**Expert Voices**

**Supplemental Materials**

**Introduction**

The Expert voices section is made up of materials that are intended to support and supplement the four thematic units that make up the Teachers’ Strategy Guide. Additionally, this material is intended to provide insights into the four Expert Voices the guide endeavors to integrate: The media scholar (represented by Henry Jenkins), the literary scholar (Wyn Kelley), the creator / producer (Ricardo Pitts-Wiley), and the actor / performer (Rudy Cabrera). The bulk of the material has been crafted by Henry Jenkins, Wyn Kelley, and Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, including with detailed analysis of Rudy’s reading and performative practices.

The materials in this guide are divided by theme, beginning with general reference materials to which we refer in multiple units and followed by readings clustered by unit.
# Teachers’ Strategy Guide: Reading in a Participatory Culture

## Supplemental Materials

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Biographies of the Four Expert Voices

Rudy Cabrera, Actor

Rudy Cabrera first discovered his "hunger for acting" in the ninth grade at Central High School in Providence, RI, when he starred in plays such as Runaways and Svetlana’s New Blame. He first became "mixed in" with Mixed Magic Theatre in 2006, after starring in their production of Taming of the Shrew. He continues to perform with Mixed Magic in plays including Moby-Dick: Then and Now (performances in Pawtucket, New Kingstown, and the Providence Performing Arts Center—PPAC), The Tempest, and Spirit Warrior's Dream. Rudy has also performed with the Providence Black Repertory Company in Etymology of Bird, and for two years at the Langston Hughes Poetry Celebration at RISD Museum. Rudy is currently enrolled at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), where he is forwarding his education by studying drama and getting his "stomach ready for the next hot plate of theater."

Henry Jenkins, Media Scholar

Henry Jenkins is the Co-Director of the MIT Comparative Media Studies Program and the Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities. He is the author and/or editor of twelve books on various aspects of media and popular culture, including Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide; Fans, Bloggers and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture; The Wow Climax: Tracing the Emotional Impact of Popular Culture; Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture; Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture; and From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games. Henry writes regularly about media and cultural change at his blog, henryjenkins.org.

Wyn Kelley, Literary Scholar

Wyn Kelley, Melville Scholar and Senior Lecturer in Literature at MIT, is author of Melville's City: Literary and Urban Form in Nineteenth-Century New York (1996). Associate Editor of the Melville Society journal Leviathan, she has published in a number of journals and collections, including Melville and Hawthorne: Writing a Relationship, Ungraspable Phantom: Essays on Moby-Dick, Melville and Women, "Whole Oceans Away": Melville in the Pacific, and The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville. She is the editor of Blackwell Publishing's A Companion to Herman Melville (2006) and author of Herman Melville: An Introduction (Blackwell 2008). A founding member of the Melville Society Cultural Project, based in New Bedford, MA, she works with the New Bedford Whaling Museum on projects, lecture series, exhibitions, and conferences related to Melville and the museum’s concerns.

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, Creator / Producer

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley is an accomplished actor, director, playwright and composer. In January of 2003, he and his wife Bernadet formed Mixed Magic Theatre & Cultural Events, a non-profit arts organization dedicated to presenting a diversity of cultural and ethnic images and ideas on the stage. Ricardo currently serves as the company's Artistic Director. He has also founded two other theater companies, The Human Eye Ensemble in San Diego and the Art Ship Project in Providence, and has been Artist in Residence at the University of Rhode Island and Long Island University at Southampton, where he directed and taught acting. Ricardo was recently honored with the Individual Achievement Award by the Arts and Business Council of Rhode Island.
What is reading for? The answer to that question has changed over time and in different cultures. In our discussion of literacy, we recognize that there are many different kinds of literacy, not just in terms of different media but also in terms of the role and function of reading in society. We don’t propose New Media Literacies as a model that can replace one historically limited concept of literacy with another equally limited one. Instead we’d like to heighten awareness of the many styles and meanings of literacy over time.

We can’t speak of literacy as extending beyond a small class of political, religious, and aristocratic elites before the early modern period in Western history. Yet within those early elites literacy acquired a range of uses. Laws for church and state had to be written down. Accounts and records had to be kept. Early scientific and historical knowledge could be preserved. Business and personal correspondence facilitated trade, marriage, exploration, political and commercial alliances, and warfare. But what did reading mean beyond these practical uses?

One early model of writing was of monks transcribing religious manuscripts, early scholars reading books aloud for pupils or disciples to copy down, or bards producing written texts of oral stories. We might call this model one of transmission. From ancient times, humans have recorded their histories, poems, and religious teachings in as durable materials as they could find—stone and wood at first, and then the more plastic papyrus, embroidered or woven tapestry, or linen scroll, all long before paper and pen and ink or print. This model posits an active giver and a passive receiver. Reading these texts allowed one to acquire the wisdom and knowledge of the past. Literacy resided in one’s ability to absorb as much as possible of one’s heritage; presumably some medieval scholars felt confident of having read all of known history or religious knowledge.

Another related form of literacy might be thought of as translation. Medieval and Renaissance scholars rediscovered lost archives of books in Latin and Greek. Translating them from the common language of law, politics, and the church—Latin—into the vernacular English or French or German made them accessible to a wider range of readers. Shakespeare’s early plays depended on, in effect translated, Latin comedies by Plautus or Italian romances. He may have been viewed for a good part of his career less as an imaginative author than as a skillful translator. The Renaissance also saw the rise of English translations of Hebrew and Latin Bibles, and with them an increase in middle-class literacy. With printing available on a broader scale and within a denser urban landscape, more people could enjoy the privileges as well as the pleasures of literacy.

The Enlightenment brought ideas of literacy as moral and social improvement. In a time when philosophical inquiry spread from the scholarly or monastic cell, penetrating more powerful, concentrated professional and middle classes, and when the middle class competed with older elites for social status, literacy offered both intellectual and practical benefits. Locke’s model of the mind as a tabula rasa, a blank slate, proposed that experiences and texts could write their wisdom on the moral page of the self. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Benjamin Franklin showed how a guided program of reading the best authors could form an ethical being. In neither case would the reader necessarily create anew. Rousseau offered a model of literacy in which the child absorbs lessons as if from a kindly friend rather than from a stern authority, but the child must still receive these before assuming a place in the adult world. Franklin, drawing on the precepts of Addison and Steele of the Spectator, argued that imitation was the best route to success. One did not read in order to change past models but, as he argued in his Autobiography, to acquire their excellences. That one could succeed just as well by imitating the style rather than the substance of one’s model lent an ironic subtext to his program. But later autobiographers like Frederick Douglass and Williams Wells Brown in American slave narratives similarly made the point that exact imitation was as important as original thought, if not more so. As these former slaves faithfully imitated the literary styles of their supposed masters, they successfully overmastered them. Arising in the revolutionary environment of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the Romantic concept of literacy posits a radically different view. Religious, political, and patriarchal authority tottered.
before the vigorous challenges of democratic and working-class ideologies. Secular thinking and a new cult of the individual privileged the power of the self over older forms of sway. Romantic poets and philosophers in Europe and Transcendentalists in the U.S. argued that humans contained a divine spark, an inner authority that could guide them aright. One could read, then, not only to receive the wisdom of the past but to also test one’s character and intelligence, exert one’s own will, experience delight. A book could be thought of as a dynamic relationship between author and reader. One could speak of loving a book, and in fact sentimental literature, emerging in the mid-eighteenth-century under the guise of moral instruction, leaped in the nineteenth century into full-blown pleasure, entertainment, and titillation. Alarmed parents and pastors issued stern warnings about the dangers of novel-reading, especially for impressionable and unprotected youth. Literacy might be seen as a form of addiction, when its purposes of cultural transmission, moral instruction, and social improvement got converted to the uses of personal pleasure and choice.

Romanticism also ennobled writing and reading, lifting them above the practical and moral purposes they had served before and making the writer a Byronic idol, the reader a Poe-ish hero. Since women could now make a living as writers, a number of nineteenth-century novels applauded women’s literacy as leading to happiness, love, and success. Many of our warm and fuzzy feelings about reading derive from the Romantic notion of literacy as something that makes us better, not necessarily according to some social or ethical standard but simply as a whole and happy being.

The Victorians, of course, could not abide such definitions of literacy in a period when England was extending its empire over regions it considered backward, primitive, and functionally illiterate. Literacy under empire served to differentiate upright civilization from lazy or vicious barbarism. Reading provided not only personal pleasure but also evidence of the capacity to rule. One might speak in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries not only about love of a book but also of mastery of a subject. This period saw the professionalization of letters, as early writers of popular and sentimental literature, who had dominated the literary marketplace, ceded their privileged positions, though not their active readerships, to authors considered more weighty, complex, and, eventually “modern”: authors, that is, who might require an army of critics, professors, and other kinds of literary professionals to make sense of their work. Whereas a typical mid-nineteenth-century book review was nine parts summary, with long excerpts lifted bodily from the text, to one part critical opinion, the twentieth century saw the rise of critics who came out of, or more often stayed in academic enclaves, wrote scholarly monographs, and created elaborate rules by which to evaluate good literature. Critics could tell you what to read so that you would not waste your valuable time on junk and could thereby become a Wall Street gazillionaire. Their arcane terms and discourses would also ensure that the world would accord them the same kind of respect it gives to scientists and engineers.

This whimsical and highly generalized chronology of literacy through the ages is meant more as fable than as history. It’s intended to identify different strategies for reading that have appeared at different times in history and that remain in force now. We still rely on texts for the transmission of knowledge, for translations from other languages, or for enlightenment and improvement. We still conduct romances with books or attack and subdue them for our own profit. We still treat literary scholarship as a science that requires specialized tools and rules and yet we also see reading as the great leveler, the surest sign of democracy in a multicultural society. All these models of reading are still active and influence our motives for reading, our practices of reading, and what we consider the benefits of reading.

What might be the advantages of thinking about traditional modes of reading in relation to new media? What would be the purpose of this guide for teaching reading, and by extension writing, in the twenty-first century? The training we receive in reading is one of our oldest and most powerful experiences, the first mark of our capacity to perform in a literate culture. In the process of learning how to read, every literate person absorbs, at a very young age, a broad and potentially confusing range of cultural, ethical, and social lessons. This early training lays down, as Melville's Ahab says in Chapter 37, “Sunset,” the “iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run.” As much as gender, race, religion, class, or national identity, our literacy defines our place in society. But like these other givenes, literacy need not mean only one thing. Just as one can be male, female, or transgendered, one race or multiracial, a member of more than one religious or ethnic identity, so one can
read in different ways. Why do we assume that literacy is the simple answer to a complex question?

We take as fundamental the value of broadening and deepening our ideas about literacy by investigating its history, its varying meanings and functions, its different media, forms, and signs. An awareness of the many and surprising paths to literacy can be liberating for students, freeing them to find creative ways to learn and to express what they know. This guide is designed to help students and teachers reflect on what it means to read in a participatory culture. A participatory culture is one where there are relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, where there is strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others, where there is some form of informal mentorship whereby what is known by experienced community members is passed along to novices, where members believe their contributions matter, and where they feel some degree of social connection to each other. This description captures what is striking about a world where more and more people have the capacity to take media in their own hands and use powerful new tools to express themselves and to circulate their ideas to a public beyond their immediate friends and families.

In such a world, the borders between reader and writer, consumer and producer, are starting to blur. Young people are at the heart of these changes. Fan fiction writers use existing media texts—including novels like the Harry Potter books—as springboards for creative explorations, writing short stories or full length novels which extend beyond the narrative or refocalize the story around secondary characters. Bloggers absorb and respond to ideas in circulation around them, claiming for themselves the right to participate actively in the central conversations of their culture. Young people on online forums are engaging in close reading practices directed towards popular music or cult television shows, sometimes engaging in prolonged and impassioned debate about what such works mean and how they convey their meanings. Young people are recording their impressions, including their reflections on what they read, through Live Journals and social network profiles, again turning the act of reading into the first step in a process of cultural participation.

So, what does it mean to teach the canonical works at a time when so many young people feel empowered to become authors and to "broadcast" themselves to the world, as YouTube urges its contributors? One implication is certainly that we should focus greater attention on what it means to be an author, what it means to be a reader, how the two processes are bound up together, and how authors exist in dialogue with both those who come before and those who follow them. In this context, young people learn how to read in order to know how to create; the works they consume are resources for their own expressive lives. They seek to internalize meanings in order to transform, repurpose, and recirculate them, often in surprising new contexts. This may be one of the core insights we take from Ricardo Pitts-Wiley's Moby-Dick: Then and Now Project—nothing motivates readers like the prospect of becoming authors or performers of their own new texts.

One final point is worth stressing: In this context, literacy is no longer perceived as a set of personal skills; rather, we understand the new media literacies as a set of social skills and cultural competencies, vitally connected to our increasingly public lives online and to the social networks through which we operate. The production of Moby-Dick: Then and Now was, as we will see, a deeply collaborative process fed by many different forms of expertise and skills, one where many creative minds worked together to achieve a shared goal. Just as authors are increasingly seen as sampling and remixing earlier works in their same tradition, creative expression, critical engagement, and intellectual argument are understood as part of an exchange which involves multiple minds and as such, developing literacy is about learning how to read, think, critique, and create together.

This guide proceeds with a deep respect for traditional forms of literacy: without the ability to do close reading or to express one's ideas through written language, none of the other forms of participation we are describing here would be possible. But we also proceed with the understanding that a new cultural context shifts our understanding of the nature of literacy, as it has so many times in the past, and forces us to acquire new skills that were not necessarily part of the curriculum a few decades ago.
READING *MOBY-DICK* THROUGH THE DECADES

**BY WYN KELLEY**

I have been reading *Moby-Dick* happily since the 1970s. In that time the book's cultural significance and meanings have changed tremendously, not just for me or for academics, but for U.S. culture and the world. *Moby-Dick* is one of America's most inexhaustible and renewable resources.

When I first approached the book in college, it was at the height of its reputation as a Great American Classic. As later twentieth-century critics have argued, Melville's novel rose to its twentieth-century prominence in the wake of World War II as an assertion of America's cultural as well as political power. Ahab was read at mid-century as a tragic figure and the book as a meditation on flawed greatness. The postwar New Critics and in particular F. O. Matthiessen, who coined the phrase “the American Renaissance,” enshrined Melville in a White, New England canon that included Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and Emily Dickinson. Their view of art as guided by certain rules demanded that a book have a unified form and intention (they particularly favored tragedy, a form which only barely made sense of the book's vastness and variety); that it take its place in a literary elite (thus the strong interest in echoes of Shakespeare, Milton, Greek drama, and the Bible); and that it also include certain modern aesthetic principles, such as irony, use of complex symbolism, formal unity and coherence, and “deep” meaning embedded in the story. Reading the book in this context meant combing its images for patterns of meaning, searching out sources that indicated its literary allusiveness and richness, and pondering its themes and philosophy.

How were we to know that Melville's nineteenth-century readers would have rejected this form of reading outright, responding instead to the adventure narrative and balking at what they saw as metaphysical "blubber"? Yet the work of writing about Melville's life and reputation proceeded for most of the first half of the twentieth century under the assumption that Melville was a misunderstood genius—not a briefly popular writer of nautical adventures. If his contemporaries did not see that genius, conventional wisdom of the period decreed, then they were common benighted folk, unable to appreciate a tragic hero in their midst, unlike the much smarter academic critics of a later time. But this view didn't necessarily pertain outside of academia. I remember having dinner with friends in Stockholm in the 1980s. A female Swedish journalist leaned over and said, "But why are you writing your dissertation on Herman Melville? Didn't he write boys’ books?" To this sophisticated European, most of nineteenth-century American fiction, from Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* to Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, was children’s literature—hardly the stuff of neglected genius.

By the time I entered graduate school in the late 1970s, critics had begun to reject the New Critical notion of the text as inviolable work of art and to place it in a broader historical and cultural context. Trained as a New Historicist, I wrote my thesis on Melville's New York and the urban culture that he responded to as strongly as he did to the sea. My work and that of many others attempted to knock Melville off the American Renaissance pedestal by placing him in company with a wider range of authors—in my case, popular sensational urban writers like George Lippard and George C. Foster, as well as the producers of new urban forms like the panorama, the sketch, and the urban travel narrative. But another wave of criticism was emerging at the same time, the one to which my Swedish interlocutor also implicitly referred: feminism. Why was I, a woman, writing about a dead-white-male author? At that point I had proceeded too far with my dissertation to change course. But as someone who entered graduate school as a single working woman—I had been teaching high school for four years after college—and left as a wife and mother of two small children, I naturally thought long and hard about the implications of studying Melville when the canon was now exploding with new authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lydia Maria Child, Fanny Fern, and Harriet Jacobs.

Yet curiously enough over the next couple of decades *Moby-Dick* went from being a book about tragic greatness, with Ahab as hero, to being a reflection of democratic inclusiveness, with Ishmael as its wise, comic voice. The 1990s saw an outpouring of new readings of the book's multicultural themes and multiracial
characters: Queequeg, Daggoo, Tashtego, and Pip. Feminists found their way to the novel, as more women joined the ranks of Melville scholars, challenging notions of Melville as speaking only for men in a patriarchal culture. As explorations of gender in Moby-Dick became more subtle, the book also attracted readings of its sexual themes, in particular the homoerotic (and interracial) friendships between Ishmael and Queequeg, Ahab and Pip.

In the same period (and also more recently), while all these approaches continued to inspire new readers, critical interest also shifted to Melville’s other works and their social themes, creative innovations, and developing concerns. Study of stories like “Bartleby, the Scrivener,” “Benito Cereno,” “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Paradise of Maids,” or Billy Budd, of novels like Typee, Pierre and The Confidence-Man, or of Melville’s large and neglected body of poetry, has somewhat displaced Moby-Dick as the previously unchallenged “masterpiece” and opened up new ways of thinking about it. This direction in academic studies runs somewhat counter, though, to the abiding centrality of Moby-Dick in popular culture, and over time that phenomenon has been studied too by cultural historians and more recently media scholars. The recognition that Moby-Dick exists in multiple media and social forms—film, television, comic books, fine arts and illustration, music, restaurants—and has continued to exert a pull over new readers and consumers of the text makes its reach and importance even greater than before.

Melville, of course, would be tickled at the attention and perhaps mystified by it at the same time. For a literary scholar, as this necessarily broad sweep through the recent critical history must indicate, reading Moby-Dick has meant continually changing lenses as the book undergoes new interpretations. In this latest iteration, the New Media Literacies approach, the book has made my rethink my own practices as reader.

Moby-Dick and Literacy
As much as I’ve changed my critical positions and practices over many years, I still cling to traditional habits of reading. The product of a mother who spent hours reading to her children and a father who taught high school English and revered Melville (and Chaucer, Faulkner, Shakespeare, Eliot) in precisely the mid-twentieth-century ways I’ve described above, I’ve inherited both the wholehearted love of books—that desire to be swept away that I think of as Romantic—and the longing to probe and understand that I call Critical. We might also associate these modes of reading with a right-brain immersion in sensuous and imaginative experience as opposed to a left-brain navigation of the text, complete with charts, guides, and lists. Or we might distinguish between the way Ishmael reads—fluidly, enthusiastically, according to his boundless curiosity and inventive thinking—and the way Ahab approaches reading, using maps and whaling chronicles with a definite plan or goal. One form of reading replicates the Sublime, in that we are drawn irresistibly into the text, seduced, horrified, or intoxicated by something greater than ourselves; the other gives us an experience of the Beautiful, in all its symmetry and harmony, its order that calms and elevates the mind. One might be called Dionysian, the other Apollonian. One is House, the other Senate. And so on.

Students, in my experience, approach reading with both approaches in mind. They love the experience of losing themselves in a text, and they also savor the joy of discovering themselves and mastering their world. We do them a disservice if we try to separate those two modes of reading or prioritize them, suggesting that one exists only for private pleasure, the other for public instruction and assessment. One is for enjoyment, we seem to be telling them, the other learning. One is emotional, the other rational. One has no particular meaning; anything you think is fine. The other has a meaning assigned by teachers, critics, and other authorities; whatever you think, you must eventually adopt this authoritative interpretation. But we have a bicameral government and a bicameral brain. We arrive at understanding through complex negotiations between different parts of ourselves. Melville understood this when he gave his book both a narrator, Ishmael, and a protagonist, Ahab; a Sperm Whale balanced by a Right Whale; and endless pairings of light and dark, calm and storm, masthead reverie and forecastle revelry, human passion and nature’s indifference and inscrutability. Although he also delights in playing off his pairs against threes—Queequeg, Daggoo, and Tashtego, Starbuck, Stubb and Flask—and then endless multiples—of whales, of gams, of authors—he keeps coming back to his basic dyads and the essential, stabilizing balance between them.
The book teaches us, then, to value two (at least) modes of reading. As teachers, the more we open up the experience of reading to include all its dimensions and possibilities, the more we build on our students’ strengths and the more we show them how to negotiate both sides of their minds. But how?

The exercises and activities in this guide negotiate the two sides of literacy again and again. They offer a creative, personalized approach to texts, as well as a critical one. They balance the external requirements of literary study with the individual motivations that drive learning. They look at a classic literary text and also at texts in other media; at a work written by an established author and at creative productions from the students’ experience; at an “original” text and at its later adaptations; at the “sources” of that text and at its appropriations of those sources. In this endless balancing act, we teach that, as Ishmael points out in Chapter 11, “Nightgown,” “there is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself.” Ishmael is describing the sensation of being in bed: to feel utterly warm some part of you must be very cold. When you have that double sensation, you can fully appreciate your situation: “Then there you lie like one warm spark in the heart of an arctic crystal.” The startling juxtaposition of “spark” and “crystal,” “warm” and “arctic,” lying in bed and resting at the heart of a glacier, speaks to the novel’s constant pattern of opposing unlike “duplicates.” These juxtapositions light sparks, cause certain shocks to occur. We know that reading can produce these shocks, especially when all parts of the mind are engaged.

**How Do Literary Scholars Think?**

I expect that each of us representing four perspectives on reading—the creative producer, performer, media scholar, and literary scholar—might consider his or her approach the default position for all readers. After all, each of us was a “general” reader before becoming “specialized,” and each would also reject an exclusive position that isolated others. Nothing I do, in other words, seems to me that different from what other readers do too. At the same time, we also contribute different methods, different kinds of awareness. For me, one critical emphasis in literary study is its concern with artful uses of language.

We use artful language all the time, in daily speech and in different media. As Ricardo Pitts-Wiley reminds us, artful language appears in Shakespeare’s plays and on street corners; he argues that if Shakespeare were alive today, he’d be listening to and borrowing from the latest slang expressions, hip-hop coinages, slogans, and rants. There’s nothing special about finding artful language in Melville when you can find it likewise in a blog or an ad or a movie. The question is, how do we know it’s artful? And how does recognizing its artfulness expand our awareness of human beings, ourselves, and our world?

Toni Morrison addresses this problem when she writes, in *Playing in the Dark* (New York: Vintage, 1992), about her discovery that classic American White-authored fiction always contains an implicit “Africanist” presence, a fugitive, generally invisible Other whose special status makes possible the author’s assumptions of his or her own freedom, democracy, and liberality—the founding principles, supposedly, of American government and the American dream. She describes the impact of this discovery as being like the experience of watching a goldfish and suddenly becoming aware of the bowl: "It's as if I had been looking at a fishbowl—the glide and flick of the golden scales, the green tip, the bolt of white careening back from the gills; the castles at the bottom, surrounded by pebbles, the flecks of waste and food, the tranquil bubbles traveling to the surface—and suddenly I saw the bowl, the structure that transparently (and invisibly) permits the ordered life it contains to exist in the larger world" (17). We think we swim in a transparent medium, that all our thoughts and decisions come freely from ourselves. We don’t see the hard invisible substance that shapes and contains our movements.

Likewise we all live in a world of language without, often, seeing the bowl—the interests that form and shape that language, that give value to certain kinds or uses of language over others, that judge and decide for us as much as we do for ourselves. This metaphor may seem a depressing reminder of how little we understand and control our environments. But it can also, as Morrison shows, free and empower us, and teach us to understand and maybe leap out of the bowl, imaginatively, at least. Knowing how language works, how it shapes us and how we can shape it, gives power. Literacy, as countless writers tell us—Benjamin Franklin,
Frederick Douglass, Anzia Yezierska—confers more than social status. It can change the meaning of our lives. But literacy, as Morrison suggests, involves more than reading text. It includes understanding how language works.

And artfulness? “Artful” has both positive and negative connotations. In its association with creativity and imagination, skill and taste, it suggests the highest forms of human invention and aspiration. In its other meanings of manipulative, clever, subtle and sneaky, it reminds us that we’d better watch out. In relation to what we teach our students in the classroom, artfulness also has double and potentially conflicting meanings. We want to prepare our students for the “real” world, not, in most cases, for the world of art. Yet artful people in the real world may create obstacles for artless youth, and so we need to prepare them.

The one tool that I see as essential for the literary critic, the student, the professional, or the amateur, the one traditional but perennially useful skill in literary study and in all kinds of media texts is close reading. We have different words for this practice. My students dismissively call it “dissecting” the text, with the clear understanding that a text must be dead to be dissected. “Analyzing” it has a similar connotation, except that since we analyze data of all kinds and in other fields, at least we might be conducting something similar to a scientific experiment or mathematical proof. But it’s certainly not creative. “Digging in” implies that the surface is uninteresting and that only the depths, after much labor, will yield up the improbable ore we’re seeking. But it’s so much work! “Unpacking” conveys a more accessible approach; but what are we looking for when we unpack? And how do we know we’ve found something valuable?

To me close reading, like other forms of closeness, implies intimacy and familiarity. Just as you don’t ask certain probing or embarrassing questions on a first date, you don’t expect to know more than the facts on a first reading. In a literary text, that means somewhat adequately understanding the plot, the characters, and their motives, and recognizing certain patterns, images, or repetitions of thematic consequence. We can teach and test this knowledge fairly reliably, since it communicates to most readers. It is not superficial knowledge, but we can know it without reading closely, without in fact consciously taking account of the language, the medium, in which we received it.

So, on a first date, you pay attention to what your new acquaintance has to say, as you mentally sift these facts and decide if you want to go on a second date. By the tenth encounter, perhaps, you have become more aware of why this person says these things and how, what they mean in a context that includes your closer observation of how he or she dresses, chews gum, laughs, talks to parents or friends, makes or doesn’t make the bed, chooses music, or drives a car. Furthermore you begin to recognize how this person makes you feel, and that reaction tells you something not only about him or her but also about yourself, since in every relationship we act in old and new ways. Similarly, closer reading of a text allows us to experience and learn more in a dynamic relationship between what the author has put on the page and what we actually take in. The text begins to have meaning for us in more varied and subtle ways, and we begin to feel that we know it better. So we judge and have opinions. Just as we begin to argue with the person we know better than before, we begin to argue with a text or with the assumptions people have had about a text. One can measure that kind of knowledge best, perhaps, through writing assignments that allow students to develop critical opinions, explore the complexity of their responses, and communicate their differences with other readers.

Again, however, one can swim in this kind of understanding without taking much account of the fact that you are in a certain kind of water—language—shaped by a certain kind of bowl—the meaning we attach to certain uses of language. Perhaps the best way to think of this problem is to imagine understanding your new love after he or she has left. As you sort through the old emails and photos wondering why this person dumped you (or you dumped him or her), as you re-evaluate the messages you received before, picking up the dirty socks and seeing them in the clear light of your new and shocked understanding that this person you loved is not who you thought at all, you are now reading closely in a new way. You are reading the person in the medium in which you know that person now—through photos, discarded belongings, and old notes. What does that language tell you now that the person has gone? And what does that language tell you about the way humans communicate with each other and conduct their relationships? You can ask the same
questions about the reports you wrote for a job after you’ve left it or about the diaries you wrote ages ago. We read these texts closely, not only as they appear to us at first but also as they have meaning later. As we do, we necessarily detach ourselves from the person and pay more attention to the medium. What does an old sock say? How does a diary communicate? What do these different kinds and uses of language tell us about our ways of creating meaning?

Harriet Beecher Stowe reflects on this phenomenon in her novel The Minister’s Wooing (1859) when she addresses the reader directly about the power of the things people leave behind: "Have not ribbons, cast-off flowers, soiled bits of gauze, trivial, trashy fragments of millinery sometimes had an awful meaning, a deadly power, when they belonged to one who should wear them no more? . . . You are living your daily life among trifles that one death-stroke may make relics" (New York: Penguin Books, 1999, pp. 120-21). She’s talking about how a casual object associated with a living person becomes a relic, a treasure after that person dies. Such objects revive memory and inspire close reading and rereading, because we long to understand what is now irreparably past. And what once seemed real, but unremarkable, can often come to seem artful, as these objects acquire histories and we see in them more complex forces at work than the actions of everyday life.

Similarly texts of all kinds, if we know and love them well, come to seem in time precious and worth examining more closely. As we’ll demonstrate in other chapters of this guide, when we teach close reading we are engaging a number of other life skills: the ability to reflect meaningfully on what we know and how we know it; the recognition that we use language in subtle ways and that we can learn more about them; the awareness that meanings change over time and circumstance and that reading and rereading teach us how to appreciate and make sense of those shifts and shocks.
READING [MOBY-DICK] AS A MEDIA SCHOLAR

BY HENRY JENKINS

A cartoon captures some of the contradictions surrounding the relations between Media Studies and the ways that Literature is most often taught in American high schools: A glowering teacher confronts a student, who is holding a paper which displays his poor grade on an assignment: "The tip off was your reference to Gregory Peck's obsession with the Great White Whale."

I could have been that student standing there. I have to confess that when I was assigned Moby-Dick in my high school English class, I never got past "The Whiteness of the Whale." It wasn't because I wasn't interested in the story. By that point, I had read a children's illustrated edition, had devoured the Classics Illustrated comics version, and had seen the Gregory Peck film several times. I loved Moby-Dick, though my teacher, Mrs. Hopkins, did little to capitalize on our existing familiarity with the story through other media. Like the teacher in the cartoon, Mrs. Hopkins viewed those other media versions with suspicion; consuming them was cheating, trying to get away without reading the book, and little else. Needless to say, we didn't see eye to eye.

Somehow reading Moby-Dick was very different from simply experiencing the story. Melville kept interrupting the adventure story elements that I knew from the other versions with ponderous meditations, encyclopedic discussions of whales and whaling, sermons, bits of theatrical scripts, and detailed character descriptions. I had no clue what to do with this other material, and my teacher didn't provide much help. She went on and on about what a great novel Moby-Dick is, but she never really told us why we were reading it or how we were supposed to make sense of all the numerous digressions. We were assigned the task of writing a paper on Biblical allusions in the novel, but I hadn't really been taught what an allusion was or what one might say about them. I never finished reading the novel. I wrote what was probably the worst essay I ever wrote in high school; I got a bad grade on it; and I decided I never wanted to read that stupid book again!

All of that changed when I met Ricardo Pitts-Wiley and listened to him talk about his plans to stage a contemporary version of Moby-Dick, involving youth actors, set against the drug trade. For one thing, Ricardo is a hard guy to say no to. He speaks with a deep booming voice which carries an enormous amount of passion and conviction. For another, his vision of getting young people to read and rewrite Moby-Dick was very much in line with my own strongly held belief that in order to reach the current generation, for whom mash-up videos and resampled music have become defining aesthetic experiences, we need to help them learn through remixing. So many MIT students through the years have told me that they learned about technology by taking things apart, tinkering with them, putting them back together, and trying to figure out what makes them work. And I've found myself wondering how we can carry some of those same experiences into the humanities classroom.

As a media scholar, I've been studying how readers read and what fans do with their favorite programs for more than twenty years. For much of that time, I have been researching the phenomenon of fan fiction. Fans dig deep into their favorite television programs, films, and novels, draw out interesting elements, and elaborate upon them through original stories and novels. I had watched a growing number of people getting into the fan writing world by the time they reached middle or high school. I've spoken with 14- and 15-year olds who have, for example, written full length Harry Potter novels which they post to the web and which get hundreds of comments from readers around the world.

I've argued that writing fan fiction represents a particularly valuable form of criticism, one which breaks all of the rules I was taught in school—getting inside the heads of the characters rather than the author, speculating beyond the ending rather than taking the text as given, asserting one's own fantasies and interests rather than...

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working to recover hidden meanings. Yet, it was also a form which led to new insights and discoveries, that got young writers doing close readings and debating interpretations, mobilizing passages from the text in the process. It was a form of criticism that saw the original work as the starting point for a conversation, one which, as Mrs. Hopkins might have put it, saw the original story as a "living" element in our contemporary culture.

If young writers could do this with Harry Potter or Naruto, with Lord of the Rings or X-Men, then why can't they do it with Melville, Hawthorne, Shakespeare, or Austen? And that's precisely what Pitts-Wiley is doing, working with students who are not only "at risk" but already incarcerated, the kids that most people have already given up on. If he could get those young convicts to read Moby-Dick, then what excuse do I have as an adult academic for not reading it?

So, I dug out the same battered old Bantam paperback edition that defeated me in high school, and I read through it, chapter by chapter, the yellowed pages peeling off in my hands. I discovered a very different book than I remembered. Moby-Dick made much more sense understood not as a classically constructed work but rather as a mash-up. Melville absorbed as much of 19th-century whaling lore as he could, mixed it with elements borrowed from the Bible, Milton, Homer, Shakespeare, and countless other writers, and produced something that shifted between genres, adopted a range of different voices and perspectives, and refused to deliver what we anticipate from one page to the next. Understanding Moby-Dick as a mash-up helped me to appreciate elements of the novel that had made no sense to me when I had read it years before, anticipating a simple, straightforward saga of men on ships hunting whales. The very parts that frustrated me as a high school student fascinated me as an adult.

Some of this has to do with the particular qualities of Moby-Dick as a novel and Herman Melville as a writer. Yet, don't stop there. The Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin tells us that writers don't take their words from the dictionary; they extract them from other people's mouths and they come to us still dripping with saliva. As my mother used to say, "put that down. You don't know where it's been." But in this case, we do know where it's been. It has a history. It's already part of our culture. Writers don't create in a vacuum. For all of our celebration of originality, authors draw heavily on stories, images, ideas that are circulating all around them. They take inspiration from other books, just as fan fiction writers take inspiration from J.K. Rowling.

Indeed, that's what my teacher was trying to get me to understand when she asked us to write about Biblical allusions in Moby-Dick. She wanted us to see how Melville was retelling stories from the Bible, giving them new meanings, and inserting them into new contexts. Melville was a great writer and a gifted storyteller, but it didn't mean he made everything up out of his head. Melville and the other writers we study in high school literature classes borrowed from everything they had ever read, yet in the process of remixing those elements, retooling that language, and retelling those stories, they created something that felt fresh and original to their readers. Bakhtin tells us that writers have to battle with their materials, forcing them to mean what they want them to mean, trying to shed some associations and accent others. The borrowed material is never fully theirs; it leaves traces of its previous use, traces we can follow like so many bread crumbs back to their sources, and in the process, we can see Melville and these other authors speak to and about what came before.

We are living through a moment of media change during which more and more average people are becoming authors. They are creating videos and circulating them on YouTube. They are writing fan fiction and exchanging it on the web. They are sampling and remixing music. They are writing blogs or recording their experience in LiveJournal. And young people—the students in your class, sometimes even the students who are sitting in the back of your class and not saying anything—are at the cutting edge of this shift towards a more participatory culture. A study conducted by the Pew Center for the Internet & American Life, found that 60 percent of American teens on line have produced media and about a third of them have shared media

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they've produced with others beyond their immediate friends and family and about a quarter of them have created new content by remixing existing content.3

The Pew Center statistic is interesting on two levels: first, it tells us that there are a lot of young authors trying to make sense of their own creative processes, and second, it tells us that there is a large number of teens who are being left behind what I call the Participation Gap. While some people in your classes have had the thrill of seeing people they didn't even know read and respond to something they created, others have no such experience and may not feel empowered to create or share what they create with others.

Neither of these groups is well served when we mystify the act of authorship in our literature classes. Beginning writers need to draw models and take inspiration from other stories they have read, but the dirty little secret is that so do gifted writers. They aren't involved in some alchemical process weaving straw into gold, creating something from nothing. They are taking materials from their culture and deploying them as raw materials to manufacture something new. Thinking about authorship in those terms, as a cultural process, allows us to revitalize some of the things literature scholars have always done—talking about sources, exploring allusions, comparing different works within the same genre, watching an author's vision take shape over multiple works. All of these approaches help us to see that writers are also readers and that understanding their acts of reading can help us to better understand their writing.

If we can follow this process backwards in time, tracing how Melville read and reworked material from the Bible to create *Moby-Dick*, we can also trace it forward in time, looking at how other creators, working in a range of different media, took elements from *Moby-Dick* and used them as inspiration for their own creative acts. That's what Ricardo Pitts-Wiley did when he wrote and staged *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*. It's also what the incarcerated youth did when they participated in his workshop and learned how to read and rewrite *Moby-Dick*. Talking with Pitts-Wiley, we find that he didn't see remixing as a matter of turning kids loose with the text to do what they want with it; he insisted that remixing must begin with a close reading and deep understanding of the original work. That's why we think that we can reconcile the goals of appropriation and transformation which are part of the new media literacies with a respect for the traditions of close reading that have always informed the teaching of literature.

And that brings us back to the teacher, the student and poor maligned Gregory Peck. The teacher sees the act of watching the film as a form of cheating because the student didn't read the novel, but there are other ways to look at it. The film versions of *Moby Dick* are not simply the cinematic equivalent of SparkNotes. Filmmakers started adapting *Moby-Dick* for the screen as early as 1926. The novel was already known and loved by its culture; filmmakers wanted to borrow literary prestige for a then emerging medium through adopting books with middle class respectability4. Each filmmaker selected which elements to take from the novel. In the process, he created his own emphasis and developed his own interpretations, rethinking and reworking the novel to the particulars of their medium (rejecting passages that would be boring to play out in real time or prohibitively expensive to film), and reflecting the tastes and interests of his own time.

Each of the films—including the 1956 Gregory Peck movie—represent a distinctive interpretation of Melville's novel and each helps us to discover new things about *Moby-Dick*. They should be understood as expansions on rather than replacements for the experience of reading the original novel. And a good teacher can draw on bits and pieces of these other adaptations to help spark debates in his or her classes about interpretation, appropriation, and creativity. (We offer close readings of several sequences from both the Gregory Peck/John Huston and the Patrick Stewart versions of *Moby Dick*) It is not that they offer us a predigested version of the novel; each of these works poses its own kind of challenges for the viewer/reader. We tend to devalue the skills involved in reading a film because they often were not acquired through formal

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education; we learned them through informal everyday practices such as watching a movie with our parents and asking them a painfully large number of questions about what's going on. Mrs. Hopkins and her kin devalue screen experiences because they say that they don't demand as much of the imagination. In fact, there are trade-offs: screen adaptations do take away some of the imaginative work of novel reading because they can show us what things look like, yet they may demand more work on other levels, such as figuring out the inner life of the characters through externalized gestures.

One of the things media scholars do is to trace what we call migratory stories, stories which get told over and over again, as they move across different media and across national borders. We want to understand what changes as the same story gets told in different contexts by different authors for different audiences through different media. And we find this works best when comparing multiple versions which share similar themes and inspiration. So, throughout my portions of this teacher's strategy guide, I will be looking at the way Moby-Dick has been taken up by other media creators—in popular music, film, television, and theater—sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. In sharing these examples, I am trying to model an approach to teaching literature that is concerned with the ways a story migrates through space and mutates through time. Rather than trying to keep Gregory Peck (or for that matter, Patrick Stewart) outside the schoolhouse gates, I will demonstrate what you gain by making them part of the conversations you have with your students. Some of you already know this: my hope is to show you some new ways to do it.

As a media scholar, I have been taught to suspend judgment about the line separating high and popular culture. We know that this border has shifted dramatically over time. Many works that we teach in our classes (Shakespeare, Dickens) were once regarded as popular culture. And many of the attacks currently directed against contemporary popular culture were also once directed against the novel or theater. Each medium has to be evaluated on its own terms—not as a debased form of literature but as an aesthetic tradition with its own standards of accomplishment. Some approaches to literature seek to narrow and refine students' tastes, weaning them from their attachments to popular culture. My own approach seeks to broaden their tastes and expand the range of works with which they can meaningfully engage.

Some teachers worry that as we start to expand what we teach to include film, television, comics, video games, and so forth, we will displace literary works. I certainly hope this doesn't happen. For me, print culture and theater also represent forms of media and need to be understood in relation to their own conditions of production, circulation, and interpretation. For me, traditional literacy skills remain fundamental, a precondition for the new media literacies our project promotes. If you can't read and write, you can't meaningfully participate in these new forms of cultural production. As a media scholar, I still draw heavily on the critical vocabulary my field inherited from literary studies, though we also need to pay attention to issues that may be particular to a given medium.

And, for me, it doesn't end there—with teaching students to be gifted "readers" of texts across many different media, worthy though that goal may be. Rather, we want them to think of themselves as someone who could become an author, someone who is able to make creative and meaningful contributions to their culture, and someone who has thought through the ethical dimensions of appropriation. And that's part of the value of having young people not simply read classic literature but rewrite it, remake it, across a broad range of different media. In doing so, we help prepare them to become participants in a culture which is far more open to the participation of average citizens than ever before.

Going back to the Pew study, we need to do this for the 60 percent who already are making media to help give them a vocabulary for thinking about their own creative process and we need to do this for the 40 percent who are not yet making media as we help them find their creative voice. By learning that all writers were once readers and that every reader has the potential to become a writer, we help them to move across that participation gap. After all, we would not consider someone literate in a traditional sense if they could read and not write; we should not consider them to have media literacy if they are critical consumers but do not know how to produce and circulate media.
A central guiding principle behind this strategy guide is the belief that media literacy can not and should not be divorced from the rest of the school curriculum; that it should not be an add-on subject at the end of the school week if the students have been good. Rather, the new media literacies should represent a paradigm shift that impacts how we teach all aspects of the school curriculum, just as media change has impacted every aspect of our society. Our goal is to show you how the new media literacies might impact the teaching of literature. In doing so, we hope that you can help heighten your students' understanding of media and broaden their skills as readers and cultural participants; but we also hope that paying attention to how authors built on existing cultural materials and how later creators built on their work will make students better readers of literature and help foster the deep appreciation that a novel like *Moby-Dick* deserves.

Keep in mind: we are using *Moby-Dick* to illustrate this alternative approach to teaching literature and so we will work through this example in some depth. But our core principles and pedagogical techniques apply to all of the novels, short stories, and plays currently being taught. We invite other educators to follow our lead, contributing resources and applying this approach to other works. We hope that you will follow Pitts-Wiley's example, using the possibility of rewriting a classic story to motivate students to read it closely and engage with it creatively.
**Reading Moby-Dick as a Creative Artist**

**AN INTERVIEW WITH RICARDO PITTS-WILEY**

**Q:** Tell us about your relationship to Moby-Dick.

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** My earliest memory of Moby-Dick was, of course, the Gregory Peck movie. Also when my mother was in high school in Mississippi in the late-20s and '30s, she had written a book report on Moby-Dick that she was very proud of. As I was growing up she would often tell us about her book report. Moby-Dick was always a part of my life even though it wasn't until several years before I started the project that I actually sat down and read the full novel. Sometimes you think you know something because it's so much a part of your life. Then when I sat down and read it, it was just far better than I could have hoped, but it was a struggle getting through it the first time. I think the first thing that I remember about Moby-Dick was the relationship between Queequeg and Ishmael, this male bond relationship that was going to ultimately prove to be very, very important in the novel. I was also struck by Pip from the beginning and the absolute focus of Ahab. Another part of it that still stays with me is Melville's description of the whaling industry and whales. He was so fascinated with whales, their scope, their size, their power, their anatomical dimensions. Everything about it was fascinating to me. Also, one cannot help being struck by how many times the crew—and it's certainly a metaphor for mankind—Ahab and his crew, had an opportunity to turn around, to stop. They were warned over and over and over again, and they just kept going. No one made a decisive choice to change the course.

**Q:** So what did you struggle with when you read Moby-Dick?

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** My desire as a theater artist to get to the action. I was constantly saying, "Get to the whale. Come on, where's the whale? Where's Moby-Dick? Where's the whale? Get to some action," and I had to really slow myself down to appreciate the language. But also the big idea, the gigantic idea, the massive ideas that you have to think about constantly or you can come back time and time again, and they keep giving you something. I'll read it again before the end of the year, I'll read it again next year. I pick it up all the time, just read my favorite parts and sometimes I go back and read parts that totally confused me. That's good writing.

**Q:** Tell us a little bit more about yourself as a reader. Do you like to read? What kinds of things do you read?

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** I do like to read. I don't get as much chance to read as I would like. It's hard for me to find the hours of the day to read. I've found over the years that I became an osmosis type of learner, meaning I could sit in a room with people who are discussing practically anything and by the time it's over with I'm in the mix because I've learned how to piece things together. I'm very mindful of column A, column B, column C type of learning. If I learn something, I'm never dependent on one source. I'll read something from here, something from another source, something from another source. Then ultimately my desire is to make my own choice about what the information is. The same was true with Moby-Dick. Once I started the process there was so much information, there was so much opinion about Moby-Dick that it would have been very easy to buy into someone else's concepts about the novel. I had to be very careful not to get caught in that, but to really learn and listen, and ultimately come to my own conclusion about the book.

**Q:** Could you describe how you read Moby-Dick as a creative artist?

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** As a creative artist, the two things you're really looking for in a literary source are clarity of character and action. What's the drama? What's the problem? Drama is always looking for the problem. The problem in Moby-Dick is more difficult to find than one might think because the real problem isn't present for so long in the novel. You're fifty pages from the end of the novel before the real problem becomes evident and playable on the stage. Ahab has found the whale and now we're going to see who's going to win and who's going to lose. Prior to that Ahab is defining the whale and himself, and Ishmael is reporting on how Ahab is defining himself and the whale. So there's not a problem yet. The crew is not in revolt. Starbuck is
beginning to question some things, but he's not acting, he's only questioning. It's not until you get into the last chapters of the chase that the real problem becomes evident…. I'm always looking for where's the conflict? Where's the problem? And how is the problem going to define the characters?

Q: Do you consider yourself a fan of *Moby-Dick*?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: If we're dealing with the roots of fan, a fanatic, I'm probably not a fanatic. But I'm a fan in the sense that I will probably spend the rest of my life trying to understand the novel, the depth of the novel, the literature, the metaphors that are in there. There's no way that you can learn it all in two readings. That's why people read it every year, once a year—people just pick it up and read it—because there's so much in there.

When I was in New Bedford, when I really encountered the Melville Society for the first time, they were at a conference. I remember a black woman who was at the conference, which kind of surprised me. In many fields of learning if two black people see one another it's like, "Oh, great, I'm so happy to see you." So when I saw her I immediately said, "All right, I want to know why you're here." She spoke so eloquently about *Moby-Dick*. But she said, "It's biblical in proportion." I said, "Wow, okay, biblical in proportion."

It gave me a new perspective of the novel and what it had to offer, but *Moby-Dick* also in many ways sent me back to the Bible. I don't profess intense Christianity or anything like that. My faith is based in a belief that you are put on this earth to do good. But biblical in proportion…. I'm a person who if you say something that's important to you from any text, any literature, anything, I'll seek it out because I want to know why it's important to you. When she said, "It's biblical in proportion," I said, "Okay, now I know I have a new lifetime learning process that I will be engaged in." It sent me not only back to *Moby-Dick*, but it sent me back to the Bible. It sent me back to Shakespeare, it sent me back to practically everything I've ever read in a way that I knew I was going to have a joyful re-examination of all of that material. *Moby-Dick* took you to every piece of literature ever created in the history of mankind.

I've been asked this question many times by people who wanted to know more about black culture or black history. They say, "Where do you start?" I say, "Anywhere." Pick a black person who has a story to tell. Start there. They'll take you to everything else if you read it thoroughly. If they reference something follow that. Jackie Robinson? Absolutely, take Jackie Robinson. Jackie Robinson will lead you to everything in black history, black culture. He's a product of this. His mother was this. His father did. Who was his grandfather? On and on and on. This was the early part of his life. Well, who did it to him or how was that? All of those kinds of things. Everything leads you to something else.

Every time I read *Moby-Dick* I'm just fascinated with how well-read Melville was. He acknowledged the Vedas, the Bible, Shakespeare, Polynesian history. He recognized the enslaved African and the Native American, the Norwegian story. On and on and on and on, and science and anthropology. Everything is in the novel. It leads you to everything else.

With the work that we're doing at Mixed Magic with going from classic literature to the stage, we're not just trying to tell that story; we're trying to also tell our audience that this story is a connection to everything. Who's entitled to the knowledge? Who feels entitled to knowledge and culture, and things like that? I felt entitled to do *Moby-Dick*. I made a choice to do it. I didn't ask anybody's permission. I did it because I was entitled to do it. Melville is also trying to say, you're entitled to the knowledge of the world. Take advantage of it. I think that's part of what new media literacy is saying. What a glorious concept. I think it's saying to its audience, you are entitled to the knowledge of the world. Part of my responsibility is telling communities of people who haven't traditionally felt entitled, no, you have to be in the mix. That's part and parcel of being human. When I do *Moby-Dick* and when I do *Frankenstein* and when I do the Frederick Douglass autobiography, when I ultimately do other novels I'm trying to tell my constituency the knowledge of the world is there for you, go get it.
Doing *Moby-Dick* was about creating conversations between young people and old people. If you finish *Moby-Dick* you become a part of that community, one of those communities, it gives you the key to the *Moby-Dick* community and there's millions of people there and no matter what their life, their life style, their age, whatever, once you have the key to the community, you got something to talk about with everybody.

**Q:** So from here you're talking about doing stage adaptations of *Frankenstein, Invisible Man, Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Why those books?

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** Because I think they're novels that will give to the dramatic process constantly and they also have messages for our time that are very important. Each story—I start with a question, "Why *Moby-Dick*?" Because everyone was there. Why *Frankenstein*? Because I can ask the question, "What do we do with the monsters we create and what do they do with us?" Why *Heart of Darkness*? Are we capable of taking ourselves to the most dangerous parts of our souls and how are people equipped to deal with that journey? Why *Invisible Man*? Because the Invisible Man, ultimately, becomes the wounded animal and dangerous—not only were they wounded and left to die but they were wounded, left to die and ignored as if they didn't matter. What do we as people, Black people, poor people, what do we have to do to not be invisible? *Uncle Tom's Cabin* because the basis of the American culture is summed up in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. We are what we are because of the things that Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote about. She didn't create it, but she wrote about it. And why Frederick Douglass? Because time is demonstrating that Frederick Douglass might have been the greatest American of all time. He's everything we love, and he was the future in the past, biracial, brilliant, handsome, courageous, well-spoken, passionate, and moral. Pretty incredible, huh? Why *Gulliver's Travels*? Because it gives you an opportunity to talk to people again and maybe create new conversations among people.

**Q:** We are sometimes hearing from teachers that *Moby-Dick* is the work of a dead white guy and this wouldn't connect with their students. How do you respond to that?

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** Yes, a dead white guy who saw the future. You can either deal with him as dead white guy or you can deal with him as visionary. I choose to deal with him as visionary. There are dead black guys who I deal with as visionaries, also.

One of the great dangers, I think, of academia is so much of it is based in the concept that the great work has already been done. We're studying the great work because it's already done. When I teach Shakespeare, when I teach contemporary literature in whatever capacity I teach it in, I say, get a key to the kingdom. Write a poem; get a key to the village of poetry. Write something and then you're in the village of writers. Shakespeare's there, too. Get into the village and I'll never tell you that the greatest work has already been done.

We have to be very, very careful and mindful. In my philosophy a culture has reached its apex when it stops creating and becomes students of its own past, when the highest level that they aspire to as a culture is the glorification of things that they have done. That's why the hip-hop culture is so fascinating to me because it's not necessarily invested in the past. It's not saying that Shakespeare is the greatest writer of all time. I never teach that. I say, what did you write? Write something that you think is important the same way Shakespeare did. Then at some point I'm going to celebrate and we will both celebrate what you have written, then we'll look at what Shakespeare wrote, and then you can say, "Shakespeare was pretty good, wasn't he?" "Yes, he was." You're not treating him as a be all and end all. You're comparing him to what you wrote. Say, "Oh, man, I was trying to express that idea. He expressed it pretty good." "Yes, he did. But you know what? So did you." I've often said that if Shakespeare were alive today he would spend very little time with the Shakespeare scholars because they're studying things that he already did. He'd be with the kids. He'd be at the clubs; he'd be in the studio trying to figure out, "How did you make that rhyme scheme work? How did you make that? That's what I was doing in my time. I was exciting the language and that's what you're doing."
I want to be with the people in the creative process, not in the remembering process even though I place a great value on what has been done because that's the foundation for the new. But I'll never be a person who will be content to say the greatest has already been done. There's usually someone saying to me, "Because I celebrate Beethoven and Schubert and Shakespeare and Shaw that elevates me, too." No, it doesn't, necessarily. I appreciate that you love that work, but they're dead. I love that work, too. They're still dead. Let's find the living. There's somebody out there and when we're all gone they're going to say, "This person went beyond Shakespeare, beyond Beethoven, beyond us all."

**Q:** Some of the teachers are saying that *Moby-Dick* is too difficult for young readers. How would you respond to that?

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** Yes, it is. It's very difficult. I respond by saying we have to learn to be patient with great literature. Don't make it a test. Make it a lifetime experience. If it takes you two years to read *Moby-Dick* that's okay. I run into people all the time who say, "Ric, I'm still fighting with this novel." "That's okay. It's not a test. This isn't a sprint. It's a marathon." How do you make *Moby-Dick* and the other great literature into a marathon, not a sprint? Because a sprint is to pass a regent's test or something like that, to pass some test. "Read it and spit something back to me." No, start the process. Then the question becomes, "How do I support you all the way through?" If you start reading *Moby-Dick* in the ninth grade where are you being supported in the tenth grade? Where are you being further supported in the eleventh grade and the twelfth grade? When you get to college how are you being supported for that? You don't read one play of Shakespeare in the ninth grade and you know Shakespeare. No, you keep getting supported.

When we started building that work we said, we're in the business for *Moby-Dick* to be here for the next ten years. We're going to keep giving our audience an opportunity to be a part of that learning experience. There are other shows with which we are doing the same thing. We're saying, stay in there and we'll stay in there with you.

You don't want a person to get to the end of *Moby-Dick* and say, "Thank God that's over." You want them to say, "Wow, that was an adventure and I'm going to keep that book because I have some things underlined in here. Every once in a while I'm going to go back and open that book up and say, 'Here it is. That's what was said,'" or, "I'm going to use that in a poem." I do it all the time when I write.

In a recent musical that I've been working on for many years there's a reference to Shakespeare, a reference to *Moby-Dick*. Some of our audience who came and saw this show, saw *Moby-Dick*, said, "Ah, there it is. I read that so I know where it came from. I know the line from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I know the reference to Martin Luther King. I know where that reference came from." That's all a part of the process. How do we reinforce learning? By constantly giving audiences excited language that reminds them of things that they already know and celebrates that they know it.

As an acting teacher and as a teacher in general, I stress, "He who controls the language controls the power." If you don't have any command of language, you control very little in your life, because words can be used against you, they can be used for you, they can be used instead of you. I think Rudy and all the other kids had to learn that it's not okay to pass over a word because you didn't understand what it meant. No, go back and check it out. That's why it's so difficult to get through *Moby-Dick* for even adults because you have to keep going back to figure out, "What is he saying? What are all these words. That's a page of words, I understand three of them. Okay, I got to go back, I got to get out my thesaurus, I got to get out my dictionary. At a certain point I have got to know what he's saying, 'cause I might not agree with it." It's like reading a legal contract, "Well wait a minute, what does this really say? No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, I know, don't tell me what you think it says, what does it really say?" That's why you keep going back. When I tell people about reading *Moby-Dick* now, I say, "If you read *Moby-Dick* and you get through it, everything else you do in your life will be easier from a reading point of view."
Q: *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* emerged from the work you were doing with incarcerated youth through the Rhode Island Training Facility. How did that come about?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: I had already made a decision that I was going to do some type of adaptation of *Moby-Dick*. At that time I was in my mental process of trying to figure out how I was going to approach the novel. I knew going in that I thought a modern metaphor for *Moby-Dick* was the international cocaine cartel. From Melville's novel, I had the color white, for sure. So whatever my parallel thing was going to be white had to be a big part of it. But, also, *Moby-Dick*, a white whale, a white sperm whale, is a natural anomaly. It's not natural. It's an oddity. Even the idea of cocaine is just odd. Before it gets to be white powder, it's brown dust. There's a process, an artificial process that makes it white. It is a product of nature, nonetheless. I had certain things that I wanted to be constant. In Melville's novel when he talks about the societies of whales and the leaders, the herd leaders, and the harems and the families and the structure of the whaling community, the same had to be true for the community of the antagonists of my story, also. The community of the drug industry is a tight-knit, very often it is a very well-organized community. It involves every aspect of the ocean of business and life. Everything is involved. So whatever I was going to deal with had to be that complete in its scope. The whale never defines itself. Ahab defines the whale. Ahab tells the reader, "The whale is malice inscrutable." Malice inscrutable, my God.

Cocaine was really my first idea, but I set out to make it fall apart, to try to say, if it's not going to work I'm going to find out early. But the parallels just kept coming across. It's a business; whaling is a business. It involves all levels of society from Pip to Ahab to the way that Melville describes the order of rank: you do this, first mate, second mate, third mate. All of that, all the way down to the cook. The lowest one on the totem pole is Fleece, the old black man, the cook. That's the drug world, too. Somewhere at the top of that food chain is someone like the owners of the ship who never go out looking for the whales themselves. They just finance it. Somewhere in the drug business there are people who never get close to the drug; they just finance it, just, "Send me a check and I'll send you one back."

So the parallels were there. Every step of the way, my original idea was supported in some way. If I had found a roadblock where it wasn't supported, I would have changed. But it was all there. So I had a whale of my own, in a sense.

I can't say the kids' names. Not only is it illegal, it's not something I would do anyway. But they were all boys, all young men, in for a variety of offenses, many of them drug-related, some of them violence, some violence against women, which is just—that's a hard one for me. I had to find my way to get past all of their offenses so that we could take this great journey together. At the end of it, I was able to separate them from whatever their crime was. I was able to love and honor them. And I think they liked me, too.

In those situations you never ask the kids why they're in there because they're there and it doesn't really matter. They will tell you, but I never ask them. They tell you in subtle ways, sometimes, and sometimes very specifically. The stronger your relationship with them, the more they want to tell you their story. I've known this not just about that group, but other people that I have encountered: sometimes people tell you their stories or they tell you a story because they're entrusting you to do something with it. I do take that responsibility very seriously as much of a burden as it is sometimes because it's a weight that can just stay with you for years until ultimately something explodes out.

I had one kid who had read *Moby-Dick* before. He was so enthusiastic, he helped me bring the rest of the kids in. When you're incarcerated like that, you have time on your hands and you want something that you can get excited about. It took a little while, but eventually they did get excited about *Moby-Dick* and they found a way that they could tell their own stories via *Moby-Dick*. That was important to them.

As their imaginations exploded around *Moby-Dick*, I think mine did, too. It forced me to look at the novel very differently and appreciate it and love it as much as I loved them. Very few days go by that I don't think about those young men and wish them well. I see them every once in a while. They're out, many of them. My
message to them was don't follow a bad leader and don't go back. When you get out of here, never come back. There's an economics to their lives that *Moby-Dick* talks about a bit, too, because it's all about the money. When Ahab wants to get the crew truly motivated, when he's rallied them and he doesn't want to leave anything to doubt, he nails the gold doubloon to the mast. It's about the money.

