

# Moby Dick: The Legend of the White Whale

*Adapted by Trey Clarkson*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

It's 1851 and a young man walks into a Nantucket pub inquiring about how to board a vessel and go to sea on an adventure. What he finds is not the inspiring advice he bargained for. Ishmael, a hardened veteran of the sea, tells a cautionary tale of foreboding and woe about his own first-time voyage on the infamous *Pequod* under the maniacal leadership of Captain Ahab. As the story unfolds, the young man plays the role of Ishmael and is fully immersed in the retelling of Melville's classic tale. Will the young man listen to the warning or will he choose to venture out into the sea?

## **ORIGINAL PRODUCTION**

Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School Theatre Company  
Barry Robinson Theatre and Fine Arts Center  
Virginia Beach, Virginia, October 24th, 2008.

Directed by Trey Clarkson. Original cast: Jimmy Lee, Katherine Parker, Nicole Bitzan, Patience Cantrell, Philip Palting, Jon Belka, Jon Bay, Hunter Scott, Angelica Palting, John Schares, Katie Murphy, Jamie Silver, Kimmie Cenzone, Megan Grassman, Moira McAvoy, Henry Boone and Cynthia Newby.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
(11 characters, 4-6 ensemble.)

**YOUNG MAN:** A young man looking for berth on a sailing vessel.

**ISHMAEL:** The lone survivor of the tragedy of the *Pequod*.

**QUEEQUEG:** An islander skilled with a harpoon. He befriends Ishmael and is chosen by Starbuck.

**CAPTAIN AHAB:** The vengeful captain of the *Pequod*, seeking to slay the white whale that took his leg.

**STARBUCK:** The chief mate of the *Pequod* and the lone voice of reason.

**STUBB:** The second mate of the *Pequod*, fond of smoking a pipe.

**TASHTEGO:** A Native American harpooner, chosen by Stubb.

**FLASK:** The third mate of the *Pequod*, fond of drinking.

**DAGGOO:** A South African harpooner, chosen by Flask.

**FEDALLAH:** A dark, mysterious figure that Ahab sneaks onboard as his personal harpooner.

**PIP:** A young cabin boy.

**ENSEMBLE:** Various characters including sailors, bar patrons, congregation, crewmen. Minor lines for Barkeep, Peter, Captain Peleg, Father Maple, Elijah, and Elijah crewman.

**CASTING**

This play is designed to be an artistic and a deconstructed look at the classic tale with a focus on its cautionary theme. Gender-blind casting is strongly suggested for the characters of Ahab, Starbuck, Tashtego, Fedallah, and the Ensemble.

**SOUND DESIGN**

Most sounds are created by the actors. A large drum is suggested to help establish mood in scene changes as well as the confrontation with Moby Dick. A nautical bell is also suggested.

### **SET AND PROP NOTES**

This production is designed to be able to travel and therefore is based on minimalism and constructivism. Seven to nine benches can be used to create the various elements including the side of the ship, the bar top, the bed for QueeQueg, the pulpit for Father Maple, and the rowing boats. The use of pantomime is utilized instead of actual oars. A long, white, continuous piece of fabric is suggested. It should be attached to four vertical standing boards so that the four “u” shaped boards serve as a backdrop that suggests a sail. This fabric can also be utilized as a shadow scrim. It will also become the white whale itself in a stylized movement scene at the end of the play, so handles on the boards are helpful. A simple beam with a nautical bell can also be used. Sticks can be representative of harpoons.

### **COSTUME DESIGN**

Black and white costumes add to the dramatic effect. Pea coats, white turtlenecks, black pants, and black shoes are suggested. Each character needs variation and individuality within the color pallet. Ahab’s leg can be achieved with a white stocking sock and a rolled pant leg along with the stylized movement of the actor playing Ahab.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many of the lines of the play are taken directly from Melville’s famous novel and the extra source material that Melville provided. Special thanks to Sara Hornick, Holly Smith, and Brant Powell for their insights into the script. Thanks to Lauren Dunlap for creating the original art design. Thanks to Leon Ingulsrud of the New York Saratoga International Theatre Institute whose work on a large scale production of Moby Dick for Old Dominion University was an inspiration for me to create this piece.

**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: A Nantucket bar scene. BARKEEP tends bar. SAILORS are drunkenly involved in song and shenanigans. ISHMAEL, hidden in the crowd, stands with his back to the action.)*

**SAILORS:** *(Singing. Some verses are all together and others are individual as each sailor tries to outdo the other.)*

What will we do with the drunken sailor?  
What will we do with the drunken sailor?  
What will we do with the drunken sailor?  
Early in the morning?

Way hay and up she rises  
Way hay and up she rises  
Way hay and up she rises  
Early in the morning

Shave his belly with a rusty razor  
Put him in the longboat until he's sober  
Stick him in the scupper with a hosepipe on him  
Early in the morning

Way hay and up she rises  
Way hay and up she rises  
Way hay and up she rises  
Early in the morning

Put him in the bed with the captain's daughter  
Hoist him aboard with a running bowline  
Put him in the brig until he's sober  
Put him in a boat and row him over  
Hoist him up to the topsail yardarm  
Way hay and up she rises  
Early in the morning

That's what we do with a drunken sailor  
That's what we do with a drunken sailor  
That's what we do with a drunken sailor  
Early in the morning

**YOUNG MAN:** *(Interrupting.)* Gentlemen! I would like to see the watery part of the world... Do you know of a good vessel for a first-timer leaving Nantucket within the week?

*(The YOUNG MAN is now the subject of entertainment.)*

**SAILORS:** *(Lines split-up.)*

Lookin' for work as a cabin boy are you?  
I've caught fish bigger than him!  
Hell, I've used bait bigger than him...  
You wouldn't last a day, lubber...  
Another dreamer lookin' to find himself...  
Why would a welp like you want to go to sea?

**YOUNG MAN:** *(Passionate and unshaken by the teasing.)* I must down to the sea, to the lonely sea and the sky, and all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by.

*(SAILORS erupt into laughter and jeering.)*

**SAILORS:** *(Lines split-up. It is a battle of wits.)*

There are certain things I hate, boy.

Spiders, ghosts, the income tax, gout, an umbrella for three—

All true...

But the thing that I hate the most  
Is a thing they call the sea.

Pour some saltwater over the floor—  
Ugly, I'm sure you'll allow it to be:  
Suppose it extended a mile or more,  
That's very like the sea.

Beat a dog till it howls outright—  
Cruel, but all very well for a spree:  
Suppose that he did so day and night,  
That would be like the sea.

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