metal. He told Perth to hammer the red-hot metal into twelve rods and twist them together to make a shaft. Then Ahab did the work himself. The blade head was made of razors, the finest steel there was. This blade was cooled by the blood of three men.
- 2 The *Pequod* met the *Bachelor*. In what ways was that a lucky ship? How did the *Bachelor's* luck help the *Pequod*? There was music and many beautiful Polynesian women on board the *Bachelor* to keep the sailors happy. The *Bachelor's* crew had caught hundreds of whales and the ship was on its way home with all the oil. Only two men had been lost. The next day, the *Pequod* was lucky too. The crew caught four whales.
- 3 Fedallah told Ahab that, when the captain died, he would not have a hearse or a coffin. He said that Ahab would see two hearses on the sea before he died and that Fedallah himself would die before his captain. Fedallah also said that Ahab could only be killed by rope. Ahab believed all this, but he did not really understand Fedallah's words. Ahab also believed that he would kill Moby Dick before he died.

### Chapter 13 The Typhoon

- 1 The storm was coming from the east – the way that the ship was going. A huge wave hit Ahab's boat and made a hole exactly where the captain sat. So Starbuck thought that both the ship and its captain were cursed.

- 2 Stubb thought that the fires meant good luck. They showed that the ship would soon be full of oil. Ahab told his men that the fires were showing them the way to the white whale. But Starbuck thought that the fires told them that the voyage was cursed.
- 3 Ahab shouted like a madman and did strange things. He was willing to risk his life and the lives of his crew to catch Moby Dick and he could think of nothing else.  
Ahab was not worried about the storm or the fires. He was thinking and behaving like a madman.
- 4 It is wrong to kill, so Starbuck was right not to kill Ahab. But if he had, the *Pequod*, its crew and Ahab himself might all have been saved.

#### Chapter 14 The Rachel

- 1 The strange noises were made by mother seals calling to their young seals.
- 2 The real lifebuoy had got too dry in the sun and the wood had shrunk. This made it fill with seawater very quickly and sink.
- 3 Ahab now knew that Moby Dick was very near. He did not want to waste time looking for Captain Gardiner's missing boat. He had to find the white whale.
- 4 The ship had been hunting Moby Dick. The whale had broken one boat in half and five of the crew had died. Moby Dick himself had got away.

#### Chapter 15 Moby Dick!

- 1 He had spent forty years hunting whales. During that time, he had only been on shore with his wife and child for three years. He had eaten bad food and suffered a great deal and all for nothing. He was old and tired and neither richer nor better for his trouble.
- 2 Ahab shouted, "The gold coin is mine!" because he was the first to see the white whale.
- 3 When Ahab was in the water, he told Starbuck to sail the ship toward the whale. This made the whale swim away. The ship was then steered between the men and the whale. Ahab was pulled into Stubb's boat.
- 4 Ahab's two promises were: The first man to see Moby Dick on the day the whale was killed would get the gold coin. The second promise was if Ahab himself saw the whale first, he would give the crew ten times the value of the coin to be shared among them.

#### Chapter 16 Fedallah is Lost

- 1 The crew wanted to catch as many whales as they could – not just Moby Dick. But now that they had seen the huge white whale, all the sailors became very excited. All they could think about was hunting and killing Moby Dick.
- 2 It seemed that Moby Dick had a plan to break up as many boats as possible and kill all the men.
- 3 Moby Dick had escaped twice. Ahab was sure that when they saw him for the third time, the whale would be at the point of death. So the plan was to follow the whale until that happened. Then they would be able to kill him.

#### Chapter 17 The Second Hears

- 1 What was Ahab's plan after he saw Moby Dick for the third time?  
First the *Pequod* was steered into the wind and then away from it, as they followed the whale. The three whaleboats were made ready and then lowered into the sea.

- 2 How did the sharks make the hunt more difficult?  
The sharks swam round the boats, biting at the oars and terrifying the men.
- 3 What had happened to Fedallah?  
The ropes had caught him and tied him to the whale's side. He had been drowned and then half-eaten by sharks.
- 4 Moby Dick had his revenge on Ahab. How?  
Moby Dick swam towards the *Pequod* and hit it. With a huge hole in its side, the ship sank. Ahab had lost his ship – a terrible thing to happen to any captain.
- 5 How did Ahab die?  
He followed Moby Dick, harpooned the whale, but was dragged into the sea with the rope round his neck and drowned. The captain was never seen again.
- 6 What happened to the rest of the men?  
They were all drowned., except for Ishmael. He was the only survivor.