When you're telling a seventeen-year-old kid who's in jail, "It costs $40,000 to keep you incarcerated. That's how much of an economy you create by being in here. Your earning potential, without even a high school degree, is $18,000 to $19,000 a year. You do the math. Where are you more useful to the society?"

The crew of the *Pequod* was essentially made up of disposable people; and the drug industry depends on a certain hierarchy and lower-archy, but the foundation of the pyramid of the drug industry is a massive disposable population, people who don't matter. Dollars turn into fives, fives turn into tens, tens turn into fifties, fifties turn into hundreds. If ten percent of you die a year, it doesn't matter. The man who's on the boat in *Moby-Dick*, he falls in and they throw down the buoy that sinks, too. Didn't have a name. He was just a dead sailor.

Working with the young people where drugs and violence have been a part of all of their lives, we were able to approach the material not from the outside looking in, but from the inside out. They could honestly say, "I've been involved," or, "I lost friends." But, also, I had an opportunity—and this was probably the best part of the experience for me—as a teacher to release their imaginations. Boy oh boy, no matter how much I write I'll never be able to fully capture the degree to which their imaginations were released, and they released me, too, to say you don't have to play by the ABC game. You don't have to go by the numbers. You can rethink these characters and it's okay, and you can honor them and rethink them at the same time. When we started the writing process, I started by saying, "Pick a character and write a story about the character." They all chose their favorite character in the novel and wrote a story about just their character.

One of the young men who chose Ahab—it was a great story, too! Ahab was at home. He had just come back from a very successful voyage of drug dealing for WhiteThing, his boss. It was so successful that he worried that he was now a threat to the great omnipotent WhiteThing. He was making some decisions that it was time for him to either challenge the boss for control or to get out of the business. He's home, he's got this young wife, she's pregnant, and the drug lord sends agents looking for him. In looking for him, they kill his wife and unborn child. His revenge is based on what they did to him.

Another one chose Elijah, the prophet, and the awful dilemma of being able to see the future and no one believing or understanding what you're trying to tell them. "I'm going to warn you about this, but if don't heed my warning this is what's going to happen," and the awful dilemma that you face. His story was about 9/11. "I'm trying to tell you this is going to happen," and then nobody listened, and how awful he felt that he knew and couldn't stop it.

Another one chose Stubb, who is kind of cantankerous. He started his story, "I'm Stubb, linebacker, middle linebacker." That just was so right. I mean, you take a character and you sum it up just like that. He's playing a football game. His girlfriend, a cheerleader, gunned down on the sideline, drive-by.

Another one chose Queequeg and he made him a pimp. Wow, why a pimp? He says, "Well, when we meet Queequeg he's selling human heads, shrunken heads," so he's a peddler in human flesh. He's exotic. He's tall. He's good looking, and fiercely loyal and dangerous. That's a pimp.

Another kid chose Ishmael. He started off by saying, "Ishmael was a Navy Seal who was so high strung they kicked him out of the Navy." If you know anything about Navy Seals, I don't know how it's possible to be too high strung, but he was. Then you go back and you see he read that first chapter where Ishmael is saying, "I feel like I'm following behind funeral processions. I feel like I need to get into a fight with somebody. I better get out of here and go handle my own anxiety before I either commit suicide or lay a whole community of people to waste because I'm mad. Time to get out. Time to go to sea. I'll get away." It's a brilliant
description: he was a Navy Seal who was too high strung so they kicked him out. That's exactly what Ishmael is. If you go back to Ishmael in the Bible, the discarded son, the one who got nothing, it makes a lot of sense.

Those are just examples. They were extreme, but at the same time the more extreme they got, the closer they got back to the root of the characters. And they met at the Spouter Inn. Ultimately all these characters met at the Spouter Inn and they rallied around Ahab who had been wronged and they knew it. In his story Pip was a soul singer, an entertainer, and they all came. He was there, but everybody thought Pip was crazy, but they took him on the voyage because they needed levity and entertainment even though they recognized that there was a message in his music, so to speak.

These young men liberated my thinking. Through their eyes I was able to see Ahab and his crew as ultra-human beings who were aware of every moment of their lives. I was able to connect with the world that many of my students came from. Theirs was a world that was full of life, color and excitement. That world was also violent, remorseless, and devoid of discipline. The kids kept giving me a sense that ultimately Moby-Dick's about revenge and why are we seeking revenge. With that kind of insight from the young men I was able to go in and fashion a story.

In my actual writing process of the play, I don't use any of the stories because they're really theirs. In some ways even when we cobbled their stories together to make our final presentation, it was a very different kind of story. Their story was far more contemporary, far more violent, far less redemptive in many ways, and undoubtedly more true than Moby-Dick: Then and Now. But if you kept looking inside their stories, they were all saying, "Don't ignore me. I can't be forgotten. Listen to me. I do think. I do care about some things," or in some cases, "I have been so stripped of my own humanity. I care about nothing." There was murder in every single one of the stories. There was violence of the highest order. But they were always able to, in some way, justify it.

Ultimately a gift that they really gave me was I knew that my young crew, when I dealt with a contemporary story, were not blameless. I felt no obligation to make my young crew some heroes of young culture that we want to cheer for. Yes, we want to cheer for them on some level because they're young. But Ahab was in the whaling business and they were in the drug business, and there was an acceptance that Ahab should have had that if you're in the whaling business there are occupational risks. The kids very clearly said, "We're in the drug business. There are occupational risks involved." The kids really freed me up to deal with that. But, also, I was able in some ways free them up to say, "Let's deal with the consequences of our actions. You're already incarcerated so you're dealing with certain consequences of your actions already, but let's deal with the long-term personal-responsibility consequences of your actions, and let's deal with the drug and the drug has a personality," and, "how many times it gives you another way out; how little it cares about you on a certain level and also what it gives you?” Whale oil lit the world. So does cocaine in a strange way. The kids were making massive amounts of money. Who doesn't want to make money for what they're doing? In the writing I was able to do coming out of that process, I wanted to honor those young men's contribution. I didn't want to appropriate their stories, but I did want to honor their contribution in some way. So my writing during that time was always to say, "These young men must be honored in some way."

They understood Melville's text on a visceral level probably as well or better than any group that I encountered, including the Melville Scholars. There were certain times they were trying to deal with the literary metaphor, they were saying, "No, the real deal is this. We don't have to coat this or surround this with academia and learned insight. Here's the bottom line." That was another way they liberated me. Sometimes I would have to write, "This is the way it is, period. We don't have to sugarcoat it." The more you cull down Melville—in order to get to the action of the play in the writing process you had to cull and strip away—you strip away everything that's not really important. When you get down to what's really important it's pretty simple: we want to exercise our humanity in some capacity and our humanness. Our humanity and our humanness are very different things. Sometimes Melville wrote about the physical nature of it. You have to
use your eyes, your ears, your nose, your hands, every sinew of your body. That was as important to these men as making money. In fact, it was probably more important because they didn't make that much money. But they got to use every aspect of their humanness.

In culling through the story in the writing process I was constantly asking, what are they doing? Not what are they saying, what are they doing? Tell me the story as concisely as you can. That was a fairly easy process, actually. I downloaded the entire novel and only saved the things in quotes. So I had people talking. Certain incidents of action I saved because they were just so active, because they were action. Then you cull out characters who may speak, but don't really have an impact on the story. Then you go back through and you say, "okay, what's moving the story line along?" Anything that's not moving the story line along, cut it out. Ultimately you find that you have a story that has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Now begins the process of creating the parallel characters. I found out fairly quickly that to make a direct parallel character wasn't going to work because after a time one character had to respond to exactly what his parallel character was doing. You just say, well, that's going to happen up here so it'll probably happen down here somewhere. With the exception of Alba and Ahab, single-minded focused leaders, everybody else on the younger crew became a composite of some type. Que became a composite of Queequeg and Ishmael. Tasha became a composite of Tash tego and a loyal crew person. Daj, Daggoo, but he didn't have to be "coal black with a lion-like tread." Stew became a parallel character in a sense for Stubb. The ticket-taker in some way became the modern metaphor for Elijah. So you look at the characters that you need and you try to find not so much a through line, but a loop, a thread that keeps going through both stories tying them together even though they don't have to... And who's telling the story when? If your through line is a straight line that says, here's the beginning of Moby-Dick, here's the end of Moby-Dick that's one thing. But the other thread, the looping thread, is the one that ties things together. That became a bit of a challenge.

I had consultation with a good friend of mine, Rick Benjamin, who really was very, very interested in the political ramifications and implications of Moby-Dick. He pushed me and encouraged me in some ways to say you really have to weigh that in. I probably didn't weigh it in as much as he would have wanted me to, but his position could never be ignored in the process. What are the contemporary implications of this story? Who are the contemporary Ahab's? Who are the contemporary Starbucks and Stubb's and Flasks and Ishmaels? Who are they in our society? In dealing with the contemporary characters, contemporary parallels I was hesitant to align my characters or the characters in the play with contemporary characters too closely because Melville's characters have survived for a hundred and fifty years and will be here hundred and fifty years from now. Those contemporary characters, they're going to get voted out, they're going to be gone in a couple of years. I didn't want to hook my wagon to that horse. On the other hand you want to do it enough for the audience to say, "This is like... That's that character right there."
Moby-Dick: Getting Started

By Wyn Kelley

Moby-Dick can seem intimidating at first. It has certainly earned its reputation for length and seriousness, but it has also become such an icon, adapted in films and other forms as a weighty tragedy, that many people are surprised to find that it’s fun: often humorous, full of adventure and odd characters, and refreshingly irreverent about authority and convention. Furthermore, as the Teachers’ Strategy Guide demonstrates, it speaks to young readers expert in using contemporary media. Before you even begin reading the text, you can introduce many of the ideas that shape the Teachers’ Strategy Guide.

1. Start with the basic premise that there is no better time than now to read Moby-Dick. We at last have the pedagogical tools for tackling a book that many readers have avoided in the past but that we believe has tremendous power to inspire young readers today.

2. Borrow or buy Moby-Dick: A Pop-Up Book by Sam Ita (Sterling 2007; $24.95) and let your students examine it closely. This book re-produces many of Moby-Dick’s salient features, not only of plot and character but also of its complexity and beauty. It may be that more people will read this version of Moby-Dick in the 21st century than any other—until the Next Big Thing comes along. Ask students what they know about Moby-Dick before and after reading the pop-up book. What surprises do they find? Explain that Ita’s work is “faithful” to Herman Melville’s humor, his racial and cultural diversity, and the intricacy and subtle texturing of his novel, even while using a very different medium.

3. Show a 30- or 60-minute version of Ricardo Pitts-Wiley’s project, Moby-Dick: Then and Now, and talk about the way Moby-Dick has been adapted in different media and variations over the last 150 years, continually finding new and committed readers. Showing students the way young people have responded to the play makes it clear how powerfully it can resonate with contemporary readers.

4. Moby-Dick may be a good story that imaginative people might want to make into a pop-up book or a play, but what is it like to read? Melville’s Ishmael explains. Turn to Chapter 10, “A Bosom Friend,” of Moby-Dick, where Queequeg is “reading” a long book:

   But . . . pretty soon, going to the table, [he] took up a large book there, and placing it on his lap began counting the pages with deliberate regularity; at every fiftieth page—as I fancied—stopping for a moment, looking vacantly around him, and giving utterance to a long-drawn gurgling whistle of astonishment. He would then begin again at the next fifty; seeming to commence at number one each time, as though he could not count more than fifty, and it was only by such a large number of fifties being found together, that his astonishment at the multitude of pages was excited.

   In this scene Melville seems humorously to predict how most people might begin Moby-Dick. But Ishmael goes on to reflect further, considering Queequeg’s character and soul, and he decides to overcome his prejudices and make a friend of this “pagan.” Rather than mock Queequeg’s kind of reading, he finds himself moved by it and responds without condescension by explaining how he reads a book:

   We then turned over the book together, and I endeavored to explain to him the purpose of the printing, and the meaning of the few pictures that were in it. Thus I soon engaged his interest; and from that we went to jabbering the best we could about the various outer sights to be seen in this famous town. Soon I proposed a social smoke; and, producing his pouch and tomahawk, he quietly offered me a puff. And then we sat exchanging puffs from that wild pipe of his, and keeping it regularly passing between us.

   If there yet lurked any ice of indifference towards me in the Pagan's breast, this pleasant, genial smoke we had, soon thawed it out, and left us cronies.
Melville makes the point that reading together melts the differences between two individuals from worlds completely apart. Students may see a connection between this moment and examples in their own experience of how sharing a book creates bonds between different people. Reading alone, this scene seems to demonstrate, can be unrewarding; reading with other people in a sociable environment can be a real pleasure.

5. Next read the Book of Jonah in the Bible and Melville’s Chapter 9, “The Sermon,” in which Father Mapple fancifully rewrites the biblical story. Have students talk about how Melville shows Father Mapple adapting the text to suit his listeners and his own experiences as sailor. Discuss how Melville models remixing and appropriation in creative ways.

6. Then show the clips of this scene from the 1956 movie version of Moby-Dick (directed by John Huston), in which Orson Welles plays Mapple, and the 1998 version (directed by Franc Roddam) where Gregory Peck, Huston’s Ahab, delivers the sermon. Orson Welles and Gregory Peck in their times were considered actors of the highest authority; directors used them in their films to signal the cultural weight and significance of the book and of these adaptations.

7. These clips make the point that Moby-Dick has had a wide popular audience in the 20th century, but these adaptations may paradoxically lead students to think that it is a “classic” and hence not accessible to general readers. Point out that it was not a classic in Melville’s lifetime or for decades thereafter; that in fact the movies helped to make it a classic and a popular work in the 20th century.

8. Now try reading Melville’s first chapter aloud, enjoying the language, Ishmael’s delightfully specious arguments about the sea, and his fanlike wonder at the whale.
UNIT: MOTIVES FOR READING

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Why Do We Read?
The study of how and why readers read has become an important subfield of Media and Cultural Studies. Work in this tradition ranges from the study of the personal associations formed by individual readers as they encounter canonical literary texts to research into large scale "interpretive communities," such as the fandoms that emerge around popular television shows. The way we teach students to read in schools represents one possible way of reading a text, an institutionally specific set of practices that emerge from the field of literary studies. This approach is valuable, to be sure, but may be radically different from what readers do with books when they choose to read them on their own. Indeed, students often experience a disconnect between the two sets of activities. For those students for whom reading in school is a struggle, their displeasure may block them from picking up books in their everyday life. In other words, we may be teaching them NOT to read even as we think we are teaching them how to read.

So, in this section, I want to call your attention to the range of motives and purposes that shape the reading of popular media texts; my hope is to give you some background on the range of different experiences and perspectives your students bring into the classroom. This Teachers' Strategy Guide will encourage you and your students to "go meta"—that is, to pay attention to how and why they are reading a difficult book like Moby-Dick. Rather than ignore those elements that make Melville's novel challenging, we want you to acknowledge those challenges and to help students broaden their strategies for confronting them. When I studied Moby-Dick in high school, my teacher, Mrs. Hopkins, had a very clear motive for why I was supposed to be reading the book—to find allusions to the Bible—which had little or nothing to do with my own reasons for wanting to read the book—because I had enjoyed the film version and wanted to spend more time in Melville's world.

These different motives, in turn, require different strategies for reading. Literary scholar Peter J. Rabinowitz argues that genre, for example, represents less a category of texts than an approach to reading. He suggests that genre involves "reading as." My teacher was encouraging me to read Moby-Dick as a retelling of the biblical story of Jonah, while I was reading Moby-Dick as the story of men against whales. Rabinowitz argues that the choice of a genre involves alternative strategies for interpretation. First, he talks about "rules of notice," that give priority to certain aspects of narratives as potentially significant while assigning others to the margins. No one can pay attention to every detail in a book as expansive as Moby-Dick, but how do we decide what to notice? Second, genre sets "rules of signification" that determine what meanings can be ascribed to the significant details we've identified. How do I know what the white whale means? Third, "rules of configuration" shape the reader's expectations about likely plot developments. We know that when Ahab and his crew find the whale, they are not likely to give it a big hug or fire machine guns or tap dance on its back or try to communicate its songs to visitors from another world. Fourth, "rules of coherence" shape the extrapolations readers make. Once we have read a book, certain questions linger. What, for example, happened to Ahab's son who is referenced by the captain of the Rachel? Depending on our goals for reading, we may be encouraged to speculate further or forget about these loose ends.

Seeking insights into how people read literature, David Bleich asked male and female students to retell the plot of William Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily." He found significant differences in male and female

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responses. Male students read for authorial meaning, perceiving a "strong narrational voice" shaping events, while female students "experienced the narrative as a world" that exists beyond the short story. Male students tried to recover what Faulkner meant, while female students got inside the heads of the characters. The male students moved quickly to interpretation even when they were trying to recount the plot while the female students felt freer to add their own speculations into their account. Not surprisingly, the males' reading strategy is the one most often promoted through the classroom, where the author's voice is seen as more important than the character's, and where recovering meanings is valued more than speculating about what might happen after the story ends. Yet, in promoting this strategy, we may be discouraging other forms of reading and motives for reading that are also rewarding.

In one of my early research projects, I looked at three very different communities of readers who were invested in the television series, Star Trek: mostly male MIT students, mostly female fan fiction writers, and the Galaxians, a group of gay, lesbian, and bisexual fans. The male MIT students were most interested in the technical aspects, classifying episodes based on which body of scientific knowledge they evoked, and using them as a starting point to speculate about future discoveries and innovations in their chosen disciplines. The female fans were much more interested in the strong emotional ties between the characters—romances, friendships, and community bonds. The Galaxians saw Star Trek as a social utopia that embraced diversity. These different motives impacted what each group took away from the series. For example, when asked about each of the regular characters, the male MIT students described them as autonomous problem-solvers, identifying what actions they took to "save the ship," whereas the female fanzine writers read the characters through their relationships as mentors, friends, lovers, and shipmates. The male MIT students translated their enthusiasm for the series into "nitpicking," criticizing errors in the science, making models of ships, or playing computer and role playing games centered on combat situations. The female fans responded by writing stories, especially stories that loosely fell into the romance genre, and making music videos, which likewise focused on the emotional lives of the characters.

What Do We Read For?
The Web has made it much easier for us to see different groups of readers in the process of reading favorite texts. We can take those insights back with us into the classroom as we think about what might be going on inside the heads of different students, each with her own motives that shape what she is likely to get out of a book. We might start with the basic question—what are you reading for?—and realize that different readers pay attention to different kinds of information.

Consider, for example, the Patrick O'Brian Compendium [http://www.patrickobrian.com/], a website where readers of a popular series of sea novels have pooled information, each tackling a different body of knowledge. On this site, you can see, for example, a breakdown of all of the medical issues (wounds and diseases) the characters confronted and how they were cured; other readers have catalogued the ships or developed a time line of the events, researched vintage recipes or produced a glossary of old naval terms. Looking at this site, we can imagine readers going through the books with yellow highlighters, marking different passages. That's precisely what we hope will happen in your classrooms as you encourage students to identify their own interests in Moby-Dick.

As we turn towards other fan websites and discussion lists, we may also pay attention to the different things readers do with texts. For example, this website [www.politedissent.com/house_pd.html] represents a medical student's reactions to House, M.D. For each episode, he describes the medical issues and practices

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6 David Bleich, "Gender Interests in Reading and Language," in Elizabeth A. Flynn and P. P. Schweickart (eds.) Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

depicted and critiques them against his own professional knowledge and experience. Fans call this approach "nitpicking." The reader recognizes that one can have an entertaining episode which misrepresents medical information, but he also takes pleasure in testing his own evolving knowledge against the series.

This Battlestar Galactica site [http://en.battlestarwiki.org/wiki/Continuity_errors_(RDM)] involves a different form of nitpicking: it is primarily focused on identifying continuity errors, places where the program contradicts earlier information. Fans collectively see if they can spot the mistakes and thus demonstrate their mastery over complex long-form narratives.

Lost is famous for its mysteries and puzzles. Whether you like the series or not depends on your interest in these enigmas. This website [http://lost-theories.com/] has become a place where fans share and evaluate their theories. Fans might describe this activity as speculation.

After every episode, Survivor fan David Bloomberg explains why the contestant booted that week lost the game. You can see an example at [http://www.realitynewsonline.com/cgi-bin/ae.pl?mode=1&article=article7926.art&page=1]. Over time, he has developed some core questions he asks about the contestants' strategies, identifying mistakes they made, and in the process, anticipating which characters will be voted off the island next. In fandom, this mode of reading is known as spoiling, since its goal is not simply to interpret what happened but also to predict future developments.

A site like Television Without Pity [http://www.televisionwithoutpity.com] involves another fan practice: the recap. Here, amateur and professional writers summarize what happened for the benefit of those who missed an episode. The tone of this site is snarky—the writers enjoy the series, but part of their enjoyment stems from not taking the series too seriously.

Some of what readers do online looks very much what readers do in classrooms: they form interpretations, often by tracing allusions to other works, as occurs in this fan's account of religious and mythological allusions in The Matrix franchise: [http://www.briandemilio.com/matrix.html].

A striking feature of all of these sites is that they represent a social process of reading. Fans go online to talk with other readers who are engaging with the same books and television shows. As they do so, sharing their reading experiences allows them to grow closer, forming friendships with others through their common reading practices. Here, readers may also debate different ways of interpreting shared texts, and in the process, they often spell out their assumptions about the nature of reading. Fans engage in close readings, citing specific passages, debating interpretations, and constructing arguments to support their analysis. Fans often say such conversations open a favorite series to new interpretations, allowing them to see things they might have missed, and providing them new motives to watch the episodes again.

These fan discussion forums illustrate one of the core new media literacy skills—collective intelligence. These communities of readers operate in a world where nobody knows everything, everybody knows something, and what is known by any member is available to the group as a whole on demand. The NML White Paper defines collective intelligence as "the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others towards a common goal." Pierre Levy, who coined the term “collective intelligence,” states very clearly that a networked society is one where each participant develops a distinctive expertise which can contribute to the

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group's common ventures\textsuperscript{11}. People working together and sharing information are able to address questions far more complex and arrive at answers far more quickly than any single member could do. Such a social structure places great value on diversity: if each member contributes his or her own expertise, the community is strengthened by the diversity of its participants.

Right now, very few activities in schools support collective intelligence. Schools are still modeled on the ideal of the autonomous learner; individuals are expected to know everything within themselves and thus seek nothing from others. To bring collective intelligence into the classroom, we first have to allow students to develop their own expertise and thus to take responsibility for helping the class to understand one aspect of the shared problem. Rather than having the students all read the same book for the same reasons, you might encourage the students to become more self-conscious about what they hope to get out of the book and allow them to pursue very different projects through their reading. In this way, they will not simply be trying to identify what their teacher thinks they should learn. Rather, they will be sharing with the teacher and their class what they discovered from reading the book in their own way.

Terms

\textbf{Nitpicking}—A fan reading practice which involves testing fictional representations against real world practices (such as reading \textit{House} for its medical accuracy) or searching for continuity errors that break down the coherence of the fictional world.

\textbf{Spoiling}—A fan reading practice that involves seeking to predict developments in a fictional text before the author reveals that information, either through internal analysis or through outside sources.

\textbf{Speculation}—A fan reading practice which involves extrapolating beyond the information provided in a series to explore other aspects of the represented world.

\textbf{Recaps}—A fan reading practice that involves summarizing the events of fictional texts for the benefits of those who missed them, often involving some form of snarky commentary.

HERMAN MELVILLE AS A PROTO-FAN
BY HENRY JENKINS

A central premise of this guide is that all authors were once readers, and their process of reading provides the preconditions for their acts of writing. Wyn Kelley offers her perspective as a literary critic about what we know of Melville as a reader and what traces we can find of his reading practices in *Moby-Dick*. Here, I want to share my take on this. In the discussion that follows, I will apply the vocabulary introduced above to what Melville does in writing about whaling culture. In other words, I want to read Melville as an enthusiast, perhaps even a fan of whaling culture who wrote *Moby-Dick* to share his passion and interest with others.

Speculating
Here is one of the many passages in the book where Melville examines the story of Jonah:

One old Sag-Harbor whaleman's chief reason for questioning the Hebrew story was this: He had one of those quaint old-fashioned Bibles, embellished with curious, unscientific plates; one of which represented Jonah's whale with two spouts in his head—a peculiarity only true with respect to a species of the Leviathan (the Right Whale, and the varieties of that order), concerning which the fishermen have this saying, "A penny roll would choke him"; his swallow is so very small. But, to this, Bishop Jebb's anticipative answer is ready. It is not necessary, hints the Bishop, that we consider Jonah as tombed in the whale's belly, but as temporarily lodged in some part of his mouth. And this seems reasonable enough in the good Bishop. For truly, the Right Whale's mouth would accommodate a couple of whist-tables, and comfortably seat all the players. Possibly, too, Jonah might have ensconced himself in a hollow tooth; but, on second thoughts, the Right Whale is toothless.—*Moby-Dick*, Ch. 83

In this case, he recounts a conversation among his fellow whaling fans—the old Sag-Harbor whaleman and Bishop Jebb—trying to make sense of contradictions in the source text. Their speculations extend beyond the information given in order to try to reconcile what they know of whales in the real world with what the story tells them about Jonah's encounter with the Leviathan. Contemporary fans would recognize the logic of this exchange: Melville takes an element that doesn't quite work in the original and rather than discarding it, he tries to figure out under what circumstances it might make sense. Fans often describe such creative work as "repairing the damage" created by a distracted artist who didn't think through all of the implications of his or her own story. What if we imagined Jonah inside the Whale's mouth rather than fully swallowed—maybe even inside his tooth? Ah, but these fans have already figured out that the Leviathan must have been a Right Whale, and not wanting to discard all of that fan labor, they want to preserve that theory and so they have to discard this new layer of speculation.

Nitpicking
In this case, the speculations also constitute a form of nitpicking: the above example closely resembles the search for continuity errors on the *Battlestar Galactica* wiki. But we can also see evidence of the kind of interpretive practices demonstrated by the young doctor in training as he critiqued the representations of medical practice on *House M.D.* Such nitpicking comes through most vividly when Melville takes on previous representations of the whale. Here, we see Melville boldly assert his superior knowledge and his desire to "set the record straight," common motives for participation in fan discussion lists:

I shall ere long paint to you as well as one can without canvas, something like the true form of the whale as he actually appears to the eye of the whaleman when in his own absolute body the whale is moored alongside the whaleship so that he can be fairly stepped upon there. It may be worth while, therefore, previously to advert to those curious imaginary portraits of him which even down to the present day confidently challenge the faith of the landsman. It is time to set the world right in this matter, by proving such pictures of the whale all wrong.—*Moby-Dick*, Chapter 55
But, before he can do so, he must clear away previous representations, in this case, focusing on the anatomical inaccuracies created by artists who have had no direct experience of the living beast:

These manifold mistakes in depicting the whale are not so very surprising after all. Consider! Most of the scientific drawings have been taken from the stranded fish; and these are about as correct as a drawing of a wrecked ship, with broken back, would correctly represent the noble animal itself in all its undashed pride of hull and spars. Though elephants have stood for their full-lengths, the living Leviathan has never yet fairly floated himself for his portrait. The living whale, in his full majesty and significance, is only to be seen at sea in unfathomable waters; and afloat the vast bulk of him is out of sight, like a launched line-of-battle ship; and out of that element it is a thing eternally impossible for mortal man to hoist him bodily into the air, so as to preserve all his mighty swells and undulations. And, not to speak of the highly presumable difference of contour between a young sucking whale and a full-grown Platonian Leviathan; yet, even in the case of one of those young sucking whales hoisted to a ship's deck, such is then the outlandish, eel-like, limbered, varying shape of him, that his precise expression the devil himself could not catch.—*Moby-Dick*, Chapter 55

I am reminded of a recurring feature on Sequential Tart, a long-standing webzine by and for female comics fans, which regularly posts and critiques unlikely depictions of the female body in various superhero comics. Here, for example, is an excerpt from one tutorial on "Bizarre Breasts." ([http://www.sequentialtart.com/archive/july02/bb_0702.shtml](http://www.sequentialtart.com/archive/july02/bb_0702.shtml)):

Bizarre proportions are nothing new to comics; be it the desire to cater to the cheesecake crowd or simply the preference of the artist, distorted anatomy has become commonplace. The fact that "professional" artists may utilize distortions in published works is a bit disappointing, but frankly, if they've gotten the job the odds are they aren't going to feel the need to change their style. That's fine, the world needs laughter. However, what does bother me is the possibility—hell, the reality—that amateur artists are copying this exaggerated anatomy and making these mistakes their own. So, in hopes of reaching those for whom this advice may actually have some impact, I have utilized my meager knowledge of anatomy and admittedly unpolished art skills to bring the world a brief tutorial on one of the comic artists' greatest challenges: the breast.

I don't want to push the parallels here too far, but both passages argue against the absurd and inaccurate representation of anatomy which comes from artists who don't really understand the subjects they are trying to depict.

**Cataloging and Collecting**

Melville, like modern day fans, refuses to restrict himself to a single text or even a single mode of representation. As he explains, "There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method" ([Chapter 82](#)). And indeed, some of the most productive modes of fan interpretation involve rampant interdisciplinarity and free association, creating unexpected juxtapositions of texts, tracing real and imagined allusions to other works, as we saw in *The Matrix* example above. Melville read everything he could get his hands on—ancient books, religious texts, paintings, scrimshaw, currency, tavern signs, even the stars in the sky. He exhibits here the fan's fascination with cataloging and collecting:

The more I dive into this matter of whaling, and push my researches up to the very spring-head of it so much the more am I impressed with its great honorableness and antiquity; and especially when I find so many great demi-gods and heroes, prophets of all sorts, who one way or other have shed distinction upon it, I am transported with the reflection that I myself belong, though but subordinately, to so emblazoned a fraternity.—*Moby-Dick*, Chapter 82

I particularly like that last bit about becoming part of a "fraternity" of others who share his passions and knowledge, for this phrase conveys the social bonds within fan communities.
Appropriation and Transformation
Melville also appropriates and transforms the raw material, retelling classic stories for his own purposes. Consider how Melville manhandles the canon in his retelling of the story of St. George and the Dragon:

Akin to the adventure of Perseus and Andromeda—indeed, by some supposed to be indirectly derived from it—is that famous story of St. George and the Dragon; which dragon I maintain to have been a whale; for in many old chronicles whales and dragons are strangely jumbled together, and often stand for each other. "Thou art as a lion of the waters, and as a dragon of the sea," said Ezekiel; hereby, plainly meaning a whale; in truth, some versions of the Bible use that word itself. Besides, it would much subtract from the glory of the exploit had St. George but encountered a crawling reptile of the land, instead of doing battle with the great monster of the deep. Any man may kill a snake, but only a Perseus, a St. George, a Coffin, have the heart in them to march boldly up to a whale.

Let not the modern paintings of this scene mislead us; for though the creature encountered by that valiant whaleman of old is vaguely represented of a griffin-like shape, and though the battle is depicted on land and the saint on horseback, yet considering the great ignorance of those times, when the true form of the whale was unknown to artists; and considering that as in Perseus' case, St. George's whale might have crawled up out of the sea on the beach; and considering that the animal ridden by St. George might have been only a large seal, or sea-horse; bearing all this in mind, it will not appear altogether incompatible with the sacred legend and the ancientest draughts of the scene, to hold this so-called dragon no other than the great Leviathan himself. In fact, placed before the strict and piercing truth, this whole story will fare like that fish, flesh, and fowl idol of the Philistines, Dagon by name; who being planted before the ark of Israel, his horse's head and both the palms of his hands fell off from him, and only the stump or fishy part of him remained. Thus, then, one of our own noble stamp, even a whaleman, is the tutelary guardian of England; and by good rights, we harpooners of Nantucket should be enrolled in the most noble order of St. George. And therefore, let not the knights of that honorable company (none of whom, I venture to say, have ever had to do with a whale like their great patron), let them never eye a Nantucketer with disdain, since even in our woollen frocks and tarred trousers we are much better entitled to St. George's decoration than they. --*Moby-Dick*, Chapter 82

Fans might describe what Melville does here with St. George as a What if? story: what if St. George had been a sea-faring rather than land-loving man? Indeed, we can see Melville as struggling with another fan community over which one of them "correctly" captures what is interesting about this character and his adventures.

But like many later fans, Melville also struggles with how much fidelity the fan writer owes to the original. The author discusses the ways that multiple whalers approaching the same creature determine who can assert ownership over it, declaring some whales to be "fast-fish," that is, already harpooned and bound by a particular ship, and others to be "loose-fish," that is, free of any binds or constraints and thus subject to being grabbed by whichever ship approaches them first. Melville, then, extends this metaphor to talk about the work of the imagination: "What are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish and a Fast-Fish, too?" (Chapter 89). In other words, Melville is exploring to what degree we get hooked into a story and thus get captured by its author and to what degree our imagination remains unmoored, capable of taking the story wherever we want it to go. In a sense, that's exactly what fans are trying to make sense of when they debate how much they need to follow canon and to what degree they can construct their own fan universe. Read in this way, we can see *Moby-Dick*, often described as the Great American Novel, as a piece of fan fiction which grows out of Melville's fascination for the whale and his mastery over whaling lore. Drawing on a range of stories, responding to competing representations, Melville constructs his own original fiction, which he asserts better captures what fascinates him about man's eternal struggle against the natural order than previous representations.
Ricardo and Rudy as Readers
By Henry Jenkins

Reading the Characters
What does it mean to read *Moby-Dick* not as a media scholar or as a literary critic but as a creative artist, someone who wants to adapt the book for the stage, someone who is reading it with an eye towards its unfulfilled dramatic potential? This is not simply a task which Ricardo Pitts-Wiley took on himself; it was also a task which he gave to a group of incarcerated youth participating at the Rhode Island Training School. Each student was asked to focus on a single character within the book and try to anticipate what kind of person this character would be if the novel had a contemporary rather than historical setting. Here's how Pitts-Wiley describes the results:

"These young men...liberated my thinking. Through their eyes I was able to see Ahab and his crew as ultra-human beings who were aware of every—moment of their lives. I was able to connect with the world that many of my students came from. Theirs was a world that was full of life, color, and excitement. That world was also violent, remorseless, and devoid of discipline.

"These young men saw a modern *Moby-Dick* in which Ahab was a loving husband and father-to-be. A man who would see his wife and unborn child murdered by the drug lord (whaling interest) that he worked for. They saw Elijah as a man who saw the events of 9/11 before they happened and had tried to tell what he saw to an unbelieving world. They saw Stubb as a ferocious football player, Pip as a soul singer with a message in his music, and Queequeg, the peddler in human flesh, as a pimp. All of these characters were connected by a lust for a better life...The characters they envisioned, like Ahab’s crew, had learned to accept the danger of hunting whales or living in poor urban neighborhoods."

This is a task you might set for your own students: rather than trying to take Melville's world in all at once, read it through the eyes of a single character. Try to understand what issues that character faces in the course of the book. Try to figure out what makes this character tick, what motivates him or her to act the way he or she does, what makes him or her feel and think the things he or she says in the book. And then take this one step forward. Don’t simply write a profile of the character as he or she exists in this story but use him or her as a vehicle to construct your own story. What kind of person would the character be if he or she was living today, or for that matter, if they were operating in any other context (as frontiersman in the wild west, as crew members aboard a starship, as characters in an anime series).

This is what fan fiction writers call an Alternative Universe Story. In the world of comics, it is called an "Elsewhere" story. Here's how DC Comics describes its Elseworlds series: "In Elseworlds, heroes are taken from their usual settings and put into strange times and places—some that have existed, or might have existed and others that can’t, couldn't, and shouldn't exist. The result is stories that make characters who are as familiar as yesterday seem as fresh as tomorrow." DC’s Elseworlds series imagines, for example, what Superman would have been like if his spaceship had crashed landed into Cold War era Russia rather than Kansas or if he lived inside the world depicted in Fritz Lang's German expressionist film, *Metropolis*. The Elseworld’s books read the superheroes as archetypes that would assert themselves in many different historical and generic contexts; they invite a search for the core or the essence of the character even as they encourage us to take pleasure in their many permutations. If we can tinker with his costume, his origins, his cultural context, even his core values, what is it that makes Superman Superman?

For Ricardo, this effort to get his young students to rewrite the characters of *Moby-Dick* could be seen as an attempt to build a bridge between their world and those depicted in the novel. Either way, to create convincing reworkings of these characters requires close analysis, a deep understanding of the essence of who these characters are and what made them into the people they are depicted as within the narrative. It also
requires the reader to take a step beyond and anticipate other possibilities for these characters, including in this case, to imagine the *Pequod* crew as Alba, Que, Dai, Tasha, and Stu, young drug dealers struggling on urban streets, trying to hold together their crew as they go after "Big White Thing."

**Rereading and Rewriting**

On July 26, 2007, the New Bedford Whaling Museum hosted a conversation between two artists who had recently created stage versions of *Moby-Dick*, both involving moving the story into a more contemporary setting. One was Ricardo Pitts-Wiley and the other was Rinde Eckert who had been inspired to write an opera which was based on *Moby-Dick*. Their comments offer some interesting insights into what it is like to read *Moby-Dick* as a creative artists looking for material to inform your next project. Each of these comments would be worth discussing with your students, both because of what they have to say about *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* and what they have to say about the challenges and rewards of reading Melville's novel:

(indented)

"I describe my research as hunting, which means I'm looking for a thread, I'm looking for my spine, the thing that's going to serve like the king-post in the whaleboat. My first reading was, I suppose, what everyone's first reading is: you just submit as you go through it. This confirmed my assumptions about the work."—Rinde Eckert. 12

Eckert here talks about a first-time reading as opposed to subsequent rereading. Your students will be doing well to read Melville's novel once, but there may well be other books that they have read more than once—or barring that, films and television shows they have seen multiple shows. Reruns are the norm on television and in the age of DVDs, we increasingly own movies so we can see them many times. So, how does the experience change between first and subsequent viewings? What do you see on second and third viewings that you missed on the first time through? Do you "submit as you go through" the story the first time? Do you gain greater control over the narrative upon subsequent encounters? Why do you choose to reread or reencounter some stories when you get everything you want out of others on the first experience?

On the third reading, one particular point jumped out at me. It's Ahab pacing on the deck. He's smoking his pipe, and it's not satisfying. Melville writes, "He tossed the still lighted pipe into the sea. The fire hissed in the waves; the same instant the ship shot by the bubble the sinking pipe made. With slouched hat, Ahab lurchingly paced the planks." I thought, this is masterful. This emblem of bourgeois life, even the intent to recover that bourgeois life in the pipe, he [Ahab] finally gives that up. At that moment he's dedicated to his path; now there's no turning back, and at that moment we have the image of the pipe sinking and the bubbles coming up. We have that vertical thing, the fire sinking and the air coming up in the form of bubbles. At the same time he [Melville] takes us right into the straightforward motion of that ship.

"The same instant the ship shot by the bubble the pipe made." So you have this cross, one thing that's going vertically down, and the vector that's going across. Then, as the coup de grace, he reinforces that with, "With slouched hat, Ahab lurchingly paced the planks." He creates a second cross, so we have this juxtaposition of vectors that creates two crosses. I thought, this is just so simple, but it's complex. I went on to the fourth reading, and I was saying, it just keeps on going, I don't think there's any end to it.——Rinde Eckert

Here, Eckert describes what he discovered on his third reading of the book, singling out moments which might have seemed insignificant before but which inspired him to think about the story from a different perspective. Can we compare this with some of the examples students have identified of things they discovered in their favorite films or television programs when they watched them for a third or fourth time? Are there moments in *Moby-Dick* which seem to them especially interesting or telling, even if they do not

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receive much attention in the novel? If so, how might one expand upon such a moment, making it the focus of a short vignette or scene in a play? It is this recognition of unrealized potential that becomes the basis for new kinds of creative expression. This is what fans look for when they look for a starting point for fan fiction. They find a line, a gesture, a facial expression which they think requires further reflection and elaboration. And they use that moment as an inspiration for an original story.

"You have this image of years' worth of goods stowed in. Everything is completely meaningful. A ship can't afford anything that doesn't belong. Everything has to be used. Everything has to have double uses. Melville's whole novel is like the ship, packed with all this stuff. You need everything. You need the practical stuff. You need the provisions. You need to know."—Rinde Eckert.

Having read the book many times now, Eckert comes away with a greater respect for the structure of the whole: he has discovered why every detail is there, what each adds, and how much this narrative gives subsequent artists to work with. Some contemporary writers have talked about the "encyclopedic" quality of many contemporary long form stories—book series, film franchises, or television series, which may extend over many installments and which give one this sense of there being more information than any given reader can absorb. Indeed, what we are calling collective intelligence comes into play as readers and viewers master different aspects of the story world and share them in the context of an online community's ongoing discussion of the work. Eckert is not simply looking at the richness here as a reader, though. He is also describing what the text looks like to an artist who comes after Melville and is looking for things he might plunder and deploy in his own world building.

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley describes his reading process with a clear eye towards the appropriation and transformation of Melville's materials: “In a sense you go through a process of trying to make your idea fall apart. Every step of the way you say, I want to put up barriers; I'm going to see how many barriers the novel will present to me, so that this project will fail before we get to the end of it.”

Here, Pitts-Wiley starts with a set of ideas he wants to explore within his play, and he reads the novel against those themes, trying to see if his interpretation holds up in the face of Melville's own writing. Pitts-Wiley describes the process as a struggle between reader and writer, each trying to assert his own control over the material.

Eckert adopted a similar metaphor of reading as an act of resistance:

There is a sense in which you are bound as an artist to wrestle with your material. I think you take a great book most seriously if you take yourself seriously in the process of making your own work. The best homage to Melville is to attempt to make your own great work with the inspiration of a great work. To a certain extent you have to be a little ornery in the process.

What do you make of this image of the reader/writer as a fighter doing battle with the original author? How might we compare this with other common ways of thinking about the adaptation process where we are told to be "faithful" to the "spirit" of the original work or to try to preserve as many of the details as possible? What does this say about our own experiences as readers? Is our task to try to get at what the author intended us to find or are we freer to engage with the work with our own imagination, with our own insights about the world, for our own purposes? One literary theorist Michel De Certeau talks about readers as "poachers" who take what they need from the stories they encounter, owning no loyalty to the original author, serving only their own interests and desires. Can we see Ricardo Pitts-Wiley and Rinde Eckert as "poaching" from Melville to create something new, rather than as being "unfaithful" adapters of the original source material?

Pitts-Wiley offers a very specific description of the process he used to convert Melville's novel into a stage play: "I downloaded the entire novel and went through page by page and took out everything that wasn't in quotes. That's the way I started. Okay, now I had a seventeen-hour script. Now you go back through, and you
say, what's important? When is it active? Where are the verbs? Okay, here is a strong verb sequence; I need it. Then you go back through, and you say, What's the duplicate scene? How do I replicate this scene for today?" 

So, here, as a reader in the process of becoming an author, he asks very pragmatic questions. He's trying to find lines which his actors can speak and actions which they can perform. He's looking for moments in the novel which offer parallels to contemporary concerns. You might compare this process of reading through the novel with a pen in hand to the kinds of notes you are asking your students to take as they read the novel. Having asked them to establish a goal for taking notes, they now have to make decisions about what elements of the novel matter to them and why. They have to decide which passages to underline and which passages to skip over.

**Rudy as a Reader**

How does acting change how you read a text? In the video interviews of Rudy Cabrera, a high school student and cast member of Mixed Magic Theatre, Rudy offers a compelling account of his own transitions as a reader in this segment. (The clip can be accessed at [http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/489-rudy-on-reading](http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/489-rudy-on-reading).) Here, Rudy describes a range of different modes of reading, and we suspect some of your students will recognize themselves in these descriptions.

Rudy makes a distinction between “following the words” and “understanding the text.” He talks about a mode of reading which ignores punctuation and treats every sentence as a "run-on." We might connect this comment to his later suggestion that he was "flying by the words" before he went back and reread a chapter from *Invisible Man* with a deeper level of comprehension: "I finally connected with this text."

Rudy talks about being "knee deep into the text." This is what we often mean by being immersed into a fictional world. What allows him to make that transition from reading on the surface to getting deep inside the story? How might this relate to the challenges he faces as an actor, learning to embody a character who thinks and feels things differently from the actor himself?

Rudy describes his "responsibility" as an actor to master the text he is going to present on the stage. He distinguishes between learning a summary of what the text is about and learning to "understand it word for word," which he sees as necessary in order to convey the emotional tone of the script. What, if any, are our "responsibilities" as readers to the texts we read?

Throughout this interview, Rudy talks about his relationship to Shakespeare. He has moved from a certain disdain ("I used to find the Dude corny") towards a respect for his reputation ("He's that known for a reason"), and he urges other students to be less "closed-minded" about reading classic works. Along the way, he expresses both an appreciation and a bemusement for Shakespeare's use of metaphors and what now seems like overwrought language. So, can we take pleasure in a text even if we find some aspects of its language puzzling or problematic? How does this relate to the process your students are going through as they learn to deal with Melville's 19th-century prose style? How might we compare that with the puzzlement some adult readers experience with the street slang deployed in the more contemporary sections of *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*?

Rudy talks about "finding a flow" as a reader, getting into a rhythm where he can engage productively with the text. Interestingly, the idea of "flow" first emerged through theoretical work dealing with video games. It describes a moment where one's mind shuts down, and players learn to trust what they have learned with their bodies. So, how might we compare that experience of "flow" when reading a book with the experience of "flow" in playing a game? In neither case do we literally shut down our brains, but we are using our brains differently.
Rudy's interview gives us a good chance to talk with students about their own life histories as readers and what skills/approaches they take to reading a book for class as opposed to reading a book for pleasure. If the goal of this unit is to help students become more self-conscious about different approaches and motives for reading, taking a personal inventory may be a good way for them to cement what they have learned so far.

We might understand acting as a form of play. Play is one of the eleven New Media Literacy skills. We define play as "the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem solving." In the White Paper, we cite work by literacy experts Anne Haas Dyson, Shelby Anne Wolf, and Shirley Brice Heath, who have studied children's play with characters, themes, plots, and language from children's books as part of the ways that they acquire basic literacy skills. Young readers, they suggest, internalize the characters, manipulate the words, and transform the plots in order to bring them more fully under their control. To what degree is this what Rudy and the other actors in the play do when they take on these characters, learn what they are thinking and feeling, and discover the meaning behind their words? What would it mean to think of reading as itself a form of "play"?
Introduction: Entering the Text
This unit gives readers tools for engaging with a new text. The activities associated with this unit allow students to figure out why we’re there. What are our motives for reading? Then we can think about how we navigate this new place. Are there helpful signs? Can we recognize the author’s very different motives in writing the story? Finally we ask what happens if we go in an unanticipated direction or get off the path. This section of the unit shows how Moby-Dick addresses these questions.

In looking at motives, signs, and paths, we will be reading in a way that is more like learning the terrain than getting to a destination. This unit encourages readers to recognize and embrace nonlinear and discontinuous reading. With the skills and the activities described in the rest of the chapter, students can raise their awareness of themselves as readers, enjoy the messiness of texts, and feel fewer inhibitions about navigating a challenging work like Moby-Dick.

Moby-Dick and Nonlinear Reading: Wandering in New Terrain
In Moby-Dick Melville says: “There are some enterprises in which a careful disorderliness is the true method” (Ch 82, “The Honor and Glory of Whaling”). His novel rewards “disorderliness” of reading because it is itself disorderly, though carefully so. Although it has a linear plot, structured around the quest for a whale, it deviates endlessly from its path. The last sentence of the book describes a ship wandering over the sea in a seemingly aimless pattern: “It was the devious-cruising Rachel, that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan” (“Epilogue”). Melville uses the word “devious” not to mean “duplicitous” or “dishonest” but in its older sense of “circuitous” or “wandering.” The reader of Moby-Dick is similarly “devious-cruising,” invited to follow any number of paths through the narrative.

This disorderliness is precisely what makes many readers consider Moby-Dick a confusing and difficult book. It is long. It has digressions. Are we allowed to skim? How do we get through it?

We need not be scared off, though, by a book that seems disorderly. Melville and his readers liked long, digressive texts. Long, digressive books have appealed to enthusiastic readers throughout history. And older habits of reading—that is, nonlinearly, digressively, discontinuously, and selectively—have great value to us now as we navigate a wealth of new media. We propose reading Moby-Dick as Melville’s readers might have read it—and as we read many forms of new media today.

To appreciate nonlinear reading, we need to identify linear reading. Reading literature, at least as understood for the last 150 years or so, has traditionally involved certain expectations of a text:

- It is linear. You start at the beginning and go to the end. Books have a design that you can best appreciate by reading in a given order.
- It is continuous. Books have a unity and cumulative effect that you would lose by jumping around.
- It is complete. You must read it all to get the meaning.
- It is deep. Your first reading gives you “only” surface understanding. You must read and re-read, looking for significant patterns of language and theme, before you can say you understand the text.

This model applies to many kinds of texts, but especially to the classic literary fiction that many teachers use to train students in reading and language arts. Before the rise of the novel, however, in the early part of the eighteenth century, such a model of reading might not have appeared the norm for European and American readers. Before the mid-eighteenth century, many Western readers, if they read at all, sampled from a wide variety of texts for which a linear reading would not have been necessary or even advisable: periodicals,
almanacs, collections (of sermons, poetry, political speeches, essays, letters, tales, travel narratives, biographies), or encyclopedias. A work of history, biography, or philosophy might have required linear reading, but readers could explore a large field of books that did not.

A primary text for European and American culture, and a major influence on *Moby-Dick*, was the Bible. According to historians of the book, early modern readers and printers approached this long, often disorderly text with a number of “finding aids”—concordances, commentaries and annotations, illustrations, and maps—that made it possible to navigate the work in different ways, according to one’s own interests. Ministers selected and elaborated on particular passages for their sermons, rather than proceeding linearly through the text. Parishioners sometimes noted, collected, and annotated passages in what were called “commonplace books.” In the periods before cut-and-paste digital technology, people created literary collections of their own by gathering favorite materials from other sources: moral tracts, poetry, sermons, fiction, and periodical essays. For those without formal education—especially women and members of the laboring classes—such personal collections compensated for the lack of books and instruction and allowed readers to pursue their own learning. As Matthew Brown argues in his essay, “Undisciplined Reading,” such habits emphasized “disorderly reading,” a search for what concerns the reader rather than for mastery of the whole text.

The books that inspired Melville’s writing of *Moby-Dick* include many that one would never read continuously from start to finish. Besides the Bible, he also loved travel books and encyclopedias, which in his day presented a cornucopia of information lavishly illustrated and displayed. One of his favorite sources, the *Penny Cyclopedia*, included topics from history, natural history, myth, popular culture, and science. Melville also read natural histories of whaling, like Thomas Beale’s *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale* (http://www.boisestate.edu/melville/), where one might browse through information on whales, whaling paraphernalia, oceanography, anatomy, personal anecdotes from sailors and captains, and the history of “the fishery.” Like the “cabinets of curiosity” popular with Europeans and Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, books like these collected motley samples of different cultures and kinds of knowledge from all over the world and placed them in a convenient location: the almanac, the encyclopedia, the taxonomy of species, even philosophical works that aimed to gather knowledge in one place. The arrangement may seem disorderly to us, but it preserved the wonder of discovery, of multiplicity, of travel through a richly exciting landscape.

Reading *Moby-Dick*, we need to keep in mind Melville’s restless and imaginative love of “curiosities” from all over the world of print and other sources. But this mode of reading and writing—browsing from a wealth of sources and collecting materials in a new form—should seem quite familiar to readers in a digital environment. Although linear reading clearly has its uses, we should not insist on it at the expense of more fluid, self-motivated, selective, and flexible modes of reading.

**Locating Motives in Moby-Dick**

To recognize one’s motive for reading this book, it helps to see that Melville had many motives for writing it. He had a story of danger and heroism displayed in Ahab’s quest for vengeance. He wanted to convey information about whales and whaling, some derived from personal experience, some from libraries. He hoped to surpass the great masterworks of England and Europe by authors like Shakespeare, Milton, Rabelais, Bacon, Browne, Montaigne, Plato, Locke, and Kant. He also longed to excel as an American author,

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drawing on the language and themes of his own culture. He wished to make his readers laugh at the comic bewilderment of his novice whaler, Ishmael. And he wanted to take his readers on soaring flights of philosophy and fancy. He wrote in a “nervous lofty language” (Ch. 16, "The Ship") such as never had been seen before. He wanted to show places that appear on maps and also ones that are “not down on any map; true places never are” (Ch. 12, "Biographical").

Teachers might ask their students as well as themselves: Why are you reading the book? Are you interested in the story? Do you want to learn more about whales? Are you excited by the violence of the hunt? Are you fond of sailing or navigation? Are you ambitious to master a text that many people have found difficult? Each of these motives will structure one’s reading experience, leading a reader to certain passages, certain destinations in the text. Your motive shapes your decisions about which signs you will heed and which you will ignore.

Similarly for Melville, different motives inspired him to use certain distinctive kinds of language, to adopt different voices that appear throughout the book. Some of Melville’s voices and their different motives appear as follows:

**Ishmael/The Narrator.** Melville’s protagonist narrates the opening chapters (1-23) continuously, and then submerges himself, often turning the action over to dramatic scenes in which he does not always appear. His voice re-emerges as Ishmael (instead of a disembodied speaker) in chapters like "The Mast-Head," "Whiteness of the Whale," "The Mat-Maker," "The Hyena," "The Town-Ho’s Story," "The Monkey-Rope," "A Squeeze of the Hand," "The Try-Works," "Bower in the Arsacides," "Queequeg in His Coffin," and "Epilogue." His is a genial, engaging, friendly voice, but note the omniscience of his narration, the events he describes but could not have seen. These peculiarities of his narration suggest that Ishmael wants to move fluidly through the text, that in Ishmael's voice Melville announces his freedom and power to write any way that he pleases.

**The Dramatist.** Melville stages certain chapters as Shakespearean scenes and soliloquies: Chapters 29-30, 36-40. (Chapter 42, "Whiteness of the Whale," might be seen as Ishmael's soliloquy). The Shakespearean mode, sometimes tragic, sometimes shading into comedy or melodrama, returns later in the novel in Ahab’s final sections, with soliloquies by the Carpenter and Blacksmith, Ahab addressing the ocean in “The Symphony,” and the men delivering final speeches in “The Chase, Third Day.” These speeches and soliloquies use the archaic pronouns (“thee,” “thou”), sonorous rhythms, and elaborate diction of Shakespeare’s plays. The voice of the dramatist suggests an aspiration toward high art, impressive language, and cultural status. In these sections, Melville seems to be competing with his literary predecessors, writing as the new American Shakespeare.

**The Advocate.** This voice begins in Ch 24 ("The Advocate") and serves to defend the whalemen and their profession from detractors or explain its significance to the ignorant. It also surfaces at the end of many anatomical and technical chapters and in "The Specksynder," "The Affidavit," the end of "The Whale as a Dish," "Jonah Historically Regarded," and "Fast Fish and Loose Fish." It is passionate, political, historical, and lawyerly. Melville appears here to want to persuade a reader that his subject is important historically, economically, even mythologically.

**The Preacher.** Melville produces a preacher character, Father Mapple. But Ishmael adopts a sermonic voice himself in Ch 18, "His Mark," where Bildad remarks that he gives as good a sermon as the Deacon, and later the ship’s cook Fleece preaches in African American dialect to the sharks. Ishmael uses a preacherly tone for philosophical and symbolic thinking as well as religion, as in "The Mast Head" or "The Try-Works." Other examples might include "The Lee Shore," "The Whiteness of the Whale,” "The Mat-Maker," or "The Spirit-Spout," with the Preacher surfacing at the ends of chapters, as the Advocate sometimes does. The voice of the Preacher proclaims Melville's interest in writing a new Bible for his culture, one steeped in the idioms of working people as well as religious authorities.

**The Humorist/Satirist.** This figure jokes often in the opening chapters and surfaces later in a wealth of sexual humor and bawdy puns, physical slapstick and sly satire. "The Cassock" offers a sustained example, as does "Heads and Tails." Puns and wordplay break into even serious scenes. Social satire and
political humor enliven chapters like "Schools and Schoolmasters," or, with more barbed effect, "Fast Fish and Loose Fish." As wit and satirist, Melville in this voice appears to undermine the seriousness of the religious, political, or cultural arbiters who hold sway in nineteenth-century society.

**The Anatomist.** This voice, with its scientific, rational, and encyclopedic tones, appears in "Cetology," first and foremost, and all the chapters on the whale's body. It is influenced by Darwin, Cuvier, and other biologists and comparative anatomists, as well as by practitioners of early science, including medieval bestiaries and Sir Thomas Browne's *Vulgar Errors*. It can be detached, sometimes humorous, but also passionate, even bloody—offering a public dissection of the whale along with the factual information. The motive here seems to be to convince readers that, as Melville was later to say in *Billy Budd*, his story is "no romance" but solid fact based on scientific observation.

**The Technician.** This voice appears in all the chapters on whaling tools and procedures, ship instruments and navigation, charts and graphs, carpentry and blacksmithing. At a certain point Ahab becomes a technician or engineer himself, as he begins rebuilding his body and refitting the ship so he can keep going. It can get geeky at times, but in his passion for the tools and weapons of whaling, the procedures and practices of its acolytes, Melville's voice as Technician takes pleasure in the process, in all its concreteness and detail.

**The Poet, Artist.** Ishmael often assumes this voice, from "Spirit-Spout" to the whale-as-art chapters and all over the text. This figure knows literature thoroughly and borrows from great poets and artists of the past. He chooses words for their beauty and makes up new ones; he emphasizes visual effects and scenic description. Some critics have argued that these passages scan in iambic pentameter. Melville's motive here seems to be to sweep his reader away with a vision of the beauty and power of his subject, the grand spectacle of whaling and of his characters' heroic engagement not only with the powerful whale but also with words, images, and ideas.

Once readers can identify particular voices and motives (and one might come up with more than these throughout the book), they can locate places where different voices and motives intermingle in a single chapter; they might pick a chapter and see how many it contains. Students can try writing with one particular motive or convert a section Melville has written with one motive by rewriting it with another.

**Off the Path, Into the Margins**

One could use a scheme like the one above to mark the text in different ways—according to certain motives that affect patterns of language or types of narration. Thus, one might pay particular attention to plot—dramatic dialogue and action, portrayals of violence, significant changes in characters' situations—and read those sections with that motive. Or one might select only the philosophical musings or lyrical outpourings or anatomy lessons or technical explanations and stick with those. Then one would be "reading with a purpose," achieving mastery of a manageable portion of the text. Such a reading might still be linear in one sense, because it would follow the shape of the novel as Melville wrote it. But it would be discontinuous, selective, and motivated in ways that would break up the linear momentum of the book.
Melville’s Marginalia: Annotation and Ornamentation in Moby-Dick
By Wyn Kelley

Marking a text as above allows one to pause in reading, think about a particular passage, and respond to it. If you are reading an online text or one that you don’t physically own, it is hard to scribble in the margins, underline words you especially like, or enliven the page with exclamation points, question marks, and emoticons. But Melville seldom read without a pen in hand, and the books he owned are often covered with jottings of all kinds. We encourage students to discover the pleasure of marginalia, in whatever form possible, as a way of getting off the linear path of reading and wandering in the open spaces of the margins. Moby-Dick offers many opportunities for annotating, commenting on, illuminating, or reshaping the text.

