

## **Paper XVII. Unit 1**

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#### **1. Introduction**

##### 1.1 Objectives

This Unit provides a biographical sketch of Nathaniel Hawthorne first. Then a list of his major works, their themes and outlines. It also includes a detailed discussion about the styles and techniques used by him. The themes, symbols and the structure of *The Scarlet Letter* are discussed

next, followed by the list of major as well as minor characters. This unit concludes with a discussion about Hawthorne's contribution to American literature and a set of questions. Lastly there is a list of further readings of Hawthorne to gain knowledge about the critical aspects of the novel.

## 1.2 Biographical Sketch of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nathaniel Hawthorne, (1804- 1864), short-story writer and novelist, was one of the foremost nineteenth century writers in America. He was born on 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1804, in Salem Massachusetts as Nathaniel Hathorne. He later added a 'w' to avoid association with one of his ancestors, Judge Hathorne. His Puritan ancestors were the first settlers in the state and included two prominent judges. By Hawthorne's time the family had retired from public eminence.

Hawthorne was a quiet, meditative child and a good student. In 1821 he attended Bowdoin College in Maine. His classmates were generally of the view that he was aloof. He graduated in 1825 with a class that included the poet H.W Longfellow and Franklin Pierce, who later became the President of United States.

Hawthorne was an active writer and published at his own expense a novel called *Fanshawe* in 1828. He quickly felt it was not up to his quality and attempted to remove all of the copies. For the next several years he created many impressive works such as, *An Old Woman's Tale*, *The Hollow of the Three Hills*, *My Kinsman*, *Major Molineux*, *Roger Malvin's Burial*, and *Young Goodman Brown*. In 1937, Hawthorne published his first commercial book, *Twice Told Tales* with little financial gain.

In 1839 he obtained a position as an inspector at the Boston Custom House, weighing and measuring the goods shipped in and out of the harbour. Distracted from doing any literary work, Hawthorne was glad to be relieved of his job when the administration changed in 1844. Hawthorne moved to Lenox, Massachusetts, where he began writing *The House of Seven Gables*. In 1851, he wrote *The Snow Image and Other Twice Told Tales*. From Lennox, Hawthorne moved to Newport, where he wrote *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), a book that satirized the pretensions and delusions of social reformers.

Hawthorne was appointed as consul to England from 1853 to 1857. He was dissatisfied with the job and moved to Italy where he wrote his last complete novel, *The Marble Faun*, (1857). He took ill in the spring of 1864, and died at Plymouth in New Hampshire on May 19, 1864. He was buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Massachusetts.

## 1.3 Major works of Hawthorne

- *Novels*

i. *The House of Seven Gables*

ii. *The Blithedale Romance*

iii. *The Marble Faun*

iv. *Fanshawe*

- *Short Stories Collection*

- i. Twice-Told Tales
- ii. Tanglewood Tales: A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys
- iii. Mosses from an Old Hill Manse

- *Selected Short Stories*

- i. Rappaccini's Daughter
- ii. The Birth-Mark and Other Stories
- iii. The Minister's Black Veil
- iv. Young Goodman Brown

#### 1.4 Themes and Outlines of Hawthorne's novels

For his novels, Hawthorne drew on Puritan orthodox thought to examine the individual and collective consciousness under the pressure of suffering. He sought to dramatize themes such as sin, guilt and punishment. His writing is marked by introspective depth and an urge to get inside the character he created. He attempts to give a genuine picture of the times by presenting a realistic setting and real puritanical philosophies.

Hawthorne frequently focussed more on a character's inner struggle or a central theme than on heated encounters between characters. One of Hawthorne's recurring themes throughout his works was his own view on human nature. He explored an interesting human psychology through his exploration of the dark side of human consciousness. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne introduced a profound comment on the breakdown of human relationships in the society of the seventeenth century. His theme that human nature is full of wickedness is also evident in *Young Goodman Brown* when the title character faced great difficulty in resisting temptation.

Hawthorne's modern themes were modelled by his own religious beliefs. For example, he raised questions concerning the morality and necessity of Hester's exile in *The Scarlet Letter*. One reason for these inquiries was Hawthorne's disbelief in heaven, hell, angels or devils since modern science was undermining the Bible. He also employed allegory as a way of presenting themes. He achieved it by placing characters in a situation outside of the ordinary. He explored the themes of penance for sins and cowardliness when Dimmesdale struggled with himself to make his sin public.

In conclusion, Hawthorne's literary style did indeed contain elements such as description and dialogue which seemed out of place when compared to modern twentieth century literature. However, his style was typical of the literary style of the time.

