

Moby Dick

We all know that *Moby Dick* is a big book. But not just for its 135 chapters: this is really a big novel because it raises all sorts of issues greater than its plot, including, but not restricted to:

- Philosophical (the natures and varieties of religion; the role in life of fate, free will and chance)
- Scientific (whales, other creatures of the sea, and the nature of whaling)
- Social (questions of race and social hierarchy)
- Psychological (obsession or monomania, the nature of love and friendship)
- Historical (the place of whaling in America's history, American society))
- Allusive (Biblical and Shakespearean allusions)
- Literary (style, literary forms, symbolism, motifs, structure, narrative style, sentence structure.)

And if this novel is, as I insist, a contender for the title of “The Great American Novel,” two other questions arise: “What makes a novel great?” and “What makes a novel American?” But wait! Please don't take what you've just read to miss the fact that *Moby Dick* is a book full of humor. This class will take a light-hearted approach to the novel, while also plumbing its serious depths.

Edition of the book: This will be a discussion-based class, and we will be constantly turning to passages that we want to talk about. With a book of this size, it is really difficult to find those passages when everyone has a different edition. I would ask everyone **please** to get the same edition: I have found the Barnes and Noble edition to be the cheapest available, at \$11.95 (it also has a good glossary of nautical terms, and the print is not too small). This is easily available through the local B & N bookstore, or online.

Before the first class: Please take some time actually to savor slowly the very first parts of the novel, “Etymology” and “Extracts.” Enjoy the oddity. Then read the glorious first chapter, “Loomings.”

Leader: Betty Lies has taught people of every age from elementary to adults and loves it all.

Fridays: 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon., 8 weeks: March 2 through April 27 (no class on 3/30)

Location: Monument Hall