To get a sense of Melville’s habits of annotation, go to Melville’s Marginalia Online: http://www.boisestate.edu/melville/. This site reproduces Melville’s markings of Thomas Beale’s Natural History of the Sperm Whale (mentioned above), as well as volumes of poetry (Matthew Arnold, James Thomson) and fiction (Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Moses from an Old Manse). These show the many ways Melville made his texts his own, from the inscriptions on the front pages to the checks and underlinings that mark certain passages, to sometimes lengthy comments approving, or more often, violently disputing certain statements. In his copy of Beale he inscribed the title page with his own name, the date when he began reading, and the price: $3.38. We will talk more in the unit on Adaptation and Translation about his use of Beale as a source (and there is no doubt that he lifted a great deal of material directly from this book and others for Moby-Dick), but the annotations also show a mind reading, thinking, marking, and commenting. On a certain drawing of the whale, for example, he writes: “There is some sort of mistake . . . . The tail part is wretchedly crippled & dwarfed, & looks altogether unnatural. The head is good” (Beale 33). Reading Beale’s description of the whirlpool a whale makes when it dives, Melville writes: “White and green vortex in the blue—as when a ship sinks” (Beale 45). He marks many details that inform passages in Moby-Dick, including notes for plot points that he later rejected—a scene, for example, in which Peleg, the Quaker captain, appears at sea.

Melville’s Moby-Dick also gives examples of his habits of noting, annotating, and commenting on information, images, and ideas. The chapters “The Whiteness of the Whale” and “The Town-Ho’s Story” contain footnotes; the one on the albatross in “Whiteness of the Whale” goes on at great length and includes personal reminiscences and literary allusions. Sometimes he will insert a chapter as if to elucidate a point, or comment on something that came before or is about to come. So, for example, at the beginning of Chapter 60, “The Line,” he explains: “With reference to the whaling scene shortly to be described, as well as for the better understanding of all similar scenes elsewhere presented, I have here to speak of the magical, sometimes horrible whale-line.” Or at the beginning of Chapter 83, “Jonah Historically Regarded,” he goes back to pick up a detail from the previous one: “Reference was made to the historical story of Jonah and the whale in the preceding chapter.” Chapter 53, “The Gam,” sets up “The Town-Ho’s Story” with a thorough definition of an unfamiliar term—“gam,” or social meeting between ships—and an explanation that prepares for the extraordinary events in the next chapter. Another chapter, “Ambergris” (Chapter 92) supplies a wealth of engaging facts and details.

Most of these comments or even whole chapters do not add anything to the plot and have been included with the other non-plot elements, like the chapters on cetology, technical equipment, and navigation, in readers’ denunciations of the book. But if we think of them as annotations they offer a different kind of experience. Like the beautiful and detailed scenes that illuminated the texts of medieval books, bringing a powerful visual dimension into the book, these moments in Moby-Dick invite us off the path of the plot. Here we wander in another world—sometimes contemplating a piece of scrimshaw or a painting, at other times meditating on odd question like, what does whale meat taste like? Melville seems in one sense to have anticipated every possible annotation or footnote his subject inspires, but in another sense he invites the reader to respond to
an endless array of tasty tidbits. If we think of the book as one part story and three parts marginalia, it starts to look more like the multimedia texts and multi-user domains described elsewhere in this unit. And anyone can play.

Wandering off the path, then, allows a reader to engage with a wide range of interests and experiences and lends itself to a devious-cruising reading of the text. One can read *Moby-Dick* from beginning to end. But remember how *Moby-Dick* begins. “Call me Ishmael”? No: with “Etymology,” a devious cruise through the names for “whale” in a dozen different languages, and “Extracts,” a commonplace book in which are collected all the references Melville could find to whales and whaling in literature over the previous millennia. From the start, Melville invites readers to wander in a world of texts and signs, picking a path that proceeds from their own hearts and minds and encouraging them to embellish the margins with their own designs.
# Unit: Appropriation and Remixing

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Is It Appropriate to Appropriate?
The process of digitization—that is, the converting of sounds, texts, and images (both still and moving) into digital bytes of information—has paved the way for more and more of us to create new works by manipulating, appropriating, transforming, and recirculating existing media content. Such processes are becoming accessible to more and more people, including many teenagers, through tools which support music sampling or video editing. A new aesthetic based on remixing and repurposing media content has flowed across the culture—from work done by media professionals in Hollywood or artists working in top museums to teenagers mashing up their favorite anime series on their home computers or hip-hop DJs mixing and matching musical elements across different genres.

Journalists have frequently used the term "Napster generation" to describe the young people who have come of age in this era of participatory culture, but this label reduces their complex and diverse forms of appropriation to the simple, arguably illegal action of ripping and burning someone else's music for the purpose of file sharing. Owen Gallagher, a twenty-something who runs Totalrecut.com, suggests that his generation's embrace of remix practices may go back to the nursery floor:

My brother and I were the proud owners of many Star Wars figures and vehicles, Transformers, Thundercats, MASK, He-Man, G.I. Joe, Action Man and a whole host of other toys from various movies and TV shows. Our games always consisted of us combining these different realities and storylines, mixing them up and making up our own new narratives. It was not unusual to have Optimus Prime fighting side by side with Luke Skywalker against Mumm-Ra and Skeletor. So, from a very early age it seemed completely normal for me to combine the things I loved in new ways that seemed entertaining to me. I think that my generation and those younger than me have grown up expecting this sort of interaction with their media, on their own terms.  

Such early play experiences taught contemporary youth how to transform elements from popular media into resources of their own fantasy, play, and creative expression. As they have embraced new digital tools, they have been able to manipulate this source material with equal ease.

Many forms of human creative expression have historically built on borrowed materials, tapping a larger cultural "reservoir" or "commons" understood to be shared by all. Our contemporary focus on "originality" as a measurement of creativity is relatively new (largely a product of the Romantic era) and relatively local (much more the case in the West than in other parts of the world.) This ideal of "originality" didn't exist in the era of ancient bards, out of which sprang the works of Homer; historians who work on oral culture tell us that bards composed by drawing heavily on stories and characters already familiar to their listeners and often built up their oral epics from fragments of language shared by many storytellers. The ideal of "originality" only partially explains the works of someone like Shakespeare, who drew on the material of other playwrights and fiction writers for plots, characters, themes, and turns of phrase. Elizabeth Eisenstein, an important historian of print culture, has called our attention to a medieval text which offered four different conceptions of the author, none of which presumed totally original creation:

A man might: write the works of others, adding and changing nothing, in which case he is simply called a 'scribe' (scriptor).

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Another writes the work of others with additions which are not his own; and he is called a 'compiler' (compilator).

Another writes both others' work and his own, but with others' work in principal place, adding his own for purposes of explanation; and he is called a commentator (commentator)....

Another writes both his own work and others', but with his own work in principal place, adding others for purposes of confirmation; and such a man should be called an 'author' (auctor).17

As this guide suggests elsewhere, all writers are already readers; their previous encounters with other texts shape what they are able to create. They can communicate only within the terms their culture provides. All expression is a balance between convention (the borrowed terms which will make a message accessible to listeners) and invention (the innovative uses of those terms which allow new ideas to be expressed). At different historical junctures, the culture places different values on convention and invention. Indeed, literary historian M. H. Abrams has identified two core metaphors—the mirror and the lamp—to describe the ways that cultures think about authorship and creativity18. The mirror has been the prevailing metaphor across much of human history: the author was assumed to reflect back aspects of the culture. The notion of the lamp—the author illuminating the world from some inner source of light—emerged in the Romantic era and has shaped educational practices down to the present day.

Our focus on autonomous creative expression falsifies the actual process by which meaning gets generated and new works get produced. Many core works of the Western canon emerged through a process of retelling and elaboration: the figure of King Arthur goes from an obscure footnote in an early chronicle into the full blown text of Morte D'Arthur in a few centuries, as the original story gets built upon by many generations of storytellers. None of these authors saw what they wrote as the starting point in a creative process, acknowledging inspirations and influences from the past. And none of them saw what they wrote as the end point of a creative process, recognizing that their characters, stories, words, and images would be taken up by subsequent generations of creators. In fact, there were more than two hundred alternative versions of Alice in Wonderland published commercially in the twenty years following the book's original release, including important first or early works by a number of significant children's book writers and including versions which used Wonderland's denizens to express everything from support for women's suffrage to opposition to socialism. Carolyn Sigler has argued that this quick and widespread appropriation helped to cement the book's place as one of the most oft-quoted works in the English language.19

So, we are making two seemingly contradictory claims here: first, that the digital era has refocused our attention on the expressive potential of borrowing and remixing, expanding who gets to be an author and what counts as authorship, but second, that this new model of authorship is not that radical when read against a larger backdrop of human history, though it flies in the face of some of the most persistent myths about creative genius and intellectual property that have held sway since the Romantic era. Both ideas are important to communicate to students. We need to help them to understand the growing centrality of remix practices to our contemporary conception of creative expression, and we need to help them to understand how modern remix relates to much older models of authorship.

Neil Gaiman is a storyteller famous for reworking classic myths, folktales, and fairy tales, whether in the form

19 Carolyn Sigler, Alternative Alices: Visions and Revisions of Lewis Carroll's Alice Books (Bowling Green: University of Kentucky Press, 1997)
of comics (*The Sandman* series), novels (*American Gods*), films (*Beowulf*) or television series (*Neverwhere*). During an interview, Gaiman asserted, "We have the right, and the obligation, to tell old stories in our own ways, because they are our stories"20. This statement offers an interesting starting point for talking with your students about appropriation. In what sense does a culture have a "right" to retell stories which are part of its traditions? In what sense are they "our stories" rather than the legal property of the people who first created them? After all, much contemporary discussion of copyright starts from an assumption that authors have rights while readers do not. Gaiman's statement pushes us further, though, since he asserts not simply a "right" but also an "obligation." In other words, retelling these old stories for contemporary audiences is a way of keeping their influence alive within the culture. It is something we owe the past—to carry their ideas forward into the next generation. As we retell these stories, we necessarily change them, adding or extracting elements in order to emphasize those themes that matter most to our listeners, much as an ancient bard would expand or compress a particular telling of a story depending on listener response.

A director appropriates and transforms the text of a play each time she stages it with a new cast for a new audience. Literary critic Diana Henderson recently published a book which talked about various actors and directors as Shakespeare's "collaborators." These creative artists continue to work with and on Shakespeare's plays long after the writer's death21. In turn, his plays continue to provide new insights and inspire new creative work around the world. In this Teachers' Strategy Guide, we are using Herman Melville and Ricardo Pitts-Wiley as two examples of artists who create through remixing existing cultural materials, yet it is important to recognize that the same would be true, to some degree, of any novelist or director/writer we looked at.

Literature teachers have already been trained to think about remix practices: they often teach about a writer's sources of inspiration or allusions to other works. The new emphasis on remix culture among contemporary youths may give you an opportunity to revitalize some concepts central to your discipline and to talk with students about cultural practices that are part of their own everyday experience. Seeing remix as another way into thinking about allusion suggests an answer to a question we often receive from teachers: How can you tell if a remix is good? How can you tell if an allusion is good? An allusion is good when it is generative, when it extends the original work's potential meaningfulness, when it taps the power of the original source to add new depth to your emotional experience of the current work. The same claims would hold true for other kinds of remix practices: as a general rule, a remix is valuable if it is generative and meaningful rather than arbitrary and superficial.

This section presents case studies of two works which appropriate and remix parts of *Moby-Dick*: M.C. Lars’s “Ahab,” and the science fiction film, *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*. The former may be called an adaptation (or retelling) of the original *Moby-Dick* narrative in music video form, while the latter samples parts of *Moby-Dick* as well as other canonical literary texts which are woven together into a film. Both of these analyses are designed to support a greater understanding of the processes of appropriation and remixing seen in the contemporary theatrical adaptation of the novel entitled *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*, which is detailed in the section *Remix Practices in Moby-Dick: Then and Now.*

**M.C. Lars’s “Ahab”: *Moby-Dick* and Nerdcore**

Before we deal with the complex series of appropriations and transformations which shape Pitts-Wiley’s *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*, it might be helpful to refine our vocabulary by looking at a relatively simpler remix of Melville’s novel, the music video which nerdcore performer M.C. Lars developed for his song, "Ahab" [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZW76mvaaXEc].

1. **What constitutes the primary source material?**

Like many examples of remix, the song combines its primary source—*Moby-Dick*—with other allusions. "Ahab" evokes contemporary reference points which would have been anachronistic in Melville’s novels, such as Steve Wozniak, the Mariana Trench, *Titanic*, and *Finding Nemo* (suggested by the clown fish at the end of the video). A tossed-off reference to "a Supergrass beat" acknowledges another group whose music MC Lars samples for this song. Remix often gets described as "plagiarism"; yet in fact, it can be seen as the opposite of plagiarism: plagiarists usually seek to cover their tracks, masking the sources of their material and taking claim for them. Remix, on the other hand, depends on our recognition that the material is being borrowed and often depends on our understanding of the specific contexts it is borrowed from. This song would be meaningless if we did not recognize its references to Herman Melville. And it says something about the ethics within this community that the songwriter acknowledges the beats he sampled.

2. **What is the media form of the remix?**

*Moby-Dick* was a printed novel; "Ahab" was a music video distributed primarily through YouTube.

3. **What is the context of the remix?**

M.C. Lars, along with Sir Frontalot, mc chris, Optimus Rhyme, and Baddd Spellah, is widely considered a founder of the so-called "nerdcore" movement. Nerdcore refers to a subgenre of hip hop music whose themes and images are drawn from geek interests: games, science and science fiction, computer and digital culture, and cult media in particular. For example, consider his video for "Space Game" [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y93x1_VghLo&feature=related], which not only celebrates early arcade games but also makes references to characters from *Star Wars* (Darth Maul, Boba Fett, Sith girls, etc.), *Lost in Space* (Dr. Smith), *Classic Star Trek* (Captain Kirk, Scotty, Spock) *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Q, The Borg), 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (Hal), *The Matrix* (Neo and Morpheus), *X-Men* (Magneto), *Superman* (Zod), even Dr. Seuss ("The Obleck"). In later verses, the song lays claim to being "postmodernist" (under the banner of Robert Ventura and Andy Warhol) and ridicules modernists such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, Franz Kafka, e.e. cummings, Wallace Stevens, and Frank Lloyd Wright. Watching this video with your students may be a good way to help them understand how allusion creates a juncture between old and new stories and in this case, between high art and popular culture.

Several of M.C. Lars songs, including "iGeneration" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhY5k_5WPCA) and "Download this Song" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zTPDVkVFOs) constitute manifestos for those who have grown...
up in a world where music is easy to access and where remix is part of what it means to consume popular culture. The "iGeneration" has in return deployed all of the resources of participatory culture to do own mash-ups to MC Lars songs, such as this version of "iGeneration" which combines characters from the Japanese Anime *Naruto* with a visual style associated with iPod advertising (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQInYAUQTI) and another fan video (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaQr9zXSY84) which deploys images from advertising, news, *The Matrix*, and *Battleship Potemkin*. So, how do the two different image tracks deployed here change the meaning of the original song?

"Ahab" was one of several songs which MC Lars based on canonical literary works; he reads with the same playful irreverence with which he approaches icons of science fiction culture. "RapBeth" represents his hip-hop ode to William Shakespeare, while "Mr. Raven" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAml5ucZUKk) signals his respect for Edgar Allan Poe. MC Lars has a degree in English Literature from Oxford University and has said that he would have pursued a career as an English teacher if he hadn't found success as a hip-hop performer.

4. **What elements of the primary source material are being remixed?**

MC Lars jokingly told one interviewer, "I read *Moby-Dick*, and I thought it was a great book but it was really long, so I tried to put it into three minutes."22 "Ahab" includes a high number of reference points to the novel, some of which are expressed through the lyrics (such as the reference to the gold doubloon which Ahab nails to the mast or the shout-out to Queequeg), some through the visual iconography (for example, the scar on Ahab’s face or his peg leg). For example, the line, "Hey Ishmael... can I call you annoying?," plays upon "Call me Ishmael," which is probably the single most famous phrase in Melville's novel. The repeated chorus, "Peg leg, sperm whale, jaw bone, what!," not only refers to some of the recurring icons of the narrative but also hints at the novel’s linkage of Ahab’s leg with the ivory of the whale. The conflict between Ahab and Starbuck is hinted at by "You’re never going to find him! He’s a big sperm whale. The ocean is enormous!" while other lines hint at Ahab’s self absorption and solitude: "excuse me while I go be melancholy in my room!" Another lyric neatly captures a key subplot in the novel: "Pip went insane when he almost drowned, So profound when he shrieks like a little sailor clown."

The visual logic of the video, which takes us under water and then into the mouth and through the belly of the whale, may hint at the story of Jonah, who is swallowed by a great fish, which Melville reads as a whale, while the hectoring figure in the turban here may suggest Elijah’s warning or Fedallah’s prophecy. MC Lars is able to shorthand *Moby-Dick* because so many of his listeners will already know the story through other media representations if not through a direct experience of the book. MC Lars simply has to point us in the right direction, and our mind fills in all the rest, with much of the humor here stemming from the brevity with which he is able to sum up such a vast and intimidating work.

5. **Are the works of the same or different genre? How do you know?**

*Moby-Dick* is a literary epic with tragic overtones; "Ahab" is a music video with comic overtones.

6. **What techniques are deployed in reworking the original material?**

The song compresses the complex and lengthy novel into a series of evocative phrases. "Ahab" relies on anachronisms to hint at the relationship between past and present. The song incorporates key phrases from literary analysis to suggest a particular set of interpretations of the novel. The staging of the music video is intended to evoke a school pageant, hinting at the relationship of this text to higher education. The song’s bouncy beat transforms the tone and spirit of the original book, inviting us to have fun with *Moby-Dick* rather than taking it totally seriously.

7. **What is the intended purpose of the remix?**

"Ahab" is a good-natured parody, one which deflates the elevated reputation of the original novel, even as it acknowledges its continued relevance. The song may be harsher towards some of the ways novels get taught through schools. Like several of MC Lars' other songs, "Ahab" blurs the line between high art and popular culture, suggesting an ongoing criticism of cultural hierarchies.

8. **How does the remix build on, add to, or alter the cultural meaning of the original work?**

The song suggests some of the interpretations of *Moby-Dick* which arise in high school literature classes. Ahab describes himself as a "monomaniac," draws parallels to Oedipus, talks about "hubris" as his "tragic flaw," defines the book's conflict as "man vs. beast," and sums up the book's message as "revenge is never sweet." All of this is the stuff of SparkNotes, suggesting a work which isn't simply familiar to us the first time we read it, but also may come predigested, neatly broken down into familiar modes of analysis.

That "Ahab" is responding to the rituals of the English classroom is further hinted at through the visuals, which depict students re-enacting *Moby-Dick*, and end with a shot from the wings as the performance concludes and the audience applauds. The Nerdcore movement tends to embrace low tech and amateur looking graphics in many videos, hinting at the Do-It-Yourself culture that inspires them and their audiences. Ironically, here, the stagecraft is more elaborate than would likely be seen in any school pageant, making, perhaps, a reference to the spectacular and equally unlikely high school productions of films like *Apocalypse Now* depicted in the cult classic *Rushmore*. The video is a thumbing of the nose at the practices of secondary education, even as it is also an affectionate tribute to the novel itself.

**Remix Practices in Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan**

If MC Lars's "Ahab" video draws primarily on *Moby-Dick* for its content, the *Star Trek* film is a much more complex weave of cultural references. *Moby-Dick* plays a central but secondary role to the 1960s television series itself and competes for our attention with, for example, Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. A remix artist breaks down the boundaries between texts, genres, cultural categories, trying to create something new through the fusion of elements once seen as separate.

1. **What constitutes the primary source material?**

*The Wrath of Khan* involves a complex interweaving of many borrowed elements, of which the most important are the *Star Trek* television series itself, *Moby-Dick*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*. Something of the intertextual mix is suggested by a shot early in the film when we are first introduced to Khan by scanning his bookshelf. Alongside a sign from his ship, the *Botany Bay* (named after a historic port in Australia through which many convicts entered the country), there are editions of Dante's *Inferno*, *King Lear*, The King James Bible, *Moby-Dick*, and two copies of *Paradise Lost*. Each book hints at aspects of Khan's character, though most of the other references remain implicit, while the *Moby-Dick* references are explicitly explored throughout the movie. Spock gives Kirk a copy of *A Tale of Two Cities* as a birthday present, and references to the book help us to understand the Vulcan's decision to sacrifice himself to save his crew. Throughout the film, there are many other allusions; some recurring, such as the fact that one regular character is named Chekhov in honor of the Russian playwright, some fleeting, such as a tossed off reference to the old advertising slogan "It never rains, but it pours," some designed to build up the credibility of the fictional world (a fictional scientist's reputation is established through comparison with Newton and Einstein), and some to the mythologies of other worlds (Romulan Ale, Klingon Proverbs, and the Vulcan IDIC symbol hanging on the wall of Spock's apartment). A key line from the film, Spock's "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few or the one," was directly informed by the philosophical tenets of utilitarianism, which is why Kirk is able to quickly complete Spock's sentence. The Genesis project is specifically discussed by McCoy in biblical terms, including a reference to Armageddon, the battle foretold in *Revelation*. Those interested in exploring some of these other literary references in *Star Trek* are encouraged to check out [http://memory-alpha.org/en/wiki/](http://memory-alpha.org/en/wiki/).
2. **What is the media form of the remix?**

*The Wrath of Khan* is a feature length, live-action film based on a television series.

3. **What is the context of the remix?**

*The Wrath of Khan* was the second feature film in the *Star Trek* media franchise; to date, there have been eleven films produced altogether. The *Star Trek* franchise is an important example of what we now call transmedia storytelling. While *Star Trek* originated as a television series in 1966, the series rapidly spread into other media: first comics, later original novels, then feature films, and more recently, additional television series, games, and amusement park attractions. Transmedia entertainment is based on a principle of world-building, creating a fictional universe so rich that it can not be exhausted by a single story or even within a single medium. The information about this world unfolds across these multiple media platforms in a coordinated manner with each new text adding something to the mix. Learning to trace the links between such stories is part of what we are describing as transmedia navigation, another of the new media literacies. In this case, the challenge confronting the producers of *Wrath of Khan* was to intensify the connection of the film franchise back to the original television series. Many hardcore fans did not think *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* had successfully captured what they had valued in the cult program. If the franchise was to survive, the producers needed to strengthen the characters and build back in more "Trek" elements. To do so, Producer Gene Roddenberry and writer/director Nicholas Meyer consistently evoke iconography, subplots, bits of dialogue, which reminded viewers of classic moments from the television series; they also restored aspects of the characterization that had been lost in the first film in the series. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* had been too generic, influenced more by *2001: A Space Odyssey* or *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* than by *Star Trek* itself. Perhaps the most important step they took here was to build the film as a sequel to one of the more popular episodes from the original series, "Space Seed," and thus bring back the character of Khan Noonien Singh, picking up the story more than a decade after it left off. In the process, the film acknowledges the impact of time not only on the world but also on the characters. So, there is a running theme in the film suggesting that Kirk and his crew have both aged and matured; they are now struggling with what the next phase of their life will look like.

Writer/Director Nicholas Meyer was already known as someone whose prose fiction creatively interwove elements borrowed from other literary sources. He broke into national consciousness with two mystery novels, *The Seven Percent Solution* and *The West End Horror*, both reading the fictional character of Sherlock Holmes in the historical context of Victorian London, where he comes face to face with such real world figures as Sigmund Freud and Oscar Wilde. Meyer entered film when he adapted *The Seven Percent Solution* to the screen, and his first original screenplay, *Time After Time*, was a fantasy/romance in which H.G. Wells actually built a time machine which ultimately takes him and Jack the Ripper into contemporary America. So, by the time Meyer was hired to revitalize the *Star Trek* film franchise, he already had a reputation for smart and playful remixes of literary and cultural history. Fans anticipated a series of allusions would be built into *The Wrath of Khan*. Meyer could not have anticipated how much his career would be intertwined with that of *Star Trek*. Ultimately, he would write and direct three of the films—*Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* and *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*. *Star Trek* fans have often argued that the even numbered episodes in the film series are always the best, and this argument started because Meyer was pulled in multiple times to fix problems the franchise faced. It is striking that, as we will see, *Star Trek II* built heavily on elements from *Moby-Dick*, *Star Trek IV* was centrally about whales in contemporary culture, and *Star Trek VI* drew extensively on references to Shakespeare, as might be suggested by its subtitle.

4. **What elements of the primary source material are being remixed?**

The remixing of *Moby-Dick* functions at three levels:

*Moby-Dick as a Marker of Book Culture*: The inclusion of *Moby-Dick* and the other literary sources in *Wrath of Khan* signals the persistence of books and reading in a society based on computer terminals and visual
The world of Star Trek embodies a technological utopianism: human nature can be perfected through refinements in technology. Improvements in transportation and communication technologies and the overcoming of poverty and scarcity paves the way for resolving other kinds of differences and difficulties. Spock and the Vulcan tradition of rationalism (and its embrace of a philosophy of utilitarianism) focus on information and data required to make decisions. We see lots of people reading from screens and monitors. For that reason, books stand out in this world. When Spock gives Kirk the book, it is a marker of his understanding of his lifelong friend's peculiar interest in "antiques." The Dickens novel takes its place alongside McCoy's gift—a pair of bifocals, both suggesting the more sedentary lifestyle he is moving towards now that he has passed 50. We see Kirk reading A Tale of Two Cities on board the shuttle craft, the only person with a book in his hand. He hands the book to Uhura as he walks onto the bridge; she looks at it oddly at first and by the end of the scene, she is flipping through its pages tentatively. We see Kirk reading the book more intensely near the end of the film as he mourns Spock's death, and then he quotes from its closing lines in recognition of what Spock might have been trying to tell him through the gift. In the course of the film, then, we watch Kirk move from the first page to the last and draw meaningful insights from his book. We might understand Moby-Dick and the other classics on Khan's bookshelf as another marker of times gone by: Khan was born in the late 20th century and spent much of the intervening years either in suspended animation or in relative isolation stranded on an arid and lifeless world. He is one of the most brilliant humans who ever lived, genetically engineered to be intellectually superior. For Khan, as for Kirk, the text becomes something he integrates into his own life, but it is less clear that he has drawn the intended insights from what he has read.

Moby-Dick as a Link to the Past: From the start, Star Trek explicitly sought inspiration from stories of the sea. Star Trek visionary Gene Roddenberry linked Kirk (and later Picard) to Horatio Hornblower from C.S. Forester's classic series of sea stories and drew comparisons between the autonomy Star Fleet captains enjoy as they encounter unexpected situations far from Earth (venturing "where no one has gone before") and the degree of control sea captains exerted over ships at sea in early periods of exploration. The seafaring tradition is suggested by the naming of space ships after older naval vessels—Enterprise, Reliant. The redesign of uniforms and the development of certain command protocols (such as the use of "Mister" to refer to female officer Saavik) in Wrath of Khan reflect the production team's desire to model Star Fleet on naval traditions. Composer Jerry Goldsmith is said to have drawn inspiration for the Enterprise theme song from earlier scores by Erik Wolfgang Korngold for Errol Flynn sea adventures like The Sea Hawk and Captain Blood. All of this reflects an older set of practices in science fiction of reworking stories set in other genre worlds, such as the old west, as space opera. So we might understand Star Trek's use of Moby-Dick alongside something like Forbidden Planet, which took its plot from Shakespeare's The Tempest, or countless space operas informed by Homer's The Odyssey. In early science fiction where writers often created stories for a range of different pulp magazines, focused on westerns, romances, aviation stories, sea stories, mystery, and science fiction, it was common to retool a plot if the story didn't sell to one publication and submit it to another. Modern science fiction is thus a complex layering of all of these genre practices, with sea stories an important influence. Captain Kirk is shown in the film to have a strong affinity for sea stories—witness the decoration of his apartment, which is full of model ships and old nautical instruments. In this context, then, it makes sense that Wrath of Khan would draw heavily on Moby-Dick and that Melville's influence would resurface multiple times throughout the Star Trek series.

Moby-Dick as a Plot Influence: Though Khan quotes from Moby-Dick, he has clearly not heeded its warnings or understood its message. Throughout the film, he ruthlessly pursues revenge against Captain Kirk, whom he blames for stranding him on a lifeless planet and causing his wife's death. Jedda, his second in command, consistently questions him about his priorities, playing a role here not unlike that of Starbuck in Melville's novel: first, Jedda suggests that having captured a starship, they are free at last to roam the galaxy, find their own worlds, rebuild their empire, and fulfill their collective hopes and dreams, only to be pushed aside; later, he notes that Khan's capture of the Genesis weapon allows him enormous power to exert his will on the universe and again, his suggestion of alternative goals is pushed aside. Each time,
Khan is even more determined to destroy Kirk and the Enterprise at all costs, including being willing to sacrifice the lives of his loyal young followers. When Jedda is killed in battle, Khan vows vengeance on his death as well, fully misunderstanding or misremembering why Jedda gave his life. Twice in the film, Khan quotes from Melville. The first time, he paraphrases the original novel. Khan says, "I'll chase him round the moons of Nibia and round the Antares Maelstrom and round perdition's flames before I give him up!", which reworks the original passage from "The Quarter-Deck": "I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition's flames before I give him up!" Here, as in the novel, Khan uses the line to define the goals for his crew and to signal his total determination to the cause. The second time he quotes more accurately: "From Hell's heart, I stab at thee, for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee." Ahab's final lines from the novel become Khan's last words in the film. By this point, the explosion on the ship has scarred his face and left his legs stiff and immobile, suggesting the physical marks Ahab bore on his body from his encounters with the whale.

5. Are the works of the same or different genre?
This turns out to be an interesting question: clearly, we think of science fiction as a totally different genre from sea stories, yet science fiction—especially in its space opera versions—has been so interwoven with earlier stories of the sea that the genres are much closer to each other than one might imagine. Certainly this remix involves a location shift—both in terms of time and space—but it also allows for a somewhat literal porting of language, rituals, and references from one environment to another. Consider how easily Khan is able to substitute galactic references in the "perdition's flames" speech for Melville's aquatic ones, changing "Antares Maelstrom" for "The Horn," for example. Note that even here "maelstrom" appears in both speeches, through it means something slightly different in Moby-Dick than in Star Trek.

6. What techniques are deployed in reworking the original material?
Moby-Dick is evoked here in multiple ways: through the image of the book on Khan's shelf, Khan's direct quoting and paraphrasing of language from the book, the borrowing and repetition of plot elements (including the destructive quest for revenge and the failure to listen to crew members who offer warnings but do not openly revolt against their monomaniacal captain), and visual references (the scarring of Khan's face and the crippling of his legs).

7. What is the intended purpose of the remix?
Star Trek shows tremendous respect for Moby-Dick and its other literary references, drawing on them in part to legitimate its own cultural pedigree. A newer medium—in this case, television—often "remediates" older content as a means of gaining greater cultural respectability. Star Trek hopes to benefit from drawing parallels between space opera and sea stories, between popular television and literary classics. Throughout, the classics are shown as continuing to offer wisdom which may be drawn upon in the present or even in the future—whether it is the insights which Kirk and Spock take from Dickens or the ironic parallels between Khan's own story and the lessons he fails to learn from Moby-Dick.

8. How does the remix build on, add to, or alter the cultural meaning of the original work?
Despite the transposed context, The Wrath of Khan is surprisingly faithful to Moby-Dick: the key point here seems to be that if Khan had read Moby-Dick more closely and really understood its truths, he might have chosen a different course, saving his life, his ship, and his crew. Not having been a good reader, Khan is doomed to repeat the plot of the novel, whereas Kirk's more faithful reading of Dickens helps him make sense of why Spock gave his life to save the ship, in a sense substituting his life for that of his captain (a development which closely follows the sacrifice of Sydney Carton to save the life of Charles Darnay). Kirk even recognizes Carton's last words, "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known," as Spock's final, healing message to him.
Remix Practices in *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*

By Henry Jenkins

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, his cast, and his crew mirror a mode of reading which is at once intensive, looking closely at Melville's text; and extensive, searching constantly for the wider contexts in which *Moby-Dick* operates, the sources it drew upon, and the more recent texts which have reacted to its provocations and inspirations. (See "Reading *Moby-Dick* as a Creative Artist," elsewhere in this guide.) In that way, *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* helps us to understood more fully the ways that remix practices draw upon the habit of close reading. Ricardo Pitts-Wiley tells us that remix starts from a "respect" for the original, trying to understand as fully as possible what the author was trying to say and trying to identify the historical contexts that shaped the work being sampled; remix also involves a creative revisioning and repurposing of the original, recognizing hidden potentials in the material that may only become clear when it is juxtaposed with ideas and images borrowed from elsewhere. Remix doesn't preserve the purity of the original, but it does grow out of a creative and insightful engagement with what comes before. This respectful reading is what distinguishes a rich and meaningful remix from one that is superficial.

Close Reading: Alba and Pip

Throughout this Teachers' Strategy Guide, we will be looking closely at the various ways that Pitts-Wiley's play connects with Melville's novel. But we might start with a basic example, which suggests just how complexly his remix practices operate in relation to the dramatic structure of the play. The scene involves Alba, the young Asian-American woman who stands in for Ahab in the contemporary setting, and her younger brother, Pip (please refer to the video clip "Cetology" on the Media Resource Page). The opening sequence of the play tells us that Pip has been killed in a drive-by shooting and as the story unfolds, we learn more about the circumstances leading up to his death.

Pitts-Wiley has shared these insights about this scene:

You have to establish the value quotient. Why was Alba so angry? It clearly had to be because she loved this child; she loved this young man, and he loved her back. If there was nothing else right in her world, it was Pip. He was beautiful, he was smart, he was fun, he was funny, he was her hope. Through her actions, she had made her choice about how she was going to live her life; and she had also made a choice that Pip was not going to live that life. He made a choice that totally showed her that she had failed in some ways. If I were drawing an equal parallel in some ways to Ahab and his leg, I would start the play with seeing Ahab as a great runner. He could run, his legs could carry him far and fast, and then he loses one. That's what we tried to establish with Pip and Alba, that she could lose almost anything and recover, but she couldn't lose him.

One of the hard questions we had to ask was is there anything in this world that, if you lost it or if it was taken away from you, you could never forgive and that you would avenge without question? Is there anything that could happen to you that would make you do that? That's a scary question and a reality for Alba, a reality for Ahab.

We had already established, at the beginning of the play, that Pip had been lost and how he was lost. Opening the second act with that scene gave me a chance to see Alba before we meet her as the angry, vengeful Alba. What was she before that? Melville does something very similar. About three-quarters of the way through, just before the chase starts, Ahab and Starbuck have this conversation on the deck of the ship. He's a gentle man. He talks about his wife and his child and how he had been wrong to her and how he had just given his whole life to this thing, and the wonder of the universe, and all of those things. He's so human and normal. I took my cue from Melville in that sense.

It also gave me an opportunity to celebrate whales and a way of showing Pip's brilliance by his talking
about going to the library and reading a book on cetology and how quickly he became fascinated with whales. Generally speaking, the cetology section of Moby-Dick is the hardest part to get through; it's brutal. But I fought my way through it twice. In my first draft, I was going to pass over the cetology section. I was ready to just say, "Well, we're not going to do anything with that." My friend Rick Benjamin said, "Well, no, no, don't sleep on the Cetology Section. Maybe it can just be presented as kind of incidental information; someone sitting on the stage and just talking about whales." But he said it so passionately, I said, "Well, I got to give this another thought." So then, it became a question, a dramatic question, of whose mouth to put the information in. And that scene lent itself to that; the brilliance of Pip and the greatness of whales.

But also it gave me an opportunity to give a warning, and Melville's description of the power of the whale and its jaws and its head, but ultimately the most dangerous part of the whale is the tail. Don't worry about the jaws; worry about the tail. We should keep an eye on our leaders but we should keep an equal, if not more vigilant eye on the forces that dictate to the leader. The power behind the power is usually far more dangerous than the face of the power. We have come to another period of time in this country where we know that for sure. It's the power behind the power. Don't worry about the head, worry about the tail.

Pip is portrayed as a book-smart kid, someone who spends time in the library reading up about whatever interests him, relying on clichés running through many contemporary works dealing with black street life (see, for example, Boys N the Hood or The Wire, Season Four) where the family seeks often unsuccessfully to protect intellectual siblings from being exposed to the dangers and corruptions of life in the 'hood. The name, Pip, of course, already resonates for readers of Melville's novel, since Pip is the young cabin boy whom the crew was unable to protect; the boy is driven insane when he is left adrift, by himself, as a consequence of being dragged overboard during a struggle with a whale. Pip's dialogue evokes the fate of the character in Melville's novel when Pip describes his thoughts as a rival gang is shooting up his house: "I thought I was going to go crazy. I was just going crazy, crazy scared. I thought I saw God. I was crazy dreaming just waiting for them to find me. But they didn't. You came back and saved me."

In this scene, the two worlds come together—Pip's bookishness is suggested by his excitement over learning about cetology at school, and his sister's destructive environment is suggested by his repeated questions about why she locks him away in the house rather than letting him participate in the gang's deals.

The exchange between Pip and his sister about cetology compresses the dense and detailed description of whale biology found in Moby-Dick into a few paragraphs. At one point, Pip interrupts his lecture with "Am I boring you?," a playful acknowledgment of the frustration some contemporary readers feel with the level of detail found in such passages. That Pip is interested in this whaling lore suggests, in fact, that there is not as big a disconnect between the contemporary and historical sections as we might imagine and sets us up to draw further parallels between the dangers confronting the gangs and those impacting the ship's crew.

This speech also sets up a key line, "If you ever out whale hunting, don't worry about the head, watch out for the tail," which resurfaces at the end of the play, when Pip reappears, offering advice to his sister which allows her and The One to turn back from the destruction which befall Ahab and his crew: "Go home. Get him out of your lives. Out of the hood. He doesn't stay where strong people live." These allusions to Moby-Dick do complex work: helping to establish the relationship between Alba and Pip, helping to bridge between the historic and contemporary setting, helping to foreshadow the alternative ending of the story, and acknowledging some of the aspects of the book that had to be cut out for the stage play.

Yet, Pitts-Wiley also deploys allusions to contemporary popular culture here. Immediately before this scene, Que, Alba's right hand guy, sums up what happened to Pip: "He thought he could be better at the game then us. He thought he could play a little game with WhiteThing. It was just a game from a boy that Alba tried to save. Game over." The image of drug dealing as a "game" is a well-trodden metaphor, but the closing phrase,
"game over" references the conventions of computer and video games. Suddenly, we read the earlier reference to Alba's attempt to "save" Pip not simply through a language of salvation but also in terms of a video game where players can "save" a well-played game and return to it again in the future.

Critics of video games note that this ability to save games takes away some of the sting of death, making it hard for games to depict real tragedy since no character remains permanently dead; one can simply reboot and play again. Here, Que's "game over" carries a finality that helps to motivate much of the other action in the play. It is precisely because Alba cannot reboot and return to a world where her little brother is still alive and protected from the terrors of WhiteThing that she is later forced to break out of the game she has been playing and follow a different set of rules. Here, again, the language prepares us for the final moment of the play where The One reverses course, rejecting revenge as a way of dealing with their problems, and imagining an alternative life for themselves in the future.

Allusions to Popular Culture
Pitts-Wiley's play merges multiple bodies of knowledge, making allusions to elements of Melville's original novel and deploying references to contemporary popular culture. Some teachers are going to feel more comfortable teasing out the literary references here, but keep in mind that the popular culture references will allow your students to share some of their mastery and expertise. Historically, such knowledge of popular culture gets dismissed as trivia and is often deflected from classroom discussions, yet when we do this we communicate two things to students: that the things they know outside of school have no relevance inside school and that the things they learn in school may also be irrelevant to what they do with the rest of their lives. Both of these messages are destructive to the pedagogical process. Teachers need to be willing to suspend judgment and allow young people to draw on their knowledge of popular culture to decipher Moby-Dick: Here and Now, much as Pitts-Wiley learned to trust his young actors to add more swagger to his language. One important step will be to have students go through the play and see how many different references and allusions they can identify. Then, have them do a little research—online, in the library, take your pick, though they will probably need to do some of both if they are going to dig out everything they need to know to process some of these analogies. Wikipedia may be more useful for understanding the references to popular culture than an encyclopedia or other traditional reference works. For more insights into the use of Wikipedia in the classroom, see Henry Jenkins, "What Wikipedia Can Teach Us About New Media Literacy" <http://henryjenkins.org/2007/06/what_wikipedia_can_teach_us_ab.html>.

In the notes that follow, we will trace some of the more interesting allusions found in this particular performance, though there is no way we can exhaust them in this guide (please refer to the video clip "Remixing Practices in Moby-Dick: Then and Now" on the Media Resource Page). As you think about these references, remember the many different levels on which a stage play operates, each of which offers potential openings through which to remix or reference existing works: the written language of the play, the setting, the costumes, the performances, the soundtrack. In what follows, we have chosen examples which work with many different properties of theater as a mode of expression. Some students may be resistant to this close analysis of a stage performance, arguing that, say, the shirts the characters wear are not part of the text we should be studying. You might want to take a look at "It's Only a Movie," [link: http://www2.gsu.edu/~jougms/Justamovie.htm] an excellent essay by film scholar Greg M. Smith which rehearses responses to common challenges leveled against close reading. His focus is on films, but most of what he has to say will apply to stage productions as well.

"Ayo, I agree that WhiteThing is a mighty big fish. Compared to him, we just Nemo." Here, Que makes probably the most explicit connection in the play between Moby Dick and WhiteThing, keeping in mind the slipperiness in Melville between whether a whale is a fish or a mammal, a slipperiness that emerges in part from his constant deployment of the biblical story of Jonah who was swallowed by a "great fish." This comparison is further complicated by the reference to Nemo, the protagonist of the Disney/Pixar animated
feature, *Finding Nemo.* There are two sequences in the film which pit the small fish—in this case, Nemo's father Marlin and his friend, Dory—against a big White Thing: first, (scene 8 on the DVD) Marlin and Dory find themselves in the midst of a gathering of sharks, dominated by a Great White Shark named Bruce. (Bruce was actually the nickname used for the robotic shark which Steven Spielberg's production company used in filming *Jaws,* a film which helped cement the Great White Shark as an object of fear in our collective imagination.) *Finding Nemo* uses the sharks to parody twelve step programs designed to overcome addictions: in this case, the sharks are bonding together to try to overcome their desire to eat smaller fish ("Fish are friends, not food"). Later in the film, Dory tries to communicate with a whale (scene 19), who ultimately swallows them, transports them to Sydney, and ejects them through its spout in a scene which might recall the story of Jonah (scene 21). Here, the film offers compelling imagery of the immense scale of the whale, especially seen from the perspective of a much smaller fish. Here's what Pitts-Wiley had to say about this sequence:

"I love the line because it speaks to their ultimate innocence. I never had to explain that line to any of those people, anybody who heard it, particularly in their own age group. They knew instantly what that meant. *Finding Nemo* is in their world, it's part of the vernacular, and very efficient. One thinks about great language: at its highest level it is always beautiful and it is extraordinarily efficient. 'Compared to him, we're just Nemo.' Well, that's—you could write a chapter of a book on understanding your proportions compared to another thing's proportions. I wish I could take credit for it, but the kids came up with that line."

**Daj's Scarface T-Shirt:** Susan Bergeron, the costume designer for the production, encouraged the young actors to find their own clothes for their characters, feeling they were going to be closer to the youth cultures depicted in the play. In everyday life, we read T-shirts as personal statements, which signal to the world our political beliefs, personal philosophies, or cultural preferences. In this case, the Scarface shirt does this and a bit more. The 1983 Scarface film, with Al Pacino, was a remake of the 1932 gangster drama of the same title. While the Depression-era version depicted Scarface as an Italian-American immigrant caught up in the era of gangsters brought about by Prohibition, the 1983 version depicted a Cuban-American gang leader, who rises to power through his control over the sale of cocaine. As such, he might well represent what the members of The One aspire to become. Something of the values associated with this character is hinted at by the subtitles of the two recent video games based on the Scarface saga: "the whole world is yours" and "Money. Power. Respect." We can compare that with Stu's statement about the values which drive The One: "White powder to green cash. Cash to power. The power to live like we want to live." In the film, the protagonist is ultimately gunned down in an act of gangland vengeance for his refusal to murder a congressman who threatens to uncover the drug trade. One can read Scarface, then, as a modern tragedy about a megalomaniac who is brought down by the logic of vengeance which shapes the entire drug culture: ironically, it is the crime he refuses to commit rather than the many he does which brings about his tragic fall.

The T-shirt can be seen as a reference to a contemporary story which has many of the same themes and plot elements Ricardo Pitts-Wiley brought into this play. Pitts-Wiley notes, "If you are age 30 to 60, the number one movie of the last 50 years is *The Godfather.* Age 12 now, to 40, *Scarface* is number one. Why are *The Godfather* and *Scarface* so much a part of pop culture in this country? They both so fit into the American mythological idea of itself. We admire Vito Corleone because he said, 'I'll do it my way.' That's the American way. I'm gonna do it the way I do it. I'm not gonna play by the rules. Tony Montana says, 'I'm coming to the land of opportunity and I'm going to live it to its fullest. I'm gonna do it my way. I'm gonna live hard, I'm gonna live fast, and I'll die hard if I have to. But on the way, I'm gonna live like a prince,' and young people identify with that. I was horrified the first time I saw the movie. I was horrified, but I understood it. *Scarface* was a remake of the Al Capone story, and Al Capone is as much a part of the American mythological cycle as anyone because he did it his way. We love that. Jesse James did it his way. Stagolee did it his way. We love that, that independent spirit, individualism. Take advantage of opportunity, grow, grow wealthy, control your own destiny. That's what these kids were about. That's what that crew was about. They talk about it in the play, 'We do it our way. We don't flip hamburgers, we don't wait in line, we live hard and we live fast.' But
you know there's a horrible part of it because Que opens his monologue by saying, 'In my neighborhood, nobody expects to live for a long time.' You know in the whaling industry, nobody expected to live for a long time. They're the same thing."

"Grand Contested Election for the Presidency of the United States. Bloody Battle in Afghanistan"
Both Ishmael in the historical setting and Stu in the contemporary setting are reading a text describing developments that seem contemporary to many viewers. In fact, the text is taken from a playbook referenced by Melville in "Loomings." In the original, Melville included a third act, "Whaling Voyage by one Ishmael," situated between the other two, a hint at what is to come and an acknowledgement that Ishmael, at least, will survive the destruction of the ship. Even as we see the same references unfold across both time periods, Stu underlines the connection by mumbling, "I swear, if it wasn't for the sports section, the news would be the same every day." This passage of Melville has gained new relevance in the wake of the 2000 elections, 9/11, and its aftermath, suggesting a way of reading Moby-Dick: Then and Now as a political allegory.

Rick Benjamin, who was originally Pitts-Wiley's creative partner on this production, wanted the play to be a much more overt critique of the Bush administration, and the artists parted company over this issue. One can find some traces of that political allegory at play here, especially as we watch the drama between Ahab, determined to follow a path of revenge even though he knows it brings about his own destruction, and Starbuck, who knows Ahab must be stopped and yet lacks the will to stand up to the powerful figure. Some have read this confrontation as similar to the inability of the Democratic Congress to exert sufficient will and political force to block George W. Bush's entry into the war in Iraq. This reading is consistent with a number of recent editorial cartoons, which have used the image of Ahab's quest for the great white whale to comment on Bush's pursuit of the War on Terror.

Even in the absence of an explicit political allegory, the headlines here serve to signal how many of the same issues were being confronted in the world Melville depicted as in our own, including uncertainties about the nature of power and about justifications for war. Pitts-Wiley explains,

"The parallels between Melville's time and ours tell us that we will always be involved in political struggle. Unless we change our national identity and profile we're always going to be engaged in some type of conflict with somebody else, somewhere in the world. Afghanistan today, Iraq tomorrow, China the day after. Unless we change our profile. But then, it speaks to human nature to say that we are political warlike animals, and that's what we are. Sometimes I think Melville's clearly saying that that's what we are as people—otherwise he wouldn't have written in so much detail about the politics of the ship. The first mate sits here, he's first; the second mate cannot sit down until the first mate has sat down and eaten; the third mate can't sit down until the second mate has sat down; and if you're the third or the second mate you're really in a bad way because when the first mate is finished eating that means you're finished eating, too, because when he gets up you get up. That's just politics and power, and power-play politics that makes you aspire to be in a more powerful position regardless of your ability: you just want to eat better. You know, man at war with himself, man at war with nature; man against man, man against himself, man against nature. War. Malcolm X would say war is always about dirt, it's always about land. What else is there to fight about? We like to put poetical ideology, religious ideology in the front of it. In the end it comes down to the dirt: who has the dirt? That's what we didn't understand, necessarily, in Vietnam. For Ho Chi Minh it was about the dirt. What was it for us, what did we want? If it wasn't about the dirt why were we there? Same thing. I don't know why we're in Iraq. Is it about who wants the dirt? Whoever wants the dirt the most is going to win. Even in Moby-Dick, 'Who shall control the ocean, you or me?' And Moby Dick decided to fight for the ocean, for his right to swim freely in it, and he turned and he said, 'I will fight,' with harpoons in his back from failed attempts to destroy him. When you see a whale with twenty harpoons in his back, leave it alone. It wants to live. Leave it alone."

"Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City": Here, the line is spoken by the Ticket Taker, who, like Elijah in
the historical drama, seeks to warn Alba and her crew of the risks they will face as they pursue their present course. Alba responds coolly, "I'm not looking for love." The phrase is taken from a 1974 R&B song first recorded by Bobby "Blue" Bland <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bDsSfX4_vY> and later covered by a range of different artists, including reggae singer Al Brown and hard rock band Snakebyte. Most famously, the song was sampled by Rapper JayZ in a song <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=re0zFRfRXu0> which later was deployed on the soundtrack of American Gangster, another movie drama about contemporary gang life <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsOYSLDaQ&feature=related>. While "Ain't No Love in the Heart of the City" is on its surface a love song, many have read it also as commenting on the poverty and hopelessness confronting many living in urban America.

**Teen Idol:** Teen Idol is a composite of many contemporary youth stars: the reference to "Idol" serves double duty here, both referring to the popular American Idol series and suggesting the concept of idolatry as false worship. Through Teen Idol, Pitts-Wiley hints at the glamorization of violence and drug culture in popular entertainment. Through the dialogue, Teen Idol warns Alba "don't believe everything that you read about me," worries that Alba notices the "fine guys" (his bodyguards) at poolside when he wants to stress his heterosexual prowess ("They're only supposed to let pretty girls in"). When he's asked directly whether his real life matches his gangster image, he first tries to bluff ("Livin' the hardcore life"), then points towards the way his image gets taken up by aspirational fans ("Showing my fans how they could live if they could only get to the promised land.") and then finally acknowledging, "My manager and my record company tell me that getting caught with a little blow is good for business." Elsewhere, he concedes, however, that as a pop star, he is exempt from many of the penalties his fans would face if they were caught using the same drugs ("Stars don't do time. We do 'rehab'").

Later, we see Teen Idol singing a song which mashes up a range of other pop songs, including The Eagles' "Hotel California" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ea0CDieb4yM>, Jimmy Hendrix's "Purple Haze" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hSW67yScqg>, and America's "A Horse With No Name" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0KKGdb4qUY>, all three of which reference contemporary drug culture. The intermingling of the lines suggests both the recycling of familiar themes and beats in contemporary pop music and the recurrence of pro-drug messages in much contemporary culture. "A Horse With No Name" and "Hotel California" also both point towards lonely and ultimately aimless journeys from which the protagonist has little or no chance of returning, themes which resonate with the plot of Moby-Dick as well as foreshadowing what may happen to The One. Consider how the line, "they stab it with their steely knives but they just can't kill the beast," evokes Ahab's battle with the whale, regardless of what those lines mean in the context of "Hotel California."

Here's how Pitts-Wiley discusses the figure of Teen Idol:

"If you're a pop star—and this has been true for a long time—get busted and get away with it. You don't fail down, you fail up. I'm a big fan of Robert Downey, Jr. as an actor. I think he's just a fine actor. He's a drug addict, too. Every time he falls off the wagon and gets back on it, we applaud him. In so much of the industry it's like the highest order of things to get busted for some blow. It's expected. You get rich and famous drugs are a part of that culture. The bigger the star, the bigger the drugs. That's why Purple Haze, 'acting funny and I don't know why, excuse me while I kiss the sky…' So much of our music of the time was about getting high, flying out. Go to the Hotel California, 'Been through the desert on a horse with no name. Felt good to be out of the rain. In the desert you can't remember your name 'cause there ain't no one to give you no pain.' When I grew up somebody had to tell me about 'cloud nine.' This was the Temptations; this was the name of their album, Cloud Nine. 'The childhood part of my life wasn't very pretty. I was born and raised in the heart of the city. But I'm doing fine on cloud nine. You can be what you want to be. You ain't got no responsibility. Every man in his mind is free.'"

**Rockwell Kent:** Both Ricardo Pitts-Wiley and set designer Morris Nathanson have suggested that the look
and feel of the historical version of *Moby-Dick* were strongly shaped by the art work of illustrator Rockwell Kent. Pitts-Wiley originally wanted to use large screen projections of Kent's illustrations during the performance; they were featured in the program and prints were hanging in the lobby during the original performance in Pawtucket. Kent is best known in this context as the illustrator of a 1930 Lakeside Press edition of *Moby-Dick* [http://www.fedpo.com/BookDetail.php?bk=232](http://www.fedpo.com/BookDetail.php?bk=232) whose popularity with the public helped to cement the growing critical reassessment of Melville's novel, helping to insure its centrality to most subsequent discussions of American literature. Kent also did illustrations for important editions of *Beowulf*, *Leaves of Grass*, *Candide*, *Paul Bunyan*, and *A Treasury of Sea Stories*, as well as doing landscape paintings depicting the coasts of New England and Newfoundland. Kent became involved in progressive politics during World War II, including spending some time involved with the Communist Party, and was blacklisted during the McCarthy era. Many have noted the emphasis placed in his illustration for *Moby-Dick* on the seamen and the labor they performed on board the ship. The references to Kent's striking black and white graphics may, thus, be read as another hint that there are progressive political subtexts at work within this particular production.

Introducing your students to Kent's illustrations may be a way to get them to think about how such works are, in fact, interpretations of rather than literal depictions of the original work: as with the other remix practices we've considered here, they create their own emphasis, shape our emotional responses, and foreground certain elements of the original for further consideration. One useful exercise would be to look at the work of a range of different illustrators who have interpreted *Moby-Dick* in their own ways for different editions of the book.

So, in the example above, we have included allusions which get communicated through dialogue ("Cetology," "Game Over," "The Heart of the City"), costume (The *Scarface* T-shirt), music (Teen Idol's song), and set design (Rockwell Kent). Many of the allusions to popular culture all point in the same direction—towards the ways that street gangs and drugs get depicted, often glamorized, by contemporary media. Underlying those references, then, is a critique of the entertainment media as part of the complex system of economic, social, cultural, and political relationships the play calls *WhiteThing*. *WhiteThing* exerts its power over us in many ways, but among them, it reshapes the contents of our imagination, creating fantasies of power and wealth (whether the spectacular consumption in *Scarface* or the consciousness altering power of drugs depicted in Teen Idol's song and celebrity image), marketing expensive brands to poor consumers which force them to step outside the law to remain competitive (as in Soccer Mom's discussion of branded tennis shoes).

The pop culture referenced here is very much part of the world inhabited by The One, by the young actors in the production, and Pitts-Wiley hopes, by the young viewers of this production. Pitts-Wiley deploys these contemporary references both as a bridge back to Melville's novel and as part of the core critique of the drug cartel in the contemporary segments. These references to contemporary popular culture are as central to the meaning of this work as are the allusions to Melville's original novel; they are simply designed to speak to different segments of the audience.
On The Ethics of Appropriation

When I came in contact with the new media literacies, many of the concepts were new to me, like the fascinating concept of remixing and appropriation. That's an incredible choice of words to use in this new field: appropriation. I have spent much of my creative life trying not to appropriate things.

I write a lot about African-ness—African culture and black people and this country's relationship to Africa. I've never been to Africa, but I have a sense of its culture and its people from things I've read and seen. I believe in spiritual villages, villages of connection. If you write a poem it's a key to the village of poets. It'll let you in. Once you're in, all the poets are there. It doesn't mean that you are going to be heralded and recognized as great or anything like that. All it means is you have a key to the village. I've always felt I've had a key to the village of African culture. But I was very determined to never, for instance, write a play in which I said, "I am a product of the Mandinka people," or, "the Zulu people," or I'm going to use their language as if I truly understand it. No, I don't. But I had a sense of the humanity and the cultural connection, and I had to go to the village of the elders and say, "I have this word and I think it means this. What do you think?"

Sometimes in that spiritual place the elders would say, "It's a good word, you may use it." Sometimes they would say, "It's not a good word, it has no value."

So when I came across the word "appropriation" in the new media literacies I thought to myself, I'm a product of a black culture where so much of what we've created has been appropriated and not necessarily for our benefit. The great jazz artists were not necessarily making money off of jazz. The record companies were making money. Our dance forms, our music, our lingo, all of those things have been appropriated many, many times and not necessarily in a way in which we profited. So when I saw the term used I had a lot of concern about it. I still have a lot of concern about it, because does that mean that everything is fair game whether or not you understand its value? Can you just use whatever you want because it's out there? Before you take something and use it, understand it. What does it mean to the people? Where was it born? It doesn't mean that it's not there to be used. It's like music in the air: it's there for everyone to hear it. But don't just assume because you have a computer and I can download a Polynesian rhythm and an African rhythm and a Norwegian rhythm that I don't have a responsibility to understand from whence they came; if I'm going to use gospel music I have a responsibility to understand that it's born of a people and a condition that must be acknowledged.

Of course, in writing my adaptation of *Moby-Dick* it became very important that I didn't appropriate anything that wasn't in the novel from the beginning. People ask me, "Why *Moby-Dick*?" Because everybody was there, so I didn't have to invent any people. It would have been different if I had to invent a whole race of people where I would make a decision that I'm going to set it in South Africa in 1700. I don't necessarily understand South African culture so I wouldn't have done that. On the other hand, I had a real concern about appropriating hip-hop culture and putting it into what we were doing because I'm not a product of the hip-hop generation. I'm very much an admirer of it. There I really had to go the source and ask the young people, "This is what I'm thinking. Is it appropriate? Is it real? Is it based in any kind of truth, in any kind of reality? What are your thoughts on this?"

If I could make any contribution to the new media literacies, it would have been to say to the appropriators, "Find the truth. Find the people. Go ask. Go talk to somebody. Do not count on a non-human experience in order to make a complete creation of anything." So in remixing I was concerned also with who had access to appropriate things. If you're media savvy, if you're on the whichever side, left or right side, of the digital divide, you have access to unlimited knowledge. But does that mean that you know how to use that knowledge and you are respectful of its source?
Advice on Remixing Literary Texts

The first step in remixing novels is to stay honest to the original text. Put a value on that, understand it, appreciate it, and then start the remixing process. Edit down to the big questions. Why? What? Why is it important now? And then take the reins off, take the leash off, take the bit out of the mouth and let imaginations run wild, and be careful not to censor too harshly. I think censorship for respect, not necessarily of the original text, but censorship for respect of the reader so you don't write in a vacuum. You write for things to be read, and I read things, "Well you didn't care about anybody but yourself." That's not the purpose. This novel that we are working from was written to be read by others.

Somehow you have to create, not for yourself, but for others, and allow the students to find their own honesty. Encourage them to always go back to the original text, keep going back to the original text. That's where the message is, that's where there's a certain amount of the truth. Otherwise all you've done is written your own story. You haven't studied; you haven't learned necessarily; you've just written your own text, and there's a place for that, too. That's important, to keep going back to the original text. There's great stuff in the original text. In *Frankenstein, Moby-Dick, Invisible Man*, you keep going back and you'll find that those people really had an idea about what they wanted to write about. Don't copy them.

When I write music, I'll hear a song and I'll go, "Wow, wish I had written that song. I like that song that much. I wish I had written it." And then when I sit down to write I came early on to a realization that it wasn't the melody or the lyric that I wanted to replicate, it was the feeling that the song gave me. So *Moby-Dick* gave me a feeling, and I was able to invest those feelings in my young company much more than I was in the original text. But Melville gave me such great feelings to work with, this is what I'm feeling, write that. Write that.

I'm not a big fan of disguising what you want to say. That's why poetry, sometimes, just gets in the way of itself; it's like the author wanted to write something so deep, so heavy, so hidden with meaning that nobody understood it. Well you succeeded. There's three people who really get it and they elevate themselves to scholar-expert because they think they understand it, but you know what? There's only three of you. I think it's important to not try to disguise what you're saying. Write it to be understood. It doesn't have to be easy, but have a point. Melville didn't write a word in that novel that he wasn't trying to make a point. And he got heady sometimes, but he was always trying to make a point. He didn't just write excess words.

On The Story of Jonah

Of all of the parts of *Moby-Dick*, I probably will spend a long, long, long time reviewing and studying and probably changing my mind about the story of Jonah, because on one level it's a nautical story, it's told by Father Mapple, a former nautical man who was now in the ministry. But the story of Jonah is about opportunity and redemption. The story of Jonah is about trying to hide from the truth. The story of Jonah is about keeping one's word and honor. The story of Jonah is about what happens when we put other people in peril because of our own selfishness. There's a lot of levels in there, in that story. Take away the religious idea that Jonah was trying to hide from an all-seeing God and deal with the idea that Jonah was trying to hide from his own indiscretions, it's still the same story. I think Father Mapple when he tells it to the men about to go to sea, he's telling them on a certain level, "You can run, but you can't hide from certain things." Even out in the vastness of the ocean where there is the law of the captain, there is a law above the law of the captain that must be adhered to, and you know what? The crew of the *Pequod* didn't do it.
APPROPRIATION AND REMIXING
BY WYN KELLEY

Introduction: Remixing and Being Remixed
This unit looks at the ways authors recombine texts and media modalities from different sources of inspiration. As students observe how authors recombine other creative forms, they may be likewise inspired to work creatively with the texts they encounter. Herman Melville’s Moby-Dick provides many examples of how imaginative remixing enriches and expands the text.

Students may rightly ask, and often do, why such borrowing is seen as "creative," imaginative," and "inspired" when Herman Melville does it but is called "plagiarism" when they remix the materials they find online. We need to take this question seriously. For years I would start my classes by dutifully reading out loud a stern definition of plagiarism and the dire results that would ensue if students tried it. My department had adopted a policy and language to be used by all, with the idea that on this issue, at least, there could be no ambiguity. If students were properly instructed and warned, then instructors could in good conscience impose the requisite penalties when the implicit contract broke down. One year I looked up from my reading to see the students looking suitably bored, if not affronted. “Okay,” I said. “What does this paper say?” “Plagiarism is bad,” they said, almost in unison. “Don’t do it.”

Clearly students have gotten the message, or at least one message about plagiarism. When I pressed them, they seemed to understand the two basic points of any typical discussion of the topic. First, we have copyright laws to protect artists whose creative work might be stolen, writers whose intellectual property could be violated, scholars whose discoveries risk being purloined and exploited. Second, as writers we use citations to invite readers into the conversation we implicitly hold with people whose ideas we have read and reflected on in making a creative, intellectual, or scholarly work. Footnotes advertise the depth of our research (hence the common abuse of padding bibliographies), but they also acknowledge that thought does not take place in a vacuum, that it grows out of and depends on the ideas and findings of others. When we credit those sources or inspirations or mentors, we make their materials available for other readers to interpret and comment on too. In this model, creativity and scholarship resemble the ideals of democratic society, to create free access and opportunity for all.

In practice, as students all too quickly realize, the world of ideas does not always work as a free society, and scholars do not always abide by these ideals. It is disillusioning to learn, as an article at Inside Higher Ed reported (http://insidehighered.com/news/2008/07/08/citation), that a study of citations in scientific journals revealed an extent of error and misrepresentation leading to the conclusion that authors were citing articles they could not have read. Even more common are the reports of plagiarism among well-known authors of both fiction and nonfiction, scholarly and non-scholarly work (http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/07/education/edlife/07books.html), or even among politicians and political candidates (http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/19/us/politics/19campaign.html?scp=2&sq=obama+and+plagiarism&st=nyt). Although search engines give editors and teachers powerful tools in the fight against plagiarism or shoddy citation, students know too that their instructors experience much the same fatigue and sense of being overwhelmed that inspired their students to plagiarize in the first place. For many of us working with new media as well as traditional texts, the arguments against plagiarism can sound rigid and narrow-minded. How can we save a set of practices that are already fast disappearing in hundreds of thousands of publications in different media online? How can we inspire a sense of responsibility for individual intellectual or creative property in a culture that celebrates ideas and expressions shared worldwide?

Herman Melville offers a couple of ways to think about this problem, a problem that in our current media environment remains open rather than completely resolved. The first is historical, the second philosophical.
The historical context for thinking about Melville's borrowing, as well as that of any author writing before the codification of copyright law in the late nineteenth century, suggests that the modern concept of protecting intellectual property is a relatively recent invention (see, for example, http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/pva/pva74.html). When Melville began writing in the 1840s, most American authors did not automatically receive copyright protection by printing their works in the U.S. They had to publish them first in England and then sell them to American printers; and even then they might see cheap pirated versions of their works being sold by other printers. In this environment, authors could not always rely on protection of their own intellectual or creative property, nor did they always observe the boundaries of other people's. Melville refers to this problem throughout Moby-Dick, often in oblique and humorous ways. For example, for his chapter on whales, “Cetology,” Melville mixes materials from known whaling authorities like Thomas Beale, William Scoresby, and J. Ross Browne, along with a host of historians, scientists, and philosophers, without in general identifying his sources. Then he creates fictional authors, throws in what a few of his seafaring friends had to say, and slyly mocks the whole matter of scholarly authority itself by arranging his whales according to size, as if they were books on a shelf (folios, octavos, etc.) rather than species and genera. Such blithe disregard for the principles of scientific discourse and taxonomy, while showing more respect for the opinions of “Simeon Macey and Charley Coffin, of Nantucket” than for Linnaeus, shows how fluidly writers might borrow from sources in Melville’s period. We see similar kinds of pastiche and collage in the works of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, William Wells Brown, Mark Twain, and many others throughout the nineteenth century.

A second, more personal and philosophical framework for thinking about how Melville viewed borrowing appears in a set of letters he exchanged with Nathaniel Hawthorne (and which I have discussed at length in my book Herman Melville: An Introduction [Blackwell, 2008]). Melville took a trip to Nantucket, where he heard the story of Agatha Hatch, a woman who rescued a shipwrecked sailor, nursed him back to health, married him, and then, when he abandoned her before the birth of a daughter, waited patiently seventeen years for his return. Melville thought Hawthorne should write the story, and he sent him the materials he would need for doing so, along with a detailed account of how Hawthorne ought to write it. Eventually Hawthorne declined, and Melville wrote the story himself, although it does not survive. At one point, in insisting that Hawthorne take up the story, Melville claimed that it was never his own; it was always Hawthorne’s. “I do not therefore, My Dear Hawthorne, at all imagine that you will think that I am so silly as to flatter myself that I am giving you anything of my own. I am but restoring to you your own property—which you would have quickly enough have identified for yourself—had you but been on the spot as I happened to be.” Melville implies that the story belongs to Hawthorne because Hawthorne, given his writing style and interests, is the person to produce it. He also implies that literary property can travel fluidly between one author and another, between writer and reader.

Melville’s “borrowing” of Agatha’s story, first from the person who told it to him and then, while he pondered its details, from Hawthorne, to whom he considered that it rightfully belonged, greatly stretches our notion of literary borrowing as happening when someone simply takes details from one source and puts them, or remixes them into another work. Melville's idea of borrowing involves a creative dialogue between different writers, a collaboration between writers and readers, in an endless process in which the finished product seems secondary to the fascinating relationships that evolve along the way. This concept suggests a far less goal- and object-oriented notion of literary property than our modern notions would emphasize.

I would want my students, then, to recognize that plagiarism is a somewhat narrow legal concept within a much broader and older tradition of literary, intellectual, creative, and scholarly borrowing and appropriation. It may seem hard for students to maintain two such conflicting views of borrowing at the same time. I would remind them, though, that we live with such a double awareness all the time. My father learned to drive in rural South Carolina during a time when ten-year-olds commonly drove cars. There was no legal driving age. Our traffic laws, which mandate that we observe speed limits, protect the bodies and properties of other drivers, and strive to maintain safe highways, have followed fairly recently from a period in which popular culture enshrined the automobile as an icon of speed and danger. We still live with those conflicting
messages. So it should not surprise us to learn that plagiarism is bad—don’t do it—and at the same time that literary borrowing is a sign of creativity, and that the best writers can be the worst offenders. In the materials offered in this unit, we give students a way to practice these techniques themselves so that they can gain a more complex and intimate knowledge of how literary borrowing works. If nothing else, they can come away from this practice with a more sophisticated understanding of plagiarism than "It's bad."

Ishmael, Ahab, and Queequeg as Remixers: An Overview
Melville’s characters offer different models of how remixing works and enlarge our sense of how Melville recycles texts and media.

Ishmael might be called a literary borrower and remixer. He shows his mastery of an endless array of authors and texts from all domains of literate culture: theology, philosophy, mythology, poetry, natural history and science, art and architecture, history, travel accounts, and maritime chronicles. In a typical example, Chapter 86 ("The Tail"), he presents himself first as a poet: “Other poets have warbled the praises of the soft eye of the antelope, and the lovely plumage of the bird that never alights; less celestial, I celebrate a tail.” He proceeds, then, as an anatomist might, pulling back the skin and revealing the muscle structure and inner workings of the whale’s “member.” Switching to the arts to describe the awesome power of the tail, he compares it to the massive chest of Germany’s greatest Romantic author, Goethe, to a Roman triumphal arch, and to one of Michelangelo’s paintings. Next, adopting the technique of a scientist, he lists the five different motions of the tail, explaining each in physical detail. These descriptions call up references to Dante’s *Inferno*, the prophet Isaiah, and the historian Ptolemy Philopater. The chapter ends with an excursion into philosophy, as he contemplates the extraordinary expressiveness of the whale’s use of his tail to signify a wide range of meanings, and he also includes a reference to the biblical Jehovah, whom the whale, in his inscrutability, seems to resemble: “Thou shalt see my back parts, my tail, he seems to say, but my face shall not be seen.”

Ishmael’s method involves not simply throwing a great number of allusions on the page but also flexibly adapting their characteristic discourses and strategies. The list of the whale’s physical traits comes straight from the encyclopedia or textbook. Yet at the same time each scientific explanation abounds in metaphors and serves as a small poem. The concluding paragraph mocks the anatomical study: “Dissect him how I may, then, I go but skin deep.” But in doing so it offers a witty philosophical twist. At the same time, it reaches for the rhetorical effect of a sermon, with its adaptation of biblical language. Sometimes the diction changes within a paragraph or even a sentence: “Had this tail any prehensile power, I should straightway bethink me of Darmonodes' elephant that so frequented the flower-market, and with low salutations presented nosegays to damsels, and then caressed their zones.” This sentence moves from the anatomical study of the tail’s motions ("prehensile power") to a historical reference to Darmonodes to a sentimental and poetic image of elephant courtship. Ishmael’s imaginative juxtapositions of various and unlike elements create poetry out of blubber, as he jokingly remarked in a letter to his friend Richard Henry Dana.

Whereas Ishmael displays the book’s most spectacular literary virtuosity, in Ahab we find a literary engineer. This is not to say that Ahab does not have extraordinary literary abilities like Ishmael’s. Melville gives him the most elevated Shakespearean language for his speeches and soliloquies, which borrow flourishes from classical oratory and sermonic diction as well. But Ahab shows his greatest creative power in the way he adapts materials for new purposes. In particular, he cuts whalebone to size and fits it to his thigh to replace the leg Moby Dick sheared away. When the bone breaks he has a new leg made and contemplates replacing other parts of himself one by one:

Hold; while Prometheus is about it, I'll order a complete man after a desirable pattern. Imprimis, fifty feet high in his socks; then, chest modelled after the Thames Tunnel then, legs with roots to 'em, to stay in one place; then, arms three feet through the wrist; no heart at all, brass forehead, and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains; and let me see—shall I order eyes to see outwards? No,
but put a sky-light on top of his head to illuminate inwards. There, take the order, and away.  
(Chapter 108, “The Deck: Ahab and the Carpenter”)

Some readers have seen in Ahab’s image of ideal man made to order a kind of cyborg or Frankensteinian creation. Just as much as he tinkers with his body, Ahab also shows considerable mechanical genius in the way he fixes broken equipment or finds handy replacements for lost instruments (Chapters 24 and 25, “The Needle” and “The Log and Line”). With Ahab, then, Melville presents a practical form of adaptation or repurposing, that makes effective use of available materials for new end. As with his physical materials, Ahab adapts nautical charts, whaling histories, bloody rituals, theatrical performances, and the language of power and command to weld his men into a machine that can hunt and kill the great whale.

A third model of creative adaptation, Queequeg the harpooneer, might be called a cultural translator. Queequeg must continually adapt the customs, tools, and texts of his new (American) culture to his own (Polynesian) framework, just as he translates his particular rituals and talents to a new sphere. Ishmael mocks such oddities as Queequeg putting his clothes on—hat first, then boots (under the bed), finally pantaloons (Chapter 4, “The Counterpane”). But Queequeg laughs at American customs when he makes fun of a Yankee captain who treats a ceremonial punch bowl at an island feast as a finger bowl, washing his hands in the “blessed beverage” (Chapter 13, “Wheelbarrow.”)

Queequeg’s abilities as translator and adaptor reveal themselves often throughout the book, most notably in his success as a whaleman. At a later point, however, he also adapts and translates texts when, thinking he is about to die, he orders his coffin built; when he unexpectedly recovers, he converts the coffin into a sea chest and engraves it with designs copied from the tattooings all over his body. Ishmael recognizes that these mystical symbols, derived from sacred images engraved on Queequeg’s skin, represent “a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth” (Chapter 110, “Queequeg in His Coffin”). In adapting religious “theory” to body art first and decorative carving next, Queequeg models the creative migration of text across media. Religion, art, and culture meet in the dynamic designs on Queequeg’s body for all to see, though as Ishmael mourns, they “were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last.”

Through these characters Melville represents the imaginative use and reuse, adaptation and dissemination, writing and remediating of a wide range of materials and texts. We now turn to the different ways Moby-Dick reveals some of Melville’s characteristic modes of adaptation and translation: borrowing from literary sources (as Ishmael does), repurposing available materials, (as with Ahab) and migrating across media to create new forms, discourses, and points of view (Queequeg’s model).

Borrowing from Sources
Part of the pleasure of reading the Moby-Dick for Melville’s readers then and now is the web of stories, information, and ideas that it constructs by borrowing from other texts. Melville lived at a time when copyright laws and notions of literary property looked quite different from what we know now. What we might call plagiarism, his contemporaries understood as appreciative references to texts they might know well and enjoy. Although nineteenth-century authors objected to literary piracy or theft—the reprinting of their works in cheap editions for which they received no royalties—many writers freely borrowed from other writers as a way to display their learning, wit, or versatility.

As we see in the “Motives for Reading” unit of this guide and our discussion of commonplace books, Melville’s contemporaries actively cut and pasted from admired literary texts for personal entertainment, enlightenment, and education. Melville’s opening section, “Extracts,” gives a thorough example of this literary borrowing but also forecasts his more sophisticated uses of sources later in the novel. Scholars have collected and traced these sources, and one does not have to look far to find in Moby-Dick direct allusions to the Bible, the essays of Montaigne, Francis Bacon, or Sir Thomas Browne, Shakespeare’s plays, Milton’s Paradise Lost,
voyages of Captain Cook, Blackstone’s legal commentary, Cuvier’s anatomical treatises, Hawthorne’s stories, Thomas Beale’s The Natural History of the Sperm Whale, J. Ross Browne’s Etchings of a Whaling Cruise, or the lyrics of sailor chanteys. More to our point would be to identify the different implications of Melville’s borrowings, as these offer readers and students a way to understand the process.

We might think of Melville’s direct borrowings or allusions as exhibiting different attitudes: admiration and respect, mockery and parody, mimicry or even unacknowledged theft, or resistance and challenge. Examples of all of these appear in the opening chapter, “Loomings.”

- **Admiration and Respect:** We call this attitude one that declares, “I like it. I’ll take it.” Melville litters the text with direct references to familiar and favorite works, as noted above. In “Loomings,” Melville borrows a “philosophical flourish” from Cato (describing Ishmael’s motives for going to sea); a bit of aesthetic theory from Burke (talking about artists and the picturesque); the myth of Narcissus (to describe the allure of the watery world); stoic philosophy from Seneca; divine judgment from the Bible (in a reference to whether the archangel Gabriel will think less of Ishmael for signing on to a vessel); a theatrical "programme" (listing a “WHALING VOYAGE BY ONE ISHMAEL”) and various dramatic forms (tragedies, comedies, farces) to suggest he is but a player in the hands of “those stage managers, the Fates.”

- **Parody:** Melville also mocks and makes fun of his sources. During a period in which readers raptly absorbed the new discoveries in Egyptology, references to the Pyramids seldom appeared as a way to describe broiled chicken, but Melville does so here: “It is out of the idolatrous dotings of the old Egyptians upon broiled ibis and roasted river horse, that you see the mummies of those creatures in their huge bakehouses the pyramids.” He jokes about a “Pythagorean maxim” concerning beans and flatulence, using it to claim that sailors have an advantage over their captain, who “gets his atmosphere at second hand from the sailors on the forecastle.”

- **Mimicry:** Melville often adopts the voices of different texts or speakers, directly appropriating their typical language. So, for example, he writes in the style of a New York City guidebook: “Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall, northward. What do you see?”, or of an art critic: “Deep into distant woodlands winds a mazy way, reaching to overlapping spurs of mountains bathed in their hill-side blue”; or a sailor: “True, they rather order me about some, and make me jump from spar to spar, like a grasshopper in a May meadow.”

- **Challenge:** At times Melville’s references imply not respect for the source but a challenge to it. Hence in his allusion to Adam and Eve he serves up a sturdy rebuttal to the doctrine of felix culpa or fortunate fall: “The act of paying is perhaps the most uncomfortable infliction that the two orchard thieves entailed upon us.” He speaks irreverently of Providence as a theater “programme” and the Fates as “stage managers” whose machinations “induced me to set about performing the part I did, besides cajoling me into the delusion that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased freewill and discriminating judgment.”

Throughout the novel, Melville makes many more and different kinds of borrowings from different kinds of texts. Is he showing off? To some extent he is. We can ignore them, but even if we pay attention to only a small number, we soon get a sense of his imaginative use of these references, which suggest a rich, ongoing dialogue with authors he loved and admired but also ridiculed and debunked.

**Repurposing Materials**

Melville writes most like Ishmael, as above, when he draws from a seemingly inexhaustible well of literary sources to enrich his prose style, making poetry out of blubber. But he also writes as an Ahab when he takes materials from one genre or mode and uses them for another. In the largest sense, all his sources from nonfictional realms—journalism, history, philosophy, religion, chronicles of whaling—get recycled,
repurposed, and re-engineered when he imports them to a novel. Likewise, he looses poetry and drama from their moorings to put them to service in prose narrative. Just as Ahab uses whalebone to make a leg, Melville appropriates sermons and biblical stories, Greek tragedy, Shakespearean drama, Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, American tall tales and frontier humor, nautical melodramas, and popular blackface minstrel shows, among many other forms. Some of these are central to the novel’s structure and themes.

1. **Bible**: Melville draws primarily on the stories of Jonah and the whale, Job and his sufferings, Old Testament prophets, and, to a lesser extent, Christ’s life and teachings. In calling his narrator Ishmael, he draws attention to the fact that he is narrating from the point of view of the biblical wanderer and outcast. His use of biblical materials often suggests an adversarial relationship with the source. Nevertheless, the story of Jonah proves endlessly convenient, as in Chapters 9 and 83 (“The Sermon,” where Father Mapple translates the book of Jonah into nautical language, and “Jonah Historically Regarded”) and as an image of Ishmael himself, who takes a literary journey through the body and mythology of the whale. Similarly Job appears in important places in the text, most notably in “Extracts,” Chapters 24, 32, 41 (“The Advocate,” “Cetology,” “Moby Dick”), and “Epilogue,” and is significantly associated with the suffering of Ishmael and the men. Scholars have long proposed that in writing *Moby-Dick*, Melville was rewriting his culture’s central text, the Bible, in an American idiom and with working-class characters.

2. **Classical Tragedy**: Melville adopts the concept of fate that governs Greek tragedy and also seems to be rewriting tragic plots, in that Ahab appears a creature of hubris and fatal flaw, hurling himself at the gods and delivering heightened oratorical rhetoric. At a critical moment just before the final chase (Chapter 132, “The Symphony”), Ahab wonders what Fate directs his actions: “Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? . . . By heaven, man, we are turned round and round in this world, like yonder windlass, and Fate is the handspike.” Ishmael too wonders if he is a creature of Fate, in the passage quoted above from Chapter 1 (“Loomings”), in Chapter 47 (“The Mat-Maker”), and “Epilogue,” where he reveals that he is the one “whom the Fates ordained to take the place of Ahab’s bowsman” after Fedallah dies. Rather than challenging Fate angrily and rhetorically as Ahab does, Ishmael tends to take a more philosophical and subdued approach.

3. **Shakespeare**: The reworkings of Shakespeare appear all over the text, in echoes of Renaissance language noted above in Ahab’s speech and in direct and indirect adaptations of many plays. When Ahab forms his oddly tender relationship with Pip, Melville seems to borrow from *King Lear* the connection between Lear and the Fool. *Hamlet* appears to influence Ahab’s quest for revenge and Ishmael’s resignation to his fate. Chapter 40 (“Midnight, Forecastle”) recaptures the multicultural tensions and humor of the camp scenes in *Henry V*. Chapter 30, “Queen Mab,” may refer to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as to folk sources and, perhaps, Spenser. As with Greek drama, the Shakespearean sources imbue the novel with tragedy, but Melville includes considerable humor as well, with his lowlife characters and bawdy jokes.

4. **Popular Forms**: One could identify many other classic literary sources for Melville’s reworkings, but he also adapts a number of contemporary cultural forms. In Chapter 64 (“Stubb’s Supper”), the old African American cook Fleece delivers a mock sermon to ravenous sharks; here, as elsewhere, Melville draws on the use of dialect and racial stereotypes popular in contemporary minstrel shows. (He counters them, though, by making Fleece’s sermon criticize Stubb in an ironic reversal of their roles.) Another popular form of entertainment, the nautical melodrama, makes an appearance in Chapter 40 (“Midnight, Forecastle”), where the sailors act as if in a musical revue, complete with stage directions: “Fo’c’sle rises and discovers the watch standing, lounging, leaning, and lying in various attitudes, all singing in chorus.” Physical comedy, even slapstick, and bawdy jokes appear: in Chapter 3 (“The Spouter-Inn”), where Queequeg leaps into the quailing Ishmael’s bed; in Daggoo’s comically terrifying treatment of the steward Dough-Boy in Chapter 34 (“The Cabin Table”); in Queequeg’s “obstetrical” delivery of Tashtego in Chapter 78 (“Gistern and Buckets”); in Stubb’s tricky theft of precious ambergris in Chapter 91 (“The Pequod Meets the Rose Bud”); and in Chapter 93 (“The Cassock”), where a sailor’s dons the skin of a dead whale’s penis, inspiring Ishmael’s flood of witty phallicisms. As critical as these elements are in enriching Melville’s mix, they also establish Melville’s commitment to entertaining, as well as impressing and inspiring, his readers.
Transmedia Migrations
Besides reworking language, plots, genres, and themes from literary sources, Melville, like Queequeg, adapts from and translates sources in other media. We might identify these according to the ways he incorporates them into his work: as sources for direct allusions, as modes of perception, and as signs of the fluidity of transmedia migrations of texts.

- **Allusions to Non-Print Media:** Along with his references to literary texts, Melville mentions many artists in other media. In Chapters 3 and 57 (“The Spouter-Inn,” “Whales in Paint, etc.”) he describes scrimshander, or scrimshaw; the innkeeper even gives him the nickname “Skrimshander,” as if to underscore the intricacy of the whaleman’s engravings on whalebone and to suggest the analogy with Ishmael’s writing. Throughout the novel Ishmael studies examples of paintings (the “boggy, soggy, squitchy” picture at the Spouter-Inn, Garneray’s two paintings of whaling), quilts (the counterpane on his bed), architectural wonders (the Pyramids, the Pantheon), sculptures (Cellini’s Perseus, Queequeg’s carved wooden idol), numerous prints and engravings of whales, tattooings, a stamped doubloon, music (from sea chanteys to a symphony), weavings (“The Mat-Maker,” “A Bower in the Arsacides”), and many other forms of nonverbal art. Three chapters (55-57) take up explicitly the representation of whales in different media, and from the beginning in “Loomings” Ishmael compares himself with artists of all kinds. The book is rich in its embrace of widely various media texts and expressions.

- **Modes of Perception:** It also recognizes and borrows from other media as they influence ways of seeing. Melville’s writing registers the impact of newer media forms like the journalistic sketch, the panorama, and the engraving in relation to more traditional forms like painting and sculpture. The nineteenth-century literary sketch, for example, had become a popular skill and art for capturing the quickened pace of travel by streetcar and railroad; as a name for both an impressionistic visual image and a brief narrative form or character study, it suggests the influence of journalism and other ephemeral forms for gathering a quick image of (often urban) life. Melville offers brief sketches of characters like Elijah and Bulkington, who quickly appear and disappear, or stories like those encountered on the gams, the social meetings at sea, where the sailors trade news and gossip. Another form useful to Melville’s wide-angle views of the sea, especially from the masthead, is the panorama, an early version of moving pictures, in which a long roll of canvas might display a painting that when unfurled could take up all the walls of a large gallery. Ishmael enjoys his panoramic views as much as his on-the-ground sketches of life at sea. Engraving too is a visual medium that takes in new information and travels well, offering middle-class art enthusiasts an opportunity to encounter the great masters affordably. Melville includes examples of etching in widely different media—paper and print, to be sure, but also tattooing on the skins of islanders and sailors, scrimshaw on whale ivory, and carving on wooden paddles and war clubs. His adaptation of ways of seeing from other media gives Ishmael and other characters tremendous versatility and mobility in point of view.

- **Transmedia Stories and Themes:** Melville’s use of multimedia insists, as in the example if Queequeg’s coffin, on the fluidity of texts as they travel across media and genre boundaries and illuminate each other. The “boggy, soggy, squitchy” picture at the Spouter-Inn is both a painting and a narrative that tells the story of the Pequod in miniature, as, in both, a furious whale attacks the ship. The Town-Ho’s story travels and grows from sailor gossip to Tashtego’s talking in his sleep to Ishmael’s Lima tavern tall-tale, Gothic-revenge-story, Providential-allegory in Chapter 54. In comparing Ahab to Cellini’s Perseus, Melville draws on both the myth of Medea’s killer (Ahab too will try to kill a monster) and an image of a youthful Greek hero, surprisingly different from scarred old Ahab. The matted poncho Queequeg wears, the mat he and Ishmael weave of nautical rope (“The Mat-Maker”), and the woven vines that interlace themselves in the whale’s skeleton (“The Bower of the Arsacides”) describe intricate designs, not only in themselves but also in the novel as it weaves its many strands together. Jonah’s story of traveling through a whale appears in biblical allusions, in Father Mapple’s sermon, and in Ishmael’s dissection of the whale’s body. The iron forged in Ahab’s harpoon also appears in his “iron-grey locks” (Chapter 30) and the “iron rails whereon my soul is grooved to run” (Chapter 37). As themes and stories appear in one medium and travel to others, Melville captures the beauty and fluidity of storytelling across cultures, genres, and art forms.
**Being Remixed**

As much as *Moby-Dick* gives evidence on every page of Melville’s creative habits of remixing texts in different forms and media, it has itself appeared in a dizzying array of verbal, visual, cinematic, dramatic, and commercial adaptations. From the *Classics Illustrated* comics to Sam Ita's recent pop-up book, from Orson Welles’ *Moby Dick Rehearsed* to Ricardo Pitts-Wiley’s *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*, from John Barrymore’s silent *Ahab* to Gregory Peck’s and Patrick Stewart’s later versions, from *Star Trek* television episodes to the heavy metal band Mastodon’s *Leviathan* and Laurie Anderson’s *Songs and Stories from Moby-Dick*, from Sena Jeter Naslund's *Ahab’s Wife* to every waterfront chowder house or sandwich shop called by some variant on Melville’s whale’s name, American culture offers an infinite variety of different reworkings of the book or its characters. The availability and richness of these offerings make it easy to share them with students and to show the resiliency and power of the book as popular entertainment, cultural mixture, and pliable source for new creative forms. Other sections of this guide will explore these adaptations of *Moby-Dick* in greater detail.
1. What constitutes the primary source material(s)? (There could be more than one.)

The Book of Jonah (http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/bib3210h.htm) is the shortest book in the Bible and one of the most concise, coherent, and dramatic. It contains the famous story of God punishing Jonah for refusing to preach at Nineveh against the wickedness of its citizens. When Jonah tries to escape God's commands by going to sea, God sends a “great wind” to swamp the ship; recognizing the inevitability of his fate, Jonah tells the sailors to cast him overboard. When they throw him into the sea, the storm abates, and a “great fish” swallows him up for three days and three nights. Jonah cries out for mercy, and God makes the whale vomit him onto dry land. Jonah proceeds to Nineveh to complete his obligation, but God forgives the people of Nineveh when they show repentance. Jonah is angry with God for not carrying out his threat, but God admonishes him, saying he has as much power to save as to destroy. The story shows the importance of God’s law and Jonah’s return to faith. It also puts God and Jonah in heated dialogue about obedience, anger, and power.

The chapter begins with a hymn, “The Ribs and Terrors of the Whale,” in which Melville rewrites Isaac Watts's hymn, “Death and the Terrors of the Grave.” See http://web.archive.org/web/20030725094345/http://www.geocities.com/cigneto/thctxt/en/deathand1.html for a rendering of which stanzas Melville retained and which he dropped and what words he changed. (The site wrongly claims that Melville made up the last stanza; he in fact changed the original slightly, as he did four others.)

Biblical history and sacred geography: In Melville’s period travelers, historians, ministers, and authors were beginning to trace the sites mentioned in biblical stories and to test the truth of biblical narrative through archaeological and geographical investigations. In Chapter 9 Melville’s Father Mapple mentions that Tarshish, Jonah’s destination when he boards ship, must be the modern Cadiz. This detail shows Melville remixing contemporary readings of the Bible less as theology than as sacred history and geography.

Urban crime novels, posters: In Chapter 9 Father Mapple describes the sailors muttering about Jonah as a criminal: “‘Jack, he’s robbed a widow;’ or, ‘Joe, do you mark him; he’s a bigamist;’ or, Harry, lad, I guess he’s the adulterer that broke jail in old Gomorrah, or belike, one of the missing murderers from Sodom.” Melville’s humorous references here to bigamists, adulterers, and murderers draw on popular urban journalism and pulp fiction sensationalizing the crimes found in big cities and advertised on “bills” such as the one mentioned in this paragraph. He also borrows from Genesis 19 in his references to Sodom and Gomorrah.
Father Taylor’s sermons: Father Mapple in Chapter 19 has a real-life source, the minister Edward Thompson Taylor (1793-1871), who preached at the Boston Seamen’s Bethel and was admired by Walt Whitman, Sophia Peabody (future wife of Nathaniel Hawthorne), and Charles Dickens. He was known for adapting the concepts of the Bible to the ears of his sailor congregations. Melville, then, would have been remixing a true remixer. (See Sargent Bush, “The Pulpit Oratory of Father Taylor: An 1836 Account,” American Literature 50.1 (Mar. 1978), 106-9: http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=00029831(197803)50%3A1%3C106%3ATPAOFT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-6&cookieSet=1)

2. What is the media form of the remix?
Melville renders the biblical story as a sermon. Both are print works, but Melville also adds song (the hymn) and considerable spectacle (in Chapter 8, where he describes Father Mapple’s careful staging of his sermon, delivered from a pulpit that is designed to resemble the prow of a ship).

As in a sermon, Father Mapple not only tells the story but also explains the lesson. The last two paragraphs show him giving his own explanation of the meaning of the story in a passionate plea to his congregation that they “delight” in obeying God’s word.

3. What is the context of the remix? (Consider the cultural and material context—why would the remixer choose to appropriate this material?)
In his opening section of the novel, “Extracts,” Melville claims that the “higgledy-piggledy whale statements” included in his “commonplace book” should not be mistaken for “veritable gospel cetology”—the kind of book he is writing in Moby-Dick. This statement suggests that Melville saw his novel as a kind of gospel cetology or cetological gospel: the Bible rewritten as whaling voyage. In individual chapters like Chapter 9 or in countless references to the Bible throughout the book, then, Melville seems subversively to advertise that his book can be as capacious, learned, inspired, and inspiring as the central text of his culture, indeed of western civilization. No small claim!

In choosing the story of Jonah, Melville drew on a long tradition in prints and engravings, as well as nautical histories and chronicles, of associating whaling with the story of Jonah. He knew that his readers would recognize the reference and its aptness and hence be surprised and delighted by the creative and illuminating uses to which he put it.

Melville grew up in a period in which printed sermons still circulated in great numbers as popular reading material. In this chapter, though, he opposes the written text—the biblical source as well as Father Mapple’s sermon in print form—to the spectacular oral effects of his rhetoric. Melville’s period saw the rise of pulpit and political oratory, as well as other oral forms, like theatrical “rants,” and opera, which were wildly popular.

4. What elements of the primary source material are being remixed? (This could include specific plot elements, style, tone, structure, and so on.)
Melville remixes the plot of the Jonah story as well as some of its language: Jonah’s speeches to God, for example, and to the sailors. Melville remains largely faithful to the part of the story that concerns the voyage and the whale, but he does not include Jonah’s argument with God, God’s sending the gourd to shelter Jonah, or God’s final word on the subject.

The story of Jonah’s progress through the belly of the whale serves here as immediate inspiration for the chapter but also foreshadows Ishmael’s—and the reader’s—longer journey through the belly of a whale, which figures both literally and metaphorically throughout the book to structure the narrative. We can see the story, then, as providing an overarching metaphor or myth for the entire novel.
5. Are the works of the same or different genre? How do you know?
Both the biblical story and Father Mapple’s sermon are moral tales intended to instruct a reader or listener. They are different, though, in that one is written and the other performed. And basically a sermon is different from its source of inspiration in the Bible, since it uses it to promote a lesson in a particular ways.

6. What techniques are deployed in reworking the original material? (i.e., what does the artist do with the works—what do they change about the original materials? How are these combined with other parts? etc.)
Melville shows great freedom in the way he reworks his source. Most obviously he changes the diction to reflect the nautical slang of his working-class listeners. But he also shifts the emphasis of the original story, subtly and decisively, to expand his characters and deepen their psychological complexity. As in other parts of the text—“Midnight, Forecastle” and “The Town-Ho’s Story,” for example—his use of sailor diction implies a marked social distinction between sailors and captains, who seem remote authority figures as opposed to the more passionate and animated sailors. He also implies some criticism of Christian preaching in the fact that the next chapter sends Ishmael back to his friend Queequeg. We might expect that after hearing Father Mapple’s eloquent sermon Ishmael would try to convert his “heathen” friend. Instead, he decides he can best show Christian fellowship by joining Queequeg in worshipping his “heathen” idol. Father Mapple’s preaching, then, does not seem to make Ishmael more traditionally Christian. In another way, though, in his urgent call to parishioners to “preach the Truth to the face of Falsehood,” Father Mapple inspires the very form and substance of Ishmael’s narrative: a preaching of truth in the face of falsehood. Melville’s reworkings, then, tease out the psychological, social, political, and philosophical meanings he sees in Jonah’s story.

7. What is the intended purpose of the remix? (parody, mimicry, etc.) If there is more than one primary source, why do you think the remixer chose to combine these sources in a remix?
Melville seems clearly to be enjoying a parody of the Bible in his use of contemporary sailor idioms. But he also shows respect for the story’s meanings, as noted above.

By mixing biblical and religious themes—the sermon, the hymn—with elements from popular culture—the urban crime stories, posters of refugees—Melville signals that he expects his rewriting of the Bible to reach a wide and diverse audience of readers. In the various ways he both draws on and playfully reworks the story, he creatively adapts within the known framework his readers would share.

8. How does the remix build on, add to, or alter the cultural meaning of the original work?
We know that the Bible was the one text Melville could count on his readers knowing intimately and respecting at least outwardly, if not deeply, in a literate urban culture. Melville retains the traditional structure and meaning of the story as moral parable from a sacred text. At the same time, delivering it as a sermon to sailors who may themselves be swallowed up by the sea, if not by whales, Father Mapple gives the moment another kind of solemnity. Melville implies that a story that might read to wealthy parishioners as an abstract injunction to be good might suggest different, more immediate kinds of “terrors” to sailors.

Melville also wrote, as noted above, in a period in which many kinds of authors were rewriting the Bible for different audiences: women, slaves, travelers, families, businessmen. His readers may well have appreciated the wit and contemporaneousness of his sermon to sailors.

9. Would you consider this an ethical appropriation of the primary source material? Why or why not?
In Melville’s context, creative reworkings of the Bible to serve other aims—literary, philosophical, moral, social—were certainly considered ethical. We have only to look at Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1852), as creative a remixing of New Testament theology as Melville’s largely Old Testament Moby-Dick—to see that such rewritings were considered socially and ethically acceptable and were also sensationaly popular. In our contemporary context, it seems even more ethical when we consider that Melville’s use of the Jonah story focuses attention on sailors, who tended to be treated in the literature of the day as degenerate, low-class scum—as despicable “tars.” In dramatizing the sailors’ plight, Melville gives space in the novel to
characters who generally cannot speak for themselves or claim the sympathy of more educated or socially elite readers.

10. Would you consider this a legal appropriation of the primary source material? Why or why not? Again, in Melville’s day copyright laws did not have the power that they do now, and authors were empowered to borrow more freely from other people’s texts. But even in our context, both the story of Jonah and Isaac Watts’s hymn would be out of copyright protection; i.e. the authors would not be damaged by Melville’s borrowings. So, no, I would not consider this illegal appropriation.
UNIT: NEGOTIATING CULTURAL SPACES

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MULTICULTURALISM, SUBCULTURES, AND NEGOTIATION SPACES
BY HENRY JENKINS

Any discussion of multiculturalism must start with a clearer understanding of what we mean by "culture" and what roles the Humanities play in teaching our students about this important concept. A classic formulation of culture was offered by the philosopher and poet Matthew Arnold in his 1869 essay, "Culture and Anarchy." Arnold identified a core mission of humanities education:

The men of culture are the true apostles of equality. The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanise it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the best knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light.23

Educators were to assume the mantle of "great men [and women] of culture" whose passion for "diffusing" knowledge would insure that "the best ideas of their time" would "prevail." Under Arnold, some aspects of human life—the most elevated or perfected bits, those removed from immediate utilitarian value and from the harshness of a growing machine culture—were worth passing down to the next generation, while others were disposable, perhaps not even culture at all. Those who embrace Arnold focus on the value they see as intrinsic to those "great works," while those who criticize this tradition focus on what it excludes—including most of what has been written by women, minorities, the developing world, and so forth, not to mention media and popular culture. Under this account, Moby-Dick constitutes an important cultural resource, whereas Star Trek and probably Moby-Dick: Then and Now are ephemeral.

The major challenge to the Arnold tradition comes from a more anthropological perspective, which sees culture as the "sum total of human experience." Aspects of our culture get communicated through every act and every artifact no matter how lowly. Under this definition, all of us are involved in the ongoing production of meaning, not simply replicating the inherited wisdom of our culture, but also innovating, expressing new concepts through our active engagement with the world around us. The British literary and cultural critic Raymond Williams captures this alternative notion:

Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land. The growing society is there, yet it is also made and remade in every individual mind.... A culture has two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested. These are the ordinary processes of human societies and human minds, and we see through them the nature of a culture: that it is always both traditional and creative; that it is both the most ordinary common meanings and the finest individual meanings...The questions I ask about our culture are questions about deep personal meanings. Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind24.

Williams, who came from working class roots, questioned elite assumptions about culture, insisting on broadening the study of literature to include the study of popular culture. The tradition he helped to found,

Birmingham Cultural Studies, sought to better understand how meaning gets produced in the contexts of our everyday lives, including the study of subcultures, reading practices, and increasingly, participatory culture.

Our allegiance to one or another of these models has implications for how you teach reading (or for that matter, what works you teach). In the Arnold tradition, the individual reader is always inadequate in the greatness of serious literary works; teachers must "labor to divest" these works of their most difficult elements so that they may be grasped by their students; reading becomes one step in a lifetime process of working towards self perfection. In the Williams tradition, new meanings emerge from the intersection between creative works and creative readers; both high culture and popular culture can be respected on their own terms. At its best, this more "ordinary" or "democratic" conception of culture is deeply empowering, inviting us to take seriously the perspectives of those who might not otherwise enjoy a great deal of cultural authority. At its worst, it can be deeply limiting, encouraging us to read literary works as symptoms of something else, rather than respecting the craftsmanship, creativity, and wisdom to be found in literary and artistic works. As the war between these two perspectives has intensified, cultural studies has lost some of its inclusiveness, devoting more and more of its attention to the study of popular culture, rather than engaging critically with the full range of human expression.

This Teachers' Strategy Guide starts from very different assumptions—that the tools and insights of media and cultural studies can be meaningfully applied to works that are central to the Western tradition, allowing us new perspectives on how such texts operate within the culture. These classic works have much to contribute to our understanding of contemporary cultural practices. Students still need to grapple with such complex and influential works in the process of acquiring the social skills and cultural competencies required for full participation in our own society. The imprint of these foundational texts doesn't go away, even as we expand who gets to be an author and what counts as insightful readings. As we saw in the previous unit, *Moby-Dick* still gets remixed and repurposed by artists of all kinds, and understanding such allusions is part of what makes us "culturally literate." In using this term, I am intentionally evoking concepts developed by writers like Allan Bloom, who argued that we should develop some shared or common reference points during a period of cultural transition. Where we differ with Bloom is in his belief that only high cultural works can perform such functions. For many coming of age now, popular culture functions in much the same way—offering a set of shared references or allusions from which they may debate conflicting understandings of the world around them. We would argue that one can not be a "cultural literate" without understanding both the shared framework offered by traditional literature and the shared framework offered by contemporary popular culture. Pitts-Wiley evokes this concept of cultural literacy when he calls for a conversation about race in America which will be motivated not by a moment of crisis or a tragedy but rather through working through shared texts together. He explains, "I'm trying to create those communities where people have something to talk about. You gotta have a community of people that aren't coming there mad about something. We’re not gonna do it because it's a reaction to Jena Six or shooting in New York or some racial incident, 'Well now we've got to come together and talk.' No, no, let's talk about it because it's important to talk about, and let's bring some kind of foundation; let's bring a language so that everybody can bring something to the table. Don't come here just mad. Come because you read a book and you have something to talk about. Let's have a lively discussion about these things, and let's put it on stage."

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley's *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* Project is exemplary in the ways it reconcile these competing understandings of culture and the pedagogical assumptions which flow from them, as is suggested by this video segment on the use of language within the play (http://www.viddler.com/simple/e0266762). As you watch the video, pay attention to the participants' expansive understanding of human expression. Consider how gestures, postures, inflections, "Swagger" are seen here as expressive resources through which the artists communicate their meanings. When they speak about language here, they are not simply talking about word choices and syntaxes; they are talking about the way language gets embodied through cultural practices. Rudy

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turns out to be a great observer of regional and subcultural differences, and this attention to cultural difference strengthens his performances. Wyn Kelley argues that Rudy's use of language shows "a rhythm, a beauty, a fluency" Melville would have recognized and respected, while Ricardo Pitts-Wiley is attentive to the "artful" use of language, whether in the 19th-century prose of the original novel or "the original slang language of the streets and the hood" (Rudy). As Pitts-Wiley explains, "we have to put great value on both of them and also have to seek the poetry of both." Pitts-Wiley recognizes a raw creative capacity in Rudy and the other young performers, and he wants to help them bridge between oral and written expression: "You can flow it but can you write it." As Rudy explains, "you have to be able to handle the language right, but in order to be able to handle the language right, the language has to be right."

*Moby-Dick: Then and Now* emerges from this attempt to respect and reconcile two very different cultural traditions—language and ideas found in one of the most respected novels in American literature and the language and insights from contemporary hip-hop culture. As a teacher, you can help your students develop an appreciation of the expressive potential of both Melville's language, which may sound archaic to their ears, and the street language, which may seem exotic or even "barbaric" to your own. This account of the production process models a context where adults and youth can learn from each other, coming to see the other's cultural traditions through new eyes: we see this in the affectionate ways that Rudy describes his respect for Pitts-Wiley and Ricardo describes his young cast as helping to make the language "fresh."

**Thinking About Subcultures**

Rudy's comparison of regional differences in "swagger" offers us a way into thinking about the important concept of subculture. When they write culture as a "total way of life" or as a "shared set of meanings," cultural scholars tended to oversimplify the lived experience of culture. Increasingly, it became clear that no two individuals relate in exactly the same way to the traditions and materials of "their" culture and that a society as diverse as the United States is shaped by the interactions of many much smaller cultural communities. For many outsiders, hip hop might be understood as a subculture while within hip hop, hip hop breaks down into distinctive local subcultures. Keep in mind the term, "sub" here, doesn't suggest something that is "subordinate" (less valuable or powerful) or "subterranean," (below other aspects of the culture). It might be better to think of a subculture as a subset, a specialized set of practices drawn from the totality of the culture, given specific meanings for a local community.

Early on, writers on subcultures discovered that youth were particularly innovative borrowers from their "parent culture," ascribing new meanings and uses to pre-existing symbols, words, and fashions.26 The British punks, for example, took the swastika not as a sign of "Aryan superiority" but as a rejection of their parents' values and lifestyles: they chose this particular symbol because they were children of the generation which had defended Great Britain against the Nazis. The Goths constructed their subculture through borrowings from Victorian horror literature. Within a subculture, symbols, gestures, words, or fashions serve a double purpose: on the one hand, they signal the connections between those inside the community, allowing them a way to recognize each other and to express their shared values and meanings; on the other hand, they distinguish the members of a subculture from the general population.

Subcultures are elective in the sense that their members choose to participate, often opting out of other identities available to them by virtue of their birthright; increasingly, these elective cultural identities crisscross other notions of racial, ethnic, or religious heritage. For many young people, choosing to embrace a subculture signals a move towards greater autonomy from their parents, though participation in subcultures may also become the source of intense conflict between youth and adults. Some recent work on subcultures has argued that the term may have outlived its usefulness in so far as it is defined in opposition to "mainstream culture."27 They argue that as the mainstream has fragmented, breaking down to a series of

niches and subcultures, there may no longer be a center against which these new cultural communities define themselves. Becoming a member of a subculture may have less to do with breaking with parent culture and more to do with finding a group within which one feels "at home." Street gangs represent one such "tribal affiliation," one way of forging a community which is more powerful than its individual members, though in doing so, the gang members also often are pushed outside of the law and often outside the family.

Pitts-Wiley's portrayal of The One allows us to raise some important questions with our students about the nature of street gangs and other subcultural communities. Here are some questions you might ask as you examine the play from this perspective:

- Why does the gang call itself "The One," and what does it suggest about the shared sense of identity the members feel within the group?
- There are a number of rituals performed throughout the play—the pointing at the sky, the stepping—which are designed to signal group unity. Which ones can you identify? What do they suggest about the shared signals and practices that hold subcultures together? What similarities or differences do you see between the gang's rituals and those depicted in the 19th-century whaling crew?
- What makes Alba the leader of The One? What attributes of leadership does she show? What kind of loyalty and respect does she command?
- Que tells us that The One is "young and thug, well organized and well strapped." What does this suggest about what the group values and how it sees itself? What might it mean to be "thug”? What is the value of being "well organized” in the world depicted in the play?
- Subcultures often create alternative sets of values, defining success in very different terms from their parents' culture. Que dismisses the idea of being "forced to flip burgers or work like slaves for somebody else and still live from paycheck to paycheck." What other signs does he give us about how he defines success?
- Soccer Mom tells us, "Shoes are important and they cost money. They're a symbol of status and money." Here, she speaks about the importance of "style" in defining identity within a subculture. Shoes are important as a source of both individual status and group membership. Yet, the need to acquire "shoes" implicates the gang within a larger set of economic relationships, bringing them more under the power of WhiteThing. So, what does her speech tell us about the push/pull between cultural autonomy and dependency experienced by many subcultures?
- Subcultures often look very threatening to those outside their ranks. Indeed, some of that "threat" is performative; they adopt postures, embrace styles, use language that may be open to "misreading" by outsiders and may give them a sense of greater power and independence. How would you respond to The One if you were another passenger on the subway that day? How does the experience of watching this play shift your identification so that you feel more closely aligned to The One than you might otherwise?
- Subcultures often provide their members with alternative sets of identities, sometimes through the use of nicknames. Pitts-Wiley shortens many of the names from Melville's novel, talking about Daj, Que, Tasha, and Stu. What role do these shortened names play in making these characters seem more contemporary?
- Subcultures are defined in terms of both whom they include, and whom they exclude. Que tells us, "We try not to get too close to anything but the hood, which we love. We don't get close to anybody but each other. Which is all that we have most of the time." How does this bond impact the group's response to "that new guy," Fedallah?
- There's a running discussion about whether Pip belongs within The One. What would it mean for him to belong? Why is Alba so determined to exclude Pip? Why does he want so much to belong? Why might WhiteThing have difficulty understanding whether or not Pip belonged? How does the case of Pip help us to identify what the members of The One have in common and hint at their relations to their families and larger community?
- While Pip is a key figure in the play, Alba mentions her parents only once, and Que quotes his grandfather once. What does this tell us about the centrality of adults in Alba's world?
- While subcultures are defined through shared interests or practices, they often have a particular relationship to space. What does the play tell us about their relationship to the "hood"?
- Later in the play, Que tells Alba that "Something is going down in our hood. Eastside Scallywags all over the place. Dudes are out in the street harassing our peoples." The play uses the contrasting response to this news—from Alba and the other members of her crew—to signal the ways that the leader is drifting out of contact with her men and losing sight of their shared values.
- The language in this passage, "Eastside Scallywags" and "Insiders" signals the borders and boundaries between subcultural communities. "Scallywag" is a 19th century term referring to a white southerner who was aligned with the forces of Reconstruction following the Civil War. Over time, the term took on a more generic meaning, referring to a deceitful and unreliable scoundrel, someone who turns against their own community. What are the implications of the use of this historic term in this contemporary context?

Each of these questions helps us to better understand Ricardo Pitts-Wiley's conception of youth subcultures. Pitts-Wiley's creative process, drawing insights from both incarcerated youth as he was conceptualizing this project and from his young actors as he was producing this play, helps to ground these observations about The One in lived experience. He is trying to translate what he has come to understand about the world being created and shaped by the drug trade into a narrative structure. In doing so, he invites us to think deeply about the parallels and differences between a contemporary subculture and the kind of social group formed by Ahab's crew of seamen. Later, we will look more closely at Patrick Stewart's portrayal of Ahab in a recent screen version of the narrative and consider the ways that Ahab seeks to bind his crew together despite their cultural differences. Yet, the most powerful force he had at his disposal was the isolation the crew must have experienced through its long weeks and months at sea. Melville hints at this isolation by showing us several scenes where the Pequod encounters other ships, each greeted with enormous excitement and intense sociability, as the crews pump each other for news, barter goods, exchange old stories, sing songs, or dance. Alba's crew is in some ways less isolated: they live in a city surrounded by many other people with whom they interact. Yet, Pitts-Wiley suggests that they feel enormous social isolation; they have formed strong bonds with each other because they have a deep distrust of everyone else around them. The play hints at the constant struggle over turf with rival gangs. And there are suggestions here that the group rarely travels beyond their own "hood," thus the anxieties about moving into "the heart of the city."

The figure of "WhiteThing" suggests something else. Pitts-Wiley wants to direct our attention to the forces aligned against Alba, Que, and the other members of The One. Early on, the script invites us to perceive WhiteThing as an individual but nondescript entity, yet as we move deeper into the play, our understanding of WhiteThing becomes more complicated. As we see the immensity of WhiteThing, we come to realize how hard it would be to combat such a structure, how many different social institutions and forces are stacked against these young people. Through WhiteThing, Pitts-Wiley undercuts the myths the gang has constructed about their autonomy and control over their own situation, their freedom, wealth, status, and loyalty. Each time WhiteThing gets mentioned or appears, we learn something more about the context within which these young gang members live and operate:

- Que: "[Pip] didn't belong. But WhiteThing didn't know that and he didn't care." WhiteThing is portrayed here as an individual ("he") who cares little for local circumstances and makes few moral distinctions; he is indifferent to what happens to the people under his control but clearly very concerned to maintain his power over this community.
- Daj: "You, WhiteThing been layin' low too." Tasha: "Out of sight, but not ghost. Three other cliques have been crunched since he rode down on Pip." Here we discover that WhiteThing doesn't control just The One; he controls many or all of the neighborhood gangs.
Stu: "If you gon' be in this business with him, making the kind of loot we've been making, you better be afraid of him. Stay afraid and stay alive." WhiteThing rules through fear, using violence to insure discipline.

Stu: "WhiteThing was just sending The One a message. He was reminding us, that if we're going to swim in the big water, with the big fish we have always best respect the biggest fish of them all." Stu has internalized WhiteThing's values, especially the social hierarchies held in place by this culture of violence and domination.

Yet, as the next lines suggest, WhiteThing also commands their loyalty through economic exchanges—"we've made mad money hustling his product" (Daj)—and Stu draws a series of connections: "White Powder to green cash. Cash to Power. The power to live like we want to live."

Stu and Tasha tell us that no one has ever seen the WhiteThing and no one is sure what he looks like. He is an absentee landlord, someone who shapes their lives but can not be directly confronted.

Alba's speech gives us the most vivid description of WhiteThing: "I've seen him. He's tall and handsome. He has a gentle voice...He sings softly to himself and smiles. I thought I was in love with him ten minutes after I met him. He told me that he would take care of me and The One, if we took care of him." Here, she conveys his charm and attractiveness, suggesting the ways that gang lords often make their members feel "special" in a world which has otherwise treated them like dirt. At the same time, Alba hints at the fear of rejection or retribution which gang lords use to insure compliance: "Then his eyes turned blood red and he got even bigger. He has a dangerous and sexy smell. He comes with a chill like the wind on the top of Mt. Everest." Finally, Alba gives us a sense of WhiteThing as a shapeshifter: on the one hand, she says, "I can pick him out of a million" and on the other, she has difficulty describing him in consistent terms, "His hair is long and short, sometimes black, sometimes blond, sometimes brown. It depends on the sun."

Along their journey, The One confronts a series of avatars, each representing a different aspect of WhiteThing and by extension, of the military-industrial-entertainment complex surrounding the drug trade: the Banker who embodies the wealth to be made from the drug trade, the Soccer Mom who embodies the search for status that motivates participation in gangs, the policeman and his son-in-law, the developer, who both profit from prolonging the war on drugs; the lawyer who builds his career from defending and profiteering upon the accused; and Teen Idol, who glamorizes the drug lifestyle through popular culture.

The Policeman offers perhaps the most complete description of complex of forces which perpetuates both the drug trade and the war on drugs, seen here as two sides of the same coin. The policeman tells us, "my son-in-law...develops prisons. Booming business. Drugs, murder, drugs, robbery, drugs. Keeps my guys busy. Keeps the courts busy. My wife is a social worker, keeps her busy. My brother is a DEA agent for the government. He's busy all the time trying to burn up cocaine farms in South America. Heck they grow cocaine like we grow corn, only a lot more of it. A lot of people on the payroll. Big business, big business." Why, for example, does the Policeman list "drugs" three times when describing the crimes for which people go to prison? Why does he repeat the phrase, "big business" at the end of the speech?

Ultimately, these various avatars join together to form a single mass identity bigger than any individual and depicted as impossible to combat. Look closely at what WhiteThing tells us about him/her/itself: "trying to kill me is like trying to kill yourself. I am the best and worst part of you all rolled into one" (Soccer Mom); "I only exist because you want me to. You need me to ease your pain" (Policeman); "I am the life blood of the world. I am the biggest employer of the poor. I am the pension plan for hundreds of thousands" (Lawyer); "I killed your father, your uncle, your sister, your brother, and if you're not careful, I'll do you too." Each of these statements suggests a culture of dependency—whether defined in psychological, economic, or social terms. Alba can not escape the WhiteThing because it has shaped every aspect of her life and because she and her gang have internalized its values from the crib. While The One has sought to escape this culture of dependency, trusting no one except themselves, every step towards autonomy has left it more reliant than before on a system which will perpetuate itself at all costs.
Our Changing Notions of Multiculturalism

The concept of "multiculturalism" emerges from an era of identity politics: In the 1960s and 1970s, each ethnic and racial group within a multi-racial nation began to recognize and insist upon the value of its own cultural traditions, began to push aside decades of racism and assert the dignity which came from being a member of a particular cultural community. As a result of these shifts in racial politics, schools increasingly broadened the range of literary texts being taught so that each member of the class would have a chance to encounter something which reflected her own heritage and background, could read about "someone like themselves," and could see herself as someone who might make a valuable cultural contribution. This notion of multiculturalism, however, often starts from essentialism, assuming each of us belongs to one and only one group and that this historic identity should predetermine how we position ourselves in contemporary society.

Yet, a growing percentage of Americans come from mixed race, mixed religion, and/or bilingual families; they grow up within multiple cultural traditions, sometimes moving back and forth between them, sometimes creating their own mixed sets of cultural practices to reflect their "hybrid" identities. Recent cultural and political figures, from Tiger Woods to Barack Obama, have put a new face on race in America. Such figures invite us to move from a conception of multiculturalism within society towards multiculturalism as part of each individual's construction of identity; rather than negotiating between groups, we are increasingly negotiating amongst competing, sometimes conflicting identities within ourselves. As Frank H. Wu notes in his book, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*, race is increasingly situational: "Race is meaningless in the abstract; it acquires its meanings as it operates on its surroundings....The same words can take on different meanings depending on the speaker, the audience, the tone, the intention, and the usage." Sometimes, racial differences matter greatly; sometimes they matter very little, depending on the context. Sometimes, Wu notes, he is perceived as Chinese-American, sometimes Asian-American, sometimes simply Non-White. And the same will be true for many students in the class. In that sense, race is continually being negotiated moment by moment through interactions with other people.

As Ricardo Pitts-Wiley explains, part of what drew him to *Moby-Dick* was the fact that "everybody was already on the boat." As Wyn Kelley comments, Melville depicts the Pequod crew in particular and the whaling community more generally as multi-cultural on a social level. Each of the harpooners represents a different racial and cultural background: Queequeg, the South Seas islander; Daggoo, the African; Tashtego, the native American; and Fedallah, the Asian. Certain moments in the novel—especially the opening scenes where Ishmael finds himself in bed with Queequeg—he heighten our awareness of racial difference, even as *Moby-Dick* suggests the ways that normal inter-racial taboos may be overcome through the bonding between men at sea.

There is a lot we can see about the history of race in America by studying how different illustrators have depicted these characters: sometimes exaggerating their differences, falling into crude stereotypes, and accenting the shock of an encounter between the "primitives" and the westerners. Sometimes they have been depicted with greater dignity or with an anthropological attention to the markings of their cultural backgrounds. An interesting exercise would be to bring in multiple editions of the book from the school library and to look at the ways these figures are depicted in the illustrations. You can encourage your students to ask questions about how the illustrators dealt with cultural and racial differences in the book and how they depicted the attitudes of the white characters towards their minority crewmates. You want to look for those moments where race matters most in the images and where, if ever, race seems to recede. Given that our dominant understandings of race are based on what people look like (that is, on recognizable visual differences), illustration is a place where it is difficult to escape from a consciousness about racial difference. A novelist can accent our awareness of racial difference or make us forget it for a period of time, much as one's race may matter or not in the digital world depending on the consciousness of the people participating in a particular exchange.

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On stage, race is also always visible, yet choices in casting may make race more or less central to our understanding of a particular character. So, for example, we might imagine a minority performer confronting a particular set of racial stereotypes. The actor might challenge those stereotypes either by working against them, portraying a character very different from our prevailing assumptions, or may create tension and discomfort by playing into the stereotype, exaggerating the clichés so that we become more aware of their implications, or the actor may accept the stereotype as the basis for the character and try to give it as much dignity as possible. One could argue that race functions differently in the two stories being told in *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*: the adult version accentuates racial differences. The performance marks off each minority character as embodying a distinctive cultural tradition through the costuming, music, and other aspects of the characterization. The youth version defines its characters more through their relationship to each other than through their racial and cultural differences. In both cases, the crews are racially diverse, yet there is a different level of consciousness about racial difference in the two stories. Queequeg is defined by his race in ways that Que is not. This is not something that emerges from the script of the play, but it is very much what we experience in watching this particular performance.

Increasingly, young people are choosing to define themselves less through fixed or inherited cultural identities, such as those having to do with race or ethnicity, and more through elective cultural identities, such as those which emerge around subcultural practices. Hip Hop as a cultural style, as a mode of expression, may have originated in an African American context but has now become a shared language across multiple racial groups. The same might be true of a range of other subcultural practices and identities—skateboard culture, sports fandom, anime and manga, to cite just a few contemporary examples. People opt into these groups based on their own personal and cultural preferences rather than inheriting their identities from their parents.

There is a growing debate about whether the emergence of such localized identities reflects a dangerous fragmentation of American society, one which will make it difficult for us to communicate across our differences, or rather represents a growing richness and diversity of our culture.

This process unfolds not only within a single nation state but across countries and continents in an increasingly globalized culture. American young people may define their identities through their relations with cultural practices or artifacts which originate somewhere else in the world: they may listen to music from India or Latin America, they may watch soaps from Korea and Taiwan, they may watch cartoons or read comics from Japan, they may enjoy action movies from China or horror films from Nigeria. They may do so without regard to their own cultural background.

I have described such attitudes as "pop cosmopolitanism": just as older generations embraced high culture as a marker of cultural distinction and as a way of signaling their movement away from the parochialism of their own culture, these young people are embracing culture from elsewhere as a way of expressing a global perspective at a time when so much of American culture and politics has been turning inward.²⁹

All of this points towards the importance of negotiation as a social skill and cultural competency young people need to acquire if they are going to successfully operate in this modern context: they need to be increasingly aware of the nuances of their interactions within and across a range of different groups; they need to become more reflective about the identities that they embody and perform in their daily lives and about the social dynamics that emerge as they interact across cultural differences.

**The Skill of Negotiation**

Networked computing has made it much easier for young people to move between cultural communities, trying on different identities, inhabiting multiple worlds. The fluid communications within the new media environment bring into contact groups who otherwise would have lived segregated lives. Culture flows easily

from one part of the world or from one cultural community to another. People online encounter conflicting values and assumptions, come to grips with competing claims about the meanings of these shared artifacts and experiences. Everything about this process insures that we will be constantly provoked by cultural difference; little about this process insures that we will develop an understanding of the contexts within which these different cultural communities operate. When white suburban kids consume hip hop or western youth consume Japanese manga, there is the potential for new kinds of cultural understandings, yet just as often, the new experiences get read through existing prejudices and assumptions. Culture travels easily; the people who initially produced and consumed such culture are not always welcome everywhere it circulates.  

In such a world, it becomes more important than ever before to help students acquire skills in understanding multiple perspectives, respecting and embracing diversity of inputs, understanding multiple sets of social norms, and negotiating between conflicting opinions. We are calling this skill "negotiation" in two senses of the word: first, as in the ability to negotiate between dissenting perspectives, and second, as in the ability to negotiate through diverse communities. What we are calling negotiation may thus require a number of closely related skills:

- the ability to move into a new space and identify the prevailing cultural dynamics, to recognize the norms and practices which define this particular subcultural community.
- the ability to actively and respectfully listen to the perspectives of those who come from a different cultural background and who may act upon a different sets of norms and values.
- the ability to "code switch," to adopt language and style appropriate to different communications contexts, and thus to be more effective at helping to bridge between different worlds.
- a commitment to ethical principles which respect yet acknowledge cultural differences.

The study of literary and media texts may have a particularly important role to play in fostering these skills at negotiation. First, fictional texts have a unique power to put us inside the heads of their protagonists and their authors, allowing us to read the world from perspectives that may be very different from our own. Here, the value is not in recognizing ourselves in what we read, a core concern of multiculturalism within an era of identity politics, but rather in recognizing people who are different from ourselves and learning to value their perspectives and insights. Because as we saw in the Motives for Reading Unit, different readers approach texts with their own priorities and goals, reading them in relation to their own traditions and backgrounds, we have much to learn from each other through reading and discussing common works across diverse cultural communities. Amulya Gopalakrishan has studied an online community, The Wandering Minstrels, which shares and discusses poems on a daily basis; the community originated in South Asia but has spread across the world, though participation is still most heavy in countries which were once part of the British empire. While some of the poems read reflect local cultural traditions, many of them are works from the western literary canon which were once part of the British curriculum imposed on all of the schools within the empire. The influence of that British curriculum has faded slowly: these poems may still be what the community shares in common, even though members from India or South Africa may have very different relationships to these works. Discussing these shared works together has provided a context for learning about both commonalities and differences between countries which gained their independence from the British Empire in the course of the 20th century.

We can examine fictional representations of "negotiation spaces," where groups with diverse backgrounds or competing agendas come together. We are using the term "negotiation space" to refer to something very close to what Mary Louise Pratt describes as "Contact Zones," "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism,

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slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.”

Pratt has stressed the pedagogical value of examining such spaces—whether in the real world or through fictional representations—for the insights they offer us into the ways cultural power operates.

These "contact zones" may also offer us models for encouraging students to reflect on what it means to negotiate their identities in a world where multiculturalism operates as much within the individual as it operates within society. James Paul Gee has talked about the desire to produce a generation of students who are "shapeshifters," defined as much by their "portfolio" of skills and experiences, as they are by any fixed identity; these students learn to mobilize different aspects of themselves in relation to different social and cultural contexts through which they travel. In order to do that, they first have to become skilled at reading social situations, developing an understanding of group dynamics and cultural norms, coming away with a clear sense of who they are expected to be and what they are expected to do in different contexts. Learning to map the relatively legible worlds in fictional works may provide a chance to rehearse the cultural observation process needed to negotiate more complex and less predictable social dynamics in our everyday lives.

"Negotiation spaces" most often emerge at borders or boundaries between cultures, whether such spaces are depicted as "common grounds" (places open to all) or "no man's lands" (spaces that are not controlled by anyone). Such spaces offer opportunities for new kinds of social relations as each member steps outside of fixed roles and existing relationships are suspended. The critical analysis of fiction allows us to study this process of negotiation and conflict from a "safe distance," trying to understand each participant's point of view, map the sources of conflict or compromise, acquire a better grasp of where communications break down and where reconciliation is possible, and comprehend how each participant is pursuing his or her own goals. Young people often have difficulty understanding the ethics of negotiation, trying to factor in others' needs as they pursue their own self interests, so talking through such sequences may provide opportunities for self reflection.

Here are some questions you might ask in analyzing fictional representations of Negotiation Spaces:

- What social groups are represented within this scene?
- What qualities define the members of each group?
- What similarities or differences are there between the various groups represented?
- What are the goals of each group?
- Where do their goals overlap or conflict?
- Is the setting a neutral space, or does it represent the home turf for one of the parties?
- What mechanisms enable participants to negotiate between these goals?
- What characters understand the shared interests and which are more invested in the conflicting goals?
- What obligations does each person owe to the group?
- What alliances exist between groups?
- Does the action of the scene resolve or intensify potential conflicts?

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Negotiation Spaces in Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End

By Henry Jenkins

A sequence midway through Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End (chapters 16, 18 on the DVD) offers us a rich example of a "negotiation space." Much like "Midnight, Forecastle" in Moby-Dick, the "Brethren Court" scene involves a gathering of seamen from many different countries—in this case, pirates rather than whalers. Much like Melville, the filmmakers are interested in what these various seamen have in common and how they differ.

In this case, the differences are expressed primarily on the level of visual details. The art director and costume designer have gone to great lengths to signal the different national cultures represented around the table with pirates from Great Britain, France, Spain, India, Eastern Europe, Africa, and China, set apart through their clothing, jewelry, hair styles and beards, make-up, weapons and other accessories, and accents. Unlike Melville, who has basically one representative for each national culture, this scene depicts multiple characters per culture, each with his own individualized style.

As one first watches the scene, there is an impulse towards classification. An early moment where each pirate leader must put forth a talisman allows the camera to identify each national delegation and thus map the configurations around the table. These shots encourage us to appreciate the diversity of dress and persona, even as we are invited to try to figure out the shared aesthetic which unifies each community. Subsequent shots may mix characters across the delegations, so that we are encouraged to contrast members of the different national cultures.

In some senses, the characters rely upon cultural stereotypes: the Spanish pirates are hot tempered, the French pirates are flowery, and so forth. It would be difficult to communicate the diversity within the pirate community if it were not possible to quickly and clearly identify these different national cultures. Yet, the individualization of the characters hints at a greater diversity in personality and background within any given nationality, which makes it more difficult to reduce these communities to singular stereotypes. And the density of visual information hints at the many levels on which a culture operates rather than relying on one or two simple distinctions between nationalities. In the context of the film, the multicultural and heterogeneous Brethren Council is read in contrast to the hierarchical and homogeneous British Navy. Pirates follow trade routes different from the governments of their countries and thus have different points of contact with other parts of the world.

As the scene unfolds, we witness a series of negotiations over leadership and goals as the group decides how to cope with a common threat. Negotiations repeatedly break down into chaos and violence, resulting in several deaths. The pirate leaders aggressively pursue their own self interests (as one might expect from a gathering of criminals) and are reluctant to trust each other or pursue shared goals.

The meeting unfolds as a broad parody of parliamentary rules of order, suggesting a tendency towards improvisation rather than convention and anarchy rather than structure. The film carefully documents a set of rituals and practices, designed to maintain some semblance of order. We see, for example, Captain Barbosa call the meeting to order by pounding on the table with a ball and chain. The use of terms like "brethren" and "colleague" throughout imply a shared identity upon which trust can be built. Each pirate leaders has a token that must be brought together before the meeting can be legitimized—though the film is quick to contrast the hodge-podge of seemingly random objects being deployed here from the idealized notion of Pieces of Eight. Several pirate leaders refer to a sense of history or tradition, and at one point, they bring out the Pirate Codex, which determines their precedents and procedures. Strikingly, the law book is not a printed document but a scrapbook pasted together through the years. In some cases, old laws have been crossed out or scribbled over.
The pirates elect a new leader through a democratic process, though voting rarely produces conclusive results since each pirate leader typically votes only for himself. A declaration of war can emerge only after the group has agreed upon a leader, a rule calculated to insure inaction. Several lines here suggest the dysfunctionality of the group's dynamics, including Jack Sparrow's suggestion that "politics" and "madness" are two words for the same phenomenon and his subsequent speech comparing the pirates to "cuttlefish" who will strangle each other if left cooped up for too long, a claim well supported by the brawls and shouting matches.

Given the elaborate effort to define national cultures, it is striking that those characters who bring about a change in this dynamic each function outside of clear national identities. Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) is depicted as a man without a country: he is a leader without following, the one person around the table who has no delegation. He is the person who is able to break the tie that prevents the council from selecting a leader because he has no fixed alliances. He can improvise possible solutions because he has no established stakes within the fights. Captain Teague (Keith Richards), by contrast, stands above the fray as the keeper of the Pirate Code, equally respected and feared by everyone around the table, and thus able to arbitrate between conflicting claims about policy and procedure. And Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley) is a proxy for the recently deceased Captain Sao Feng, having the authority of a voting member but without an established set of ties to the other participants. It is no accident, then, that she has emerged as the leader, able to push in new directions because she is not bound to the past. Sparrow, Teague and Swann, then, are "shapeshifters" in Gee's sense of the term, capable of moving between identities, interacting with multiple groups, and thus, able to negotiate a new set of relationships.
SCENE ANALYSIS:
THE QUARTERDECK AS A NEGOTIATION SPACE IN MOBY DICK (1998)
BY HENRY JENKINS

Students can learn a great deal about how leaders negotiate competing interests and expectations of their communities by studying how Patrick Stewart (Captain Jean-Luc Picard in Star Trek: The Next Generation) performs the quarterdeck scene in the TV version of Moby Dick (DVD Chapters 9 and 10). This version shows a consciousness of the factions that operate on the ship. Ahab's leadership emerges through the ways that he unites these groups behind a common cause, forging close bonds between himself and his men. Often, Ahab has been portrayed as an aloof and distant leader who intimidates and dominates, whereas Stewart's version of Ahab emphasizes his desire for closeness with his crew, even as he wants to bond them to his personal pursuit of Moby Dick. You might contrast Stewart's performance with the ways Gregory Peck plays this same scene in the earlier version: Director John Huston keeps Peck apart from his men physically throughout most of the scene and visually through his framing of the shots. Even when they are brought together in the same space, he tends to frame Peck by himself and cross-cut with scenes of his crew.

There is a lot going on in this sequence, and it offers interesting comparison with Moby-Dick: Then and Now since it deploys many of the same lines. There are some counterparts for these rituals in the ways that Alba creates strong social ties within The One in the contemporary storyline.

If you want to work through the sequence with your students, we recommend playing it through once first and then coming back through a second time, stopping and starting to single out specific moments. Indeed, our notes below might suggest a way of breaking the scene down into smaller chunks for the purpose of discussion. There is a particular value in working through the scene this way with your students because it may help them to better understand how you can do close reading with a media text. Before you play the scene the second time, you might consider asking your students:

- What are Ahab's goals here?
- What differences in race, class, and rank, are depicted?
- Which members of the crew feel closer to each other? Which feel more distanced?
- Who embraces Ahab's goals? Who remains more resistant?
- What rituals does Ahab perform to bond his men together? What other things does he do which are more implicit to insure their loyalty to him?
- Does he treat each member of his crew the same, or does he handle different groups differently?

Such questions may prime them to watch the scene more closely the second time and may help them to identify specific tactics of cultural negotiation Ahab deploys. Having talked it through on a global level, you can now focus more closely on specific gestures, turns of phrase, or inflections and the responses they provoke. Working through this sequence may be a good chance to emphasize to students that actors offer an "interpretation" of the characters they play and that they communicate that interpretation through their voices and gestures. You might also review the footage of Rudy discussing how being an actor changed how he reads and consider what it might mean to read this scene through an actor's eyes. You might also have the students look more closely at Melville's description of these same actions in "The Quarter-Deck" and ask them how some of the staging of this scene reflects or differs from the actions as described in the novel.

Here are some things to watch for as you examine this sequence:

- The scene opens with the introduction of Fedallah and his men, who remain outside the Pequod community. Note the initial expression of discomfort from Flask and Stubb. Periodically throughout the scene, the camera shows Fedallah and his men standing apart, showing little emotional response to what is unfolding, even as the other divisions of the crew are being broken down.
- Ahab asks Flask, Stubb, and Starbuck to call the rest of the crew. Why doesn't he call them himself?
First they call together the men who are already on deck and then, only later, they call the men down from the masts. What are the implications of this distinction? What is involved in pulling the men down from the masts? What are the potential costs of this action?

We hear Stubb and Flask whispering about Ahab. What do they say? What has Ahab done that provokes this response?

Pay attention to the expressions on Stewart's face, especially his eyes; the scar; and the ways he wobbles on his one leg throughout the scene. Are there moments in the performance where you are more aware of his wounds than others?

Ahab reviews with his men some basic procedures that will already be understood by everyone serving on the ship, yet the men seem proud to be repeating these answers to him. What is the purpose of this exchange? How might we compare Ahab's treatment of his men during this scene to the relationship between teachers and their students? How does the captain signal his approval to his men and how do they convey their hunger for his respect?

While Ahab begins the scene standing above his men, looking down, he quickly moves down the steps so that he is standing on the same level with them. What is the significance of this gesture?

Throughout this scene, Ahab periodically refers to individual members of the crew by name even as he is addressing the group as a whole. Pay attention to when he singles out particular characters and how they respond when he does.

Ahab walks through the group, holding the gold coin up close to each man's face. As he does, he's also drawing them closer together. We can understand him as simultaneously creating competition, encouraging each to perform his best in hopes of getting the reward, and creating a sense of unity which may help contain the rivalry being unleashed through this competition.

Ahab solicits a hammer and a nail from the ship's carpenter. How does he signal his respect for the carpenter's knowledge and skills?

Tashtego, Daggoo, and Queequeg stand side by side here, a positioning which stresses their commonality with each other as well as their relative distance from the other crew members. How does Ahab win their respect? Note that he speaks to each of them by name.

How does Ahab respond when questioned about his leg? Here, Stewart moves from forced laughter to rage in a fairly short period of time. What effect does each of these responses have on the men?

By the end of this speech, the men are shouting their approval for his plans. What has he done to solicit this response?

Ahab performs the ritual of pounding the coin into the masthead. What role does this ritual play in his effort to "splice" them together?

Ahab orders a "measure of grog" for his sailors, another action which is designed to produce solidarity and mark these exchanges as a particularly memorable event.

Ahab now turns to confront Starbuck, who has seemed increasingly discontented throughout the scene. Ahab pulls him aside to speak privately, first challenging his courage, then pounding on his own chest, then putting his arm around him, praising him and asking directly for his help ("surely you of all this crew will not hold back"). This is a key moment here since Ahab must decide whether he can pull Starbuck into the community or whether he needs to isolate and diminish him in the eyes of the men. As the scene continues, watch the steps Ahab takes to manage Starbuck.

Ahab drinks with his crew, while he has difficulty getting Starbuck to do so, signaling who belongs in the newly forged community and who doesn't.

Ahab performs rituals with the harpoons designed to create powerful bonds, first between the mates, then between the harpooneers, and finally amongst the two groups. What explanations does he offer for these rituals, which he traces back to his "fisherman fathers before me"?

There is something very primal about the shedding and drinking of human blood. Why might Ahab see this particular act as meaningful to his "three pagan kinsmen," and why does it seem repulsive to Starbuck?
Remix as Negotiation: Queequeg and 21st Century Maori Culture

Remix may represent an ideal formal language for negotiating between multiple cultural identities or moving between diverse communities of interests. Remix allows us to merge alternative traditions, seeking common sounds or images that express new relations or identities.

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley deploys remix practices towards precisely this end during Queequeg’s funeral in Moby-Dick: Then and Now, creating a complex fusion of culturally distinctive sounds, suggesting the crew’s shared sense of loss. The performers construct a complex soundscape. Listen closely and one will hear different tribal chants from Tashtego and Daggoo, Pip tapping his tambourine, the singing of "Amazing Grace," and an oath being taken by the members of The One. Each of these sounds is significant on its own terms, reflecting cultural traditions. Yet, mashing together these various sounds hints at a shared human experience of mourning and loss.

Here’s what Pitts-Wiley has said about this sequence:

"The funeral for Queequeg before his death has four things that I think that are very important. For Daggoo and Tashtego, the African and the Native American, I clearly wanted to say that their mourning had much more to do with the acceptance of the inevitability of natural events. Queequeg went into a trance and they said, 'Okay, this is the time to pray not for his life, but for his passage into the next world.' Then the Christians get involved and they are saying, 'We are preparing for this person to pass into the next world, and how amazing is our God—how amazing is our God, period.' Then the young people's song is about dealing with the reality of death in their life and the ritual that comes with it. Ultimately, it all becomes about ritual. Pip dances, Daggoo and Tashtego sing, the Christians pray, and the crew pays homage through ritual of poignant liberation, but it's all about transition, and what we do, culturally, to mark this transition. I've been to a funeral or two in my life, and haven't been to a whole lot yet, thank God, I guess. You can see the groups of people who all mourned differently, and sometimes it took a while for them to just figure out, 'How do we mourn together?' Because I gotta mourn the way I gotta mourn and you gotta mourn the way you mourn, but it's all mourning, and we're as different as night and day in this moment, but we're both looking for the same thing. So it's about clarity of culture and also, in an odd way, demonstrating that even in that clarity of culture, there can be harmony."

George Lipsitz offers another conception of cultural politics of remix in his book, Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism, and A Sense of Place. He traces how various indigenous peoples around the world have sought to tap the global circulation of so-called "world music" to create a circuit through which they might communicate something of their own cultural traditions or political perspectives to the developed world. Often, they do so by mixing sounds that have a deep history in their culture with much more contemporary and popular forms of music. Many in the western world are drawn to this music in part because it appeals to authenticity or exoticism, yet it also feels vaguely familiar and comfortable. This choice to remix traditional sounds with contemporary music is a tactical decision for many artists in the developing world, allowing them to generate revenue and also to communicate something of their culture to people who have historically had little interest in what they had to say.

The 2000 CD Oceania offers a vivid and relevant example of such remix practices. The album is available for sale, and you can sample the music through this video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSLjGQfp_h0&feature=related>. Oceania emerged from a collaboration between British rock performer Jeremy "Jaz" Coleman and Maori folk singer Hinewehi Mohi. Coleman embarked on the project in his role as the Composer in Residence for the Auckland Philharmonia. Hinewehi’s mother is Pakeha (New Zealander of English/Irish descent), but her father is Maori, and she

34 George Lipsitz, Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and A Sense of Place (New York: Verso, 1997)
holds a degree in Maori Studies from Waikato University. She is a champion of Maori culture through her production of programs for New Zealand television and albums of traditional music. Yet, both approached *Oceania* as something different. As Coleman explains, "This is not a sampled album. It's a written album, we wrote it and played all the instruments on it with the help of the best master musicians of the Maori people— I'm the only Westerner, apart from string players and programmers, who actually played on the album, all the rest is done by Maori hands." While the album is heavily informed by traditional cultural practices, *Oceania* represents an original composition, informed by elements from techno music as much as it is by folk music practices. As one music critic explains, "This is no journey into the past, the last rites of a lapsed culture. Rather, it is a confident exploration of future possibilities, a vigorous celebration of life... *Oceania* is what happens when Maori culture meets the modern world." All involved have expressed concern that many of us encounter indigenous cultures through a lens of historical preservation: the first images that come to mind may be those we saw in *National Geographic*. Yet, each of these cultures is having to make its peace with the transformations of our time. Those which seek to hold onto the past are losing out in the current generation as their young people are drawn towards more contemporary identities and modes of expression.

In fusing traditional and contemporary sounds, *Oceania* solicits young people—Maori and Pakeha alike—to help transmit the values of Maori culture into the future. They perform the songs in Maori, though they offer English language translations of the lyrics as part of the liner notes. The album’s packaging, with its image of a frizzy haired woman cloaked in shadows standing in a verdant forest and a waterfall in the background, suggests the appeal to exotic locations and primitive peoples for western consumers. Reading the packaging as a whole, then, we can see this album as one that is addressed to young Maori as a way of drawing them back to their own culture and is marketed to the western world as a way of transmitting that message more widely. It was the first contemporary Maori recording to be sold outside of New Zealand.

The album’s opening song, "Pukaea," tells us "Those that have passed on will always live on in their offspring" and compares the Maori traditions to a "precious feather" being set adrift. The song captures the sense of loss felt by a younger generation increasingly cut off from Maori elders: "I am left alone, a sole survivor, left with no guidance, not given the knowledge or guidance, in search for my tribal heritage." The second song is more assertive, arguing that "one must have pride in their race, their people, without which life is worth little.... The bravery of our warriors is well known, exciting the passions of our people, awe inspiring, filling us with emotion." Another song, "Farewell," more directly implicates those beyond the seas in the task of remembering what the Maori have been and imagining what they can become: "My voice reaches out to you, resounding over the highest mountains, weaving through the contours of the land, floating across oceans." And the closing song proclaims, "self determination will give us pride, passion, and ultimate life fulfillment. Let us cast aside the shackles of oppression, allowing me to reach my spiritual homeland. As it has been said, I will never be lost for the seed was sown in Rangiatae. The foundation of my existence is solid." As students listen to these songs, they should keep in mind that many scholars believe Melville intended Queequeg to be read as Maori (though he comes from the fictional island of Kokovoko). How might we read such songs in relation to what Melville shows us of Queequeg’s devoted to his religious beliefs and his pride in his cultural traditions? (If you would like to dig deeper into the Maori traditions in relation to *Moby-Dick*, you might consider showing *Whale Rider*, which includes representations of the rituals and practices surrounding whaling as they persist in contemporary Maori culture.)

Several of the songs, especially "Kotahitanga" (Union) rely on the beats and sounds of the Hakka, a traditional dance performed with shouted accompaniment. (A recorded performance of the Hakka can be viewed at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-lErE2lIcO44](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-lErE2lIcO44).) Contrary to common stereotypes, Hakkas are not exclusively war chants—they may express a range of different cultural functions—nor are they performed exclusively by men. There is, however, a strong tradition of Maori warriors performing Hakkas as

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a means of psychological preparation for combat. In the Patrick Stewart version of *Moby Dick* (chapter 11 on the DVD), Queequeg is depicted performing a Hakka below decks as the other shipmates are dancing a jig, one of many ways that the film explicitly acknowledges his Maori background. As can be seen from these two examples, the hakka involves not only singing and dancing but also ritualized facial expressions, such as showing the whites of one's eyes or poking out one's tongue, and a wide variety of vigorous body actions such as slapping the hands against the body and stamping of the feet. The New Zealand football team, The All Blacks, has helped to increase the visibility of the Hakka which they have embraced as a team ritual, where it is performed by team members of all racial and cultural backgrounds. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19PQ67ygDs8>. We might understand the All Blacks' performance of this ritual as another kind of remix practice, one which reflects the reality of contemporary New Zealand as a multicultural society, where Maori and Pakeha cultures are intersecting in ever more complex ways. It might be interesting to compare the relative cultural authenticity of the Hakka as performed by the All Blacks with the pseudo-native American performances connected with several U.S. sports franchises, such as the tomahawk chop performed by fans of the Atlanta Braves <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fv3jxToQbAw>.
Q: One of the signature differences between the book and your play is that WhiteThing has a voice in your play. Have you thought about the decision of giving WhiteThing a voice?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: I'm not so sure that Moby Dick doesn't have a voice, too. In a sense Ahab is the voice of Moby Dick because he articulates what he thinks he is. Sometimes he even articulates what he thinks the whale is thinking. So in a sense Moby Dick was not totally voiceless. Ishmael also has a way of describing the actions of the whale that kind of gives him a voice.

But cocaine, in this case, couldn't have a single voice. Cocaine had to have many voices, and it had to come from many different directions. That was important, because I had to put the kids in a situation where they weren't dealing with an imaginary enemy; they were dealing with a real enemy, something that they could touch. At the beginning of the play when Alba describes WhiteThing she says "he's tall and short. He has brown, black, blond hair; it depends on the sun." He's a multiple of opposites, and he's dangerous and he's sexy and he's charismatic. And, "He told me, I'll take care of you if you take care of me." In her world, WhiteThing broke a promise. In the novel Ahab, in some ways, fulfilled a prophecy of what would happen to him if he did something. He spit, he desecrated another people's culture, and his punishment was the whale, which is very much like the Jonah story. You sin against the laws of God and Man, and there's a price to pay for it. You'll be swallowed by a fish. In the case of the kids the warning, if you will, was that WhiteThing was so changeable. If you listen all the kids say, "My uncle told me WhiteThing was this. My aunt told me WhiteThing was this." WhiteThing can be anything, but it's real. She spoke with it. But even in speaking with it, it changed on her and it made her love it. WhiteThing is very skilled that way—no matter what form it takes. It's very skilled at making you love it. If you don't love the drug itself, you love the power, you love the money, you love the prestige because that's what it counts on.

When I lecture on building a drug empire and all the necessary elements—you need a disposable underclass, you need a fluid economy, you need cash, you need a product, you need advertising—they say, "What do you mean, advertising?" I say, "Yeah, that big Lexus sign on the freeway that says, 'Buy a Lexus, it'll make you feel better.' Buy this, it's status.' That's advertising for the drug lord—'let's suck them out. It makes you feel better. Don't you want the drug? Yes, I do. Okay, now you're going to go to work seventy hours, eighty hours a week in Silicon Valley, you're going to make $150,000 a year, maybe even more. But in my business, you can make that $150,000 working half the time. Same money. What makes you think that the product that you provide in Silicon Valley is any more important than the product that I provide? Peace of mind, comfort sometimes, escape from the realities of the world. I've known some of the Silicon Valley people. I wouldn't have their life. For many of them that's a drug, too; and for many of them, they count on the drug that I provide to keep them in that world.'"

That's something that was very important to tell the kids. It couldn't be imagined. It had to be said specifically. It had to be in somebody's mouth. Ultimately at the end of the play we have the embodiment of the WhiteThing. We call it the Hydra, the many-headed thing that says, "Let me tell you what I am. Let's get this straight, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. I am dangerous. But I'm feeding people. There are people in South America who are able to put food on the table because of me. There are some cops who are retiring to nice places because of me. Miami got built because of me. There's pilots in the air, there's bankers making money because of me. There are a lot of things going on because of me. So don't act like I don't add value to the world. I do. I take some things away, too. But you killed all the whales and what did you take away?" You have to try to find a way in those voices for the almost voicelessness of the white whale in Moby-Dick. The voice of WhiteThing has to be the one that's saying, "Don't sleep on what you think I don't do." This is not as easy as Just Say No. Say yes to something. Tell me what you want to say yes to because that's what WhiteThing says. "What do you want to say yes to? What do you want and I'll help you get it."
You know what? Alba would have paid her brother's way through MIT in cash. He would have wanted for nothing. What's so bad about that? There are some kids out there who should be here, who aren't here because nobody has enough money.

Q: So in the play White Thing is more than just cocaine. It's a military, industrial, entertainment complex.

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: You notice the agents that appear on the train with the kids—they are a policeman, a lawyer, a soccer mom, an entertainer — and they really try to tell the kids, "We're as much a part of this whole thing as the pusher is," even though there's never any reference to pushers or junkies, or anything like that. You never see the drug. The same thing with Moby-Dick. For many, many chapters you hear about Moby Dick, but you never see him. Even when they spot him originally he's so far off it's his spout that you see. That's also very much how the drug business is. You don't really see it, it's just there. It built Miami, built Miami. Do you see blocks of cocaine in those superstructures in Miami? No, but that money, drug money, built Miami. Drug money does a lot of things. I know of at least two or three community centers and recreational centers in big cities built by drug money. There were touring plays, particularly black touring plays, that were supported by drug lords because it was cash.... It's big, it's real big, as big as the whale, as omnipresent as the whale. And you defend yourself against it by keeping it out of your life. That's the only way you can…. You have to make the decision: I'm not going to allow it, as much as I can, into my world. If you make that decision for the most part, the drug business leaves you alone because it's not invested in trying to change your mind. There's plenty of other people who are willing.

During the course of the play's production, six hundred tons of cocaine was intercepted, six hundred tons. If there's six hundred tons of cocaine coming into this country, there's a marketplace for cocaine, wouldn't you say? And if six hundred tons of cocaine got intercepted, don't we think that the drug business, the drug cartel dealt with that as a cost of doing business? Sometimes you're going to lose your product. Did we see that cocaine get burned, destroyed, whatever? No. There's a good chance some of it made its way back to the street anyway. Who did that? If you have an AWACS bomber that can drop a bomb down a chimney, how does this much cocaine get into our country? We asked the kids, as in the play, "What do you do with a million dollars in small bills?" The banker says, "I got a way for you to deal with it." So that person is in the drug business, too. The police chief says, "Shoot, I'm glad for drugs because it keeps my guys busy, keeps my wife busy—she's a social worker, keeps the courts busy." Everybody's making money off of this. I believe if you were to eliminate drugs, and cocaine in particular, from our society tomorrow we'd be in total collapse within a week until we figured out a new drug.

Q: So tell me about the tennis shoes.

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: When I was a kid if you had a pair of PF Flyers, they were kind of cheap, but they were, like, exciting. Kids and Converse All Star shoes. They were fashionable — well, not so much fashionable, but they were desirable items across the board. But now you deal in a world where $150, $200 tennis shoes become status symbols. When the wealthy have them and the poor don't have them, that doesn't mean that the poor don't want them. So what do the poor have to do to get them? Soccer Mom is the great advertiser of things that you want. You want a Lexus, don't you? Yes. You want nice clothes. You want expensive shoes. Soccer Mom is wearing it every day and her kids have it, and she drives them to soccer practice in her late-model SUV just like what you want. She doesn't think that she's part of the business, but she is. She is the marketing firm for the drug business because she's the one who's flaunting, in some cases, or promoting certain things.

Q: What do you think your play has to say bout the culture of the gangs or the crews?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: Live by the sword, die by the sword. Find a desire to live, and everyone lives. I think our play ultimately is trying to say as the one message to our audience that at some point we have to make a
decision for ourselves about certain things. The message may come from a source that we don't necessarily expect it to come from. But we have to keep listening. We have to keep listening, watching, observing, and understanding what we're doing to our neighborhoods, to ourselves, to our children, to our world.

Ahab went out on the ocean to hunt a thing that is the son of the ocean. If you read Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, he would say never fight an enemy on its turf. You're going out in a little boat to fight a thing that is the son of the ocean. You can't win. Then ultimately when mankind advances — now they don't go out in little wooden boats they row with oars, they go out with cannons — they start destroying the enemy. But the more you destroy it the more you find you're destroying yourself. That's part of the lesson that the young people have to deal with in the play, the lesson that Ahab's crew didn't learn. Ahab didn't care. He was willing to sacrifice them all for his cause.

We love to answer the rally call. We're Americans, we love the rally. "Remember the Alamo." "Remember Pearl Harbor." "Remember," whatever. "Remember 9/11." Okay. Sometimes the rally needs to be, let us never forget those things and never forget why they happened; not that they happened or how they happened, but why they happened. We're going to have to become a smarter nation; and I think that's one of the lessons that the kids.... And I think they do a very good job of saying, "We've got to get smarter. We can't keep doing it this way." We can't continue to ignore the warnings like Ahab did.

**Q:** So that's one of the radical revisions of the contemporary story, that they turn back from self-destruction?

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** Yes, they do. Yes, they do, but they're at the cusp, they're at the brink, and they're willing to go forward. But it's so important that they be given a choice, that they get a chance to make a choice as opposed to the choice being made for them. Even Ahab's crew had a choice. They could have said, "No," but they didn't, even though they all knew at a point it was wrong, "This is not good." But they kept going. And they paid for it with their lives.

Great literature is about great choices. Caliban in *The Tempest* says to Prospero, "I am your only subject who once was mine own king," mine own king. There was a time in human history where kings made kings' choices, and they were the only ones who could do it. It was an enormous responsibility, a king's choice. The greatness of a king was determined by his ability to make good choices. Many failed, I would say most probably failed when it came to making a king's choice. But now we as individuals are much more responsible for being "mine own king" and making a king's choice. I think that's part of the lesson of the kids: that Ahab's crew became so subordinated to him that they stopped thinking. Even at a certain point Alba says to her crew, "This is not your fight, this is mine. You got to make your own choices. Don't do it for me." But you go back to the nature of friendship, as exemplified by Ishmael and Queequeg, and her crew says, "No, all for one and one for all." That's a noble thing, too. But it's a nobility determined by an active choice, not an acquiescence to the will of someone else. Think, question, see how you're divided, see how you're separated.
Q: We've already touched on this a little bit, but why don't you speak a little bit more about the role of the hip-hop cultures, music, dance, and swagger, and so forth?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: As much as I was on a journey to understand what Melville was writing about, I also was on a journey to understand hip-hop culture much more specifically. I had two young sons, so I was surrounded by hip hop. That doesn't mean that I was a part of it or really understood it: the language, the intent. The Pequod was very much the hip-hop culture two hundred years in advance because it was made up of multiple cultures who all brought something to the rhythm that was necessary to operate the ship. You had to be able to work in a core, you brought your rhythm, you brought your energy, you brought a certain thing to the process. Also, the rank had more to do with skill than it had to do with culture or background.

Back years ago when they were talking about the browning of America, I think there was a belief that the browning of America meant that interracial marriages were going to produce this new culture of people who were not single race anymore. That was going to happen anyway. History has never supported cultures that didn't intermingle. But the true browning of America was not going to happen in interracial marriages and procreation; it was going to happen when young people shared a similar type of attitude about the world. They were going to listen to the same type of music. They felt isolated, sometimes alienated against some other force, together. They were less conscious of race. That doesn't mean that they were unconscious of it, but they were just less conscious of race. You would go to places and you would see black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, Indian who were all dressed alike, they were all listening to JZ, and they all had a sense of friendship for life. There were very few racial-specific questions even though race was very much a part of their conversation.

In creating the crew for Moby-Dick I really wanted it be a much more clear reflection of a culture that put something else ahead of race and even gender in many ways. It was about us. That's why they're called "The One." We're the one. We're this crew. Our crew is more important than the individual, which is very much true in the case of the Pequod. The crew outweighed individual wants, desires, or needs. Also, they have a rhythm — they have a way of moving, a way of walking, a way of talking — that you can find anywhere.

Not too many years ago I was doing Othello at an outdoor theater in Westerly, Rhode Island, a very white enclave in Rhode Island. I'm playing Othello, and I'm the only black person in the company because the director felt that if you're going to do Othello, Othello can be the only black person in the show. I'm coming from the house I was staying in across the street to go to the theater one late afternoon. A group of white kids drove by in a car and they are blasting hip-hop music and it's using every kind of racial terminology that you could think of. I mean, it was hip hop, and it was extreme. They're in a car and heads are going and they have the clothes. They see me crossing the street and it's, like, "Hey, man, hey, brother, what's up?" I'm thinking to myself that not many years ago for the language that's coming out of your stereo blasting at me I would probably be thinking about coming over and punching you out. After that I'm about to go play a historically put-upon black man in a show. So all of the things together: I'm in a white community about to play Othello, crossing the street, listening to white kids playing hip-hop music, who greet me warmly. I'm thinking to myself, this is too bizarre. I don't know what to do.

Well, Moby-Dick comes along and never once did that young crew ever discuss race. It never came up. There was a Cambodian crew leader, a Dominican first mate, a white kid, a black girl from St. Kitts, and a Cape Verdean. They were the crew. They never discussed race because in that world it wasn't important. But when it came down to the dancing and the hip hop there was a thing that they just all had in common and they could just go to it, and I loved them for it. As we moved through the process, I realized also that in many ways they had become a-cultural, also. I'm not so sure that was so good because when I would go to Yosa
Yon and say, "Tell me about Cambodia," she could tell me some things, but she didn't really know a lot about it. "Tell me about the Dominican Republic." Rudy knew quite a bit. But across the board they didn't necessarily. They had not subverted their culture; they had just relegated it to a place where it didn't have as much impact on their lives. I would often say, "That's important. You don't want to put that on the back burner." The question becomes, how do you balance your past with your future in a way that you don't repeat the mistakes of your predecessors? There's your great opportunity because on the ship if you don't work together, you die together. That was true. Even though in the "Midnight, Forecastle" scene all the racial anxiety and hatred, and everything, comes out. But then the storm comes up. When the storm comes up, who cares if you don't like me? That's not the issue. I think in many ways the hip-hop culture is saying the storm is upon us. We're going to have to figure out a way to work at this together.

Q: You've said that everyone's on Melville's boat, but everyone's also a type. They are defined through their race or their ethnicity. You hold onto that in your version of Melville. With The One, it's important that the gang is mixed race but you could scramble the races easily in your casting and...

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: And it wouldn't make any difference at all, it wouldn't make any difference at all. Gender, race, whatever, it would not make any difference at all, which is probably the reason why Pip becomes so important because Pip is the little brother. He's the little brother. Here's an African American kid whose sister is Cambodian, if we're looking at it strictly from a racial point of view, but they never dealt with that, and we didn't give the audience an opportunity to make any judgment about it. In some ways we didn't care what judgment they would have made because we recognized that whatever judgment they would make came in with them. Never once did I hear anyone say anything about that because the kids were so invested in each other that it didn't matter. They took all of that negativity away. Isn't that a great thing? What an enviable gift they have to be able to do that. I felt honored to be a part of a group of young people who helped me move through it in the same way.

At this point in my life, I'm realistic about my own racism. I'm never going to say to anyone I never have any racist thoughts or inclinations, but I will say every day I get up and do battle with it because it is a waste of my life. At this point in time I don't have any life to waste on stupidity like that. The kids just fired me up, and I said, "you know what? I'm going to make this easier on myself, and I'm going to learn from you how to do it." What a blessing my older crew was, too, because they led the kids on a certain level, but they followed them on another level. The conversations and the relationships that developed between the two crews were a story in themselves. It was about sharing information and attitudes and ideas, and talking about them where you frontload your success. It's a great thing when you can frontload your success. At the end of the day are we still going to be friends? Are we still going to like each other? Do we still have a play to do? Yes. Okay, we can talk about anything then because we've already decided the outcome: we're still going to be friends. And they were great together, absolutely a study in multi-generational, multi-racial, multi-cultural success. In some ways Melville was trying to say, if we don't deal with some of these issues now, they're going to come back and get us. And he was right.

Q: What role does race play in the casting under those circumstances? People often use the phrase "race-blind casting," but what you just said is that you want to call attention to this multi-racial context through the play.

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: Yeah. I'm not a person who uses race-blind casting as a concept because that says I don't see who you are. I do see who you are. In fact, not only do I see who you are, I want you to see who you are. I want you to bring your African American-ness, your Asian-ness, your Latino-ness, your Jewish-ness, your woman-ness, your Gay-ness, whatever your -ness is to the table. How else are we going to take advantage of everything that you have if we don't recognize what you are? That doesn't mean that one thing is going to dominate another thing, but at least put it on the table and let's see how we can use it. If you don't put it out there we don't know what it is and we're not going to guess. I sometimes resent that whole concept race-color-blind casting. What do you mean color-blind? I'm an African American man. I'm a black man.
you going to do, act like I'm something else? No. What of that I use is the option. Sometimes I really want to use some of that stuff. Other times that's not important. These young people put value on who you are. That's important. I would never tell Yosa Yon to ignore her Cambodian heritage even in this play. I wouldn't do that. Or to deny her gender. What sense does that make? No, bring all of that and then we'll decide how we can use it in a way that everybody is safe, but everybody is also empowered by their self. That's what I like about Melville's work—I love about Melville's work. When you meet Queequeg, who is the ultimate human being in the whole novel, his great lesson was he was faithful. He lived his religion, he lived his faith. He taught Ishmael, if you are what you say you are, live it. Don't just talk it, live it. Ishmael comments on that a lot. "I'll try a pagan friend because Christian humanness had proven to be wanting." Why not? He admired Queequeg for that, and Queequeg taught him that friendship has everything to do with "can I count on you? Do I have to turn around to see if you are there?" And we can discover new ways of being friends. I think very much that's what hip hop clearly does. It's discovering new ways for people to relate to one another. In ten years, not more than that, they will not only be the dominant part of the culture, they will also be the ones making the decision as to whether or not this country will fulfill its creed. I have great faith in them.

Q: Historically in the real world, gangs have been racially segregated, whereas you portrayed The One as mixed race.

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: That's right. I think racially segregated gangs are becoming a thing of the past. Gangs are brought together for different reasons now. You can go into south central Los Angeles, which is one of the stereotype gang places of the world, and you can see black, white, Hispanic gangsters and they're all in the same gang. There are still many segregated gangs, but they're not running big ships. They are pretty limited in many ways. What's very interesting I find, culturally speaking, in the segregated gangs is that segregated gangs feed on each other. There's a term that's banded about, black-on-black crime, black people committing crimes against black people. But if you were to look at the history of the Mafia they fed off of each other, but I never heard the term Italian-on-Italian crime. The Asian gangs feed on each other. You don't hear that. When gangs feed off their own at some point in time, they're already determining their future of extinction. Whereas I think the new crews — and I would probably use that term more than gangs now — are discovering the benefits of multiculturalism. Can our society catch up with those new crews and take advantage of the benefits that they are realizing already? Some organizations are. They're seeing the benefits of it. Crews come together because it's us against something. In Melville's case it was us against whales. Us against poverty. Us against the Huns. It's us against somebody. We have to shift that paradigm in a way that says it's us against anything that's trying to destroy us. Us against global warming and pollution of the planet. Us against AIDS. Us against the pollution of the oceans. Us against poverty. In the case of Mixed Magic I feel very much like it's us against disentitlement and illiteracy.
NEGOTIATING CULTURAL SPACES:
THE POTENTIAL FOR COMMUNITY AND THE USES OF VIOLENCE

BY WYN KELLEY

This section supports the theme of the unit “Negotiating Cultural Spaces” by showing how characters in Melville’s *Moby-Dick* explore and negotiate a dense cultural space. The whaling ship *Pequod* provides open decks where New Yorker Ishmael, Nantucket Quaker Ahab, Pacific islander Queequeg, African Daggoo, and Native American Tashtego, along with numerous other European, North American, and South Seas sailors, may meet; but on a compact whaling vessel, they must also learn to get along. The zone of cultural contact can afford the sailors diverse kinds of communal and celebratory pleasure, as we will see in Melville’s Chapter 40, “Midnight, Forecastle,” but it can also produce violence and conflict. Melville suggests, however, that by shifting points of view we may see violence more deeply and understand its uses more fully. Melville’s explorations of cultural space on the *Pequod* give us ways to think about how students traverse the cultural spaces of their families, communities, schools, and Internet groups.

Negotiating a New Space: The *Pequod* as Unfamiliar Territory

In writing about sailors on a whaling vessel, Melville knew his readers might feel themselves being led into a frightening, possibly dangerous, and even loathsome world, comparable in some ways to the slum-worlds Dickens and other popular writers of the city unfolded in the new urban melodramas of the day. In his 1846 novel *Typee*, Melville describes the complaints of passengers subjected to the rigors of life at sea: "Oh! ye state-room sailors, who make so much ado about a fourteen days' passage across the Atlantic; who so pathetically relate the privations and hardships of the sea, where, after a day of breakfasting, lunching, dining off five courses, chatting, playing whist, and drinking champagne punch, it was your hard lot to be shut up in little cabinets of mahogany and maple, and sleep for ten hours, with nothing to disturb you but 'those good-for-nothing tars, shouting and tramping over head,'—what would ye say to our six months out of sight of land?” (Ch 1). "Good-for-nothing tars" fill the pages of temperance tracts and sensational urban pot-boilers of the period as figures of drunkenness, disease, and vice. Although nautical chronicles like Richard Henry Dana’s *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) and J. Ross Browne’s *Etchings from a Whaling Cruise* (1846) reached a broad mainstream audience, their very popularity points to the fact that readers found the lives of sailors exotic and remote. Ishmael mediates, then, between the "state-room sailors" of his audience and the "good-for-nothing tars," the highbrow characters and the low, to make readers feel at home in a strange and, to many, threatening world.

In a number of ways, *Moby-Dick* shows how new arrivals in this unfamiliar world must behave in order to get along. They learn who is in charge, how the different groups function, what the rules are, and how to speak in the specialized language of this maritime environment. Melville’s 1849 novel *Redburn* focuses on the experience of a greenhorn youth facing the violent hazing, exhausting physical rigors, and mental stresses and fatigues of shipboard life. In *Moby-Dick* Ishmael is the greenhorn at first, for even with his experience of serving on merchant vessels, he has no idea what whaling involves. The early scenes play on the comedy of his errors as, in Ch 35 ("The Mast-Head") he nearly falls from his dizzy perch aloft, or in Ch 48 ("The First Lowering") and 49 ("The Hyena") he almost drowns in his first whale chase and ruefully considers the insanity of it all. Yet soon, in detailed cetological chapters and disquisitions on whaling tools, boats, and paraphernalia, Ishmael introduces the insider information he has learned the hard way and can now helpfully pass along to a willing reader. In the ways Melville shows Ishmael and other characters learning to navigate this new terrain, we see the operations of what we describe in other sections of this unit as the NML skill of negotiation: the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, and grasping and following alternative norms—not only in virtual and personal interactions with others, but also in working with an unfamiliar text.
Three issues in *Moby-Dick* seem particularly pertinent to the concerns of this unit on negotiation: understanding the social organization of the Pequod, recognizing its cultural diversity, and comprehending the boundaries of one's station. This section of the essay looks at specific chapters that take up these issues. The rest of the essay looks at the way a single chapter, "Midnight, Forecastle," shows the implications of negotiating a diverse culture when it erupts into violence.

Chapter 34, "The Cabin-Table" dramatizes with brilliant humor the plight of the third mate, Flask, as he negotiates the power structure of the ship. As a mate, Flask is entitled to certain privileges denied to the men. He dines in the officers' mess (or dining cabin) and presumably enjoys slightly better food than what the sailors receive. Yet Melville makes clear that this privilege entails considerable anxiety and stress, not to mention hunger, for although higher on the social ladder than the men, Flask stands on the lowest rung among the officers. The meals, sacred rituals in which the social hierarchy of ship determines the order in which men eat and how they may behave at the table, demonstrate to him in humiliating terms his lowly status. So, for example, the men enter the cabin in order of rank: Ahab as captain first, Starbuck the first mate next, Stubb the second mate, and lastly Flask, who executes a little jig in the absence of his superiors; but going down into the cabin, "he pauses, ships a new face altogether, and, then, independent, hilarious little Flask enters King Ahab's presence, in the character of Abjectus, or the Slave." Once inside, the men are served again in order of rank, Flask last, and eat in total silence in deference to Ahab, who seldom speaks. According to rules that Melville shows to be absurd, no man may reach for food that has not been served to him by the captain: "For Flask to have presumed to help himself, this must have seemed to him tantamount to larceny in the first degree. Had he helped himself at the table, doubtless, never more would he have been able to hold his head up in this honest world; nevertheless, strange to say, Ahab never forbade him. And had Flask helped himself, the chances were Ahab had never so much as noticed it. Least of all, did Flask presume to help himself to butter. Whether he thought the owner of the ship denied it to him, on account of its clotting his clear, sunny complexion; or whether he deemed that, on so long a voyage in such marketless waters, butter was at a premium, and therefore was not for him, a subordinate; however it was, Flask, alas! was a butterless man!" In a final indignity, Flask, being at the lowest level, must also finish his meal and leave first before the others, giving Ahab maximum time to dine. "Therefore it was that Flask once admitted in private, that ever since he had arisen to the dignity of an officer, from that moment he had never known what it was to be otherwise than hungry, more or less. For what he ate did not so much relieve his hunger, as keep it immortal in him." Flask longs for the relative freedom and camaraderie of the forecastle, where the crew eat their dinners in democratic peace.

Melville plays off the freedom of the forecastle against the hierarchy of the officers' quarters again and again throughout the book to emphasize what every whaling man knows when he steps onto the ship: each sailor has his place assigned, and although the ship is less rigidly organized than a military vessel, each one owes the captain instant and total obedience. In this environment, the ranks and distinctions between the men, the different tasks and functions they have been given, bear weighty significance and influence every action and every moment in their lives. Negotiating these rules is a matter of learning one's station and sticking to it.

A less rigid but in some ways more mysterious social structure reveals itself in Ch 54, "The Town-Ho's Story." Here Ishmael chronicles a story of mutiny and violence, a tale he heard from the sailors of the Town-Ho while he was sailing on the Pequod but which he retells "in the style in which I once narrated it" to various "Spanish cavaliers" he met in Lima at some unspecified later date. These Spanish nobles have no idea of the world of whaling, and since the story involves various regional differences among the men—one is a "Lakeman" or sailor from the American Great Lakes, some are "Canallers" who got their start as wild Erie Canal bargemen of the frontier, another is a Vineyarder and hence nurtured by the sea—the Spanish cavaliers must learn subtle cultural differences between the different groups of men. Ishmael provides the explanations that make sense of these unfamiliar groups or subcultures, but it becomes clear that the world of the Town-Ho is not organized like the social hierarchy Flask experiences on the Pequod. On the contrary, because of a conflict between the Lakeman, Steelkilt, and the Vineyarder, Radney, a mutiny ensues, with Steelkilt locking himself and his confederates in the hold with their weapons, threatening to break out and take over the ship.
The social hierarchy, then, breaks down, and the cultural differences emerge as more useful in defining the men's actions. Steelkilt, the Lakeman, learned his maritime experience on landlocked waters, and he knows how to work within a more contained sphere than Radney, the man of islands and oceans, who assumes unlimited power over his men. Steelkilt works in secret; Radney understands only the most open and physically violent gestures. Steelkilt plots; Radney blusters. Their differences in character seem to derive as much from their regional and cultural backgrounds, as detailed in the story, as from either innate personality traits or fixed social positions (Steelkilt as sailor, Radney as mate). Negotiating this physical (and narrative) space requires an alertness to subtle cultural differences rather than to one's place on the social ladder. In the end that order has been completely reversed, as Radney the mate is killed (by the providential intervention of the whale Moby Dick), and Steelkilt the mutineer escapes.

In this chapter, Melville provides two levels of negotiation: that of the Town-Ho sailors trying to decide which side to take in the mutiny and that of the Spanish cavaliers trying to understand what Ishmael is telling them about these unfamiliar subcultures. Although both projects are ultimately unsuccessful—the mutiny ends in Radney's death and Steelkilt's leaving the ship rather than taking it over, while the cavaliers remain mystified long after Ishmael finishes his narration—the chapter nevertheless offers a subtle, probing treatment of the mysteries and dangers of finding one's way in an unfamiliar and potentially threatening environment.

In a third example of the problems of negotiating social space, one that draws on both the social hierarchy issues of "The Cabin Table" and the potential for mutinous violence of "The Town-Ho's Story," Melville develops at various points throughout the book the complex relationship between Ahab and Starbuck. Although Ahab is Starbuck's official superior as captain, Starbuck is in a sense Ahab's moral superior as the only man to recognize the quest to kill Moby Dick as blasphemy: a violation of what the captain owes to his sailors, whom he's leading to their deaths, to the ship's owners, who have invested in the enterprise, and to the Christian God, who would judge "vengeance on a dumb brute" (Ch 36, "The Quarter-Deck") as a sacrilege against His creations. In two chapters, 109 ("The Cabin: Ahab and Starbuck") and 123 ("The Musket") Melville uses the threat of violence to clarify the boundaries that define each man's place in the shipboard social space. Although in each case the violence restores the men to their assigned places, it also shows how dangerously mutable these boundaries are. Negotiating them reveals how easily one can fall into the uncertain space between the men's different social and cultural groups.

In "The Cabin," Starbuck reports to Ahab that the barrels of oil are leaking, and the vessel must stop to repair the damage. Ahab, intent on finding Moby Dick, refuses this reasonable request: "Begone! Let it leak! I'm all a-leak myself." Starbuck questions him, reminding him of his obligations to the ship's owners, to which Ahab flings back his defiance: "Let the owners stand on Nantucket beach and outyell the Typhoons. What cares Ahab? Owners, owners? Thou art always prating to me, Starbuck, about those miserly owners, as if the owners were my conscience. But look ye, the only real owner of anything is its commander; and hark ye, my conscience is in this ship's keel.—On deck!" Starbuck parries this intolerable affront to shipboard usage by answering mildly: "A better man than I might well pass over in thee what he would quickly enough resent in a younger man; aye, and in a happier, Captain Ahab." When Ahab again orders him on deck, Starbuck responds with an implied threat: "I do entreat. And I do dare, sir—to be forbearing! Shall we not understand each other better than hitherto, Captain Ahab?" Although the speech sounds again mild, his request for a better understanding may indicate that he thinks Ahab has gone too far, may in fact be risking mutiny. Ahab's violent response shows that he sees the threat for what it is. He pulls his musket from its rack, points it at Starbuck, and declares: "There is one God that is Lord over the earth, and one Captain that is lord over the Pequod.—On deck!" As a Quaker, Ahab does not respect human intermediaries between himself and his God, but in this statement he draws an analogy between God's power and his own, an attitude that he knows God-fearing Starbuck could never abide. Starbuck obeys the order with a parting shot that shows he understands the danger Ahab has put himself in: "Thou hast outraged, not insulted me, sir; but for that I ask thee not to beware of Starbuck; thou wouldst but laugh; but let Ahab beware of Ahab; beware of thyself, old man."
Starbuck's obedience turns out to be good policy in the end. Ahab recognizes that he has overstepped his bounds as captain and as fellow human. Why? "It may have been a flash of honesty in him [Ahab]; or mere prudential policy which, under the circumstance, imperiously forbade the slightest symptom of open disaffection, however transient, in the important chief officer of his ship. However it was, his orders were executed," and Starbuck gets his way. In this example of successful negotiation, Starbuck tests the limits of both men's official positions in a way that shows his courage and his shrewd understanding of Ahab's character. The success is costly to him, however, because it shows that Ahab is not the tyrannical captain of the mutiny narrative and that Starbuck, in having prevailed, must continue to obey. The violence displayed in "The Cabin" does not, in the end, allow Starbuck to achieve his larger goal, namely to stop Ahab's mad pursuit of the whale.

Melville shows that second issue in the companion chapter, "The Musket," where now Starbuck is the one wielding the gun. Entering Ahab's cabin to report to him on the progress of a typhoon, Starbuck finds Ahab asleep and, seeing the muskets in the rack reflects that he could quickly and righteously end the madness in one lethal stroke. "'But shall this crazed old man be tamely suffered to drag a whole ship's company down to doom with him?—Yes, it would make him the wilful murderer of thirty men and more, if this ship come to any deadly harm; and come to deadly harm, my soul swears this ship will, if Ahab have his way. If, then, he were this instant—put aside, that crime would not be his.'" Starbuck, in other words, can save the ship and men from Ahab and Ahab from his wilful self. At this critical moment Starbuck sounds his ethical depths for an answer: "'A touch, and Starbuck may survive to hug his wife and child again.—Oh Mary! Mary!—boy! boy! boy!—But if I wake thee not to death, old man, who can tell to what unsounded deeps Starbuck's body this day week may sink, with all the crew! Great God, where art Thou? Shall I? shall I?" As he hesitates, Ahab cries out in his sleep—"Stern all! Oh Moby Dick, I clutch thy heart at last!"—and Starbuck loses his nerve and steals away.

As Ricardo Pitts-Wiley points out in relation to his adaptation of the book, *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*, the novel's ethical challenges, its aspirations to tragedy, lie in the fact that no one on the boat succeeds in stopping the inevitable carnage that will result from Ahab's manic quest. Starbuck comes closest but fails. His efforts at negotiating this impasse reveal the limits of human action in the face of violence, but they also uncover the complex dimensions of negotiation itself. In his attempts to confront Ahab, Starbuck fails in his object, but as Melville shows in Ch 132, "The Symphony," the two men also reach a profound understanding of and connection with each other. Ahab acknowledges his helplessness in the hands of Fate: "'Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm?'" And Starbuck surrenders the human logic that would interpose in the affairs of fates and gods. Negotiation survives the violence between them to arrive at a recognition of each man's place, not so much in the social world of the ship as in the ethical universe beyond it.

As we will see in Chapter 40, "Midnight, Forecastle," these philosophical issues get worked out in the social space of the forecastle as well as in the cosmic space of Ahab and Starbuck's moral universe. We turn now to a reading of the themes Melville develops in that chapter to highlight the significance of negotiating a complex social space.

Before you begin, you might return to the Melville section of the "Motives for Reading" unit, in the topic "Locating Motives in *Moby-Dick.*" This section lists a number of voices (we might think of many others besides these) that Ishmael or Melville's narrative persona adopts throughout the narrative, voices that signal different motives and ways of relating to the story—those of the advocate, the dramatist, the humorist, the poet, and so on. We might also think of them as voices of the book's different cultures and subcultures, in the terms in which Henry Jenkins defines them in his section of this unit. That is, we might see these voices as representing not just authorial intentions (to preach, dramatize, or satirize) but also cultural practices. Certain characters in the text seem to operate as advocates (Ishmael) or dramatists (Ahab), others as humorists (Stubb), technicians (the carpenter and blacksmith), artists (Queequeg), and so on. These different interests and affiliations among the characters suggest, as Jenkins emphasizes in his essay, that we may think of
"subculture" (identifying oneself in terms of preferred and shared values and practices) on the Pequod as identifying the characters somewhat differently from what we associate with "multiculturalism," or identifying oneself in terms of race, place of origin, religion, gender, or some other given category. Within the model of multiculturalism, we might regard Queequeg, for example, primarily as a Polynesian or Maori prince. Viewed as a member of one of Melville's multiple subcultures however, he might look as much like an artist (with his body as a canvas for graceful tattooings) or a preacher who instructs Ishmael in sacred rituals or an anatomist/hunter who knows intimately the body of the whale. Rather than associating him only with the other nonwhite characters, like Daggoo and Tashtego, Melville links him logically with fellow-artist Ishmael as well. Likewise Pip, often thought of primarily in terms of his race (African American) or his status (cabin- boy) might also appear as like Ahab in that both deliver soliloquies in a "nervous lofty language" (Pip most notably at the end of Chapter 40, "Midnight, Forecastle"). Melville very seldom aligns Pip with Daggoo, although both share racial characteristics, but near the end of the novel he binds Pip and Ahab in a fast friendship. This connection looks more like "subcultural" than "multicultural" affiliation.

But as we will see, when the obvious markers of identify prove less useful than we might have thought in helping us understand the characters, other more subtle ones complicate our reading, especially of conflicts and negotiations of violence. In "Midnight, Forecastle" Melville seems to show conflict as a matter of racial difference when the Spanish Sailor and Daggoo engage in a fistfight. But by the end of the chapter, when a storm disperses the crew to their stations and reveals their deeper solidarity with each other in the face of wrathful nature, we get a different sense of what racial conflicts mean. It turns out that racial difference accounts for only the most obvious conflicts in the scene; in the end the men's fear of the storm, of Moby Dick, of Ahab proves to be more consequential—and far more difficult to negotiate.

In the sections that follow, we look at how Melville poses the problem of cultural identity, how he shows violence emerging in communal space, and how characters negotiate that shared and often contested space to come to a deeper understanding of themselves and each other.

“Midnight, Forecastle” and the Celebration of Cultural Diversity

One might begin with any number of scenes in Moby-Dick where characters negotiate relationships with people from diverse cultures—the chapters that describe the friendship between Ishmael and Queequeg, for example, or the odd connection between Ahab and Asian Fedallah—but Chapter 40, “Midnight, Forecastle” takes up these themes in a particularly vivid fashion.37 Uniting sailors of all nations and parts of the globe, Melville shows them dancing and singing together in ways that suggest the promises of multicultural understanding, festivity, and fellowship. Indeed the chapter looks like a celebration of multicultural togetherness, though as we’ll see Melville reveals the fault lines in this ideal of social harmony.

Melville makes this chapter a remarkable formal departure from what comes before it in the novel, heightening its distinctiveness. Most strikingly, he presents it as a play rather than continuous narrative, with an opening stage direction: “Foresail rises and discovers [reveals] the watch standing, lounging, leaning, and lying in various attitudes, all singing in chorus.)” Unlike the theatrical chapters that precede it, notable for tragic Shakespearean soliloquies by Ahab (Chapter 37, “Sunset”), Starbuck (Chapter 38, “Dusk”), and Stubb (Chapter 39, “First Night-Watch”), “Midnight, Forecastle” moves from a tragic mode to something more like the nautical melodramas popular in Melville’s period, complete with chanteys sung “in chorus” followed by energetic jigs and reels danced to the accompaniment of Pip’s tambourine. The mood of the men, released from their watches by the eight bells of midnight, is festive and jolly. Although it is unlikely that they tasted

the grog Ahab distributed to the mates and harpooners in Chapter 36, “The Quarter-Deck” (the Dutch Sailor does mention the effects of “our Old Mogul’s wine”), the sailors are ready for frivolity.

The multicultural nature of this festive gathering comes across in Melville’s insistent use of national identities for the sailors instead of names (except for Pip, Tashtego, and Daggoo). Sailors appear as characters called simply First Nantucket Sailor, Dutch Sailor, French Sailor, Iceland Sailor, and so on. Interestingly Melville begins with American and Northern European sailors, then moves to the Mediterranean—Maltese Sailor, Sicilian Sailor,—and on to the Azores, China, India (Lascar Sailor), and Tahiti, seemingly following the routes of the historical spread of global whaling. Since the number of sailors probably exceeds what Ahab’s ship could hold, it appears that Melville is making a particular point of the Pequod’s diversity, even if it means some nautical inaccuracy.38

At the same time that Melville emphasizes the multicultural breadth of the crew, he does not give the sailors much depth of character or specificity. He sketches in their racial and national identities in broad and stereotypical strokes, with the Lascar Sailor calling on Shiva and the Ganges, the Tahitian dreaming of naked hula-dancing girls, and the English uttering Cockney oaths. The simplistic distinctions seem designed, however, to show that although the men are very different from each other, they readily fall into camaraderie and revelry together. Separated by points of origin, they merge in the sounds of Pip’s tambourine, which communicates in an onomatopoetic language that everyone can understand; the Azorean sailor speaks for all when he yells, “Go it, Pip! Bang it, bell-boy! Rig it, dig it, stig it, quig it, bell-boy! Make fire-flies; break the jinglers!”

Melville does present Pip and Tashtego as detached from the festivity. Pip gets tired of jingling and protests: “Jinglers, you say?—there goes another, dropped off; I pound it so.” Tashtego removes himself almost completely: of the French Sailor he remarks, “That’s a white man; he calls that fun: humph! I save my sweat.” Signs of a coming storm also disturb the revelry, when “the sky darkens—the wind rises,” and the Lascar cries, “Thou showest thy black brow, Seeva!” But for the most part the men persist in their pleasures, taking sailors for dance partners or fantasizing about the women they cannot have, as the Sicilian does: “Hark ye, lad—fleet interlacings of the limbs—lithe swayings—coyings—flutterings! lip! heart! hip!” In a book dominated by tyrannical Ahab and scholarly Ishmael, this moment of sailor recreation stands out as unusually playful, lively, and merry.

In many ways the chapter also suggests the promises of multicultural awareness. It was not unusual for nineteenth-century authors to represent men of different nations working together—Richard Henry Dana did so just a few years previously in Two Years Before the Mast (1840)—but generally these portrayals subordinate the nonwhite sailors to the Americans and Europeans and burden them with demeaning accents and stereotypes. To some extent Melville does the same, with one striking difference: his white sailors are just as stereotyped as the men of other races, and the only sailors to receive names and identities are nonwhite Pip, Daggoo, and Tashtego. The chapter, then, seems to offer an appreciation of racial and national diversity in the celebratory spirit of twentieth-century American multiculturalism. In the same scene, though, Melville shows the disturbing other side to this festive picture.

Conflict and Violence in the Multicultural Space

As the carousing proceeds, certain tensions emerge around and between the men. Some of the sailors are anxious about the coming squall and fear for their vessel, as does the Danish Sailor—“Crack, crack, old ship! so long as thou crackest, thou holdest!”—and the Manx Sailor watching the shivering masts: “How the three pines shake!” Others, like the English sailor, have Ahab’s quest for Moby Dick on their minds: “Blood! but

38 For information on the racial and national composition of whaling crews, see W. Jeffrey Bolster, Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Richard Ellis, Men and Whales (New York: Knopf, 1991).
that old man’s a grand old cove! We are the lads to hunt him up his whale!” A more sinister tension emerges when Daggoo takes the Manx Sailor’s description of the sky—“pitch black”—as a racial innuendo: “What of that? Who’s afraid of black’s afraid of me! I’m quarried out of it!” This proud declaration irks the Spanish Sailor, who mutters to himself, “He wants to bully, ah!—the old grudge makes me touchy,” referring to the ancient battle between Spain and North Africa over religion, resources, and slaves. To Daggoo he then utters a challenge: “Aye, harpooneer, thy race is the undeniable dark side of mankind—devilish dark at that. No offence.” Daggoo refuses to take offense, but the Spanish Sailor goads him further. When the Fifth Nantucket Sailor asks if the flash he’s seen is lightning, the Spanish Sailor replies, “No; Daggoo showing his teeth.” Finally reacting to the insult, Daggoo pounces, shouting, “Swallow thine, manikin! White skin, white liver!” as the Spanish Sailor retorts, “Knife thee heartily! big frame, small spirit!”

What happens next does not appear in the typical multiculturalist scenario. Words fail to pacify the combatants, and they prepare for a fistfight. The other sailors do nothing to stop them. In fact, they seem to welcome “A row! a row! a row!,” forming a ring around the menacing pair. Just as the men leap to it, however, the mate calls “Hands by the halyards! in top-gallant sails! Stand by to reef topsails!” as the storm strikes in earnest. All hands scatter, crying “The squall! the squall! jump my jollies!” The fight, then, does not get resolved verbally or peacefully. It has been put aside for another time, which never presents itself. As a picture of multicultural consciousness, the chapter presents a rich array of diverse perspectives, sharpened to a point in the racial brawl between Daggoo and the Spanish Sailor, but never successfully arbitrated or decided.

In another way, however, Melville shows the sailors negotiating the challenges of a diverse community through the way he ends the scene—not with the men but with young Pip, the tambourine-playing cabin boy. The squall has sent him flying under the shelter of the windlass, where he cowers, terrified of the storm but also of Ahab, the men, and the “big white God aloft” above them all. Melville gives Pip the last word of the chapter, and as in Chapters 37-39, that word appears in the form of a soliloquy—the only one in the book by a nonwhite character. The speech seems to be delivered in onomatopoetic language, like that of Pip’s tambourine, as he shivers and shakes and tries to describe the noise of the storm: “Crish, crash! there goes the jib-stay! Blang-wang! . . . Jimini, what a squall! . . . shirr! shirr! . . . it makes me jingle all over like my tambourine.” The view of Pip as almost voiceless except through the musical jingling of his instrument seems to hold for much of the speech. In a remarkable reversal, though, Melville gives Pip the most powerful and articulate words of the chapter: “Oh! thou big white God aloft there somewhere in yon darkness, have mercy on this small black boy down here; preserve him from all men that have no bowels to feel fear!” Pip is afraid of the squall and the big white God, but he is just as afraid of the men who feel no fear: Ahab, most of all, but also the sailors who mask their fear of the quest, the whale, and the sea, with their jollity, singing, and dancing. (Stubb has shown us in the preceding chapter how he habitually covers up his distress by singing cheery songs.) Pip faces his fears directly. And if later in the book he goes mad because of them, he remains throughout a vivid reminder of what the men fear and cannot fully confront.

The last section of the chapter, then, models a way of negotiating the hostility that can arise in the scene of multicultural mixing. Violence emerges, but while it threatens the men’s community, it also enables Pip to express the men’s terror when they cannot do it themselves and to put it in a new and larger perspective. The model for negotiating violence is a multi-stage process of displaying and celebrating difference, releasing hostilities that may emerge, and expressing them in a way that gives full meaning to violence as a part of humanity, nature, even God. The chapter does not suppress the violence, nor does it run out in pointless physical brutality. Instead Pip’s speech makes the violence central to understanding his place in the universe.

**Violence and Point of View: From Sailors to Pip to Whales**

Melville’s astonishing achievement in this chapter is to shift its point of view on violence. The fight between Daggoo and the Spanish Sailor seems at first like a display of masculine or racial pride and anger, and the sailors at first welcome it as sport. Read, however, in the context of Ahab’s dramatic announcement to the
sailors in Chapter 36, “The Quarter-Deck,” that they have shipped for one thing only, his “vengeance on a
dumb brute” Moby Dick, the fight might also appear a way for the sailors to vent their fear and tension. In
either case, for most of the chapter, Melville makes us see the violence from the point of view of the sailors,
meaningful to their community and their ability to get along on the ship. By switching to Pip at the end of the
chapter, Melville moves to a nonwhite non-sailor perspective. As someone powerless on the ship, Pip
perceives the violence of the men as aligned with the violence of Ahab, of nature—the squall, the whale—and
of a wrathful God. This larger perspective gives meaning to a form of violence that seemed pointless, a
silly squabble between co-workers, or cruel and hateful.

Throughout the book Melville finds many ways to shift the point of view on violence and give it a more
profound meaning. In an early example, when Ishmael and Queequeg are taking the ferry to Nantucket in
Chapter 13, “Wheelbarrow,” a bumpkin mocks Queequeg and Ishmael for being friends. In a sudden move,
“the brawny savage [Queequeg] caught him in his arms, and by an almost miraculous dexterity and strength,
sent him high up bodily into the air; then slightly tapping his stern in mid-somerso, the fellow landed with
bursting lungs upon his feet.” What seems like an adroit defense becomes more significant when in the next
moment the bumpkin gets swept overboard by a flying boom. Queequeg rescues him from the sea with as
much dexterity as he flattened him before, and with as little fuss; although nearly drowned in the process, “he
put on dry clothes, lighted his pipe, and leaning against the bulwarks, and mildly eyeing those around him,
seemed to be saying to himself—‘It’s a mutual, joint-stock world, in all meridians. We cannibals must help
these Christians.’” In the sudden shift from a focus on the physical fight to Queequeg’s act of charity,
Melville makes the interracial quarrel into a meditation on Christian brotherly love.

Just as negotiating multicultural differences often exposes underlying violence, as we saw in the examples
from “Midnight, Forecastle,” negotiating violence often involves recognizing multicultural difference and
tension, as the example from “Wheelbarrow” suggests. Melville plays out these conflicts again and again
in human interactions throughout the novel, as the men threaten each other or do battle in various ways. A shift
in perspective often changes a simple view of the violence into something insightful and complex.

Nowhere does Melville accomplish this shift more meaningfully than in relation to the violence men do not
to each other, but to the whales.

Melville’s is, as far as I know, the only book in the nineteenth century to present animals as sentient beings
and the first to show them feeling pain as humans might feel it. The violence men enact toward whales
appears through much of the book as glorious, like the deeds of epic heroes, warriors, and gods, as he
proclaims in Chapter 82, “The Honor and Glory of Whaling”: “Perseus, St, George, Hercules, Jonah, and
Vishnoo there’s a member-roll for you!” But at critical points, Melville changes the point of view to
emphasize the men’s cruelty and the whales’ unbearable suffering. In Chapter 81, “The Pequod Meets the
Virgin,” for example, the men attack an old blind whale, its one useless fin that “beat his side in an agony of
fright” as he flees. Melville describes the chase from the whale’s perspective, as he suffers “exhaustion” and
“anguish.” As the sailors approach, they observe “a strangely discolored bunch or protuberance, the size of a
bushel, low down on the flank.” Flask sees an opportunity: “A nice spot . . . just let me prick them there
once.” As he pierces the whale’s ulcerous growth, “the whale now spouting thick blood, with swift fury
blindly darted at the craft, bespattering them and their glorying crews all over with showers of gore . . . . It
was his death stroke.” The scene emphasizes not only Flask’s wanton cruelty but also the men’s savage waste,
for they fail to secure the whale in the end and must drop his corpse into the sea.

In another example from Chapter 87, “The Grand Armada,” the men chase a large number of whales until
they find themselves dragged into the center of their herd. Here they watch the whales disport among
themselves, the females nursing their young in a tenderly domestic scene. The men for once halt the hunt to
wonder at the beauty and serenity of the animals they had just been attacking and killing with murderous
intensity. Suddenly, one of the whales, maddened with the pain of the harpoon, rushes into the charmed
circle, threatening all the rest: “he had also run away with the cutting-spade in him; and while the free end of
the rope attached to that weapon, had permanently caught in the coils of the harpoon-line round his tail, the cutting-space itself had worked loose from his flesh. So that tormented to madness, he was now churning through the water, violently flailing with his flexible tail, and tossing the keen spade about him, wounding and murdering his own comrades.” The victim of violence has become a source of violence to his own kind and also, implicitly, to the men now trapped in the circle of whales.

This astonishing switch in point of view, from the men’s triumphs to the whales’ suffering, gives a new and deeper meaning to the violence of the hunt. We see the men’s actions as violent, and ironically the whales’ actions as violent too in ways that illuminate the animal behavior of both species. Such a perception of the men’s unwitting kinship with the animals they hunt would not be possible without the violence of the scene, the weapons, blood, torment, and agony. As in classical Greek tragedy, Melville uses violence to show the full ethical dimensions of violence, not only as it pertains to human suffering but also as it affects the universe.

In this sense, Melville does what Toni Morrison suggests that violence can, indeed must do for readers of literature: “The reader [of Beloved] is snatched, yanked, thrown into an environment completely foreign, and I want it as the first stroke of the shared experience that might be possible between the reader and the novel’s [slave] population. Snatched just as the slaves were from one place to another, from any place to another, without preparation and without defense. No lobby, no door, no entrance—a gangplank, perhaps (but a very short one)” (32). By shifting the reader from the perspective of the perpetrators of violence to that of the victims, a writer can expand the reader’s knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

Conclusion
Melville’s multiculturalism, then, is not a rainbow-colored theory of human oneness but a recognition that confronting violence can lead to understanding human differences. His use of multiple voices and identities in the text gives the reader a way to negotiate violently different points of view in order to arrive at fuller appreciation of difference and a deeper sympathy with what we cannot accept as our own.

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http://quod.lib.umich.edu.libproxy.mit.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=mqrarchive;c=mqrarchive&q1=morrison%2C%20Toni;rgn=author;view=image;seq=45;idno=act2080.0028.001;node=act2080.0028.001%3A2;page=root;size=s;frm=frameset;
The Cultural Value of Violence

By Henry Jenkins

At least since the school shootings of the late 1990s, teachers, parents, and educational institutions have been preoccupied with whether representations of violence in films or video games might be a cause of real world violence. We have combed through every clue and every possible warning sign which retrospectively might help us understand "the monsters next door," as one of the national news magazines labeled the Columbine shooters. In particular, this search for answers has led to a deep suspicion that fantasies and representations of violence might make young people more aggressive and antisocial. Teachers and counselors are being told to keep track of violent themes in children's art and creative writing projects in the hopes of identifying early symptoms of impulses which might turn destructive.

Much of this anxiety has been shaped by a language of "media effects," trying to identify what media might be doing to our students. This section of the Teachers' Strategy Guide starts from a different assumption—that we need to be more concerned with understanding meanings rather than effects.

Effects are seen by media reformers as emerging more or less spontaneously, with little conscious effort; effects are not accessible to self-examination. Meanings emerge through an active process of interpretation—they reflect our conscious engagement, they can be articulated into words, and they can be critically examined. New meanings take shape around what we already know and what we already think, and thus different readers will respond differently to the same depiction of violence.40

A concern with media effects is an appropriate topic for a social science classroom, where one can get into issues concerning social science research methodologies and evidence. A focus on meanings, on the other hand, offers a role for English or Art teachers, where representations of violence can be read in the context of the stories our culture tells about trauma, loss, and aggression. As you enter into this material, we ask you to bracket momentarily the usual "yes it does—no it doesn't" debate about media violence in favor of considering some new critical perspectives that might guide your classroom discussion of literary and media texts.

Violence in the real world may often feel meaningless: no matter how hard we try to comprehend what has happened, we can't understand the reasons why someone we care about has been hurt or killed; nothing about the experience makes sense to us. Violence in fiction is rarely "meaningless:" violence often plays important roles in shaping the story or providing insight into the characters. Indeed, the power of art is that it can transform a "senseless" tragedy in the real world into a source of meaning within the fiction. In doing so, it gives us some way of resolving the conflicting feelings sparked by real world violence, even if it is in a context far removed from our everyday lives. Art may offer us a way of symbolically exerting control over the deep passions and disturbing emotions sparked by actual violence.

Some Basic Assumptions

Let's start with an intentionally provocative statement. There is no such thing as media violence—at least not in the ways that we are used to talking about it—as something which can be easily identified, counted, and studied in the laboratory. Media violence is not something that exists outside of a specific cultural and social context. It is not something we can simply eliminate from art and popular culture. Our culture tells lots of different stories about violence for lots of different reasons for lots of different audiences in lots of different contexts. We need to stop talking about media violence in the abstract.

Otherwise, we end up looking pretty silly. So, for example, a study endorsed by The American Academy of Pediatrics reported that 100 percent of feature length cartoons released in America between 1937 and 1999 contained images of violence. For this statement to be true, violence has to be defined here so broadly that it would include everything from the poisoned apple in *Snow White* to the hunter who shoots Bambi’s mother, from Captain Hook's hook to the cobra that threatens to crush Mowgli in *The Jungle Book*—and that's just within the Disney canon. The definition must include not only physical violence but threats of violence, implied violence, and psychological/emotional violence. If we start from a definition that broad, we would need to eliminate conflict from our drama altogether.

Almost no one operates on a definition of violence that broad. Most of us make value judgments about the kinds of violence that worry us, judgments based on the meanings attached to the violence in specific representations, so church groups allow young kids to watch Jesus get beaten in *The Passion of the Christ*, and games reformers go after first person shooters but not World War II simulation games (which coat their violence in patriotism and historical authenticity).

Why is violence so persistent in our popular culture? Because violence has been persistent across storytelling media of all kinds. A thorough account of violence in media would include: fairy tales such as Hansel and Gretel, oral epics such as Homer's *Iliad*, the staged violence of Shakespeare's plays, paintings of the Rape of the Sabine Women, and stained glass window representations of saints being pumped full of arrows, or, for that matter, talk show conversations about the causes of school shootings. Violence is fundamental to these various media because aggression and conflict are core aspects of human experience. We need our art to provide some moral order, to help us sort through our feelings, to provoke us to move beyond easy answers and to ask hard questions.

Our current framing of media violence assumes that it most often attracts us, that it inspires imitation, whereas throughout much of human history, representations of violence were seen as morally instructive, as making it less likely that we are going to transgress against various social prohibitions. When we read the lives of saints, for example, we are invited to identify with the one suffering the violence and not the one committing it. Violence was thought to provoke empathy, which was good for the soul. Violence was thought to make moral lessons more memorable.

Moral reformers rarely take aim at mundane and banal representations of violence, though formulaic violence is pervasive in our culture. Almost always, they go after works that are acclaimed elsewhere as art—the works of Martin Scorsese or Quentin Tarantino, say—precisely because these works manage to get under their skin. For some of us, this provocation gets us thinking more deeply about the moral consequences of violence, whereas others condemn the works themselves, unable to process the idea that such a work might provoke us to reflect about the violence that it represents. The study of literature offers a remarkable opportunity to engage young people in conversations about such issues, expanding the range of stories about violence which they encounter, introducing them to works that encourage reflection about the human consequences of revenge and aggression, and broadening the range of meanings they attach to such representations.

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Ten Critical Questions To Ask About Fictional Representations of Violence

By Henry Jenkins

1. What basic conflicts are being enacted through the violence?

Literary critics have long identified the core conflicts that shape much of the world's literature: Human vs. Human, Human vs. Nature, Human vs. Self, and sometimes Human vs. Machine. Such conflicts spark drama. *Moby-Dick* can be understood as including all three conflicts: the conflict between Ahab and Starbuck embodies deeper divisions within the ship's crew over the captain's decision to place his own personal goals above their collective well being or above the business of whaling; the conflict between Ahab and Moby Dick may be understood as a human being throwing himself full force against the natural world; Ahab struggles with his own better nature and Starbuck searches his soul trying to figure out how to respond to his conflicting duties. Any of these conflicts can erupt in violence—directly against other people, against the natural world, or against ourselves. You might ask your students to identify which of these forms of conflict are most visible in contemporary video games, on television, or in the cinema and why some forms of conflict appear more often in these media than others. For example, video game designers have historically found it difficult to depict characters' internalized conflict (human vs. self), in part because contest or combat are central building blocks of most games.

2. Do the characters make conscious choices to engage in acts of violence? How do they try, through language or action, to explain and justify those choices?

In the real world, an act of violence may erupt in a split second: one moment, people we care about are alive; the next, they are dead. The violence may be random: there is no real reason why these victims were singled out over others; they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Yet, works of fiction often focus our attention on moments when characters make decisions, often based on aspects of their personalities which they little recognize or control, and those choices may have repercussions that echo across the work as a whole. So, the act that took Ahab’s leg may have been totally random, and we see several examples throughout the novel where a split-second decision may cause a character to be wounded or killed. We might compare Ahab's amputation with the events that lead to Pip being thrown from the boat, left adrift, and ultimately driven insane, or to the unnamed man who falls from the ship’s mast and drowns. By contrast, the novel invites us to consider the choices Ahab makes at each step and how the other characters respond to those choices. Melville shows us many points where the ship could turn back and avoid its fate. He spells out what the characters are thinking and why they make the decisions they do.

The events could take a different shape, though the shape of a plot can give depicted events a sense of inevitability. Some forms of tragedy, for example, rely on the notion that characters are unable to escape their fates, no matter what choices they make, or that the final acts of violence and destruction flow logically from some "tragic flaw." In trying to make sense of a fictional representation of violence, you want to encourage your student to seek out moments where the characters make choices that ultimately lead towards acts of aggression or destruction. Often, authors provide those characters with rationalizations for their choices, offering some clues through their words, thoughts, or actions about why they do what they do.

At such moments, the work also often offers us alternatives to violence, other choices the characters could have made, though such choices may remain implicit rather than being explicitly stated. Different works and different genres may see these alternatives to violence as more or less plausible, attractive, or rational. So, if you are being chased by a mad man waving a chain saw in a horror film, engaging him in a conversation may not be a rational, plausible, or attractive alternative. Genre fiction constructs contexts where the protagonist has no choice but to resort to violence, though what separates heroes from villains may be their relative comfort in deploying violence to serve their own interests. In many American movies, the hero is reluctant to
turn towards violence, seeing it as a last resort. By contrast, the villain may deploy violence in situations where she has other alternatives, suggesting cruelty or indifference.

In dealing with violence in video games, then, you may want to ask what options are available to the player for dealing with a certain situation. In some games, there may be no options other than violence, and the game itself may spend very little time offering the character a rationalization for such actions. It is fight or flight, kill or be killed. Many games are simply digital versions of the classic shooting galleries: the game space is designed as an arena where players can shoot it out with other players or with computer-controlled characters. In other games, there may be options that allow the protagonist to avoid violence, but they may not be emotionally satisfying; they may put the player at a significant disadvantage; they may be hard to execute. So, helping students to interpret the options available to characters in a literary fiction may help them to reflect more consciously on the more limited choices available to them as gamers.

3. What are the consequences of the violence depicted in the work?
Many popular stories don't pay sufficient attention to the consequences of violence. Rambo may slaughter hundreds and yet, much as in a video game, the bodies simply disappear. We get no sense of the human costs involved in combat on such a scale. Many medieval epics consisted primarily of hack and slash battle sequences; yet, periodically, the action would stop, and the bard would enumerate the names of the dead on both sides, acknowledging that these warriors paid a price even if their actions help to establish the nation state or restore order to the kingdom. Gonzala Frasca has argued that video games inherently trivialize violence because they operate in a world where the player can simply reboot and start over if their character dies. In contrast, westerns follow a basic formula: the protagonist (most often male) would resort to violence to battle other aggressive forces that threaten his community; his heroic actions would restore justice and order, but the hero could not live within the order he had helped to create and would be forced to ride off into the sunset at the end of the story. Susan Sontag has written about "the Imagination of Disaster," suggesting that films about apocalyptic events often create a rough moral order in which characters are rewarded or punished based on the values they display under extreme circumstances. Moby-Dick can be said to have its own mechanisms for punishing violence: Ahab's search for vengeance at all costs means that he and his crew must pay the ultimate price.

4. What power relationships, real or symbolic, does the violence suggest?
In many cases, storytellers deploy violence as a means of embodying power. We should not be surprised by this tendency given the way sociologists have characterized rape as the deployment of male power against women or lynching as the enactment of white power against blacks. Historically, wars have been seen as a way of resolving conflicts between nations through the exercise of power, while trial by combat was a means of deploying power to resolve individual conflicts and disagreements. Media representations of violence can give viewers a seductive sense of empowerment as they watch characters who are hopelessly out-numbered triumph or they watch segments of the population who seem disempowered in the real world deploy violence to right past wrongs. Some have argued that young people play violent video games, in part, as a means of compensating for a sense of disempowerment they may feel at school.

Conversely, stories may encourage our sense of outrage when we see powerful groups or individuals abusing their power, whether in the form of bullies degrading their victims or nations suppressing their citizens. This abuse of power by powerful forces may prepare us for some counter-balancing exercise of power, setting up the basic moral oppositions upon which a story depends. As you teach students to think critically about representations of violence, a key challenge will be to identify the different forms of power at play within the narrative and to map the relations between them. Which characters are in the most powerful positions and what are their sources of power? Which characters are abusing their power? What sources of power are the

ascribed to characters who might initially seem powerless, and to what degree is violence depicted as a means of empowerment?

5. How graphic is the depiction of violence?
One of the limits of the study on violence in American cartoons released by the American Academy of Pediatrics is that it counts "violent acts" without considering differing degrees of stylization. In fact, children at a pretty young age—certainly by the time they reach elementary school—are capable of making at least crude distinctions between more or less realistic representations of violence. They can be fooled by media which offers ambiguous cues, but they generally read media that seems realistic very differently from media that seems cartoonish or larger than life. For that reason, they are often more emotionally disturbed by documentaries that depict predators and prey, war, or crime, than they are by the hyperbolic representations we most often are talking about when we refer to media violence.

While most of us have very limited vocabularies for discussing these different degrees of explicitness, such implicit distinctions shape the ways we respond to representations of violence within fictions. We each know what we can tolerate and tend to avoid modes of representation we find too intense or disturbing. Most ratings systems distinguish between cartoonish and realistic forms of violence. We need to guard against the assumption, however, that the more graphic forms of violence are necessarily "sick" or inappropriate. More stylized forms can make it much easier to ignore the gravity of real world violence through a process of sanitization. In some cases, more graphic depictions of violence shatter that complacency and can force us to confront the human costs of violence.

Literary critics have long made a distinction between showing and telling. We might extend this distinction to think about media representations of violence. An artist may ask us to directly confront the act of violence, or she may ask us to deal with its repercussions, having a character describe an event which occurred before the opening of the narrative or which took place off stage. Some very famous examples of media violence—such as the torture sequences in Reservoir Dogs or Pulp Fiction—pull the camera away at the moments of peak intensity, counting on the viewer's imagination to fill in what happens, often based on cues from the soundtrack, or in the case of Pulp Fiction, the splattering of blood from off-camera. Again, we need to get students to focus on the creative choices made by the storytellers and artists in their construction of these episodes, choices especially about what to show and what not to show.

6. What function does the violence serve in the narrative?
Critics often complain about "gratuitous violence." The phrase has been used so often that we can lose touch with what it means. According to the dictionary, "gratuitous" means "being without apparent reason, cause, or justification." So, before we can decide if an element in a fictional work is gratuitous, we have to look more closely at why it is present (its motivation) and what purposes it serves (its function). Keep in mind that we are not talking here about why the character performs the violent act but rather why the artist includes it in the work. An artwork might depict senseless killings, as occur at certain moments in No Country for Old Men, where the killer is slaughtering people seemingly at random. This doesn't necessarily mean that the violence is "gratuitous" since in this case, the violence sets the action of the story into motion, and the work is very interested in how other characters react to the threat posed by this senseless violence. There is artistic motivation for including the violence, even if the directors, the Coen Brothers, are uninterested in the killer's psychological motives.

An element in a work of fiction may be motivated on several different levels: it may be motivated realistically, in the sense that a story about contemporary urban street gangs might be expected to depict violence as part of their real world experience; it might be motivated generically, in the sense that people going to see a horror movie expect to see a certain amount of gore and bloody mayhem; it may be motivated thematically, in the sense that an act of violence may force characters to take the measure of their own values and ethical commitments; it may be motivated symbolically, in the sense that a character dreams about performing
violence and those dreams offer us a window into his or her thinking process. In each case, the violence has a different motivation, even though the actions depicted may be relatively similar.\textsuperscript{44}

By the same token, we might ask what functions an act of violence plays in the work. One way to answer that question is to imagine how the work would be different if this element were not included. Would the story have the same shape? Would the characters behave in the same way? Would the work have the same emotional impact? Some acts of violence motivate the actions of the story; some bring about a resolution in the core conflict; still others mark particular steps in the trajectory of the plot; and in some rare cases, the violent acts may indeed be gratuitous, in that their exclusion would change little or nothing in our experience of the work.

But keep in mind that the violence which disturbs us the most on first viewing is not necessarily gratuitous and is often violence which has ramifications throughout the rest of the story. Describing a scene as "gratuitous" is easy, especially when it shortcuts the process of engaging more critically with the structure and messages of the work in question. For example, the film \textit{Basketball Diaries} became the focus of controversy following the Columbine shootings primarily because of a single scene in which the protagonist wears a long black coat and imagines shooting up a school. Those discussing the sequence failed to explain that it was a dream sequence, not an action performed by the film's protagonist, and that it is part of a larger story which explores how a young man overcame his rage, his addictions, and his antisocial impulses to become a poet. Without the representation of his aggression, the power of the story of redemption would be weakened, whereas the scene removed from context seemed to endorse the antisocial values the work itself rejects.

7. **What perspective(s) does the work offer us towards the character engaging in violence?**

Media theorists have spent a great deal of time trying to determine what we mean when we say we identify with a character in a fictional work.\textsuperscript{45} At the most basic level, it means we recognize the character; we distinguish the fictional figure from others depicted in the same work. From there, we may mean that the work devotes a great deal of time and space to depicting the actions of this particular character. Typically, the more time we spend with a character, the more likely we are to see the world from her point of view. Yet, this is not always the case. We may be asked to observe and judge characters, especially if their actions and the values they embody fall outside of the stated perspective of the work. We may grow close to a character only to be pushed away again when the character takes an action we find reprehensible and unjustifiable. There is a distinction to be drawn here between the structuring of narrative point of view and the structuring of moral judgments on the character. Part of what helps us to negotiate between the two is the degree to which we are given access to the thoughts and feelings of the character (and in the case of an audio-visual work, the degree to which we see the world from his or her optical point of view). Consider, for example, the use of first person camera in a work like \textit{Jaws} where scenes are sometimes shot from the perspective of the shark as it swims through the water approaching its human prey. At such moments, we feel fear and dread for the human victims, not sympathy for the sharks. Filmmakers quickly learned to manipulate this first person camera, sometimes duplicating the same camera movement, tricking us into thinking the monster is approaching, and then, demonstrating this to be a false alarm.

So, it is possible to follow characters but not get inside their head, and it is possible to have access to characters' thoughts and still not share their moral perspective. And indeed, all of these relationships may shift in the course of reading a book as we may feel the character's actions are justified up until a certain point and then cross an implicit line where they become monstrous. Homer shares Ulysses's point of view throughout much of the \textit{Odyssey}, but we still are inclined to pull back from him at a certain point as he brings bloody vengeance upon Penelope's suitors in the final moments of the epic. Wyn Kelley identifies a similar

\textsuperscript{44} David Bordwell, "Historical Poetics of Cinema," in R. Barton Palmer (ed.), \textit{The Cinematic Text: Methods and Approaches}, ed. R. Barton Palmer (Georgia State Literary Studies, no. 3 (1989)).

pattern in *Moby-Dick* where we are invited to experience what whaling would be like from the point of view of the whale, and in the process, we are encouraged to reflect on the bloody brutality of slaughtering an innocent animal, stripping the meat off its bones, and boiling its flesh to create oil. Here, a break in the following pattern gives us an opportunity to reassess how we feel about the characters with whom we have up until that point been closely aligned. We might think about a common device in television melodrama where we've seen a scene of conflict between two characters who believe they are alone and then at the end, the camera pulls back to show the reaction of a previously undisclosed third-party figure who has been watching or overhearing the action. Such moments invite us to reassess what we've just seen from another vantage point.

In video games, the category of "first person shooters" has been especially controversial with critics concerned about the implications of players taking on the optical point of view of a character performing acts of violence; often, critics argue, the player doesn't just watch a violent act but is actively encouraged to participate. Gamers will sometimes refer to their characters in the third person ("he") and sometimes in the first person ("I"), pronoun slippages that suggest some confusions brought about by the intense identification players sometimes feel towards their avatars. Yet, even here, we need to be careful to distinguish between following pattern, optical point of view, and moral attitude. In games, we typically remain attached to a single character whom we control, and thus we have a very strong following pattern. In first person shooters, we see the action through the optical point of view of that character, though we may feel no less connected to the characters we control in a third person game (where we see the full body of the character from an external perspective). The *Second Person* video game confounds our normal expectations about optical point of view, inviting us to see the action from an unfamiliar perspective, and thus it may shake up our typical ways of making sense of the action. Those who have spent time watching players play and interviewing them about their game experiences find that in fact, identification works in complex ways, since the player is almost always thinking tactically about the choices that will allow her to beat the game. Winning often involves stepping outside a simple emotional or moral connection with an individual character. Players are encouraged to think of the game as a system, not unlike taking a more omniscient perspective in reading a work of fiction, even as other aspects of the game's formal structure may encourage them to feel a close alignment with a particular character whose actions are shaped by their own decisions.

Game designer Will Wright (The Sims, Sim City) has argued that games may have a unique ability to make players experience guilt for the choices their characters have made in the course of the action. When we watch a film or read a novel, we always reserve the ability to pull back from a character we may otherwise admire and express anger over choices he or she has made or to direct that anger towards the author who is reflecting a world view we find repugnant. Yet, in a game, because players are making choices, however limited the options provided by the designer, they feel some degree of culpability. And a game designer has the ability to force them to reflect back on those choices and thus to have an experience of guilt.

8. **What roles (aggressor, victim, other) does the protagonist play in the depiction of violence?**

Many of the media texts which have been most controversial are works which bring the viewer into the head of the aggressor—from the gangster films of the 1930s through contemporary films like *Natural Born Killers* and *American Psycho*, television series like *Dexter* and *The Sopranos*, and games like *Grand Theft Auto*. All of these works are accused of glamorizing crime. As we've already discussed, we need to distinguish between following pattern, optical and psychological point of view, and moral alignment. Many of these works bring us closer to such figures precisely so that we can feel a greater sense of horror over their anti-social behavior. Consider, for example, *Sweeney Todd*, which depicts a murderous barber and his partner, a baker, who turns the bodies of his victims into meat pies she sells to her customers. We read the story from their perspective and we are even encouraged to laugh at their painful and heartless puns about the potential value of different

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people as sources for human meat. Yet, our strong identification with these characters allows us to feel
greater horror and sorrow over the final consequences of their actions.

At the other end of spectrum, literary scholar James Cain describes how a whole genre of literary works arose
in the Middle Ages around representations of saints as victims: "The persecutions of early Christians gave rise
to an extraordinary collection of tales commemorating the supernatural endurance of victims who willingly
suffered heinous atrocities and ultimately gave their lives bearing witness to their faith. From accounts of the
stoning of the first martyr, St. Stephen, to the broiling of St. Lawrence on an open grill, the strapping of St.
Catherine to a mechanical wheel of torture, the gouging-out of St. Lucy's eyeballs, the slitting-open of St.
Cecilia's throat, the slicing-off of St. Agatha's breasts, the feeding of St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas to the lions,
the piercing of St. Sebastian with a barrage of arrows—the graphic brutality undoubtedly exceeds even the
most violent images in media today.... The strong emotional responses these images conjured up in their
observers were deliberately designed to produce lasting impressions in people's memories and imaginations,
to enable further reflection."47 Far from being corrupting, representations of violence are seen as a source of
moral instruction, in part because of our enormous sense of empathy for the saints' ability to endure
suffering.

Most American popular culture negotiates between the two extremes. In the case of superheroes, for
example, their origin stories often include moments of victimization and loss, as when young Bruce Wayne
watches his mother and father get killed before deciding to devote his life to battling crime as the Batman, or
when Peter Parker learns that "with great power comes great responsibility" the hard way when his lack of
responsibility results in the death of his beloved uncle.48 In the world of the superheroes, the villains are also
often victims of acts of violence, as when the Joker's face (and psyche) are scarred by being pushed into a vat
of acid. The superhero genre tends to suggest that we have a choice how we respond to trauma and loss. For
some, we emerge stronger and more ethically committed, while for others, we are devastated and bitter,
turning towards anti-social actions and self-destruction. A work like David Cronenberg's A History of Violence
is particularly complex, since we learn more and more about the character's past as we move more deeply into
the narrative and since the protagonist moves from bystander to victim and then reverses things, taking his
battle to the gangsters, and along the way, becomes increasingly sadistic in his use of violence. Cronenberg
wants to have the viewer rethinking and reassessing the meaning of violence in almost every scene of the film.

The filmmaker Jean Renoir famously said "every character has his reason." His point was that if we shift
point of view, we can read the aggressor as victim or vice versa. Few people see themselves as cruel; most
find ways to justify and rationalize acts of even the rawest aggression. And a literary work may invite us to see
the same action from several different perspectives, shifting our identifications and empathy in the process.
So, for example, the moment when we see the hunt from the whale's point of view reverses the lens, seeing
Flask and his crew as the aggressors and the whale as the victim, a perspective we don't get in the rest of the
novel. Even when the artist doesn't fill in these other perspectives, critics and spectators can step back from a
scene, put themselves in the heads of the various characters, and imagine what the world might look like from
their point of view. Consider the novel and stage play, Wicked, which rereads The Wizard of Oz from the
vantage point of the Wicked Witch and portrays Dorothy as a mean spirited trespasser who has murdered the
witch's sister.

47  James Cain and Henry Jenkins, "I'm Gonna Git Medieval on Your Ass: A Conversation about
Violence and Culture" in Helaine Posner (ed.) The Culture of Violence (Amherst: University Gallery, University
of Massachusetts Amherst, 2002).
9. What moral frame (pro-social, antisocial, ambiguous) does the work place around the depicted violence?

Some fictions focus on violence as the performance of duty. The police, for example, are authorized to use certain sanctioned forms of violence in the pursuit of criminals and in the name of maintaining law and order. Some of these—for example, the television series The Shield—find great drama in exploring cops who "cross the line," seeing brutality or unnecessary use of force as a symptom of a police force no longer accountable to its public. Similarly, much fiction centers on themes of war, with works either endorsing or criticizing military actions as forms of violence in the service of the state and of the public. There is a long tradition of national epics, going back to classical times, which depict the struggles to establish or defend the nation with violence often linked to patriotic themes and values. In the American tradition, this function was once performed by the western, which depicts the process by which "savagery" gave way to "civilization," though more recent westerns have sometimes explored the slaughter of the Indians from a more critical perspective as a form of racial cleansing. So, even within genres that depict the use of force in pro-social or patriotic terms, there are opportunities for raising questions about the nature and value of violence as a tool for bringing about order and stability.

On the other hand, many stories depict violence as anti-social, focusing on criminals, gangsters, or terrorists, who operate outside the law and in opposition to the state or the community. The cultural critic Robert Warshow discusses the very different representations of "men with guns" found in the western, the gangster film, and the war movie, suggesting that all three genres have strong moral codes which explain when it is justifiable to use force and depicting what happens to characters who transgress those norms.49 The westerner can not live in the community he has helped to create through his use of force; the gangster (see Scarface for example) frequently is destroyed by the violence he has abused to meet his personal desires and ambitions; and the hero returns home at the end of the war, albeit often psychologically transformed by the violence he has experienced. Just as fictions that seem to depict the pro-social use of violence may contain critiques of the abuse of power by the police or the horrors of war, fictions which depict the anti-social use of violence may include strong critiques of the gangster lifestyle. Robin Woods has famously summed up the basic formula of the horror films as "normality is threatened by monstrosity." In such a formula, there are three important terms to consider—what constitutes normality, what constitutes the monstrous, and what relationship is being posited between the two.50 Some horror films are highly moralistic, seeking to destroy anything which falls outside of narrow norms; others use the monster as the means of criticizing and questioning the limits of normality.

In many works, there is a core ambiguity about the nature of the violence being depicted. We may be asked to identify with several characters who have different moral codes and thus who see their actions in different terms. Our judgments may shift in the course of the narrative. The characters may understand their actions as pro-social even as the author invites us to read them as antisocial. Or the work may be saying that there's no simple distinction to be drawn between different forms of violence: it's all equally destructive. We might even imagine a truly nihilistic work in which all violence is justified. It isn't that we want students to fit works into simple either/or categories here. Rather, asking this question can force them towards a more complex understanding of the moral judgments the work is making—as opposed to simply those being made by the characters—about the value of the violence to society.

10. What tone does the work take towards the represented violence?

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We've already seen the importance of distinguishing between the forms of violence being depicted in a work and the position the work takes on those actions. We've seen that identification with a protagonist is fragile and shifting across a work, so that we may sometimes feel a strong emotional bond with a character for much of the story and yet still feel estranged from her when the author reveals some darker side of her personality. A work may depict the pro-social use of violence and either endorse or criticize the Establishment being depicted. A work may depict anti-social forms of violence in ways which are conservative in their perspective on those groups who use force outside legal contexts. Or a work may depict forms of violence that are hard to classify in those terms and thus invite readers to struggle with that ambiguity.

Similarly, we need to consider the range of different emotional responses a work may evoke through its use of violent images. Some fictions about violence, such as the action sequences in an Indiana Jones movie, may thrill us with exciting, larger than life heroics. Some, such as *Saving Private Ryan* or *Glory*, may appeal to our sense of national pride towards the brave men who gave their lives defending their country. Some, such as the scene in *Old Yeller* where the boy is forced to shoot his dog, may generate enormous empathy as we feel sorry for the characters who are forced to deploy or suffer violence against their will. Some, such as depictions of human suffering around the world, may seek to shock us into greater social consciousness and civic action. Some, such as slapstick comedy, may encourage us to laugh at highly stylized depictions of physical aggression. And still others, such as *Saw* or *Nightmare on Elm Street*, may provoke a sense of horror or disgust as we put ourselves through a series of intense emotional shocks in the name of entertainment. We can not understand what representations of violence mean, then, without paying attention to issues of tone, and part of teaching close reading skills is helping students identify the subtle markings in a text which indicate the tone the author is taking towards the depicted events. Popular texts tend to create broadly recognizable and easily legible signs of tone, though many of the works of filmmakers like Tarantino or Scorsese generate controversy because they adopt a much more complex and multivalent tone than we expect from other texts in the same genre. We might compare Tarantino or Scorsese to certain writers—William Faulkner or Flannery O’Connor come to mind—who also seek complicated or contradictory emotional reactions to grotesque and violent elements in their narratives.

**Violence in *Moby-Dick: Then and Now***

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing that it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it.... Returning violence to violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that"—Martin Luther King Jr.

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley has acknowledged that the representation and exploration of violence in *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* reflects his experience working with incarcerated youth. These young men had first hand experience of the reality of violence; many of them were in prison because of their involvement with gang-related violence and the drug trade. Pitts-Wiley wanted to use *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* to call attention to some of the things these young men had experienced and in the process, to help other young people to grasp the consequences of gang-related violence before it was too late. Here are some basic statistics about gang-related violence in the United States, which you might want to use to provide a context for this discussion:

- Gang-related violence accounted for more than half of the homicides reported in Los Angeles and in Chicago in 2004, representing a combined total of more than 1000 deaths.
- In another 171 American cities with populations of over 100,000 residents, approximately one quarter of all homicides were considered to be gang related.
- In another survey of police departments conducted in 2000, 95 percent of respondents "identified [gang] activity within one or more high schools in their jurisdictions," and 91 percent "reported gang activity within one or more intermediate schools in their jurisdictions."
According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, killings by juvenile gang members increased 500 percent between 1980 and 1994, making this one of the fastest-growing crimes in the United States.

While gangs attract membership from all races, African American men have disproportionately paid a price for the presence of gangs in their communities:

- The percentage of African American men in prison is nearly three times that of Hispanic men and nearly seven times that of white men. While African American men represent 14 percent of the young men in the United States, they represent over 40 percent of the prison population.
- Black men make up 41 percent of the inmates in federal, state, and local prison, but black men are only 4 percent of all students in American institutions of higher education. Young black men are 25 percent more likely to be in prison than to be in college.
- Young African American men die at a rate that is at least 1.5 times the rate of young white and Hispanic men and almost three times the rate of young Asian men. For young African American men, more deaths are caused by homicide than any other cause.

Such grim statistics provide a context for thinking about the confrontation between The One and WhiteThing.

1. **What basic conflicts (human vs. human, human vs. nature, human vs. self) are being enacted through the violence?**

In the historical narrative, we see evidence of all three basic forms of conflict: we see Human vs. Nature in Ahab's search for the Great White Whale; we see Human vs. Human in the struggle between Ahab and Starbuck; we see Human vs. Self in terms of internal struggles displayed both by Starbuck and Ahab. Of these three, only the struggle against nature erupts directly in violence, though there is a scene where Starbuck and Ahab almost come to blows before Starbuck backs down. Ahab's dismemberment is one of two acts of violence which opens the play, a scene which Melville's novel refers to but does not directly depict. This scene is paired with the closing scenes of the play where Ahab, his ship, and his crew are all destroyed by the whale. The play arguably spends the most time focusing on the conflict between Ahab and Starbuck. In an interview, Pitts-Wiley expresses fascination with the fact that Starbuck recognizes the futility and risks of Ahab's quests but still can not bring himself to overthrow the captain: "So why aren't people stopping him? It's like Othello, if you know the play. Twenty times in Othello people have a chance to do the right thing, and the sequence of events would have never happened. Emilia had a chance to give the handkerchief back, as an example. How many times in Moby-Dick did the crew and Ahab have a chance to break off their pursuit? It happens over and over again."

In the contemporary narrative, the urban setting means that nature per se plays a much lesser role in the narrative, with the social complex represented by WhiteThing standing in for the whale. The one moment where nature asserts itself is during a lightning storm which occurs on The One's journey into the heart of the city, when the crew sees the shattering of a tree as a "bad sign." By contrast, the threat of human on human violence is ever present—including the opening scene where Pip gets killed in a drive-by shooting, their rumble on the train with "agents," and their final confrontation with WhiteThing. The gang lives in a world where violence is sometimes dealt with in a matter-of-fact manner as part of "business," where a leader may kill someone just to deliver a "message," where encounters with another gang may sometimes becomes "fun," and where violence sometimes hits home as a matter of deep personal trauma. The contemporary version also spends a great deal of time focused on Alba's internal struggles—her sense of responsibility over her brother's death and her sense that she is a "monster" who may not deserve to live.
Here are some questions you might want to discuss with your students:

- *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* opens with two acts of violence: we see Captain Ahab struggle with the great White Whale and we see Alba's younger brother, Pip, get killed in a drive-by shooting. What similarities and differences do you see between these two acts of violence?

- Pitts-Wiley observes that both of these incidents reflect the realities of their chosen professions: "You have to remember something. The kids were in the cocaine business. Ahab was in the whaling business. The whale didn't jump up out of the water and snatch him off the deck of the Queen Mary and bite his leg off. Ahab was trying to kill whales. He knew the risk. So his behavior was even more irrational because he had seen other people in forty years of the whaling business be hurt, injured, or killed by whales." Is Alba's pursuit of revenge equally irrational given the realities of the drug trade?

- Starbuck threatens Ahab but fails to act on those threats. Ahab says with contempt, "He waxes brave, but nevertheless obeys; most careful bravery that!" Are there other ways to understand Starbuck's decision in this scene? Are there other moments in the play where characters consider but reject the prospect of violent confrontation?

2. Do the characters make conscious choices to engage in acts of violence? How do they try, through language or action, to explain and justify those choices?

Several times, Ahab suggests that he has no choice, no control, and thus no responsibility for the actions he is taking. Ahab asks, "Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm?" and compares himself to the sun which moves "not of himself but is as an errand-boy to heaven." He proclaims, "I am the Fates' Lieutenant; I act under orders." The fate of the crew is foretold first by Elijah and then by Fedallah, again adding some credibility to Ahab's sense that what unfolds is a matter of predetermination or God's will and not simply an outcome of his own decisions. Yet, one could also argue that Ahab uses his belief in predetermination to avoid accepting responsibility for his decisions and that he returns to this belief each time he is tempted to turn back from his path towards self destruction. By contrast, Alba makes no appeal to the concept of Fate, taking full responsibility for her own decisions, and blaming herself even for things over which she had little or no control. For this reason, much more time gets spent in the contemporary storyline articulating her motives and justifying her decisions to pursue revenge. In the process, Pitts-Wiley is able to speak much more explicitly about the forms of violence emerging from the war on drugs and from gang culture. The absence of a strong notion of fate allows Pitts-Wiley to imagine an alternative ending for Alba and The One. They pull back from a direct confrontation with WhiteThing in order to try to clean their own lives and free their community of dependence on the drug lord and all that he represents.

Here are some questions you might pose to your students:

- Alba clearly feels great responsibility for what happens to her brother, and that responsibility defines her character from its first introduction: "I should have never left you by yourself, Pip. I couldn't save you, but I will avenge you. I'll make him pay." What do these lines suggest about her motives for going after the WhiteThing? How is she able to translate guilt into revenge?

- The play juxtaposes Alba's decision to avenge her brother's death and Ahab's vow to chase Moby Dick "round Good Hope, and round the horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition's flames before I give him up." What are the parallels between the two characters and their motives in the play?

- The following speech by Alba is key in understanding her motives: "We are in the business and we all know the risks. But WhiteThing didn't keep it business. He meant to hurt me. And he did. But not just my heart, or body, or even my soul. He has made my world hurt. My mother and father cry all night and look at me with hate in their eyes. A hate that will never go away. There is pain everywhere I go now. The air hurts, the sun hurts, music that used to cool me out now hurts. The neighborhood, where we all grew up, has no more comfort in it. Just Pain. WhiteThing picked me out of a hundred hundred thousand. He took the most precious thing in my life away and filled that space with pain. And I will
give him that pain back ten times ten. I cannot and will not be stopped." It is worth spending some time working through this speech with your students since it is such a vivid expression of Alba's grief and the ways that she feels cut off from those things in life which once comforted her—from her family and her neighborhood to the natural world and her music.

- The script consistently deploys numbers to suggest a logic of accounting: "A hundred hundred thousand," "ten times ten." How can we reconcile this economic logic with the human loss which such phrases are intended to describe? And how might such numbers be linked back to the discussion of "business" and "risks" at the opening of the speech?
- During one of the rehearsals, Pitts-Wiley asked his young actors, "Is there a hurt that could be done to you that would cause you to seek revenge at all costs?" How would you and your students respond to this question?
- Ahab later tells Starbuck, "I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him.... I'd strike the sun if it insulted me." Note here the suggestion that Ahab is doing battle with the forces of nature and ascribing to them motives and emotions that they could not realistically possess. To what degree is he doing battle with his own projection onto the whale as opposed to the whale itself? To what degree is Moby Dick a creation of his own "hate" and a way of helping him make sense of his own feelings of suffering and loss? Might the same thing be said for Alba's relationship to WhiteThing? After all, her first response is to blame herself for the loss, much as her parents do, and only secondarily to seek out vengeance elsewhere.
- Soccer Mom tells Alba, "You're here because you just don't understand about WhiteThing. So you've come to kill us." To what extent is this an accurate description of her motives? Is she trying to destroy something she doesn't understand? Soccer Mom continues, "Why would you do that? Trying to kill me is like trying to kill yourself. I am the best and worst part of you all rolled into one." In what ways are Alba and the gang so implicated in the violence that surrounds them that they have become, in effect, an appendage of WhiteThing? How is this line consistent with the guilt and responsibility that Alba already feels over her brother's death?

3. What are the consequences of the violence depicted in the work?

The human costs of the pursuit of revenge are a central theme of this play. Again and again, the characters describe how their lives have been touched by violence, or we are given predictions about what will happen if they do not pull back from their current struggles.

- The script has both Ahab and Alba repeat in unison the last part of Ahab's speech, "Till he spouts black blood." What is the significance of this line? Why might Pitts-Wiley want to place emphasis on this image of blood?
- Tasha tells Alba that "three other cliques have been crunched since he [WhiteThing] rode down on Pip." While Alba experiences the death of her brother as a unique experience which she mourns for several months before moving to confront his killer, drive-by shootings are an everyday experience for WhiteThing on which the gang lord places no particular importance. Within the logic of the "drugs business," Alba's desire for revenge amplifies a personal loss into an issue which her entire gang is forced to confront.
- Ishmael acknowledges but downplays the risks involved in the whaling trade: "Yes, there is death in this business of whaling—a speechlessly quick chaotic bundling of a man into Eternity." Yet for Ishmael, this risk of loss of life and limb pales before the other things he gains from his time at sea: "A whale ship was my Yale College and my Harvard."
- Elijah warns Ishmael and Queegueg and the Ticket Taker warns Alba of the likely ends that will befall them as they set out on their respective journeys. Yet, both ignore the warnings. On one level, these warnings function as foreshadowing helping the audience to anticipate the tragic shape of the narrative, yet they also shed light on the psychology of their respective protagonists. Why does each group choose to ignore or dismiss the warnings they are offered?
Ahab tells Starbuck that Moby Dick "dismasted me." This metaphor clearly has implications in the context of a sea story. It may be worth reminding your students that the mast is a tall vertical pole on a sailing ship which supports the sails. A ship which has been "dismasted" is out of commission until the ship's rigging can be repaired. Yet, there is also a loss of manhood implicit in this metaphor: Ahab experiences the loss of his leg as a violation of his sense of himself and his subsequent language in this speech reminds us how deeply and personally he experiences this loss.

Fedallah describes his dream to Alba, offering a vivid image of the consequences of her pursuit of revenge: "The line will go on for miles and miles. Thousands will pass by and weep and shake their heads at the loss of the One. The days before will have been a blaze of pure glory. You and your warriors on the battleground facing an impossible foe. Blood will have blood is what you will last…. As your crew will go before you. You will see them drawn in, then drawn down where they will wait for you to follow. This will be made true by your choice. Your will." This prediction is complicated, since it describes the fatal consequences of Alba's decisions, yet also offers a heroic image of the gang as "warriors" who go down in "a blaze of pure glory" and depicts them as being mourned by their entire community. We might read this prediction against Que's statement in his opening speech: "In my world nobody expects to live a long time... We live hard and fast and try to never be bored." The implication here is that Que and the others have already accepted that they are not long for this world and that they may see the fate that Fedallah predicts for them as perhaps the best of all possible outcomes. We might also contrast Fedallah's vision of the funeral for the One with his prediction that Ahab will see neither a hearse nor a coffin and that "Hemp only can kill thee," a prediction which leads Ahab to assume he is speaking of the "gallows." Fedallah's prediction leads Ahab to imagine that he is "immortal on land and on seal," even as Alba expresses indifference to her own mortality. She later tells the Ticket Taker, "I've got no place to go back to," suggesting that she understands this journey to be a one-way trip.

Pip's final speech suggests the human price to be paid for getting entangled with WhiteThing: "You can't have my brother back Daj. You can't have your sister back Tasha…. No uncles or fathers are coming back. The cemetery is full of people just like you who followed leader just like you Sis into the eye of the hurricane. Looking for revenge. While the WhiteThing or BlackThing or Red or YellowThing gets ready to deal with the next crew calling themselves The One." This speech particularizes loss—reminding Daj and Tasha of the prices they have paid in their own lives from the "business" they are pursuing—but also hints at the cyclical nature of this struggle, trying to suggest the scale of destruction which gangs and drugs pose for their community. Strikingly, as well, this speech suggests that all races bear some responsibility for this destruction, further complicating our understanding of "WhiteThing".

If Ahab sees himself as having no choices, Alba is presented a choice in the end, and she takes it. What alternative model does the play offer for her future? In what ways does it suggest her community might battle WhiteThing while avoiding self-destruction? Pip explains, "Go home. Get him out of your lives. Out of the hood. He doesn't stay where strong people live. Kick him out so you'll have some room in your souls to think about what you need to do."

4. What power relationships, real or symbolic, does the violence suggest? On one level, power gets personified here through the large forces the protagonists are struggling against—Moby Dick in the case of the historical drama, and WhiteThing in the case of the contemporary narrative. Moby Dick is a force of nature albeit personified in a single being; Pitts-Wiley, like Melville before him, wants for us to recognize the sheer power and scale of this beast and to understand its destructive force. Yet, he also wants us to see the whale as in many ways a projection of Ahab's own rage and self-destruction. And at other places, Ahab uses language suggesting that he sees the whale as a "demonic" or supernatural force. The nature of WhiteThing is very much under dispute from the moment that the figure is first introduced in the play: while all of the characters have felt his influence on their lives, they can't agree on what he looks like or even how to describe his personality. Several times, we are told that seeing WhiteThing is like looking into a mirror and that doing battle with him would be like doing battle with oneself. At other times, the play introduces us to a range of different personas who represent some of the many institutional forces promoting
or profiting from the presence of drugs within American culture. WhiteThing can not be understood as an individual agent but rather must be seen as a social-political-economic complex, a series of institutions and practices which collectively ensure the community's dependence on drugs and on those who make their living off drugs. While Ahab could in theory kill the whale, there is no way that The One can overcome WhiteThing through direct conflict. Through the course of the action, the protagonists learn more about the operations of WhiteThing and come to recognize that they must change themselves and their community before they can resist its influence on their lives.

On a second level, power is represented here through the figures of Ahab and Alba, the two characters who command the respect and obedience of those under their command. By contrast with Patrick Stewart's performance as Ahab (as discussed earlier), in which the captain negotiated with diverse interests in his crew and won them over through his superior understanding of their needs and desires, this Ahab rules through force of personality and fear. We watch him at a key moment intimidate Starbuck, overcoming his resolve to reverse the ship's course. Alba, by contrast, deploys a range of rituals, including the step dances that open Act II, as ways of enacting and reaffirming the group's loyalty to her and their common cause. These rituals are discussed more fully in the section on subcultures.

Here are a few questions to explore with your students:

- Stu tells Alba that "WhiteThing was just sending The One a message. He's reminding us, that if we're going to swim in the big water, with the big fish, we have always best respect the biggest fish of them all." Alba questions the others about whether they understand Pip's death as a "message" and what significance it bears for them, and it is clear that for most of them, it is simply a cost of doing business. Daj tells her, "we've made mad money hustling his product" and Tasha explains, "WhiteThing has straight up made The ONE some fat cash. Including you Alba." This last line implicates Alba directly in the profits and culture of violence which are two sides of the same coin once you hook up with WhiteThing.

- Pip's final speech offers us the most vivid description of WhiteThing's power: "WhiteThing is bigger than a lot of nations. It has an undefeated army of those willing to sell their souls, sell out their neighborhoods, their friends, and the future. You could come here with all the policeman and government agencies and all the guns in the world. You still wouldn't win. Too much money to be made. Too many people getting paid."

5. How graphic is the depiction of violence?

Pitts-Wiley wants to show us moments of violence throughout the play: we see Pip get shot and we see Ahab's first encounter with Moby Dick; we see The One do battle with the "agents" on the train; we see the Pequot crew hunt whales; and we see the ship get destroyed. See the video segment where Pitts-Wiley explains why he chose to open the play with a direct depiction of Pip's death rather than through a scene of his funeral. We see the impact of this violence on the characters but we often do not see the forces they are struggling against. The script tells us, "With a knife he [Ahab] stabs helplessly at something that is large and alive. He continues to stab at the unseen thing amid his screams." Similarly, the audience never sees the gunmen who down Pip, though the script suggests "shots ring out from all directions." The same is true when The One confronts the "agents" on the train: "Suddenly the lights on the train go out...The ONE lash out at the unseen agents with their knives." The scenes have an emotional intensity in part because of the sound of the actors' voices and the physicality of their gestures, yet there is no blood and gore, and the violence is represented in the abstract. There are other moments of violence which are told and not shown—for example, the story of how the historic Pip lost his mind or the hints that other members of The One have lost family members to WhiteThing. A consideration of the place of violence in the play should include how the flashback scene between Pip and Alba shapes our emotional response to the action and why Pitts-Wiley might have chosen to withhold the scene until the second act of the play.
6. What function does the violence serve in the narrative?

While the prospect of violence lingers throughout the play, actual representations of violence occur at three points in the drama: the opening sequence which depicts Pip's shooting and Ahab's dismemberment; the struggle with the "Agents" and the first killing of a whale, both of which culminate the First Act of the play; and the final scene which depicts the destruction of Ahab and his crew alongside The One's decision to turn back from a direct confrontation with White Thing. Each of these direct representations of violence represents a turning point in the play: the opening sequence motivates the protagonists' quest for revenge; the events at the end of Act I give us a sense of the routine forms of violence which form the backdrop for the action; and the closing scenes pose contrasting responses—one where the search for vengeance leads to devastation, the other where characters set another course of action.

7. What perspective(s) does the work offer us towards the character engaging in violence?

Multiple potential points of identification are created within both story lines, so that we have the two narrators (Que in the contemporary story, Ishmael in the historic one), the two leaders (Alba, Ahab), and a range of other characters who may step forward and share aspects of their own perspective on the event (Father Mapple's Sermon, Elijah's and Fedallah's prophecies, the songs performed by various figures). Each of these characters may momentarily draw feelings of empathy and moral support, each may share aspects of her or his inner life with us, but none consistently dominates our attention. Further complicating the identification are various elements inviting us to look critically on the two leaders and their pursuit of violence—from the foreshadowing of their destruction to moments of confession and self-loathing.

Here are some study questions to consider:

- We know nothing about Pip at the time we experience his death. In fact, we only glimpse Pip's personality and his relationship to his sister only in a scene that comes halfway through the play. What does Pitts-Wiley gain by withholding that flashback for so long? How does this impact our emotional reaction to Pip's death?

- Clearly Pip's name connects him to the young cabin boy in Moby Dick whose loss of sanity pains Ahab greatly. What parallels might the play want us to draw between these two characters? What does Melville tell us about how Ahab experiences Pip's loss? The story of what happens to Ahab's Pip concludes the first act.

- Alba seeks to liberate her crew from any obligation to follow her to the bitter end and, in the process, gives us a glimpse into how she sees herself and understands her mission: "This is my rage, my pain. It's got nothing to do with you. I'm becoming a monster. Oozing blood, losing blood. Blood will have blood. So go with him and try to find some peace in your life and don't let the demons have your souls. Too late for me." In what sense does Alba see herself as a "monster?" Does this description change in any way how you feel about this character? How might we compare this with Ahab's description of himself as "more a demon than a man?"

- Ahab fails to respond to the pleading of Captain Gardiner that he suspend his quest long enough to help the Rachel find its missing crew member. In doing so, Gardiner appeals to Ahab's feelings and obligations to his own family, "You too have a boy, Captain Ahab—though but a child, and nesting safely at home now—a child of your old age." What does Ahab signal about his feelings towards his family when he refuses to stop and help the Rachel? Does this decision change in any way how you feel about Ahab?

- Later, Ahab acknowledges that he has more or less abandoned his wife, having left "but one dent in my marriage pillow," and characterizing her as "a widow with her husband alive." How does this phrase further deepen our understanding of Ahab's feelings towards his family?

- Starbuck makes a similar appeal to Ahab's feelings and obligations to his family and in the process, solicits empathy: "Wife and child, too, are Starbuck's—wife and child of his brotherly, sisterly, play-
fellow youth; even as thine, Sir are the wife and child of thy loving, longing, paternal old age! Away! Let us away!" Why does Ahab reject this second appeal?

- Ishmael tells us, "Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels." This statement pits rationality against emotion, yet begs the question of what Ahab feels. Ahab himself provides the answer in his next lines, "From hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee." Can we reduce what Ahab feels to hate, or do we see signs throughout the work that he experiences a broader range of emotions? Is it possible to identify with a character who is reduced only to hate? How might we contrast the "feeling" Ahab with Starbuck, who seems to overthink the situation and as a result is never able to bring himself to take action?

- How does the choice of youth actors to play the contemporary storyline and adult actors to play the historic version impact your emotional response to the play? Do you think young viewers are more apt to identify with the young characters and adults the adult characters? How does the use of contemporary street slang or archaic language shape how we respond to the two sets of characters?

8. What roles (aggressor, victim, other) does the protagonist play in the depiction of violence?

The opening scenes of the play invite us to see Alba and Ahab as victims of violence, leaving us much more sympathetic to their quest for revenge. The play particularly dwells on Alba's feelings of guilt and remorse over her brother's death, motivating the journey she takes towards the heart of the city. As the play continues, however, Pitts-Wiley introduces a number of elements which complicate the two leaders' relationship to violence. There are strong suggestions, for example, that Alba and her gang not only see violence as part of the business they have pursued but also as a source of "fun" and perhaps as part of what drew them into this world in the first place. As we see Alba and Ahab from the point of view of their respective crews, we come to understand the ways that they have allowed their pursuit of personal revenge to unbalance other factors that should be shaping their decisions. Both of them have turned their back on their core missions; both are willing to sacrifice the lives of their followers; neither feels responsibility to protect others who may be victims of violence. Ultimately, they may be as much aggressors as victims.

- Alba's initial description of WhiteThing portrays the threat of violence as a central part of his seductive appeal. She tells us, "his eyes turned blood red...He has a dangerous and sexy smell. He comes with a chill like the wind on top of Mt. Everest." Such a description invites us to consider the relationship between sex and violence in the urban youth culture being depicted in the play. Why might Alba find WhiteThing sexy?

- Alba's description operates through three different senses: she describes the blood red look of his eyes, his "dangerous and sexy smell," and then, the sense of chill which surrounds him, an image which invites our sense of touch. Each of these references is vivid in its own right; yet collectively, they seem designed to form a very powerful impression on the audience.

- Alba responds to the battle with the Agents with a momentary sense of pleasure and then catches herself: "Oh that was fun. But it wasn't what I came for." What clues does this offer into the ways she thought about violence before the death of her brother forced her to confront its human consequence? In describing the fight as "fun," she suggests that violence might be a source of pleasure for her and her gang, not simply an undesired aspect of the drug business.

- Pip describes his experiences of vulnerability in the face of gang violence: "When they didn't find you, they shot the house to pieces. Seems like they kept shooting all night long. I thought I was going to go crazy. I was just going crazy, crazy scared. I thought I saw God. I was crazy dreaming just waiting for them to find me. But they didn't. You came back and saved me." You might consider how some of the images here of abandonment, fear, spiritual visions, dreams, and madness all connect the contemporary Pip back to what Ishmael told us about the historic Pip and his fate. Pip sees Alba as his salvation, yet she feels tremendous responsibility for what happened to him both during this incident and in the later events that lead to his death.
Ahab describes himself as having spent forty years seeking to "make war on the horrors of the deep!" What does this phrase suggest about who might be seen as the aggressor in this narrative? Do whalers "make war" on nature? And how does the phrase, "horrors of the deep," complicate any simple moral interpretation of this situation?

9. What moral frame (pro-social, antisocial, ambiguous) does the work place around the depicted violence?

Representations of gang-related violence can be seen as a classic example of anti-social violence. Pitts-Wiley is deeply concerned about the impact of gang life on members of his own community and wants to use this play to call attention to the damage the drug trade is doing to the lives of many young people. Yet, he is also very aware that some of the core institutions of our society—the legal and criminal systems, big business—are implicated in perpetuating this destruction. In that sense, violence is part of the establishment of the society, and in some cases, violence is performed in the name of the state. This sense of violence as pervading the culture is further suggested when the characters read a newspaper which describes both corrupt and contested elections and "bloody battles" being fought by the government, again hinting at the relationship between localized and national forms of violence. Finally, the street gang itself is depicted as a social structure that protects the members of a community and in the end, it is the members of the gang who will have to take the steps needed to transform their community and make it less dependent on all that WhiteThing represents.

- The introduction of the newspaper headlines proclaiming a "Bloody Battle in Afghanistan" places Pip's death in a larger national context. Newspapers often talk about a "war on drugs." You might encourage your students to reflect on what is implied by that metaphor. If there is a war on drugs, what attitude should we take towards its casualties? If the newspaper headline is intended to evoke our current military conflicts in the Middle East, what attitude does it express towards the war, especially when it is read against the suggestion of a "grand contested election for the presidency of the United States?"

- Que warns Alba that "something is going down in our hood. Eastside Scallywags all over the place. Dudes are out in the street harassing our peoples. A couple of our insiders have been busted up. We need to get off at the next stop and go back and take care of our business." These lines hint at The One's responsibility to their neighborhood. Alba goes against the group in insisting that they continue on their quest for WhiteThing rather than "take care of our business," much as Ahab expresses little interest in the fact that his mission may undercut the business interests that funded his voyage (See his exchange with Starbuck about the kegs that are leaking oil).

10. What tone does the work take towards the represented violence?

Violence is depicted here as a source of human pain and suffering. There is no attempt to romanticize violence. We are asked to understand both its personal and societal repercussions. The play is written in large part to focus attention on the impact of gangs and drugs on contemporary urban America, and it is this concern that gives Melville's "Moby-Dick: Then and Now" such urgency and immediacy. The juxtaposition with the historic storyline places the contemporary violence in a larger context; we understand the issues of revenge and self-destruction as part of a larger cycle of human history. Melville gives us a new perspective on the problems of our own time.
VIOLENCE IN MOBY-DICK: THEN AND NOW
AN INTERVIEW WITH RICARDO PITTS-WILEY

Q: Why do you open the play with the scene of Pip's shooting? What does the direct depiction of violence contribute to the play?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: I had to put at the front of the play the "Why?" Why is Ahab so angry? Why is Alba so angry, and as an audience can I put you in a position of saying, "I would be just as angry. I could see where I could be just as angry." If I achieve that, then the audience hopefully is saying, "Now, I'm going to see what they do with that anger."

Early in the development of the show, I had scenes where there was gunplay. The kids took guns out and everything. And then one day I came in and said, "No guns." The kids will never show a gun. And they were like, "Oh man, we're out talking about taking on this big thing and we don't have our gats?" I say, "No, because the minute you draw a gun you make it okay for the audience to accept that you could be destroyed." I'm not gonna do that. I'm not gonna make it that easy for them. At one point, they reach for their guns supposedly and Fedallah comes in and says, "Put your guns away. They won't do any good anyway. This kind of enemy you have to battle hand to hand and hand. Hand to hand." It's what Melville ultimately says about Moby Dick also, and Ahab. Many, many times Ahab asks other ships, "Have you seen the White Whale?" His reward is not for the person who kills the whale, the reward is for the one who spots him, because "I want to kill him. I want to put the harpoon in his heart." It's personal, and Fedallah says that to the young crew, "Oh no, when you take on the agents of White Thing, you don't do it from a distance. You got to be up close."

Hopefully in saying that, I'm also saying to the audience that there would be fewer acts of violence, if we didn't promote the idea that it can be impersonal. I mean the whole concept of a drive-by shooting, a sniper, an atomic bomb, a high powered rifle; it's all about disconnecting from the act of violence. I think Melville is saying that if you really understood what this meant, what riding up on the biggest thing that's ever been created and putting a knife in it and you don't put just one knife, you got to stab this thing a hundred times, and its blood is gonna pour out and turn the sea crimson. No, this is not a cannon from a ship a quarter of a mile away. This is personal. You got to get right up on it. The closer you get to it, not only do you have the chance to kill it, it has the chance to kill you, too.

That's what the whole concept of taking coup was about. On the battlefield, coup and courage come together. When you can take your stick with a rock on it and go and hit somebody with it, okay, you've proved some courage then and at the end of the battle, sometimes all you walked away was a knot on your head and the acknowledgment that some other person had outdone you but you walked home. Then we introduce this Western concept of, "No we do it from a distance."

Q: The One describes the battle as fun.

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: Yes, after the battle on the train with the agents, The One says, 'oh yeah, that was fun.' But it's not the crew that says it, it's Alba that says it. That was fun. Because she is prepping herself for the great battle, and this little skirmish proved that she was ready, that the blood lust was high in her and she was ready for the next level. Violence escalates. I push you, I hit you, I take a stick and beat you, I stab you, I shoot you. It escalates, and she's in the process of escalation. Same thing with Ahab on the crew. His violence escalates.
Q: Could you talk a little bit about what role the stage craft plays in shaping our response to the scenes of violence? I'm wondering about the stylization of the way violence is represented, the fact it's an unseen force, usually they are battling against, as opposed to the way this violence might be depicted in a film or video game?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: The film industry or television can simulate violence at a most extreme level. You could see a movie where a person's head just gets blown off: "Ahh." Camera play, but you know, all right. On stage you can't do that. The most extreme violence on the stage is the violence that we don't see all the time because it's left to our imagination. Even when we see it — we don't really see it. That's what Alfred Hitchcock understood. In Psycho, the horror is not what you see, the horror is what you don't see. As a stage director, I'm probably closer to that as a concept. Once you take a gun out on stage, you kinda gotta use it. If you're not gonna use it, don't take it out, or surprise me with it, like, "Whoa, where'd that come from?" Okay? "Whew, wasn't expecting that." Then I'll have to use it. Sometimes it's just a MacGuffin, the Hitchcock technique of, you know, this might be important. Maybe not, but you better keep an eye on it. Also with young people, violence is the end of the act, and I never wanted to put the kids in a situation where they did something and that was it. Once they kill something and I saw it, they were just murderers.

You know in Romeo and Juliet — by the end of the play Romeo is a double murderer and we very often don't deal with that fact. I mean, he willfully and vengefully killed Tybalt. In the tomb where Paris has come to grieve for Juliet, he kills him, too. Paris didn't do anything wrong other than come to grieve for Juliet. But he [Romeo]'s still heroic to us at the end because he gets to his beloved. But you know something? In reality, even if he had found her again, he's still going to jail. The reality of gangbanging and gang warfare is if you kill somebody, if you get caught, you're going to jail. You should. And there's very few people who are going to come up and stand beside you and say, "I defend you in this." I wouldn't. So if I wouldn't do that for a person I didn’t know, I certainly would not do that for a group of characters that I’ve created and which I'm saying, "Don't do this. I can't help you." We have to find ways of telling our young people "Don't do this."

Q: So to what degree was the depiction of violence in the play shaped by what you heard from incarcerated kids beginning the process?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: A lot. Because of the violence in their lives, some of the kids had lost something that they were never going to get back. And there's a good chance the thing that they lost could or would lead to their untimely end, also. The most dangerous animal in the world is one with nothing to lose. The most dangerous person in the world is the one with nothing to lose. I had to leave the kids with something else because they lost Pip already, what else could you lose? I also wanted to say that there was a thing that they placed great value on, even as they abused it and that was the hood, their neighborhood. The message they got on the train, the first time they say, "Let's break off the attack and go back" is because their neighborhood is under siege. They said, "No that's valuable. That's worth going back for," and it's the maniacal focus of their leader to say, "I don't care what's going on back there, we're going on. We have this mission," and she's so strong that they can't resist her. But they cared about their neighborhood, even if they were slingin in it. It was still theirs: "That's all we got." Hopefully that's a part of the message also, "Love your neighborhood and take care of it. It's yours, take care of it."
# Unit: Continuities and Silences

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EXPLORING GAPS AND SILENCES

BY WYN KELLEY

In this chapter, we look at the structure of *Moby-Dick* as a collage of many different genres or kinds of writing. Viewing such a collage as a seamless whole makes it difficult, if not impossible, to absorb. What are we to make of a text that freely combines narrative plot, a sea voyage halfway around the globe, encyclopedic information on science and natural history, philosophical musings on fate, free will, and the universe, a realistic portrayal of how men hunt and kill whales, rendering their fat into precious oil, and literary excursions into Shakespearean theater and biblical stories, sea chanteys and sermons, lyric poetry and Rabelaisian humor? As we saw in the unit, “Motives for Reading,” one can look for the *stylistic* signposts that orient a reader within a chapter of the novel. Another set of markers reveals itself in the *structural* design of the text and particularly at the edges of chapters: the seams, the places where chapters join and by their merging or breaking apart signal how the book is arranged and where it is going. The first section of this chapter examines such edges and seams and shows how reading for structural markers can make a reader feel at home in the design of Melville’s book.

In the second part of the chapter we look at how these seams and edges reveal spaces as well as connections between the book’s many parts. One of the reasons the book continues to fascinate readers is that Melville created many gaps and silences in the text, places left open for imaginative readers to fill with stories and ideas of their own. By looking more closely at some of these gaps, we find they stimulate reading in a participatory way, as they encourage new and creative responses to the text.

PART ONE: GAPS AND SEAMS

**Melville’s Writing Process: Unnecessary Duplicates**

Readers often view the complications of *Moby-Dick* as evidence of a wicked conspiracy on Melville’s part to trick and mystify the reader. But he did not always compose his novel in an intentional, linear, or fully conscious way. The story of how the book got written indicates haste and passion as much as careful planning and execution.

Melville began the book as another in his series of nautical adventure stories based on his own experiences of sailing on a merchant ship, several whaling vessels, and a naval ship from 1839-44, between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five. His first five novels—*Typee* (1846), *Omoo* (1847), *Mardi* (1849), *Redburn* (1849), and *White-Jacket* (1850)—won him a moderate but steady income and mostly enthusiastic readers. Although *Typee*, *Omoo*, and *Mardi* begin on whaling ships, he had not fully explored whaling as a subject and thought it deserved serious treatment in his next book. Living in New York with his wife and children, brother, sister-in-law, and their children, he wrote enough of the book to tell his British editor, Richard Bentley, in June 1850 that the manuscript would be complete in the fall. His letter to Bentley mentions certain “wild legends” of the whale fishery and the fact that the subject has never been treated by a “romancer,” but the letter otherwise gives no indication that he planned a work as ambitious as *Moby-Dick* eventually became.

What happened between this business-like missive and the completion of *Moby-Dick*, not in autumn of 1850 but almost a year later in the summer of 1851? Melville met Nathaniel Hawthorne and moved to the Berkshires, where he started his book over again, convinced by Hawthorne’s friendship and example to aim much higher than before. In his essay, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850), an adulatory review, he describes Hawthorne as a genius, the American Shakespeare, and as carrying out the great promise of a new American literature. Inspired and renewed by his reverence for Hawthorne, Melville embarked on a momentous literary voyage of his own.

Because no manuscript survives from *Moby-Dick*, we have no direct evidence of how Melville reworked and
expanded his original text to include the “wild” and “romantic” material he thought it needed. Scholar Harrison Hayford, however, building on the internal evidence of the story, made the case for the book as a sometimes ungainly splicing of Melville’s first draft and his later revision. Hayford studied the seams and edges of the book to understand how Melville added to and changed his story. In his “Unnecessary Duplicates: A Key to the Writing of Moby-Dick,” he argued that Melville began with one plot, one captain, one friend-of-Ishmael, but as the book grew he developed new ones. Never completely erasing the old story and characters, Melville created a set of “unnecessary duplicates”—Melville’s phrase (Chapter 107, “The Carpenter”). For example, the original story may have had Bildad and Peleg as captains; in the later version Melville relegated them to the opening chapters as ship owners in order to make room for Ahab. The first draft might have had a mysterious and charismatic sailor named Bulkington play a more important role, perhaps even as Ishmael’s closest friend. Instead, according to Hayford, Queequeg took Melville’s fancy instead, and Bulkington disappeared in Chapter 23, “The Lee Shore,” with an epigraphic comment from Ishmael: “this six-inch chapter is the stoneless grave of Bulkington.” The plot may have originally been meant as a version of “The Town-Ho’s Story” (Chapter 54), a narrative of mutiny and revolt in which Moby Dick kills the villain Radney so that heroic Steelkilt, the mutineer, does not have to. In the expanded version, Moby Dick emerges as much more than a plot device and the story as more concerned with the complicated interlacings between humans and whales than between captains and rebellious sailors.

Hayford’s reading of Moby-Dick reconstructs Melville’s writing process as an inspired but spontaneous and sometimes disorderly one. It allows us to see the book not as a “well-wrought urn” (Donne’s phrase used by New Critics to describe a perfect work) but as an artful pastiche that reveals its sources and influences, its gaps and the bridges flung across them, its woven threads and ripped seams throughout the text. In his novel Mardi, a character cries, “I have created the creative!” (Chapter 180). Melville’s open seams in Moby-Dick reveal his creative process as they tell his story.

**Edges and Seams as Images in the Novel**

Melville appears to have been fascinated by images of seams, edges, and weaving throughout Moby-Dick. This figurative language provides a rich vocabulary for talking about how the novel is put together. The concept of “seam” is associated first and foremost with Ahab, a man with body “torn” and soul “gashed” by Moby Dick (Chapter 41, “Moby Dick”). His face bears a vivid scar that Ishmael assumes runs the whole length of his body: “it resembled that perpendicular seam sometimes made in the straight, lofty trunk of a great tree, when the upper lightning tearingly darts down it, and without wrenching a single twig, peels and grooves out the bark from top to bottom ere running off into the soil, leaving the tree still greenly alive, but branded” (Chapter 28, “Ahab”). Later in the book (Chapter 113, “The Forge”) Ahab brings the blacksmith the razors for making a vicious barbed harpoon and asks him if he can “smooth almost any seams and dents; never mind how hard the metal, blacksmith?” Perth replies, “Aye, sir, I think I can; all seams and dents but one.” Ahab then shows him his brow and begs the blacksmith to let him “lay my head upon thy anvil, and feel thy heaviest hammer between my eyes. Answer! Can’st thou smoothe this seam?” Perth acknowledges that he cannot remove the deep wrinkle from Ahab’s brow, a wrinkle that Moby Dick bears on his brow as well. Ahab agrees that, “it is unsmoothable.”

The seam in Ahab’s face and later his brow speaks to the deep wounds in his being. No scar can heal the wound seamlessly; it reminds us always of the gap. Furthermore Ahab’s furious passion keeps the wound open, the edge jagged and torn. In Chapter 37, “Sunset,” Ahab growls that the responsibility he bears as captain is like the “Iron Crown of Lombardy,” a heavy weight that bites into his skull: “the jagged edge galls me so, my brain seems to beat against the solid metal.” Images of rending and tearing proliferate throughout the novel, in Ahab’s flesh but even more violently in that of the whales, their blubber ripped from them in straight-edged sheets. Sharp knives cut the whales and sometimes the men, leaving gaping holes and bleeding edges. The only seamless surface is the sea itself, and even that breaks up in tempestuous waves, creating abysses that threaten to swallow up the frail ship.
In opposition to the pattern of wounds, cutting, scarring, and seams, Melville also uses imagery of weaving in organic, sinuous, often biological materials. Hence in the Chapter 47, “The Mat-Maker,” Ishmael and Queequeg weave a mat that seems to interlace the threads of life: “as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates.” Melville develops the image even more fully in Chapter 102, “A Bower in the Arsacides,” where Ishmael enters a temple made from a whale’s skeleton covered with interwoven vines that make it seem alive: “the industrious earth beneath was as a weaver’s loom, with a gorgeous carpet on it, whereof the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof, and the living flowers the figures.” The vines seem to Ishmael evidence of an invisible spirit that reanimates the dead whale and by extension Ishmael himself: “the great sun seemed a flying shuttle weaving the unwearied verdure. Oh, busy weaver! unseen weaver! . . . The weaver-god, he weaves.” Where once lay a skeleton now a green grove teems with new life: “Life folded Death; Death trellised Life; the grim god wived with youthful Life, and begat him curly-headed glories.” Whereas the imagery of scars reminds Ishmael that old wounds can never heal, be made seamless again, the images of woven threads and vines signify new life; they mingle with death, presenting a fresh “ever-woven verdant warp and woof intermixed.”

Seams and weaving accomplish similar tasks, to knit up the raw edges and raveled threads of a fabric and make it whole. One (the seam), however, reveals its unfinished nature, its visible threads advertising an imperfect join; the other (the weave) hides the raw edges in a fluid mesh. Melville seems to adopt these images in different ways as he stitches together his narrative.

Transitions and Juxtapositions
We can think of Melville’s design as playing off smooth, mostly continuous narrative lines against abrupt and often dramatic breaks between individual chapters (or sometimes even within a chapter). The overarching structure of the book resembles the whale-temple in “A Bower in the Arsacides” in that it interweaves its various elements in organic and harmonizing ways. Although the book is seldom definitely linear it does follow a comprehensible logic, visible in the way chapters fall into sections with certain identifiable themes.

Hence we see that the first twenty-three chapters form a novel-within-the-novel, taking place onshore and involving Ishmael with Queequeg, the wharves of New Bedford and Nantucket, and the whaling men among whom he will shortly take his place. In these land-based chapters Ishmael narrates a series of actions and adventures without the interruptions and digressions he interpolates later. Events follow in sequence, and even when some extraordinary diversion occurs—Father Mapple’s sermon, for example, which takes up three entire chapters that do little to advance the plot, although they thicken the mood of foreboding—the story moves forward confidently nevertheless. The sequence ends logically as the Pequod goes to sea, launching itself ahead as Ishmael looks back retrospectively on Bulkington, the lee shore of safety and comfort, and the world he has left behind for a new “watery world” (Chapter 1, “Loomings”).

In this book of many chapters, Melville tends to gather them into somewhat distinctive and graspable groupings. Hence Chapters 24-35 introduce the captain, mates, and men, making a passionate case for the quasi-chivalric honor and order of whaling and at the same time mocking the science of whales (Chapter 32, “Cetology”). With Chapter 36, “The Quarter-Deck,” Melville introduces Ahab’s vengeful quest, and succeeding chapters register its impact on the mates and Ishmael, who ponders the meaning of the whale to Ahab and then to himself (Chapter 43, “The Whiteness of the Whale”). Chapter 44, “Hark!,” announces a new departure, and although it takes Ishmael a few chapters to catch up, a section of active whale hunts ensues, culminating with the dramatic Chapter 54, “The Town-Ho’s Story,” and the terrifying portrayal of Moby Dick’s act of retribution against Radney. After three chapters (55-57) devoted to the representation of whales in different media (paint, stone, stars, etc.), the men begin capturing whales, and Ishmael divides his time between exhaustive descriptions of the technology of whaling (Chapter 60, “The Line,” Chapter 67, “Cutting In”) and a dissection of the whale’s body that continues with little interruption until Chapter 87, “The Grand Armada.” Between Chapter 87 and Chapter 105, “Does the Whale Diminish?” Ishmael continues to reflect on whales and whaling, with occasional episodes of the whale hunt or sailor gams (social
gatherings of the ships). With Chapter 106, “Ahab’s Leg,” however, the story begins to move from Ishmael’s observations to Ahab’s actions as the ship closes in on its prey. This long section, a patient development of Ahab’s moods, Fedallah’s weird prophecies, and Ahab’s attempts to fashion the weapons and tools he needs for his final battle, comes to a head in the concluding chapters, which are all action: Chapters 133-35, “The Chase: First Day,” “The Chase: Second Day,” and “The Chase: Third Day.”

An “Epilogue” briefly concludes the work, signaling that it has had an end, a meaning, an integrated intention after all. In an unforeseen irony, the British edition, which came out before the American one, omitted the “Epilogue,” angering reviewers, who thought the book—narrated, they assumed, by a dead man—was an absurdity. Only when Melville published the book in New York was he able to inform his readers that “one did survive the wreck” to tell the story properly. Even in the publication of Moby-Dick, then, Melville worked hard to tie off the loose ends.

This reconstruction of the narrative structure suggests that Melville had a clear framework in mind. Within the somewhat loose weave of this narrative fabric, however, Melville also indicated the tears and gaps that required a bit of repair along the way. If we read at the boundaries, as one chapter gives way to another, we see as many jagged edges as smooth connections. Sometimes a whole chapter will break into the narrative in a particularly unceremonious way. So for example Chapter 43, “Hark!,” begins dramatically with “Hist! Did you hear that noise, Cabaco?” The speaker, Archy, and his comrade Cabaco have never been introduced and will appear only briefly again after this moment. The chapter, about a page long, shows Archy mentioning a cough he heard in the hold; Cabaco thinks nothing of it, and they continue passing buckets for water. Later Ishmael reveals the existence of a secret crew of Malaysians led by the ambiguous Fedallah, indeed coughing and lurking in the hold, but until they abruptly appear in Chapter 48, “The First Lowering,” the mysteries of “Hark!” remain unresolved.

Another dramatic interpolation appears in Chapter 122, “Midnight Aloft,” and consists entirely of Tashtego’s brusque comments on a violent typhoon: “Um, um, um. Stop that thunder! Plenty too much thunder up here. What’s the use of thunder? Um, um, um. We don’t want thunder; we want rum; give us a glass of rum. Um, um, um!” This startling outburst of sounds, as percussive as the chatter of Pip’s tambourine in “Midnight, Forecastle,” breaks into a conversation between Stubb and Flask about the storm and the evil it portends to the ship (Chapter 121, “Midnight—the Forecastle Bulwarks”). Ishmael resumes his narration in Chapter 123, “The Musket,” in which Starbuck will have a chance to get his revenge on Ahab and will not take it. Between two chapters in which Ahab’s mates associate the storm with Ahab’s vengeance and in different ways rebel or protest against it, Tashtego’s speech, an entire chapter, seems meaningless. But in the violent way it breaks into an already violent scene, it reveals the ripped seams in the narrative, the unraveling of the shipboard community, the rage of the heavens as they thunder above and in the drumming “ums” of Tashtego’s language.

These are extreme examples of the visible edges of Melville’s irregular chapters. Often the seams are less ragged. If Chapter 1, “Loomings,” begins with the abrupt and challenging, “Call me Ishmael,” Chapter 2, “Carpet Bag” begins more smoothly: “I stuffed a shirt or two into my old carpet-bag, tucked it under my arm, and started for Cape Horn and the Pacific.” If Chapter 32, “Cetology” breaks disconcertingly into the story of Ahab’s mates by introducing without warning a learned disquisition on the different species of whales, followed by the seemingly unrelated Chapters 33, “The Specksynder” (on harpooners), 34, “The Cabin-Table” (on meals), and 35, “The Mast-Head” (on Ishmael’s giddy experiences aloft), Chapter 36, “The Quarter-Deck” steers us firmly back to the story: “It was not a great while after the affair of the pipe, that one morning shortly after breakfast, Ahab, as was his wont, ascended the cabin-gangway to the deck.”

Besides providing transitions between his chapters, some smooth and orderly, others sudden and surprising, Melville also creates dramatic juxtapositions that highlight in bold relief the significant contrasts between episodes. So, for example, the transition between Chapter 53, “The Gam,” to Chapter 54, “The Town-Ho’s Story,” is entirely smooth and logical. Ishmael has explained the meaning of an arcane seagoing term, a
“gam,” and then goes on to tell the “Town-Ho’s” story as an example of the kind of social interchanges that take place at such gams. Yet the two chapters juxtaposed in this way reveal a startling difference between the scholarly tone Ishmael adopts in explaining this unusual word and the sly, subtle, and subversive tone he adopts in narrating how he received and then later told the story to various Peruvian “cavaliers” in Lima. One chapter presents an earnest Ishmael who, except for an ironic reference to the fact that slave ships avoid gams because of their own shady business, does not inject much humor or variety into the chapter. The intense drama and vividness of the “Town-Ho” story, then, appears against this solemn and sober backdrop. The juxtaposition of the two styles throws a spotlight onto Chapter 54.

In another example of juxtaposition and contrast, Ishmael pursues in different ways the theme of property in Chapters 89, “Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish,” 90, “Heads or Tails,” and 91, “The Pequod Meets the Rose-bud.” In “Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish” Ishmael presents a legal concept, the use of a flag or waif planted in a dead whale to indicate possession, thereby commenting on how people and nations take possession of other people and nations. Although the chapter is wickedly satirical, it makes a serious and powerful point on imperialism: “What to that redoubted harpooneer John Bull [England], is poor Ireland, but a Fast-Fish? [a captured whale].” It ends with an even more serious question directed outside the novel: “And what are you, reader, but a Loose-Fish [free] and a Fast-Fish, too?” In the next chapter, “Heads and Tails,” Melville juxtaposes to this political chapter a historical example of how English dukes used certain laws guaranteeing their possession of dead whales to rob the fishermen of their prizes. Within this story of arrant injustice, Melville then inserts a sly tale of a tail. According to another law, the king is supposed to receive the head, the queen the tale of a slaughtered whale. Besides the fact that there’s very little left to a whale when you take away the head and the tail, Ishmael also wonders ironically why the queen should get the tail: “is the Queen a mermaid, to be presented with a tail?” An odd question. But if the king is head of his kingdom and by that logic gets the head, then the law seems to place the Queen in a rather unflattering position, and Ishmael seems to relish this irony: “An allegorical meaning may lurk here.”

Just as these two chapters juxtapose historical and humorous readings of sovereignty and possession, the succeeding Chapter 91, “The Pequod Meets the Rose-Bud” offers another kind of remarkable juxtaposition. The theme of possession remains at the forefront of this chapter, in which Stubb comes upon a sick whale that a French ship has claimed as its own. Through a humorous process of mis-translation, he convinces the captain to give up his prize, which stinks of the whale’s “prodigious dyspepsia, or indigestion.” Once the French ship has disappeared from view, however, Stubb seizes the whale, which he knows by its smell contains a valuable cache of ambergris, a product of the whale’s bowels which can be used to make expensive perfumes. The juxtaposition of these serious and comic episodes of taking possession produces a rich mix.

After another informative section, Chapter 92, “Ambergris,” Melville creates another abrupt shift and startling juxtaposition when in Chapter 93, “The Castaway,” Pip jumps overboard and is left alone for hours at sea until the sailors retrieve him, after which he is incurably mad. From the theme of possessing whales and countries, to taking possession of the ambiguous substance in the whales’ bowels, Melville moves to a powerful scene in which the ship loses possession of Pip and Pip loses possession of his wits. The progression of the theme through these chapters seems on the one hand full of gaps—Pip is not exactly a Fast-Fish or Loose-Fish—and yet in another sense it is seamless and breathtakingly compelling.

_Moby-Dick_ offers many other examples of how Melville stitches his chapters together in ways that reveal both dramatic breaks and unsuspected continuities, opening up meanings in the spaces between the chapters as much as within them. In this sense, he writes as a collaborative author, inviting readers into those spaces to knit up the fallen stitches for themselves. The ragged edges of the text call out to an active, participatory reader to bind them off more gracefully, to weave the dropped threads into a satisfying whole. These are not just pleasing images of how Melville writes but are rather philosophical premises on which he bases the book. Ahab may present a spectacle of scars that never heal, but the reader can perform the surgery that the novel demands.
The other seams appear in Queequeg’s coffin, later converted to a life-buoy when the Carpenter caulks the seams.

**PART TWO: FILLING THE GAPS**

The concerns of this chapter, namely what gets left out of a literary work and how readers may step into the breach, have not traditionally entered into language arts classes—not mine, anyway. Readers and teachers of literary texts are generally more involved with what an author does in writing a text than in what she or he does not do. When I teach *Pride and Prejudice*, and students ask, “Why don’t they kiss at the end?” the typical response is, “Well, now you’ve stepped outside the book. That’s not the book Austen wrote. We’re here to talk about the book Austen wrote.” Yet numerous films and books have filled in Austen’s story, and you can be sure that most of them end with a kiss. These reworkings, while often not “true” to the original work, nevertheless step outside the book boldly and read it in new ways. They are part of the long line of interpretations of the text and as such are relevant in the way scholarly articles or Austen-themed tourist sites or other kinds of interpretation are relevant.

As we see in the “Appropriation and Remixing” unit of this guide, *Moby-Dick* has inspired probably more spinoffs—illustrated editions, abridgments, films, cartoons, restaurants, television episodes, jokes, comic books, parodies, songs, even a heavy metal album—than any other American novel. According to Elizabeth Schultz, speaking of illustrated editions alone, only *The Wizard of Oz* comes close. This wealth of cultural material suggests a large fan following, certainly, but also the endless adaptability of the book’s themes and characters. *Moby-Dick* inspires readers to rewrite it in different media and new idioms and voices, as Ricardo Pitts-Wiley’s *Moby-Dick: Then and Now* abundantly reveals.

This section takes up the question of how the book makes this enormous cultural response possible. What gaps does *Moby-Dick* leave for other writers to fill, and what choices does it make for readers to consider and reconsider? How does it represent the creative process? How does it encourage readers to write or create their own versions of the novel?

**Where Are the Women?**

*Moby-Dick* leaves many gaps for a reader to fill. This point might draw immediate gasps of disbelief, since the response of many readers, even when it was first published in 1851, has been to criticize the book’s length and plenitude. It is too long. How can one complain about what has been left out? Nothing has been left out. Everything, as Melville says in his opening “Extracts,” “affording a glancing bird’s eye view of what has been promiscuously said, thought, fancied, and sung of Leviathan, by many nations and generations, including our own,” has been included in the book. If you want to know all there is to know about whaling, and a great deal more besides, read *Moby-Dick*.

Yet especially in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as literary scholarship has opened up the so-called literary canon to new, previously unheard or unrecognized voices, the question of which readers Melville reached and which he neglected, what characters or groups he represented and which he represented unsatisfactorily or not at all, has become more urgent and critical. As a result, scholars have looked at previously unexamined evidence and made new discoveries about Melville’s readers. In one striking example, John Stauffer in his book *The Black Hearts of Men* revealed that *Moby-Dick* had been quoted in *Frederick*.

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Douglass’ Paper a few years after it was published. This information showed conclusively for the first time that Melville had African American readers. In a book inspired by this discovery and by a conference on Frederick Douglass and Melville held in New Bedford, MA in 2005 (the 150th anniversary of the publications of Douglass’s autobiography, My Bondage and My Freedom and Melville’s slave narrative “Benito Cereno”), scholar Robert K. Wallace traced other connections, previously unexplored, between these two great authors. As he sadly pointed out, in trying to explain why such connections had not received attention before, the disciplines of African American studies and American literary studies do not always overlap. The evidence, unregarded, was there staring people in the face.

The passage quoted in Frederick Douglass’s Paper comes from Chapter 61, “Stubb Kills a Whale,” in which during a whale hunt Stubb exerts his considerable verbal skills to motivate his oarsmen:

"Start her, start her, my men! Don't hurry yourselves; take plenty of time—but start her; start her like thunder-claps, that's all," cried Stubb, spluttering out the smoke as he spoke. "Start her, now; give 'em the long and strong stroke, Tashtego. Start her, Tash, my boy—start her, all; but keep cool, keep cool—cucumbers is the word—easy, easy—only start her like grim death and grinning devils, and raise the buried dead perpendicular out of their graves, boys—that's all. Start her!"

The writer for Frederick Douglass’ Paper used this passage to comment on what might be needed to energize certain politicians to take up the cause of abolition. His allusion clearly indicates that Melville’s book seemed relevant to contemporary political and social issues.

This example and the work of Stauffer and Wallace show not only that Melville had closer ties with abolitionists and African American writers and activists than had been previously thought but also that Frederick Douglass and others did not see Moby-Dick as excluding them from the text. Toni Morrison’s essay, “Unspeakable Things Unspoken” (quoted in Unit 3) likewise suggests that Melville did not share his culture’s blindness to what she calls the “Afro-American presence in American literature.” The more common response since the late-twentieth century, however, has been to assume that this book or any novel by a “dead white male” implicitly bars certain readers by virtue of their race, gender, or class. Critics have noticed, for example, that although the African harpooneer Daggoo is a noble and impressive figure, the ship’s cook Fleece, with his use of dialect and minstrel gestures, seems stereotypical and offensive. (Others have argued, however, that Fleece undermines these stereotypes when he unexpectedly compares Stubb, the white second mate, to the sharks attacking the whale.) Recently a few scholars, recognizing the latitude in Melville’s representation of Native and African Americans, have nevertheless criticized his less nuanced treatment of what he calls “rascally Asiatics” (Chapter 87, “The Grand Armada”). The character Fedallah, identified at different times as Chinese, Parsee (Indian, Persian), and Malay, has seemed to some readers a stereotype of an inscrutable and demonic "Oriental." Similar questions have been raised about Melville’s sympathy for and understanding of working class and poor characters, although ironically when the book came out some

52 John Stauffer, The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Stauffer also discovered that Melville’s first novel, Typee, had been mentioned in Frederick Douglass’ Paper.
readers objected to his writing about sailors, members of a class many people considered low, immoral, and
dissolute, rather than about more elevated subjects.

One gap that has in more recent years appeared a glaring one is the absence of women in the book. Yes,
certain women appear—Mrs. Hussey at the Try-Pots, Aunt Charity in Nantucket, the Polynesian island
women who grace the decks of “The Bachelor” in Chapter 115. Wives of the departing sailors appear as an
undifferentiated group in Chapter 7, “The Chapel,” listening in “muffled silence” to Father Mapple’s sermon.
Starbuck mentions his wife, and Ahab has a wife, who has inspired a one-woman theater piece and an art
Nevertheless no women play active roles in the book, a fact that has concerned critics, readers, and serious
adaptors like Ricardo Pitts-Wiley.

In addressing this gender gap readers ask, “Why doesn’t Melville include women in his book?” The question
is hard to answer satisfactorily and tends to limit one’s understanding and exploration of the text. Do we ask
why Toni Morrison does not write at great length about white people? Is it a problem that Amy Tan writes
her books from a predominantly female and Asian or Asian American point of view? More useful for reading
practices in a participatory culture would be the question, “What spaces does Melville create in his text for
imagining women or people of different races, nationalities, or sexual identities?” As seen in the outpouring
of multimedia adaptations of *Moby-Dick*, including ones with multiracial, feminist, or gay characters and
themes, the book affords many opportunities for readers of different identities and backgrounds to insert
themselves into the text.

**Spaces and Silences: Where Creativity Begins**

The silence of *Moby-Dick* on the many kinds of people it might have included into the text might seem
exclusive and prohibitive. As we saw in Unit 3, Melville’s multicultural chapter “Midnight, Forecastle” names
sailors from the Azores, Africa, China, Tahiti, and many other places that do not tend to get noticed in
nineteenth-century literature except as exotic or abstract locations. But the sailors themselves are almost
invisible, not meriting the close attention and character development with which Melville invests his white
characters. Even so fully realized a character as Queequeg mostly disappears after the first twenty-three
chapters, to emerge only briefly after that. But Melville’s silences speak to another possibility as well. In many
of Melville’s works silence conveys meaning and power. The whale Moby Dick, who motivates the whole
novel and gives it its title, is notably silent throughout. How many eponymous heroes (Jane Eyre, David
Copperfield, Jay Gatsby, Rabbit) never utter a word throughout an entire book? The whale’s silence
nevertheless generates hundreds of thousands of words and allows Ishmael to create a massive work. To
Melville silence is sublime and majestic. More importantly for our project, the silences of the text create a
space for new understandings of power and new writing and creativity.

For example, silence creates a majestic space around Ahab in Chapter 34, “The Cabin-Table,” where he
“presided like a mute, maned sea-lion on the white coral beach, surrounded by his warlike but still deferential
cubs.” So intimidated are the mates that their meals pass “in awful silence.” But silence is not reserved only
for the white captain. In Chapter 17, “The Ramadan,” for example, after investigating the *Pequod* and deciding
it is the ship for him, Ishmael returns to the Try-Pots to tell Queequeg the news. Instead of the friendly
reception he has enjoyed so far, however, he meets a locked door, and when he knocks and calls, no answer
comes. After various feints and starts, Ishmael breaks down the door to discover Queequeg observing a
daylight fast and meditation, his “Ramadan.” Ishmael finds Queequeg’s silence and discipline so unnerving
that he hardly knows what to do or think. Yet although he lectures him afterward about the dangers of long
fasts, he is also clearly impressed by Queequeg’s religious faith. Furthermore he accepts as fact Queequeg’s
implication that “he no doubt thought he knew a good deal more about the true religion than I did.” In the
physical space Queequeg creates between them by locking the door, and in the length of time during which he
refuses his companionship, Queequeg creates a powerful place for himself in the text.

In Chapter 93, “The Castaway,” Pip too gains power from creating a sphere of silence and, in his case, infinite
space around himself. Pip has been ejected from Stubb’s whaleboat during a chase and floats alone in the sea for hours before the men find him. During that time he experiences “the intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity.” In the endless space and silence in which he contemplates the universe, Pip “saw God’s foot on the treadle of the loom, and spoke it.” Afterward the sailors call him mad, but he also achieves a special status on the ship and eventually moves into Ahab’s cabin as his confidant and companion. Pip has hardly spoken before except through his tambourine and the eloquent soliloquy in “Midnight, Forecastle.” After the loss of his wits, although he now speaks in gibberish or riddles, his speech has a power that competes with Ahab’s.

No being conveys more eloquently the power of silence than Moby Dick himself. In Chapter 52, “The Spirit-Spout,” the sailors detect on the horizon a mysterious “silvery jet” that Ishmael is convinced comes from the whale. It appears in the “silvery silence” of a “silent night” always at the “same silent hour.” What might seem in another context beautiful looks sinister here, engendering “a sense of peculiar dread, . . . as if it were treacherously beckoning us on and on, in order that the monster might turn round upon us, and rend us at last in the remotest and most savage seas.” When Moby Dick does appear in full view at the end of the novel, he once again comes in awesome silence, “at every roll of the sea revealing his high sparkling hump, and regularly jetting his silent spout into the air.”

Melville was later to write in his poem, “The Great Pyramid,” of the power of God as the “dumb I AM.” Silent characters appear in nearly all of his works—Bartleby, the scrivener comes most strikingly to mind, but there are many others—each one invested with a remarkable power to strike the reader with awe. The silences in Moby-Dick, coming in the midst of Ishmael’s wordy narrative, suggest the spaces within the text where unimaginable power may dwell. Frequently this silence is associated with characters like Queequeg, Pip, and Moby Dick, who, in the world of Melville’s urban middle-class white readers, would be otherwise powerless.

The silence, then, of the women in Father Mapple’s church or of the “dumb brute” Moby Dick or of Pip, Daggoo, and Tashtego does not necessarily imply that these characters have been marginalized or silenced. Melville reserves for them a space that resonates with meaning—a "negative" space with a positive charge. It is not surprising, then, that numerous readers have felt empowered to take up their own places in Melville’s text and begin writing.

“Friends, Hold My Arms!”: Melville’s Invitation to the Reader

One of the reasons Moby-Dick has produced so many adaptations, translations, parodies, and remediations is that Melville models this kind of creative work himself in the way he writes his book. As we have seen, he adapts and rewrites Shakespeare, the Bible, Milton, and Beale with enthusiastic abandon. Some of his borrowings suggest deep reverence for his sources, others a more frivolous desire to adorn his text or to parody and subvert his competitors. In these maneuvers, Melville invites a reader to do likewise, if he can, with Moby-Dick. In Chapter 104, as often elsewhere in the text, Ishmael speaks directly to his readers: “Give me a condor’s quill! Give me Vesuvius’ crater for an inkstand! Friends, hold my arms! For in the mere act of penning my thoughts of this Leviathan, they weary me, and make me faint with their outreaching comprehensiveness of sweep. . . .” Calling upon his readers as friends, Ishmael implies that they can join him in his weighty enterprise and even write books of their own.

The passage also shows, however, that more than friendship and good will is required; one must also exercise judgment. Acknowledging what his readers must already know, Ishmael calls his book a vast enterprise: “To produce a mighty book, you must choose a mighty theme.” Ishmael claims to have chosen “to include the whole circle of the sciences, and all the generations of whales, and men, and mastodons, past, present, and to come, with all the revolving panoramas of empires on earth, and throughout the whole universe, not excluding its suburbs.” This statement speaks to authorial decision-making, about both what to include and what to leave aside. Ishmael does not seem to have forgotten or neglected anything in Moby-Dick, but in fact the book is full of roads not taken. As Ishmael models certain kinds of choices, he also indicates things not
chosen. In the spaces created by those unchosen possibilities, readers, his friends, may insert narratives of their own.

We have already discussed, with Harrison Hayford's essay, some of these roads not taken. Melville abandoned Bulkington to develop Queequeg. He got rid of Peleg to make Ahab. He left the wives at home but included more sailors than could comfortably fit on the Pequod. Other plot and character details get dropped or abandoned. Ishmael’s stepmother makes a brief appearance in Chapter 4, “The Counterpane,” but no other mention of his family or previous life appears, except the fact that he has been to sea and worked as a schoolteacher in the past. We never find out what Steelkilt whispered to his captain to make him drop the mutiny charges against him (“The Town-Ho's Story”), nor do we have any idea how or when Ishmael got to Lima to tell the story to his friends at the Golden Inn. At one point Melville indicates that Pip comes from Connecticut and is presumably free, but then he implies that he might be a slave (Stubb reminds him that he would not fetch much of a price in the Alabama market). Just where does Fedallah come from and how did he acquire such sinister influence over Ahab? We never find out. Why did Melville choose to send the Pequod around the tip of Africa in an easterly direction, rather than around South America into the Pacific, as Melville did in his own voyages, ending in Hawaii?

These roads not taken provide openings for Ishmael’s comrades. Just as Melville’s fleeting glimpses of women make possible Ahab’s Wife, so some of the anomalies, absences, silences, and spaces indicated elsewhere in the text could engender What Bulkington Knew, How Ishmael Got Home: An Odyssey, Queequeg, Prince of Polynesia, and Son of Starbuck. The spaces in the narrative can be seen not simply as lapses on Melville’s part but also as rich possibilities for new stories. Such a perspective enables participation in Melville’s world but also, more broadly, in the world generated by his book and by the people who have read and shared it with other friends. The power of the book resides as much in what it does not say or do as in what it tells us on the page.
Most forms of creative expression depend on the ability of artists to direct the attention, tap the cognition, and shape the memories of their readers. Art critic and historian Ernest Gombrich coined the term "the beholder's share," suggesting that gallery visitors must complete the work of representation begun by the artist. We do not, he suggests, simply read the world from the painting. Normal perception depends on our ability to see an object from multiple perspectives as we sweep our eyes across a scene, not from the static and flat perspective offered in a painting. The artist relies on conventions that are shared with the reader for representing the world; the work cues us to make certain interpretations of what we are looking at. A smear of multicolored paint may become a cloud; line and shading may communicate depth; a fragment may suggest a whole, and so forth. When we look at a painting, we see what we know to look for, and our knowledge is shaped by our previous experiences and by our motives and interests.

Taking this one step further, we see that many expressive arts depend on principles of juxtaposition to mold our perceptual and cognitive experience. Early Russian filmmakers, including Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein, and Dziga Vertov, were the first to articulate this principle in relation to cinema. They spoke of "montage" (or juxtaposition through editing) as the basic building block of film art. When a filmmaker edits two or more shots together, the viewer starts to mentally construct a relationship between them. Kuleshov experimented with combining shots of an actor looking blankly at the camera with shots of a coffin, a little girl playing with a toy, and a bowl of soup, and claimed that readers ascribed different emotions to the actor's expression depending on which shot followed it (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grCPqoFwpSk).

Similarly, he found that we might add up fragments taken of different people to create a composite image or that we would assume a continuous space built up over a series of shots if we saw an actor moving in a consistent direction across the frame. Kuleshov's students deployed these basic principles to create remarkable works of art. You can see how Eisenstein manipulated many different elements through his use of editing in the Odessa Steps sequence from Battleship Potemkin (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps-vkZzfec).

Comic book artist and theorist Scott McCloud makes a similar point. He talks about the white space separating two panels as the "gutter" and stresses the importance of that space in shaping our emotional experience of the work. The reader necessarily finds some kind of relationship between any two images put side by side; the white space is the reader's cue to fill in the gaps.

If juxtaposition shapes our experience at the most local level—in the relationship between shots in a film or panels in a comic—then the same principles operate on a larger scale in longer works. A novelist like Melville constructs his novel from a series of fragments—scenes, chapters, even smaller units of the text—which may involve shifts in point of view (see our unit on violence), in genre or voice, in time or in space. The reader is supposed to do the work of stitching these various elements together to experience the work as a cohesive whole. This reading process may involve many such shifts in attention; it also depends on our memory as we build a mental map of the characters and events. Some artists may want to make this process relatively effortless so that we forget the cognitive labor involved in making sense of the story; other artists may want to call attention to the juxtapositions and thus force us to work harder in figuring out the relationship between elements. Melville's Moby-Dick has a challenging structure involving many abrupt and seemingly


arbitrary shifts in style, voice, time, and perspective. One never knows where Melville is going to take us from chapter to chapter. In shifting between different genres of writing, he forces us to think almost as much about how the story is being told as about the story itself. By contrast, the 1956 John Huston film version (with Gregory Peck) streamlines the digressions in Melville's text: it tries for a clear plot trajectory and for well defined character relations, focusing more on the conflict between Ahab and Starbuck, the friendship between Ishmael and Queequeg, the hunt for the whale, and the spiritual themes of the novel. Much as with other Hollywood films of the period, we can immerse ourselves in its world and identify easily with its characters. The film still relies on our ability to put together the pieces on both a local and global level and still deploys some of the principles of juxtaposition through editing which were developed by the Soviet filmmakers. (See case study).

Many teachers worry that their students are experiencing a diminished attention span brought about, in part, by the rapid-fire editing found on MTV or in contemporary cinema. But there's another way to understand what's going on here.59 The current generation of students is growing up in a media-saturated age; they have experienced many more hours of audiovisual media than any previous generation, and they have acquired skills at making the cognitive leaps needed to make sense of the most conventional forms of juxtaposition deployed by filmmakers and television producers. Editing style has become more elliptical; perceptual cues (to time or place) are less explicit; and narrative sequence gets scrambled. All of this responds to spectators' instinctive desire to be cognitively challenged.60

Historically, montage worked through the sequential juxtaposition of images and actions: there was a limited amount of visual information contained within any given shot. In contemporary media, however, we are also seeing a rise in what might be called simultaneous juxtaposition. Think about the screen of a typical cable news program, where we might see footage shot in the field embedded on a screen behind the news anchor, one or more lines of texts underneath sometimes amplifying what is being seen and sometimes dealing with a totally unrelated topic, and perhaps even a tickertape showing the ball scores or the stock market results. As our students process such a screen, their eyes are drawn from one level of information to the next, quickly deciding which ones are related to each other and which represent unrelated stories we are also being asked to follow. On that basis, they decide where to focus their attention and what they can safely ignore.61 Both sequential and simultaneous juxtaposition place demands on our attention. In one, we have to remember bits of information over time and recognize the relationships between them; in the other, we have to take in information simultaneously, shifting our attention to the most salient details.

This process of managing and allocating attention is what we call multitasking and for our purposes, we encourage you to think of multitasking as a skill rather than a deficiency. The goal should be to expand the range of cognitive and perceptual strategies available to students. They should be able to do focused work and contemplative reading but they also need:

- to deal with the complexity of the current environment
- to be able to make quick decisions on fragmentary data,
- to know how to balance competing demands and how to shift attention to salient details.

Again, we think understanding creative expression may be key to acquiring this skills, because artists sooften play at the thresholds of our perception and teach us new ways of seeing the world.62

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Case Study: The Separation Scene in John Huston’s Moby Dick

By Henry Jenkins

We can see some of the expressive possibilities of juxtaposition by looking closely at the "separation" scene in John Huston’s version of Moby Dick (Scene 5, "All, Save One" on the DVD). For the purposes of this analysis, we will bracket the sequence involving Elijah which is included in the chapter on the DVD and focus on the action of the ship pulling away from the wharf.

Feminist critics have expressed concern about the absence of female characters in Melville’s novels (see Wyn Kelley’s "Where Are the Women?”). Director John Huston also has a reputation for being a director whose central interest is in his male characters, but this sequence is striking in the visual centrality of women (who appear in roughly a third of the shots in this sequence) and the hints the scene gives us about gender relations in New Bedford. These women are going to be on screen for only a short period of time; they speak no words (with the exception of the woman who is passing out the Bibles), so Huston wants to make sure we remember them. The women carry much thematic weight here—embodiment of the families the men leave behind, the land as they move to sea—and, given that the scene is preceded by Elijah’s warning, perhaps even the life they will lose when the ship meets its predicted fate.

We see several generations of women in the group shots here—older women who are most likely mothers of the crew members, younger women who may be their wives or girlfriends, still younger ones who are their daughters. Huston resists any attempt to sentimentalize this moment: there is no weeping, little attempt to attach these women to particular men (with one key exception, as we will see.) They stare almost blankly ahead; they are resigned to what is happening; most of them have gone through this process of separation before. What we are left with is the absence of emotion—the flatness of their expression, the emptiness of their eyes—coupled with the unglamorized and weathered looks of their faces and the plainness of their dress. Several times the filmmaker draws our attention to an older woman with facial hair—not the kind of character we expect to see in a Hollywood film and for that reason, she adds an element of realism to the sequence.

The scene’s real power is created through juxtaposition. For example, Huston wants to contrast the frantic physical activity the men must perform with the static, fixed, and passive position of the women. The women stand, watch, and wait. For much of the scene, Huston cuts these women off from the men through his framing of the shots. We move between shots of the men on the deck working to shots of the women first as a group and then as individuals watching expectantly.

Throughout the film, Huston shows a fascination with ethnographic details. The opening credits suggest he consulted closely with the staff of Mystic Seaport, a living museum that preserves 19th-century nautical culture. Huston shows how the men brought the supplies on board and what materials they would depend on during their journey; he shows us the owners taking account of and then leaving the ship; he shows the crew checking out the sails and rigging, hauling away the gang plank, lifting the anchor, and pulling the helm, the mates issuing commands and the men singing sea chanteys. This emphasis on the process of labor replaces some of the more encyclopedic passages in Melville’s novel. Note how Huston uses deep focus to show us the relations between the foreground and background or uses camera movements (pans, tracking shots) to link two parts of the space or two activities together. The scene is complex with lots of activity, but Huston wants us to remain aware of the integration and coordination between these actions. The men are working together for a common goal even as each has been assigned a different task.

Amid the larger ethnographic detail there are also small character touches—Queequeg’s refusal to accept a Bible from the church woman, Pip playing his tambourine—and of these, the most compelling may be a series of shots of Starbuck. The camera shows us a distant rooftop where a woman and her child wave to the men below and then cuts to a timid wave back by Starbuck. The scene suggests but never explicitly says that
the woman and child are Starbuck’s family. Later, Huston juxtaposes Starbuck and the distant house within a single shot, again drawing a link between the two.

Otherwise, the men and women are kept apart as if they were already looking at each other from two sides of an invisible wall. Early on, Huston shows the men and the women in the same shots but only to show the men brushing past them as they climb onto the ship. The women start to walk away as soon as the gang plank is pulled aside and we think they are returning to their home, but later shots suggest they are already moving toward the edge of the dock where they get their last longing look at their men as they go off to sea. Both sides want to hold on to that contact as long as possible. By the very end of the scene, we see the women in the background framed from the ship or we see a shot from the rooftop, meant to suggest Starbuck’s home, looking out at the ship moving away into the distance. Once again, we see men and women in the same shot but in a way that suggests the growing physical distance between them. It is interesting that the final shot of the sequence leaves us on shore looking out at the ship as it pulls from view; only then do we cut back to the ship to start the next sequence.

The film’s editing and framing accent the physical separation between the men and the women. Yet he uses screen direction to suggest that certain shots of the men at work are framed from the point of view of the women on shore. Keep in mind here that these are rarely literal point-of-view shots—in that they are often much closer to the men than the physical location of the women would suggest—yet the juxtaposition invites us to read the men as the object of the women’s intense gaze. The soundtrack functions to both link the two spaces together (as the naturalistic sounds of the men’s work and singing on the ship bleeds over some of the shots of the women on shore) and to convey the separate emotional experiences (the music suggests the sorrow of the women and the heroic actions of the men, pulling us in two different emotional directions).

**Study questions for discussion with students:**

1. Can you identify the major elements which constitute this scene? For example, students should identify all of the different groups who are depicted in the scene.
2. What jobs are being performed in this scene? How do these jobs contribute to the larger task of getting the ship off to sea?
3. What details here shed light on some of the recurring characters in this scene? For example, students should be attentive to the information provided about Pip, Queequeg, and Starbuck.
4. What relationship exists between the men and women in the scene? You might get students to think about the different ages of the women and what this suggests about their relationship to the men on board—mothers, wives and girlfriends, daughters.
5. What role does the camera work and editing play in conveying both the emotional attachment and yet distance between the men and women? You should consider how rarely the film shows us the men and the women in the same shot, the role of point of view shots in suggesting the exchange of looks between the men and the women.
6. What roles do sound and music play in this scene—consider the performance of sea chanteys on the ship to shape the labor, the role of music to suggest both the women’s sad longing and the men’s heroic quest, and the use of sound effects to link the two spaces together.
7. How does the filmmaker use editing to suggest the relationship between Starbuck and the women and children on the roof of a nearby building?
8. Why does the sequence end with shots taken on land watching the ship heading off to sea rather than the other way around?
Juxtaposition plays important roles in *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*. The play depends on a series of parallels drawn between two different versions of the *Moby-Dick* story: one which is very faithful to Melville's original novel and performed by the adult cast on the upper deck; the other which is more contemporary and is performed by the youth cast on the lower deck. The action of the play shifts constantly between these two stages, expecting that viewers will refocus their attention on the center of interest in any given scene, while there is often a suggestion of ongoing action in the other space. The two intertwined stories allow the viewer to draw comparisons between the two time periods, sometimes seeing parallels, sometimes seeing contrasts, but always reading one storyline in relation to the other. This structure involves forms of multitasking, making high demands on the spectators' memories (to keep the strands of the two stories clear in their minds), attention (to focus on the right stage at the right moment), and inference (to complete actions which may be only suggested rather than played out in both storylines.)

The opening scenes of the play help to establish this relationship: Ahab loses his leg in battle with the whale and Pip is killed in a drive-by shooting. Alba's vow—"I couldn't save you, but I will avenge you. I'll make him pay"—is followed immediately with Ahab's vow, "I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom..." before the two characters complete the speech in unison, "Till he spouts black blood." This moment seals the connection between these two core characters; both stories will deal with the consequences of this unrelenting search for vengeance over a personal tragedy. A similar set of parallels is drawn between the two characters later in the play when Ahab is observed walking alone on the deck and Alba pulls away on the train listening to music through her headphones. Ahab's contemplation is shattered by Stubb who complains about the sound that Ahab makes walking on the deck with his peg leg, while Alba is interrupted by Stu who asks that she turn down her music. A little later, Ahab calls his men together on the quarter-deck to tell them about the offer of a sixteen-dollar piece to the first man who spots Moby Dick while Alba wakes everyone up on the train and holds up a wad of "green stuff with dead presidents on it," telling them that the money goes to the first person to spot White Thing. Alba's speech in this scene, which describes her personal pain over Pip's death, is closely paralleled by Ahab's speech which describes how he has been "dismasted" by "that accursed white whale."

Pitts-Wiley wants to avoid total duplication of action since this could rapidly become tedious: once a pattern of parallel development is established, he begins to show the action on only one stage and anticipate that spectators will be able to flesh out the action in the other story from their own imaginations. Only occasionally does he create actions which occur on both stages at once or has actions which involve interactions between the two spaces. In every case, these juxtapositions of spaces carry enormous emotional impact—as occurs in the opening when we see Ahab doing battle with the whale and Pip's shooting at the same time, when Pip's and Alba's interaction occurs on the upper deck rather than the lower, when Queequeg's funeral spills over into the lower deck. Only two characters cross over between the two casts—the actors playing Pip and Fedallah. Act One opens with the depiction of Pip's death in the contemporary story and ends with Ishmael's account of Pip's drowning in the historical storyline; Act Two opens with Que's account of Pip's fate and a scene with Alba during which Pip tells his sister that he was "going crazy" when he felt abandoned in a house under fire from White Thing's agents. Near the end of the play, Fedallah moves between Alba and Ahab, offering both glimpses into his dreams which foretell the death and destruction that await the crews. Even where no direct parallels are drawn between the two storylines, language associated with the sea spills over into the lower deck segments, including Stu's "Swim in the big water with the big fish," Que's "White Thing is a mighty big fish."

These parallels and juxtapositions prepare us for the final moments of the play when the storylines diverge: while we see Ahab and his crew destroyed by the whale, The One turns back from a direct confrontation with White Thing, choosing instead to reform themselves and their communities. While Melville's narrative has a
strong sense of predestination, even though characters sometimes struggle to escape their fates, Pitts-Wiley wanted to deliver a message to the incarcerated youth with whom he worked and to other young people that they do have a choice about what happens to them. The closing moments of the play, thus, become a call to action, encouraging us to debate the alternatives that might have been available to both groups. In that sense, the structure of the play follows some of Bertolt Brecht's ideas about "Epic Theater." Brecht argued for a mode of theater which was to be actively debated rather than passively consumed. He wanted spectators to struggle with core questions that shaped their contemporary society and saw theater as a mode of inquiry through which we might raise contentious questions. Brecht argued that the best way to achieve this struggle over meaning would be to create short scenes with abrupt shifts between characters and situations, making it hard for spectators to become fully absorbed into any given situation and instead encouraging them to draw parallels and make connections between fragments of the action. In Brecht's case, the effect of this juxtaposition was to create some level of emotional distance, whereas one might argue that Pitts-Wiley often uses such juxtapositions to intensify the play's emotional impact.
**Juxtaposition in *Moby-Dick: Then and Now***

**An Interview with Ricardo Pitts-Wiley**

**Q:** Let's talk about the juxtaposition of the young and old story. What are some of the challenges created in trying to tell both of those stories on stage at the same time?

**Mr. Pitts-Wiley:** I think the biggest challenge was to keep the action moving forward. How do you tell both stories without one dominating the other and keeping the action going at the same time? You have to be careful that you just don't stop to tell one story; "Okay, we'll stop and tell this story, then we'll stop and tell another story." They have to be fluid in a sense but ultimately, we're telling the story of *Moby-Dick*. You pick your story that you're gonna tell.

Now I'm using both elements to tell both stories, but at some point you just have to keep saying, "This happened, this happened, this happened, this happened and this happened." Now who's telling this part of it? Are they both telling it together? Is this group telling it or is this group telling it? But it's all got to be the same story, even if we're telling it different ways and the commitment from the beginning was to tell Herman Melville's story. So the challenge became more of who's telling what part of the story when.

Sometimes certain things just lent themselves to that and other times I really had to struggle to make sure that I put the language in the right mouth. Sometimes I had to create characters that had to tell a part of the story — the ticket taker for instance. The ticket taker in the young crew story had to be symbolic of multiple times that the crew got a warning, questioned their motives. So you had to take all of those stories and put it in one character. Two themes but one character.

How many times could I keep the story linked? Through the use of Fedallah and Pip, I was able to find a way of saying, "We're still telling the same story." And these characters are the ones that keep us connected, both sides of the story. I would say those were my biggest challenges, and I'm still working on some of them. Every time I do the play, I get closer. I'm gonna be working on this play for the rest of my life, but I will always be mindful of what those challenges are. It'll be interesting in years to come to see how other directors deal with it.
**READING CRITICALLY AND READING CREATIVELY**

**BY HENRY JENKINS**

If there is a shared agenda within the diversity and fragmentation that has often characterized the American media literacy movement, it has come through a focus on five core questions students and teachers have been taught to apply to a range of texts:

- Who created this message?
- What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
- How might different people understand this message differently from me?
- What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
- Why is this message being sent?

Throughout the Teachers' Strategy Guide, we address each of these core questions, although not always in the same language. When we talk about context in our discussion of remix, we are really trying to consider who created the message and why; we also encourage students to identify the techniques deployed within the remix. Our discussion of Motives for Reading helps to explain how and why "different people understand this message differently from me," and that recognition of differences in interpretation and experience are central to our understanding of how to negotiate a multicultural space. Throughout, we have reinforced the value of close reading. Through various case studies, we've applied these skills and inquiries to a range of different kinds of media texts including music videos ("Ahab"), films (several versions of *Moby Dick*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, *Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*), musical recordings (*Oceana*), and television shows (*Battlestar Galactica*) as well as our central texts—a novel (*Moby-Dick*) and a stage production (*Moby-Dick: Then and Now*). Within various media, we have focused on different critical approaches, including considerations of narrative (*Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan*), acting (Patrick Stewart in *Moby Dick*), art direction (*Pirates 3*), and camera work/editing (John Huston's *Moby Dick*). We have embraced the core goals of the media literacy tradition, but we are also expanding its vocabulary and introducing some new perspectives. We are trying to reflect through our pedagogy some significant shifts in the media environment at a time when more and more young people are entering the participatory culture.

In this section, we want to turn our attention to question 4—"What lifestyles, values, and points of view are... omitted from this message?" Here, pay attention to the word, "omitted." What's not in the text is seen here as consciously or unconsciously excluded; often there's a hint that certain ideas or perspectives are being silenced, marginalized, or repressed. This formulation sets the reader in ideological opposition to the text while maintaining a clear separation between producers and consumers. This understanding reflects a moment when the power of mass media was extensive and the average consumer had no real way to respond to the media's agenda except through critical analysis. In a participatory culture, however, any given work represents a provocation for further creative responses. When we read a blog or a post on a forum, when we watch a video on YouTube, the possibility exists for us to respond—either critically or creatively. We can write a fierce rebuttal of an argument with which we disagree or we can create a new work which better reflects our point of view.

Schools have historically taught students how to read with the goal of producing a critical response; we want to encourage you to also consider how to teach students how to engage creatively with texts. Under this model, we should still be concerned with what's not in the text; the difference is in what we do about it. Yochai Benkler argues that we look at the world differently in a participatory culture; we look at it through

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63 Center for Media Literacy, "Five Key Questions Form Foundation for Media Literacy,"
the eyes of someone who can participate. Just as we saw in the Motives for Reading unit, we read for different things depending on our goals, we also watch for different things depending if we want to use the experience of reading as the starting point for writing criticism or as a springboard for creative expression. At its worst, reading critically teaches us to write off texts with which we disagree. At its best, reading creatively empowers us to rewrite texts that don’t fully satisfy our interests. Keep in mind that we may rewrite a text out of fascination or out of frustration, though many writers are motivated by a complex merger of the two.

Reading Fan Fiction
Fan fiction represents a vivid example of reading creatively and critically. Fan fiction refers to original stories and novels which are set in the fictional universes of favorite television series, films, comics, games or other media properties. Some of the earliest fan fiction was inspired by Star Trek in the 1960s. Today, fans write thousands of stories each year devoted to hundreds of different media texts. The writers are often amateur; the stories are labors of love. Many of these stories are distributed online. Historically, women wrote the majority of fan stories, though men have become more actively involved as fan fiction has moved onto the Web. Some stories are written by teens; many more are written by adults. Harry Potter and various anime/manga fandoms have become central sites for youth expression. Some of the stories are appropriate for high school students; some are more sexually explicit. Fans typically include some kinds of rating at the start of the story indicating its graphicness, often using the same G, PG, R, and X ratings used for motion pictures. There is no consistent relationship between the ratings of the "source text" (the original work which inspired the story) and the ratings of the fan text—so one can imagine a Sex and the City story that only deals with shopping and a Harry Potter story depicting carnal relations between the characters. Fan authors and critics have developed their own vocabulary for talking about these works (see handout) with many of the terms reflecting fan-oriented genres or describing the complex set of negotiations between the fan text and the source text. Some of the terms reflect the desire of fans to be as respectful as possible to the original work, such as the distinction between stories that are "in" or "out of character"; others, such as "alternate universe," signal works which break more dramatically with the original material. Fans generally scorn "Mary Sue or Barry Sue" stories where authors insert idealized conceptions of themselves into the fictional world often at the expense of the more established characters. Fans often use Author's Notes (AN) to explain the relationship of their stories to the source text. Even the concept of the original work as a "source" tells us a great deal about the ways fans think about the creative process. In her book, The Democratic Genre, poet Sheenagh Pugh discusses what motivates large numbers of women to write fan fiction. She suggests that some fans want "more from" the original source material because they felt something was missing, and some write because they want "more of" the original source material, because the story raises expectations that are not fulfilled. Pugh discusses stories as addressing two related questions—"what if" and "what else." Pugh's discussion moves between fans writing about science fiction or cop shows and fans writing about literary classics (for example, Jane Austen's novels). She focuses mostly on the work of amateur writers, yet she also acknowledges that a growing number of professional writers are turning their lenses on canonical literature and extending it in new directions. She opens her book, for example, with a discussion of John Reed's Snowball's Chance (2001), which rewrites George Orwell's Animal Farm. Other examples might include Isabel Allende's Zorro (based on a pulp magazine character), Gregory Maguire's Wicked (The Wizard of Oz), Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea (Jane Eyre), Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (Hamlet), J.M. Coetzee's Foe (Robinson Crusoe), Linda Berdoll's Mr. Darcy Takes a Wife (Pride and Prejudice), Nicholas Meyer's Seven Percent Solution (Sherlock Holmes), Alice Randall's The Wind Done Gone (Gone With the Wind), and Sena Jeter Naslund's Abba's Wife (Moby-Dick).

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While such works are sometimes described as post-modern, such practices run throughout the history of literature, and, as Abigail Derecho notes, this mode of creative reworking of canonical literature has been a way some female authors have asserted their perspectives in their culture.\textsuperscript{66} If anything, modern conceptions of copyright have slowed down a long-standing tendency of people to retell existing stories. Fan fiction revitalizes that creative impulse, operating in a world where many different people might retell the same story and in the process, expand the range of potential interpretations of the source material. Here, for example, a veteran fan fiction writer speaks about what motivates her to read and write such stories:

> What I love about fandom is the freedom we have allowed ourselves to create and recreate our characters over and over again. Fanfic rarely sits still. It's like a living, evolving thing, taking on its own life, one story building on another, each writer's reality bouncing off another's and maybe even melding together to form a whole new creation. A lot of people would argue that we're not creative because we build on someone else's universe rather than coming up with our own. However, I find that fandom can be extremely creative because we have the ability to keep changing our characters and giving them new life over and over. We can kill and resurrect them as often as we like. We can change their personalities and how they react to situations. We can take a character and make him charming and sweet or coldblooded and cruel. We can give them an infinite, always-changing life rather than the single life of their original creation. We have given ourselves license to do whatever we want and it's very liberating.... If a story moves or amuses us, we share it; if it bothers us, we write a sequel; if it disturbs us, we may even re-write it! We also continually recreate the characters to fit our images of them or to explore a new idea. We have the power and that's a very strong siren. If we want to explore an issue or see a particular scenario, all we have to do is sit down and write it.\textsuperscript{67}

This statement beautifully captures our participatory model of reading: the text as written is the starting point; readers may be motivated to respond to the work by creating new works. Literary works do not simply enlighten us; they also inspire us or perhaps more accurately, they provoke us.

To understand this provocation, we might consider two closely related concepts—negative capability and the encyclopedic impulse. The term, "negative capability," emerges from the writings of the poet John Keats, who first coined the term by explaining: "I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact & reason." We use the term to refer to any meaningful gap or detail in a text which allows readers to draw on their own imaginations.\textsuperscript{68} Consider, for example, a horror film where the monster remains in the shadows and thus becomes more terrifying as we flesh it out in our minds. The less the filmmaker shows us, the more we are able to imagine something that terrifies us. The minute the monster comes into the light, we are stuck with whatever the filmmaker thought we would find fearsome. As we have seen above, all art works are incomplete and depend on the "beholder's share" to put together the pieces, to read across the gutter, to fill in the gaps, choose your own metaphor. Some artists purposefully create nooks and corners for their more creative readers to play in, while other authors want to close things down as much as possible. We might read J.K. Rowling (\textit{Harry Potter}) as an author who is torn between these impulses—sometimes wanting to encourage fan readers and writers to take


the story in their own directions, increasingly attempting to close off speculations that differ with her own interpretations through verbal response or continued annotation of her fiction, even through legal action.

Closely related to this artistic practice of negative capability is an encyclopedic impulse on the part of readers who want to know all of the details of a favorite story. For a work to become a cult movie, Umberto Eco suggests, it must come to us as a "completely furnished world so that its fans can quote characters and episodes as if they were aspects of the private sectarian world." The work must contain a rich array of information that can be drilled, practiced, and mastered by devoted fans. Yet, the text will ultimately fall short of the fan's hunger to know everything, and so part of what motivates fans to write their own stories is this desire to get "more from" and "more of" a work that has given them pleasure. Negative capability describes this phenomenon from the point of view of the producer, who wants to create opportunities for audience engagement and participation; the encyclopedic impulse describes it from the point of view of the consumer who demands coherence and continuity and who is motivated towards further speculation and expression.

Many literary critics would describe a great book as one where everything is there for a reason and nothing is missing that wouldn't detract from our experience as a whole. Director's cuts and DVD extras suggest otherwise. At least in the worlds of film and television, many things remain on the cutting room floor—some of what gets left out improves the work by its absence, some of it might have made a meaningful contribution, and some may radically transform our understanding of the whole. DVDs often label these segments "deleted scenes," inviting us to take pleasure in seeing behind the scenes in the production process and second guessing the creative decisions of the producers. For example, the DVD for Aliens includes a scene where Ripley reacts to the news that her daughter has grown up and died during the time she has been in suspended animation in space; the scene can provide a different understanding of what motivates her intense efforts to protect and rescue the young girl Newt. A scene added for the Director's Cut of Bladerunner, linking Deckard's dream of a unicorn (in the original cut) with a shot of an origami unicorn left outside his dorm (in the director's cut) implies that he may be a replicant, because people from the Corporation know the contents of his dreams.

We might contrast this focus on deleted scenes with a genre of fan fiction called "missing scenes." Here, fans add to the fiction, offering their own versions of what might have happened during scenes absent from the original source. These scenes may be as simple as showing how other characters reacted to the news of the events shown in a particular episode; they might show us what happened before or after a key turning point, allowing us a deeper understandings of the character's motivations or the impact of their actions. So, the term, "deleted scenes," holds onto the idea that authors get to determine what belongs in their story, while the term, "missing scenes," allows fans to decide for themselves what parts of the story they want to see. Both can represent creative contributions to our understanding of the work, but they have different kinds of status because our culture tends to value the original author over their readers. Many fans will distinguish between canon (elements contributed by the author) and fanon (speculations proposed by fans), with the first providing an agreed upon baseline in their conversation while the second is taken as apocrypha.

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Reading *Moby-Dick* As a Fan

Fans are searching for unrealized potentials in the story that might provide a springboard for their own creative activities. We might identify at least five basic elements in a text that can inspire fan interventions. Learning to read as a fan often involves learning to find such openings for speculation and creative extension.  

Kernels—pieces of information introduced into a narrative to hint at a larger world but not fully developed within the story itself. Kernels typically pull us away from the core plot line and introduce other possible stories to explore. For example, consider the meeting between the captains of the *Pequod* and the *Rachel* which occurs near the end of Melville's novel (Chapter cxxviii). Captain Gardiner of the *Rachel* is searching for a missing boat, lost the night before, which has his own son aboard. He solicits Ahab's help in the search. In doing so, he tells Ahab, "For you too have a boy, Captain Ahab - though but a child, and nestling safely at home now -- a child of your old age too." The detail is added here to show how much Ahab is turning his back on all that is human in himself. Yet, this one phrase contains the seeds of an entire story of how and why Ahab had a son at such a late age, what kind of father Ahab might have been, and so forth. We may also wonder how Gardiner knows about Ahab's son, since the book describes him as a "stranger." The John Huston film version goes so far as to suggest that Gardiner was also from New Bedford, which opens up the possibility that the two men knew each other in the past. What might their previous relationship have looked like? Were they boyhood friends or bitter rivals? Were their wives sisters or friends? Did the two sons know each other? Might Ahab's wife have baby-sat for Gardiner's son? Soon, we have the seeds of a new story about the relationship between these two men.

Holes—plot elements which readers perceive as missing from the narrative but central to their understanding of its characters. Holes typically impact the primary plot. In some cases, "holes" simply reflect the different priorities for writers and readers who may have different motives and interests. For example, consider the story of how Ahab lost his leg. In many ways, this story is central to the trajectory of the novel but we receive only fragmentary bits of information about what actually happened and why this event has had such a transformative impact on Ahab, while other seamen we meet have adjusted more fully to the losses of life and limb that are to be expected in pursuing such a dangerous profession. What assumptions do you make as a reader about who Ahab was—already a captain, a young crewmember on board some one else's ship—or where he was when this incident occurred? In fandom, one could imagine a large number of different stories emerging to explain what happened, and each version might reflect a different interpretation of Ahab's character and motives.

Contradictions—Two or more elements in the narrative which, intentionally or unintentionally, suggest alternative possibilities for the characters. Are the characters in *Moby-Dick* doomed from the start, as might be suggested by the prophecies of Elijah and Gabriel? Does this suggest some model of fate or divine retribution, as might be implied by Father Mapple's sermon about Jonah? Or might we see the characters as exerting a greater control over what happens to them, having the chance to make a choice which might alter the course of events, as is implied by some of the exchanges between Ahab and Starbuck? Different writers could construct different stories from the plot of *Moby-Dick* depending on how they responded to this core philosophical question about the nature of free will. And we can imagine several stories emerging around the mysterious figure of Elijah. Is Elijah someone gifted with extraordinary visions? Is he a mad man? Does he have a history with Ahab that might allow him insights into the Captain's character and thus allow Elijah to anticipate what choices Ahab is likely to make?

Silences—Elements that were systematically excluded from the narrative with ideological consequences. As Wyn Kelley notes in "Where Are the Women?," many writers have complained about the absence of female characters in *Moby-Dick*, suggesting that we can not fully understand the world of men.

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without also understanding the experience of women. Some works—such as the John Huston version—call attention to the place of women in whaling culture, if only incidentally. Melville hints at this culture only through a few scattered references to the families that Ahab and Starbuck left behind. These references can provide the starting point for a different story, as occurs in Sena Jeter Naslund's novel, *Ahab's Wife*; we might imagine another version of the story where Ahab was female, as occurs in *Moby-Dick: Then and Now*, or we might use the plot of *Moby-Dick* as the starting point for creating a totally different story set in another kind of world where women can play the same kind of roles as the men play in Melville's novel, as occurs in the *Battlestar Galactica* episode, "Scar."

**Potentials—Projections about what might have happened to the characters that extend beyond the borders of the narrative.** Many readers finish a novel and find themselves wanting to speculate about "what happens next." As Pugh writes, "Whenever a canon closes, someone somewhere will mourn it enough to reopen it....Even though we may feel that the canonical ending is 'right' artistically, if we liked the story we may still not be ready for it to end, for the characters and milieu that have become real to us to be folded up and put back in the puppeteer's box." For example, we might well wonder what kind of person Ishmael becomes after being rescued. Melville offers us some hints—even if only because Ishmael chooses to tell this story in the first place. Yet, in our world, someone like Ishmael might be wracked with "survivor guilt," feeling responsibility for the deaths of his friends, or wondering why he alone made it through alive. How might Ishmael have dealt with these powerful emotions? How might these events have changed him from the character we see at the start of the novel? Might we imagine some future romance helping to "comfort" and "nurse" him through his "hurts"?

The examples above suggest several additional aspects of reading a narrative as a fan. First, fans generally focus on characters and their relationships as their point of entry. Clearly, Melville's novel, with its digressions and fragmentation, raises many more character issues than it resolves—for example, the richly drawn but only occasionally explored friendship between Ishmael and Queequeg or for that matter, the comradeship between Queequeg, Daggoo, and Tashtego, or the relationship between Ahab and Fedallah or... Second, fans look for worlds that are richer, have greater potentials, than can be used up within a single story. They are particularly interested in back story—the untold narratives that explain how the characters became the people we encounter within a particular story. Many contemporary television series reward this fan interest by parceling out bits and fragments of back story over time. Here, again, part of the pleasure of reading *Moby-Dick* is absorbing all of the incidental details about the ship, its crew, the other ships, and life in New Bedford, and through chapters such as "The Town-Ho's Story," Melville tells us again and again that this world is full of stories beyond the ones the novel tells.

For the most part, fan reading practices are directed at popular television series or films, but there's no reason why they can't be applied to works from the literary canon. Teachers might find that students respond well to being asked to look at *Moby-Dick* and other literary texts through this lens. Here's a process you might follow:

- Encourage students to find examples of Kernels, Holes, Contradictions, Silences, and Potentials.
- Ask them to consider what purposes these elements play within the original novel.
- Invite them to speculate on how these elements might provide the basis for additional stories.
- Tell them to find other passages that shed insight into the core character relationships here.
- Discuss what elements would need to be in place for a new story to feel like it belongs in this fictional world.
- Have students write stories reflecting their insights.
- Share stories between students, especially those working with the same elements, so that they have a sense of the very different ways writers might build upon these same starting points.

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley took a very similar approach with the students in the Rhode Island correctional program, asking them to select a character and explore the novel from their point of view. Students were encouraged to develop a character sketch which described what kind of person the character would be if he or she were
alive today. (See Ricardo Pitts-Wiley, "Reading Moby Dick as a Creative Artist"). These character sketches were then combined to construct a plot in which these characters met at the Spouter Inn and set out on a quest together. Such an approach might tap the techniques of fantasy role play games to sketch out the events of the story, and then the student writers might contribute to a shared narrative of the experience. Such techniques led to the writing of the *Wild Cards* series of fantasy novels, for example.\(^71\)

The "Transformative Work" of Fan Culture

Fan stories are not simply "extensions" or "continuations" of the original series. They are constructing arguments through new stories rather than critical essays. Just as a literary essay uses text to respond to text, fan fiction uses fiction to respond to fiction. You will find all kinds of argumentation about interpretation woven through most fan-produced stories. A good fan story references key events or bits of dialogue as evidence to support its particular interpretation of the characters’ motives and actions. Secondary details are deployed to suggest the story might have plausibly occurred in the fictional world depicted in the original. There are certainly bad stories that don't dig deeply into the characters or which fall back on fairly banal interpretations, but good fan fiction emerges from a deep respect for the original work and reflects a desire to explore some aspect of it that has sparked the fan writer's imagination or curiosity. Fan fiction is speculative, but it is also interpretative. And more than this, it is creative. The fan writer wants to create a new story that is entertaining in its own right and to offer it to perhaps the most demanding audience you could imagine—other readers who are deeply invested experts about the original work. The new story may operate within any number of genres that have emerged from the realm of fan fiction and which represent shared ways of reading and rewriting favorite works.

Novelist Michael Chabon is a fan of the creative works of fans and has written an essay discussing the value of fan fiction in relation to Sherlock Holmes. He argues:

> All enduring popular literature has this open-ended quality, and extends this invitation to the reader to continue, on his or her own, with the adventure....It creates a sense of an infinite horizon of play, an endless game board; it spawns, without trying, a thousand sequels, diagrams, and web sites....Through parody and pastiche, allusion and homage, retelling and reimagining the stories that were told before us and that we have come of age loving—amateurs—we proceed, seeking out the blank places in the map that our favorite writers, in their greatness and negligence, have left for us, hoping to pass on to our own readers—should we be lucky enough to find any—some of the pleasure that we ourselves have taken in the stuff we love: to get in on the game. All novels are sequels; influence is bliss.\(^72\)

Not all writers would agree that writing fan fiction is a logical or legitimate extension of critical interpretation. Fantasy writer Robin Hobb has raised sharp concerns about how fan fiction impacts her own creative process:

> "Every fan fiction I've read to date, based on my world or any other writer's world, has focused on changing the writer's careful work to suit the foible of the fan writer. Romances are invented, gender identities changed, fetishes indulged and endings are altered. It's not flattery. To me, it is the fan fiction writer saying, 'Look, the original author really screwed up the story, so I'm going to fix it. Here is how it should have gone.'...The tragic ending is re-written, or a dead character is brought back to life, for example. The intent of the author is ignored. A writer puts a great deal of thought into what goes into the story and what doesn't. If a particular scene doesn't happen 'on stage' before

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the reader's eyes, there is probably a reason for it. If something is left nebulous, it is because the author intends for it to be nebulous. To use an analogy, we look at the Mona Lisa and wonder. Each of us draws his own conclusions about her elusive smile. We don't draw eyebrows on her to make her look surprised, or put a balloon caption over her head. Yet much fan fiction does just that. Fan fiction closes up the space that I have engineered into the story, and the reader is told what he must think rather than being allowed to observe the characters and draw his own conclusions."73

By contrast, consider this statement from the introduction to an important anthology of scholarly essays about fan fiction:

"Work in progress is a term used in the fan fiction world to describe a piece of fiction still in the process of being written but not yet completed....The appeal of works in progress lies in part in the ways fans engage with an open text; it invites responses, permits shared authorship, and enjoins a sense of community....Every fan story is in this sense a work in progress, even when the story has been completed....In most cases, the resulting story is part collaboration and part response to not only the source text, but also the cultural context within and outside the fannish community in which it is produced....When the story is finally complete and published, likely online but perhaps in print, the work in progress among the creators shifts to the work in progress among the readers....The source texts in many cases are serial, in progress, and constantly changing, as are the fan stories set in these universes."74

These writers see both the fan text and the source text as open-ended, subject to revision and expansion, providing raw material for further speculation and creative elaboration. This idea of the text as open and collaborative contrasts sharply with Hobb's notion that writers should have the last word on what happens to their characters and that any addition by fans is to be understood as signaling a flaw or error in the original work. Fans would find Hobb's suggestion that their stories tell the reader "what he must think rather than being allowed to observe the characters and draw his own conclusions" particularly baffling: since no fan story is regarded as in any way definitive or as precluding other acts of authorship. To the contrary, fans take great pleasure in reading and writing a broad range of different interpretations of the shared characters, and fan authors often may construct a number of mutually contradictory conceptions of the characters or situations even within their own body of work.

Some fans have adopted the legal term, Transformative Works, to defend their creative practices against such challenges. A transformative use is one that, in the words of the U.S. Supreme Court, "adds something new, with a further purpose or different character, altering the [source] with new expression, meaning, or message." _Moby-Dick: Then And Now_ is a transformative work in so far as it revises and updates Melville's novel. _Moby-Dick_ is a transformative work in so far as it takes sources, such as the story of "Jonah", as raw materials for its own storytelling. And fan fiction is transformative in so far as it transforms the critical insights we are discussing here into the starting point for new stories, developing new conceptualizations of the characters or expanding the narrative in new directions.

The Organization of Transformative Works (http://transformativeworks.org/) has emerged within fandom as an advocacy group defending the rights of readers to remix and rewrite the contents of their culture for the purposes of sharing their own interpretations and speculations. Here's part of the mission statement of the Organization for Transformative Works:

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We value transformative fanworks and the innovative communities from which they have arisen, including media, real person fiction, anime, comics, music and vidding.

We value our identity as a predominantly female community with a rich history of creativity and commentary.

We value our volunteer-based infrastructure and the fannish gift economy that recognizes and celebrates worth in myriad and diverse activities.

We value making fannish activities as accessible as possible to all those who wish to participate.

We value infinite diversity in infinite combinations. We value all fans engaged in transformative work: fans of any race, gender, culture, sexual identity, or ability. We value the unhindered cross-pollination and exchange of fannish ideas and cultures while seeking to avoid the homogenization or centralization of fandom.

The Organization for Transformative Works has been developing a series of short documentaries in partnership with Project NML that are designed to introduce students to the basics of another fan remix practice—vidding. Vids are music videos which combine footage from the source text with music—sometimes original, more often also appropriated—for the purposes of critical commentary or artistic expression. The tradition of vids goes back to the early 1970s when fan artist Kandy Fong first began to set slides of scenes from Star Trek to music. Through the years, this production practice has spread across many fan communities and in the process, fans have refined their craft and embraced new technologies that support their production and distribution. In these videos, vidders talk about this kind of transformative work in their own words, explaining what motivates them to re-edit the footage, discussing what they see as good or bad practices, and sharing some examples of their work. The videos excerpted in these documentary segments reflect some current popular fandoms, including Harry Potter, Doctor Who, Battlestar Galactica, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and Will and Grace. As with fan fiction, these vids start with a recognition of an unrealized potential in the original source material. While the fan fiction writer can create new situations for the characters, the vidder works with found footage, trying to use the images to illustrate a particular interpretation of the original text. The footage may be removed from context or shift perspectives to suggest alternative ways of understanding the characters. Some vids are playful and parodic, encouraging us to laugh with and sometimes at the original (see the Will and Grace video sampled here which has fun with the relationship between the music and the character's gestures); many others strive for a more serious and sometimes melodramatic tone. The Organization for Transformative Works is seeking to document the history of this amateur media production practice and to provide a shared portal through which fan video makers can share their work. These videos are an extension of their effort to educate the public about their fan practices. The Organization for Transformative Works is mounting a legal and political defense of fan culture, one which acknowledges fan culture as a site of creative expression, as an alternative way of thinking about how stories get produced and circulated, and as a space which supports diversity and experimentation.

There has also emerged a strong set of arguments about the educational benefits of the fan community as a space of informal learning, especially for younger fans. James Paul Gee has described the fan community, alongside other sites of informal learning, as "affinity spaces," asking why people learn more, participate more actively, engage more deeply with popular culture than they do with the content of their textbooks. Affinity spaces offer powerful opportunities for learning, Gee argues, because they are sustained by common endeavors that bridge across differences in age, class, race, gender, and educational level, because people can

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participate in various ways according to their skills and motives, because they depend on peer-to-peer teaching with each participant constantly motivated to acquire new knowledge or refine his or her existing skills, and because they allow each participant to feel like an expert while tapping the expertise of others. More and more literacy experts are recognizing that enacting, reciting, and appropriating elements from preexisting stories is a valuable and organic part of the process by which children develop cultural literacy. Educators like to talk about 'scaffolding,' the ways that a good pedagogical process works in a step-by-step fashion, encouraging kids to try out new skills that build on those they have already mastered, providing support for these new steps until the learner feels sufficient confidence to take them on her own. In the classroom, scaffolding is provided by the teacher. In a participatory culture, the entire community takes on some responsibility for helping newbies find their way. Many young writers began composing stories on their own as a spontaneous response to popular culture. For these young writers, the next step was the discovery of fan fiction on the internet, which provided alternative models for what it meant to be an author. At first, they might only read stories, but the fan community provides many incitements for readers to cross that last threshold into composing and submitting their stories. And once a fan submits, the feedback he or she receives inspires further and improved writing. Many fan fiction website provide a process of mentoring, known as "beta-reading," through which more experienced writers critique and support emerging contributors. Fans learn both from the feedback they receive and from the process of sharing feedback with others. As a consequence, fans become better readers and writers. As educational researcher Rebecca Black argues, the fan community can often be more tolerant of linguistic errors than traditional classroom teachers and more helpful in enabling learners to identify what they are actually trying to say because reader and writer operate within the same frame of reference, sharing a deep emotional investment in the content being explored.78 The fan community promotes a broader range of different literary forms—not simply fan fiction but various modes of commentary—than the exemplars available to students in the classroom, and often they showcase realistic next steps for the learner's development rather than showing only professional writing that is far removed from anything most students will be able to produce.

Much of what works here works because fan fiction exists outside of school, and the people who participate do so out of deep personal and social motivations, rather than because they are assigned to write a story for a grade. Yet, this does not mean that educators can not learn a good deal from fan fiction, and this Teachers' Strategy Guide has been informed by our own research on fan cultures as sites for reading and creating stories. We believe strongly that there is a value in learning to engage with works of fiction creatively as well as critically, that the process of creating a transformative work often motivates much closer reading of the original text, that it is empowering for young people to think of themselves as authors and thus to find their own expressive voices, especially in the context of today's participatory culture. Pitts-Wiley's work with the incarcerated youth shows a similar understanding of how we might motivate reading by encouraging young people to look at established literary texts as the springboard for their own creative expression.

Ricardo Pitts-Wiley on Alba

Q: Let's talk a little bit about Alba and Ahab. So what's behind the decision to make Ahab into a woman for the modern version?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: Two things, one it was important to not leave women out of the story, period. For me that was kind of simple. I just got to figure out a way to get more women involved in this great thing that's happening. The other thing is by making Alba a woman I didn't run the risk of it turning into a pissing contest between two male elements. If you had a male Alba, so to speak, a male counterpart of Ahab you would have been comparing two like things, whereas by making Alba a girl, that never was an issue we had to deal with. Ahab got to be independent as Ahab, and she could be independent as who she was. They just had similar causes but they didn't have to be alike in any other way. They didn't have to look alike, they didn't

78 Rebecca Black, Adolescents and Online Fan Fiction (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).
have to walk alike, they didn't have to talk alike, they didn't have to do anything alike, other than want revenge.

Very often in Old World classic literature there aren't great women's roles. I mean there are some great women's roles in Shakespeare but not a whole lot of them, there's a whole lot of plays with two girls, two women in it, three. In the same way that you have to make a decision that I'm going to be multicultural in my casting, you also have to make the decision in advance, "I'm going to be multi-gender also. I'm just going to find a way. I'm not gonna force a way, but I'm gonna find a way". Sometimes when you're looking for that way, you also leave the door open for women to come in and say, "Here's the answer." You can't assume that you know how to do it automatically. All you can say is, "I have the motivation to do it. Help me." That was an easy one, though. That was an easy one.

Elijah was a harder one, because how do I get women on the boat, on Ahab's boat? Okay, not much choices there, I could have cast a woman as Father Mapple and I still would have had to call her Father Mapple though. There was no Mr. Elijah so I could just make it. So you look for these things and sometimes they come to you, sometimes you get lucky and find them.

Q: So what kind of qualities does Alba show as a leader? Why are The One following her?

Mr. Pitts-Wiley: She's decisive, she's courageous, she's smart, she has an intense love for the community, she's extraordinarily loyal to the crew, and I think she's easy to follow because she's going somewhere. I think those are all qualities that good leaders have. You know, there's an old saying, "The first violinist was always the first violinist." I think in some cases the great leader was always the great leader, and their followers were people who recognized it early and didn't fight with it, didn't resist it. I like to think that my Alba is such a person. We play for a lot of young groups and never once in the follow up discussions has a young person asked that question, "How come she's the leader?" They just kind of roll with it, even though in reality a female leader of a crew like that would be a rarity, a rarity.

Moby-Dick: Then and Now as a Transformative Work

From the start, Ricardo Pitts-Wiley was interested not simply in retelling the events of Melville's novel but also transforming them into a vehicle which could speak to contemporary social concerns, whether the debates about politics and the war proposed by Rick Benjamin or the consequences of the war on drugs, a concern which drew Pitts-Wiley to this book and which was reaffirmed by his experiences working with the incarcerated youth. Pitts-Wiley urged the young people in the Rhode Island correctional institution to take ownership over Melville's book, to enter the community of writers, by not simply reading but actively rewriting Moby-Dick. As he recounts in "Reading Moby-Dick as a Creative Artist," the young people were encouraged to read the novel through the lens of a particular character, and they were asked to construct a character sketch suggesting who that person would be if he were alive today. The young people produced passionate and imaginative stories in which Ahab's family is slaughtered by his Mob boss when he starts to pose a threat to his authority, where Elijah foretells 9/11 but is unable to get anyone to believe him, or where Queequeg becomes a pimp, a "dealer in human flesh."

Through this pedagogical process, Pitts-Wiley demands that his students "respect" Melville, seeking to understand his original goals and meanings, but he also wants them to feel "entitled" to make their own contributions to their culture, transforming the story to speak to their own lived experiences and to share their own truths about the events that led them to prison. Pitts-Wiley sees the book as a resource which can help young people work through their own issues and arrive at a deeper understanding of their plight. While Pitts-Wiley demands that they understand what is being said and cut to the heart of the story and the language, he also insists that the book should operate within a living culture and must be made to speak to our present realities. Pitts-Wiley has not only produced a powerful play which encourages viewers to re-imagine and reconceptualize Melville's novel; he has also developed a powerful pedagogical approach based
on both close reading and active revision of classic literary works. Throughout this Teachers' Strategy Guide, we have identified a range of different ways that he has transformed Melville's original novel:

- He changes the setting of the story from the 19th-century whaling culture to 21st-century drugs and gang culture.
- He changes the ending of the play, allowing The One to pull away from a direct confrontation with WhiteThing, and thus allowing them a way to escape the fate of the Pequod crew.
- He changes the language of the story, adapting for the contemporary storyline the slang and swagger of hip-hop culture.
- He responds to the lack of female characters in Melville's novels, inserting strong women—especially Alba but also Tasha, Soccer Mom, and Elijah.
- He changes the construction of race from Melville's multicultural society where each character is made to embody a different race or ethnic group to a mixed-race society where the members of The One interact with little regard to racial difference.

In the process of developing a believable background for his characters, he also creates his own kernels which might provide openings for your students to write themselves into this narrative. Consider, for example, Pip's speech at the end of the play: "You can't have my brother back Daj. You can't have your sister back Tasha. No uncles or fathers are coming back. The cemetery is full of people just like you who followed leaders just like you Sis into the eye of the hurricane. Looking for revenge. While WhiteThing or BlackThing or Red or YellowThing gets ready to deal with the next crew calling themselves The One."

Here, we get a glimpse of a number of different stories which are not told directly in the play but place its events in a larger context. Engaging with this work as a creative artist might encourage us to develop stories where we work out what Pip meant to Daj, or what happened to Tasha's sisters, or how each of them has been impacted across multiple generations by the history of drugs and violence. For that matter, this speech may reveal a different kind of silence at work in Pitts-Wiley's play since it is the first time that he has linked the whiteness of WhiteThing to race rather than to the white powder which is the source of its power. And so, the references to "BlackThing or Red or YellowThing" invites us to think about how—or if—race makes a difference in this story. The play itself does not need to tell these other stories; it can simply exploit the power of negative capability to get us to think about its events in a larger context, while leaving gaps to be filled through our speculations, our fantasies, or our own original stories.
We’ve already seen that there is a close relationship between the tradition of stories dealing with ships at sea and more recent works of science fiction dealing with ships in deep space. Just as Star Trek: The Wrath of Khan (and subsequent films in the Star Trek series) were influenced by Moby-Dick, more recent science fiction series, such as Battlestar Galactica, have also built upon elements from Melville’s novels. In this case, the episode, "Scar," offers yet another way that we might address the concern about the absence of women in the original novel: in this case, telling another story about heroic women (Kira Starbuck; Louanne "Kat" Katraine; Sharon "Boomer" Valerii) that explores many of the same themes and issues as Melville’s novel. Rather than a world where men go off to sea and leave women behind, Battlestar depicts a world where men and women are equally capable of being warriors and where Starbuck and Katraine are the "heavy hitters" whose leadership and rivalry have a dramatic impact on the rest of the crew. The male characters here become extensions of the women's emotional conflict—representing sounding boards for their thinking process (whether as lovers or as sparring partners in the gym) or as vulnerable victims who are significant primarily because of the ways their losses prod the women into action.

Ironically, the one thing which might explicitly acknowledge Moby-Dick here—the character name, Starbuck—has been part of the series from the beginning and can be traced back to an earlier version of this series (from the 1970s) where the name was chosen to evoke Luke Skywalker in the then recently released film, Star Wars. The connection between "Scar" and Moby-Dick is implicit rather than explicit, and many viewers may not recognize the parallels. Yet, reading the two stories side by side reveals certain subtexts in Melville’s novels. There are strong parallels to be drawn between "Scar," the Cylon Raider Ship, and Moby Dick. The Galactica crew has become obsessed with "Scar" as a malignant and destructive force which has taken the lives of friends who have gone up against it. The ship’s hull is ripped and dented, much as Moby Dick’s side is punctured with harpoons and tangled with ropes. Boomer compares "Scar" to "a trained animal with basic consciousess and a survival instinct," yet Starbuck and the others have clearly personified this ship, ascribing to it motives that may be well beyond its mental capacity. Both Starbuck and Kat, the two women at the center of this drama, have announced that they will kill Scar at any and all costs, and the episode centers on the emotional consequences of their ongoing struggle against this "monster." Whenever anyone returns from battle, the first question is "was it Scar?" as much as Ahab shouts out to every ship he passes. Boomer, a Cylon who has sided with the humans, offers us a glimpse into Scar’s emotional experience, much as Melville uses a shift in point of view to invite us to understand whaling from the creature’s perspective: "He’s filled with rage...Scar hates you every bit as much as you hate him." The bet between the two women functions not unlike the gold coin in the mast, offering a reward to whoever is the first to bring down Scar.

Melville has described Starbuck and Flask as men with radically different tempers and thus with differences in styles of leadership. We might contrast these two descriptions from "Knights and Squires":

Starbuck was no crusader after perils; in him courage was not a sentiment; but a thing simply useful to him, and always at hand upon all mortally practical occasions. Besides, he thought, perhaps, that in this business of whaling, courage was one of the great staple outfits of the ship, like her beef and her bread, and not to be foolishly wasted. Wherefore he had no fancy for lowering for whales after sundown; nor for persisting in fighting a fish that too much persisted in fighting him. For, thought Starbuck, I am here in this critical ocean to kill whales for my living, and not to be killed by them for theirs; and that hundreds of men had been so killed Starbuck well knew. What doom was his own father’s? Where, in the bottomless deeps, could he find the torn limbs of his brother? With memories like these in him, and, moreover, given to a certain superstitiousness, as has been said; the courage of this Starbuck which could, nevertheless, still flourish, must indeed have been extreme. But it was not in reasonable nature that a man so organized, and with such terrible experiences and remembrances...
as he had; it was not in nature that these things should fail in latently engendering an element in him, which, under suitable circumstances, would break out from its confinement, and burn all his courage up. And brave as he might be, it was that sort of bravery chiefly, visible in some intrepid men, which, while generally abiding firm in the conflict with seas, or winds, or whales, or any of the ordinary irrational horrors of the world, yet cannot withstand those more terrific, because more spiritual terrors, which sometimes menace you from the concentrating brow of an enraged and mighty man.

"The third mate was Flask, a native of Tisbury, in Martha's Vineyard. A short, stout, ruddy young fellow, very pugnacious concerning whales, who somehow seemed to think that the great Leviathans had personally and hereditarily affronted him; and therefore it was a sort of point of honor with him, to destroy them whenever encountered. So utterly lost was he to all sense of reverence for the many marvels of their majestic bulk and mystic ways; and so dead to anything like an apprehension of any possible danger from encountering them; that in his poor opinion, the wondrous whale was but a species of magnified mouse, or at least water-rat, requiring only a little circumvention and some small application of time and trouble in order to kill and boil. This ignorant, unconscious fearlessness of his made him a little waggish in the matter of whales; he followed these fish for the fun of it; and a three years' voyage round Cape Horn was only a jolly joke that lasted that length of time.

Melville never suggests any rivalry or tension between the mates, yet it is hard to believe, given these fundamentally different tempers, that these characters did not sometimes rub each other the wrong way or find themselves in disagreement about the best response to a situation. The Battlestar Galactica episode shows us what happens when such disagreements are allowed to fester.

Much as "Midnight, Forecastle" shows us what the men do in their off hours, the episode shows us all of the ways that the men and women on board this starship seek escape from the emotional consequences of their work through drinking, gambling, drugs, fistfights, and sex. Much as the mates drill their men on the routines of whaling, these officers spend their downtime going over with their "nuggets" how they should respond to risky situations they will encounter in the field. And much as Melville shows us the human costs of whaling through various characters with wounds and scars, there is an ongoing discussion here of the many men and women who have died doing battle with "Scar." We see a memorial the crew has constructed in their honor where photographs and other memorabilia are pinned to the wall; we listen to several conversations as those who survive try to remember those who have given their lives; and in a final speech, we learn that Starbuck, who has claimed not to be able to remember the men's names, can recite all of them. (Regular viewers of the series will recognize many of the names as those of minor characters who have been killed during other episodes, often without this same focus on the emotional impact of their deaths.) Much as Melville's Starbuck must spend time worrying about the wife and family he has left behind, Starbuck is haunted by a man she has left behind, who may or may not still be alive, and the episode shares with us her memory of their last parting.
**Key Terms and Concepts Concerning Fan Fiction**

*by Madeline Klink (NML Research Assistant and Fan Fiction Expert)*

**A/A**, also **action/adventure**—Describes a story in which there are fight scenes and often elements of the heroic journey.

**Alternate Universe**, also **Alternative Universe** or **AU**—A story in which facts deliberately deviate from the way they occur in canon. A fic in which Harry was sorted into Slytherin, or in which the Potters didn't die on Halloween, or where Neville, not Harry, was the "Boy Who Lived" would be defined as an AU.

**A/N**—An Author's Note. This is where the author inserts some commentary about the fic, including thanks to friends and beta readers. Sometimes these are scattered throughout the fic, sometimes they are simply a note at the top or bottom of the file. Scattering them through the fic is probably not a good idea.

**Angst**—Used to describe a story which contains insecurity, misery, or other depressing elements, but usually doesn't include character death or intense violence or physical suffering.

**Archive/archivist**—An archive is a website dedicated to hosting fics. Some archives are exclusive, and others are open to all. An archivist is the person responsible for the website, and generally the person who chooses which fics end up in the archive.

**Badfic**—Usually an intentionally awful fic usually written to prove a point (i.e., that badfics often get far more reviews than good fics, or to make fun of common clichés). Can also mean a fic not intended to be bad, but is anyway.

**Beta reader**—Came from the idea that the first person to read a fanfic is the writer -- the "alpha" reader -- and the next person to read it is the "beta" reader. Also see "editor."

**Beta version**—A rough draft of a story.

**BNF**—Big Name Fan. Any well-known fandom personality. These vary depending on whom you're talking to, and what part of the fandom you're in at that moment.

**Canon**—Facts established in the original texts (whether those are movies or books or...). Often, when a series has resulted in spin-offs in other media or extensive interviews with the cast and crew, some of the spin-offs and interview facts will not be considered canon. One example: the remade *Battlestar Galactica* has a novelization and a comic book spinoff, as well as many interviews with the cast. However, only facts gleaned from the TV show itself are considered "canon" in its fandom. Canon's counterpart is "fanon."

**Challenge**—Fic challenges generally present topics or pairings for participants to attempt writing a fic for. ("I had to write a fic about Sirius Black and Bertie Botts' Every Flavour Beans for the "Candy is Dandy" challenge!")

**Cookie**—A teaser for a longer fic, or a fic that is short on its own.

**Darkfic**—Fanfic that is darker than angst, usually involving violence, twisted characters, and the most horrible of horrible things.

**Delurk**—To stop lurking on a list, group, thread or forum, and post a fic, an introduction, or a review.
Disclaimer—A note put on the front of a fanfic stating that the characters in the fanfiction are not owned by them, giving a copyright notice, and asking any person who might attempt to sue him or her to contact him or her through e-mail first.

Drabble—A fanfic that is either up to 100 words, or exactly 100 words.

Fanart—Artwork based on either canon or fanon.

Fandom—The term meaning all activity by fans. The Harry Potter fandom, for instance, includes all ships, gen, het, and slash; it includes fanfiction but is not necessarily limited to it. A convention, for instance, could be of interest to the entire fandom.

Fanfiction (fanfic, fan fic, fan fiction, fic)—Fiction written by fans about a TV show, game, book, or movie.

Fanon—Concepts, ideas or beliefs about the series that have never been explicitly stated in the original work, but have become so commonly used in the fandom that they are taken as fact. For example, in Battlestar Galactica 2003 fandom, it is fanon that there is a betting pool among the pilots as to when Lee Adama and Kara Thrace will finally get together.

Fandom — The community of people who are fans of a series or show, often specifically referring to, the community of people who read and write fanfiction.

Femslash (femmeslash)—Lesbian pairings.

Fen—Plural of fan, because somehow “fans” wasn't good enough.

Filk—A musical parody. Unlike songfics, filks don't add narrative around lyrics to a song; they actually are the song, but with edited lyrics.

Fluff—Fanfic that is mostly sweet, sometimes humorous, and bereft of significant on-page character development.

Gary Stu/Mary Sue—a character who is the author in disguise. Normally a Gary Stu/Mary Sue is the hero of the story, all the characters fall in love with him/her, and s/he is outrageously beautiful and powerful. This is a much reviled type of character.

Gen—A story without any particular pairing. A story that is more focused on plots or individual characters than romantic entanglements.

IC/OOC—In Character/Out Of Character. This is generally a compliment or an criticism. ("Your Draco is really IC!" "Do you think it's too OOC for Harry to burst into tears in the Great Hall?" "Oh, her Snape is always OOC!") If something is OOC it has strayed too far from the canon and is thus unbelievable. For your character to in IC means that it is staying true to the qualities s/he showed in the books.

Lurker—Someone who reads a mailing list, or a livejournal, or in a chatroom, or anything that involves participation, without participating.

OC—Acronym for "original character" in a fanfic, that is, a character that does not appear in canon.

OTP—"One True Pairing," that is, one's favorite pairing of characters.
**Plot bunny**—An idea that sprouts out of something, sometimes when inappropriate, sometimes just in overabundance. I have heard it used quite positively as well ("I was stalled by a plot bunny!" "I love you, you plot bunnied me!"). Fanfic-speak for "I just got an idea!"

**PWP**—Stands for "Plot? What plot?" PWP fics are pure smut with little or no plot or character development.

**Rec**—A recommendation (usually of a fanfic). Can also be a verb: "I rec'd a bunch of fanfics on my LiveJournal."

**Remix**—A common fanfic challenge is to "remix" another author's fanfiction by rewriting it in a different style or from a different perspective. The resulting fanfiction is then usually titled to reflect both the original work and the tenor of the remix.

**Round robin**—A fic project where one story is passed from author to author until it is completed. Typically, each author writes one chapter.

**RPF**—Real Person Fiction. Fics written not about fictional characters, but about real people (members of bands, actors, and so forth). FictionAlley allows real people in fics, but does not allow real, living people to be depicted as engaged in any illegal activities, any R-rated activities (http://www.fictionalley.org/ratings.html) or to perpetrate any violence. In other words, you could have J.K. Rowling see Peter Pettigrew's attack in 1981, but you couldn't have her throw a rock at Sirius Black afterwards.

**'Ship, also ship**—One of the weirder terms in any fandom. The term "ship" originated in *X-Files* fandom, where it was used to describe fanfic about a romantic relationship*ship* between Mulder and Scully. Soon, people who supported this "ship" were calling themselves "shippers." These terms found their way to *Harry Potter* fandom, so someone who thought Ron & Hermione were meant for each other would identify as a "R/H shipper." But it didn't stop there—people began forming clubs, using a metaphor of ships moving on the sea. Each has gained a strange and wonderful name, so the Ginny/Tom is called "The HMS Gin n’ Tonic" and the Harry/Hermione club is called "The HMS Pumpkin Pie." Other fandoms have used this model to a greater or lesser extent.

**Slash**—Fanfic including a homosexual relationship, either male or female. Slash fanfic doesn't necessarily include graphic sex or have homosexuality as the focus of the story.

**Smut**—Fanfic including graphic sex.

**Songfic**—A fanfiction which includes the lyrics to a song, quoted at intervals throughout the fic.

**WAFF**—Fluff, especially the most saccharine feel-good kind. Stands for "warm and fuzzy feeling."

**WIP**—Also known as "work in progress." It's a story that is not yet completed, which may mean that the author is still writing it, or still having it beta-read.