#### 1.5 Styles and Techniques used by Hawthorne

Hawthorne shaped his own literary style. Although his writing style was viewed as outdated when compared to modern literature, he conveyed modern themes of psychology and human nature

through the use of allegory and symbolism. During the time when he wrote, printing technology was not advanced enough to reproduce photographs in books. Therefore Hawthorne frequently wrote lengthy visual descriptions. One example of such description is in *The Scarlet Letter* when Hawthorne intricately describes the prison door and its surroundings. Another aspect of his writing which was exclusive to his time was the use of formal dialogue which remained consistent from character to character. He adopted this technique partly from a British writer, Sir Walcott Scott, whose works were popular in the United States and Great Britain. Sir Scott used an unknown, mysterious character whose main function is to add mystery and complicate the plot. We find that character in Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter*. The caricature of minor characters, somebody exaggerated or distorted was found in Sir Scott's works, we find a likeness of that in Mistress Hibbins in *The Scarlet Letter*. Sir Scott used elaborately detailed scenes planned on a huge scale, we find that in the initial scaffold scene as well as in the third scaffold scene where Dimmesdale confesses his sin, of *The Scarlet Letter*.

Although his dialogue was overly formal, it was an accurate tool to describe human emotion. He also uses some of the techniques used in theatres, for example, the action in his novels are seen as if they were being enacted on stage. The audience's point of view is of much importance, also the reflections of some characters are perceived as asides. He was also fascinated by some of the many devices of the Gothic novel. He used them immediately in the initial chapter, when describing the scarlet letter, and the effects it provokes on him; later with the description of Hester's dark prison, Bellingham's elaborately decorated mansion and with the sinister descriptions of the Puritan ministers. Besides, we find some Gothic Elements in Chillingworth's appearance.

### **Chapter wise Summary and Analysis:**

#### Summary

Hawthorne begins *The Scarlet Letter* with a long introductory essay that generally functions as a preface but, more specifically, accomplishes four significant goals: outlines autobiographical information about the author, describes the conflict between the artistic impulse and the commercial environment, defines the romance novel (which Hawthorne is credited with refining and mastering), and authenticates the basis of the novel by explaining that he had discovered in the Salem Custom House the faded scarlet A and the parchment sheets that contained the historical manuscript on which the novel is based.

#### Analysis

The preface sets the atmosphere of the story and connects the present with the past. Hawthorne's description of the Salem port of the 1800s is directly related to the past history of the area. The Puritans who first settled in Massachusetts in the 1600s founded a colony that concentrated on God's teachings and their mission to live by His word. But this philosophy was eventually swallowed up by the commercialism and financial interests of the 1700s.

The clashing of the past and present is further explored in the character of the old General. The old General's heroic qualities include a distinguished name, perseverance, integrity, compassion, and moral inner strength. He is "the soul and spirit of New England hardihood." Now put out to pasture, he sometimes presides over the Custom House run by corrupt public servants, who skip work to

sleep, allow or overlook smuggling, and are supervised by an inspector with "no power of thought, nor depth of feeling, no troublesome sensibilities," who is honest enough but without a spiritual compass.

A further connection to the past is his discussion of his ancestors. Hawthorne has ambivalent feelings about their role in his life. In his autobiographical sketch, Hawthorne describes his ancestors as "dim and dusky," "grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steel crowned," "bitter persecutors" whose "better deeds" will be diminished by their bad ones. There can be little doubt of Hawthorne's disdain for the stern morality and rigidity of the Puritans, and he imagines his predecessors' disdainful view of him: unsuccessful in their eyes, worthless and disgraceful. "A writer of story books!" But even as he disagrees with his ancestor's viewpoint, he also feels an instinctual connection to them and, more importantly, a "sense of place" in Salem. Their blood remains in his veins, but their intolerance and lack of humanity becomes the subject of his novel.

This ambivalence in his thoughts about his ancestors and his hometown is paralleled by his struggle with the need to exercise his artistic talent and the reality of supporting a family. Hawthorne wrote to his sister Elizabeth in 1820, "No man can be a Poet and a Bookkeeper at the same time." Hawthorne's references to Emerson, Thoreau, Channing, and other romantic authors describe an intellectual life he longs to regain. His job at the Custom House stifles his creativity and imagination. The scarlet letter touches his soul (he actually feels heat radiate from it), and while "the reader may smile," Hawthorne feels a tugging that haunts him like his ancestors.

In this preface, Hawthorne also shares his definition of the romance novel as he attempts to imagine Hester Prynne's story beyond Pue's manuscript account. A careful reading of this section explains the author's use of light (*chiaroscuro*) and setting as romance techniques in developing his themes. Hawthorne explains that, in a certain light and time and place, objects ". . . seem to lose their actual substance, and become things of intellect." He asserts that, at the right time with the right scene before him, the romance writer can "dream strange things and make them look like truth."

Finally, the preface serves as means of authenticating the novel by explaining that Hawthorne had discovered in the Salem Custom House the faded scarlet *A* and the parchment sheets that contained the historical manuscript on which the novel is based. However, we know of no serious, scholarly work that suggests Hawthorne was ever actually in possession of the letter or the manuscript. This technique, typical of the narrative conventions of his time, serves as a way of giving his story an air of historic truth. Furthermore, Hawthorne, in his story, "Endicott and the Red Cross," published nine years before he took his Custom House position, described the incident of a woman who, like Hester Prynne, was forced to wear a letter *A* on her breast.

## Summary

In this first chapter, Hawthorne sets the scene of the novel — Boston of the seventeenth century. It is June, and a throng of drably dressed Puritans stands before a weather-beaten wooden prison. In front of the prison stands an unsightly plot of weeds, and beside it grows a wild rosebush, which seems out of place in this scene dominated by dark colors.

## Analysis

In this chapter, Hawthorne sets the mood for the "tale of human frailty and sorrow" that is to follow. His first paragraph introduces the reader to what some might want to consider a (or *the*) major character of the work: the Puritan society. What happens to each of the major characters — Hester, Pearl, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth — results from the collective ethics, morals, psyche, and unwavering sternness and rigidity of the individual Puritans, whom Hawthorne introduces figuratively in this chapter and literally and individually in the next.

Dominating this chapter are the decay and ugliness of the physical setting, which symbolize the Puritan society and culture and foreshadow the gloom of the novel. The two landmarks mentioned, the prison and the cemetery, point not only to the "practical necessities" of the society, but also to the images of punishment and providence that dominate this culture and permeate the entire story.

The rosebush, its beauty a striking contrast to all that surrounds it — as later the beautifully embroidered scarlet A will be — is held out in part as an invitation to find "some sweet moral blossom" in the ensuing, tragic tale and in part as an image that "the deep heart of nature" (perhaps God) may look more kindly on the errant Hester and her child (the roses among the weeds) than do her Puritan neighbors. Throughout the work, the nature images contrast with the stark darkness of the Puritans and their systems. Hawthorne makes special note that this colony earlier set aside land for both a cemetery and a prison, a sign that all societies, regardless of their good intentions, eventually succumb to the realities of man's nature (sinful/punishment/prison) and destiny (mortal/death/cemetery). In those societies in which the church and state are the same, when man breaks the law, he also sins. From Adam and Eve on, man's inability to obey the rules of the society has been his downfall.

The Puritan society is symbolized in the first chapter by the plot of weeds growing so profusely in front of the prison. Nevertheless, nature also includes things of beauty, represented by the wild rosebush. The rosebush is a strong image developed by Hawthorne which, to the sophisticated reader, may sum up the whole work. First it is wild; that is, it is of nature, God given, or springing from the "footsteps of the sainted Anne Hutchinson." Second, according to the author, it is beautiful — offering "fragrant and fragile beauty to the prisoner" — in a field of "unsightly vegetation." Third, it is a "token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to" the prisoner entering the structure or the "condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom." Finally, it is a predominant image throughout the romance. Much the same sort of descriptive analyses that can be written about the rosebush could be ascribed to the scarlet letter itself or to little Pearl or, perhaps, even to the act of love that produced them both.

Finally, the author points toward many of the images that are significant to an understanding of the novel. In this instance, he names the chapter "The Prison Door." The reader needs to pay particular attention to the significance of the prison generally and the prison door specifically. The descriptive language in reference to the prison door — ". . . heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes" and the "rust on the ponderous iron-work . . . looked more antique than anything else in the New World" and, again, ". . . seemed never to have known a youthful era" — foreshadows and sets the tone for the tale that follows.

## Glossary

Cornhill part of Washington Street. Now part of City Hall Plaza.

Isaac Johnson a settler (1601-1630) who left land to Boston; he died shortly after the Puritans arrived. His land would be north of King's Chapel (1688), which can be visited today.

burdock any of several plants with large basal leaves and purple-flowered heads covered with hooked prickles.

pigweed any of several coarse weeds with dense, bristly clusters of small green flowers. Also called lamb's quarters.

apple-peru a plant that is part of the nightshade family; poisonous.

portal here, the prison door.

Anne Hutchinson a religious dissenter (1591-1643). In the 1630s she was excommunicated by the Puritans and exiled from Boston and moved to Rhode Island

## Summary

The Puritan women waiting outside the prison self-righteously and viciously discuss Hester Prynne and her sin. Hester, proud and beautiful, emerges from the prison. She wears an elaborately embroidered scarlet letter *A* — standing for "adultery" — on her breast, and she carries a three-month-old infant in her arms.

Hester is led through the unsympathetic crowd to the scaffold of the pillory. Standing alone on the scaffold as punishment for her adulterous behavior, she remembers her past life in England and on the European continent. Suddenly becoming aware of the stern faces looking up at her, Hester painfully realizes her present position of shame and punishment.

## Analysis

Although the reader actually meets only Hester and her infant daughter, Pearl, in this chapter, Hawthorne begins his characterization of all four of the novel's major characters. He describes Hester physically, and he tells about her background, illustrating her pride and shame. Then we see Pearl and hear her cry out when her mother fiercely clutches her at the end of the chapter. Although Pearl is one of the physical symbols of Hester's sin (the other is the scarlet *A*), she is much more than that. She is the product of an act of love — socially forbidden love as it may have been — but love still. This is why Pearl, as we later learn, is not amenable to social rules. She was conceived in an act that was intolerable in the Puritan code and society.

In addition to Hester and Pearl's appearance, we get our first glimpse of the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth, the novel's other two main characters. Although the irony of Dimmesdale's relationship to Hester is not yet apparent, his grief over his parishioner Hester is commented on by one of the women assembled near the prison who notes that Dimmesdale "takes it very grievously to heart that such a scandal should have come upon his congregation." And, although Roger Chillingworth is not yet named, we are given a rather full characterization of the man through Hester's recollections of him. He is the "misshapen scholar" who is Hester's legal husband.

Chapter 2 also contains a description of the Puritan society and reveals Hawthorne's critical attitude toward it. The smugly pious attitude of the women assembled in front of the prison who condemn Hester is frightening — especially when we hear them suggest that Hester should be scalded with a hot iron applied to her forehead to mark her as a "hussy," an immoral woman. Although this scene vividly dramatizes what Hawthorne found objectionable about early American Puritanism, he avoids over-generalizing here by including the comments of a good-hearted young wife to show that not all Puritan women were as bitter and pugnaciously pious as these "gossips." The young woman's soft remarks of sympathy for Hester's suffering contrast sharply with the comments of the majority of the women. It is important to note, however, that even this young mother has brought her child to witness the punishment, passing these morals and behaviors to the next generation.



When Hester appears with Pearl, she is in stark contrast to the gloom and the grim reality of the crowd. She has a natural grace and dignity and rejects the arm of the beadle, walking into the sunlight on her own. The most startling part of her appearance is the scarlet letter A on her dress. What is meant to be a badge of shame is elaborately decorated in threads of gold. It goes far beyond the standards of richness — sumptuary laws — decreed by the colony. Her extraordinary appearance defies the order of the governor and the ministers. The scarlet letter is "fantastically embroidered and illuminated" and takes "her out of the ordinary relations with humanity" and into a sphere all her own. The red of the letter, standing for adultery, reminds the reader of the rosebush and the letter that later appears in the sky. Its color, for now at least, is associated with her sin and will be strongly connected to Pearl throughout the novel.

Stylistically, the chapter employs a somewhat heavy historical narrative, occasionally interrupted by Hawthorne's comments. It also uses such symbols as the beadle, the scarlet letter A, and Pearl. In fact, many of the novel's themes become apparent by investigating the images and symbols represented in the characters, physical objects, and larger social issues. For example, the beadle, or town crier, who carries a sword and walks with a staff symbolic of religious — and therefore social — authority, is described as "grim and grisly." This description also characterizes , both the atmosphere in Chapter 2 and, more important, the society of which the beadle is a part. As the novel progresses, Pearl, the offspring of Hester's adulterous affair, becomes more strongly linked to the scarlet letter A that Hester wears on her clothing; likewise, both Pearl's and the A's symbolism are also more fully developed.

## Glossary

Physiognomies: facial features and expression, esp. as supposedly indicative of character

Antinomian: a believer in the Christian doctrine that faith alone, not obedience to the moral law, is necessary for salvation; to the Puritans, the Antinomian doctrine is heretical.

Heterodox: religious person who disagrees with church beliefs; unorthodox.

Petticoat and farthingale: underskirts and hoops beneath them.

The man-like Elizabeth Queen: Elizabeth I of England (1558-1603), characterized as having masculine qualities.

Gossip: a person who chatters or repeats idle talk and rumors

Beadle: a minor parish officer who keeps order in church.

Ignominy: shame and dishonor; infamy.

Rheumatic: flannel material worn to keep warm, especially to ease the pain of rheumatism in the joints.

An hour past meridian: 1:00 p.m.

Pillory stocks: where petty offenders were formerly locked and exposed to public scorn.

Papist: a Roman Catholic; the Puritans thought them to be heretics.

Spectral: of, having the nature of, or like a specter; phantom; ghostly; supernatural.

Phantasmagoric: dreamlike; fantastic.

Elizabethan ruff: an elaborate collar worn around the neck, consisting of tiny accordion pleats.

### Summary

Hester recognizes a small, rather deformed man standing on the outskirts of the crowd and clutches Pearl fiercely to her bosom. Meanwhile, the man, a stranger to Boston, recognizes Hester and is horror-struck.

Inquiring, the man learns of Hester's history, her crime (adultery), and her sentence: to stand on the scaffold for three hours and to wear the symbolic letter *A* for the rest of her life. The stranger also learns that Hester refuses to name the man with whom she had the sexual affair. This knowledge greatly upsets him, and he vows that Hester's unnamed partner "will be known! — he will be known! — he will be known!"

The Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale, visibly upset, pleads with Hester to name her accomplice. He tells her that she should name her partner in sin because perhaps the man doesn't have the courage to step forward even if he wants to. Yet despite Dimmesdale's passionate appeal, followed by harsher demands from the Reverend Mr. Wilson and from a stern voice in the crowd (presumably that of the deformed stranger), Hester steadfastly refuses to name the father of her child. After a long and tedious sermon by the Reverend Mr. Wilson, during which Hester tries ineffectively to quiet Pearl's crying, she is led back to prison.

### Analysis

The novel's other two principal characters now make their first physical appearance, and the tensions of the story begin to develop. In Chapter 4, the reader learns that the stranger who so terrifies Hester calls himself Roger Chillingworth, a pseudonym he has chosen for himself. In reality, he is Roger Prynne, the husband whom Hester fears meeting face to face. The other principal character is the young Reverend Dimmesdale, who pleads with Hester to name the father of her infant daughter; Dimmesdale is Pearl's father.

Hawthorne's portrayal of Chillingworth emphasizes his physical deformity. More important, Chillingworth's misshapen body reflects (or symbolizes) the evil in his soul, which builds as the novel progresses. In this chapter, Hawthorne provides hints of just how obsessed Chillingworth will become with punishing Dimmesdale. For example, when Chillingworth recognizes Hester standing alone on the scaffold, "a writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them . . ." Characteristic of Chillingworth, he internalizes "into the depths of his nature" this external convulsion, which will feed his appetite for revenge throughout the novel. The image of the snake is apt when we recall the serpent in the biblical Garden of Eden and the carnal knowledge that it represents. From this chapter forward, revenge and punishment for Dimmesdale will be Chillingworth's only consuming passion.

Dimmesdale's one-paragraph speech to Hester reveals more about his character than any description of his physical body and nervous habits that Hawthorne provides. Knowing that he was Hester's sexual partner and is Pearl's father, the speech that he gives is ripe with double meanings. On one level, he gives a public chastisement of Hester for not naming her lover; on another level, he makes a personal plea to her to name him as her lover and Pearl's father because he is too morally weak to do so himself. Ironically, what is initially intended to be a speech about Hester becomes more a commentary about his own sinful behavior.

In his speech, Dimmesdale asks Hester to recognize his "accountability" in addressing her, and he begs her to do what he cannot do himself. Publicly, he is her spiritual leader, and, as such, he is responsible for her moral behavior. Privately, however, he was her lover, and he shares the blame of the horrible situation that she is in. He then admonishes her, as her spiritual leader, to name her accomplice so that her soul might find peace on earth and, more important, so that she might better her chance for salvation after her death. When he then goes on to "charge" her with naming the transgressor, we understand that he is privately pleading with her to expose him publicly and thereby help ensure *his* salvation, for without public repentance salvation is not attainable.

The dichotomy between Dimmesdale's public speech and personal meaning is most evident in the phrase "believe me." This phrase comes directly following his plea that Hester not take into consideration any feelings she might still have for him. It also follows acknowledgment — privately to himself, but through public speech — that it would be better for him to step down "from a high place" and publicly stand beside her on the scaffold. