**Moby Dick Reading Packet (3)**

**Chapters 36 and 37**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>blasphemous</td>
<td>irreverent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chalice</td>
<td>cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>galls</td>
<td>irritates, frets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imprecations</td>
<td>curses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inarticulate</td>
<td>hard to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inscrutable</td>
<td>unable to be figured out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plumbs</td>
<td>a true vertical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position</td>
<td>alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turbid</td>
<td>muddy, cloudy</td>
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1. What reward does Ahab offer to the man who spots the white whale, and how does he advertise it?

2. What is Starbuck’s opinion of Ahab’s quest? Explain.

3. Do you believe Moby-Dick’s action merits Ahab’s seeking revenge? Is the whale really a figure of “inscrutable malice”? Why or why not?

4. Ahab offers the philosophical observation that the whale is a wall “shoved near to me,” and “there’s naught beyond.” What might this mean?

5. What elements of drama, not usually present in a novel, appear in Chapter 37?

**Chapters 38 and 39**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>insufferable</td>
<td>unable to be tolerated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leering</td>
<td>giving a dirty look</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predestinated</td>
<td>meant to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whelped</td>
<td>born</td>
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1. Starbuck says, in objection to Ahab’s logic, “…aye, he would be a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below!” What does he mean, in your own words?

2. What response does Stubb propose the men take during the Pequod’s troubles?
Chapters 40 and 41

corporeal – of the flesh
malignity – evil
monomaniac – obsessed with one thing

morbid – connected to death
pagoda – a Japanese temple
satiety – complete satisfaction

1. Notice that the sailors who come together in chapter forty come from all over the world. Does their meeting seem mostly friendly, or mostly hostile? What do you think Melville is trying to say about what happens when cultures meet?

2. The Tahitian, the “savage”, speaks in dialogue of more complex prose than do any of the sailors from the “enlightened” nations. Why is this contrast important?

3. What, according to Ishmael, is Moby-Dick’s most telling trait?

4. What traits do the theories of Olassen, Povelson, and Cuvier all assign to the sperm whale?

5. How do the seamen explain the fact that the White Whale appears to be “ubiquitous” – to be in two places simultaneously?

6. According to Ishmael’s description, Ahab was stabbing Moby Dick with a six-inch knife, when the whale cut the leg as if it were “a blade of grass in the field.” Why is this image powerful? What does it tell us about man and nature?

7. What, according to Ishmael, gave Ahab the will to recover?

8. How do the goals of the ship owners and Ahab differ?

9. Find an exact quote in the text that answers the following question: Why are each of the officers of the Pequod unable to stand in Ahab’s way?
Chapters 42 and 43

abhorrent – hated
ascriptions – credits
benignity – harmlessness
cordon – to encircle
hallowed – holy
magniloquent – lofty

1. Why does the color of the whale have such a profound effect on Ishmael? Think about the contrast between what we usually associate with the color white, and the opposite associations that are implied in Moby Dick.

2. A key element of suspense is brought up at the end of Chapter 43: One crew member hears “two or three sleepers” under the hatch. Who do you think they might be?

3. According to Ishmael, why did the crew take to the hunt with such ferocity?

Chapters 44 and 45

cypher – a figure; brand
effaced – removed
gregarious – outgoing, friendly
irascible – easily angered
ratification – approval
somnambulistic – in sleepwalking state
transom – a crossbeam
undeviating – unchanging

1. In Chapter 44, the narration changes: Melville has become more omniscient in the narration. More of Ahab’s inner monologue is revealed. Note that when Ahab wakes, he has “his own bloody nails in his palms.” He is obviously in turmoil while he sleeps. Why do you think Melville changed his narrative style here?

2. How does Ishmael compare Ahab to Prometheus at the end of Chapter 44?

3. What, in order, are the items that Ishmael testifies to in his Affidavit?

4. How does the point of view change in Chapter 45?
Chapters 46 and 47

chivalric – heroic perquisites – gratuities; profits
sepulchre – a tomb

1. Why does Ishmael consider it wise for Ahab to keep the crewmen busy hunting other whales when they could have hunted Moby-Dick exclusively?

2. What part does the wooden sword play in Ishmael’s analogy?

3. Consider: Ahab is described as “dark Ahab”, and Moby Dick is white. Is it possible that Melville is asking us to question Ahab’s interpretation of Moby Dick as the ultimate evil? Explain your thinking.

Chapters 48 and 49


1. What about Fedallah and his crew’s appearance and actions immediately raise suspicion aboard the ship?

2. Who throws the first harpoon of the voyage, and what happens?

3. How are Starbuck and his crew finally found by the Pequod?

Chapters 50 and 51

1. Why does the crew accept the strangers so readily after their initial appearance?

2. Locate an instance of alliteration in Melville’s description of whalers.

3. What relationship does Fedallah maintain with the crew as a whole?

4. Who first spots the night spout? How does Melville use alliteration in the description of the waves, the night, and the spout?

5. What about the way Ahab is sleeping causes Starbuck to shiver?

Chapter 52

capriciously – making sudden, unpredictable changes
erudition – education, knowledge
forbidding – human weakness
ominous – threatening

ostensible – apparent
dull
prodigious – huge
tyro – a newcomer; amateur
unostentatious – without showiness

1. What happens when the captain of the Goney is asked about the white whale?

2. Ahab says, “This is the Pequod, bound ’round the world!” What problem does Ishmael point out in sailing full-circle?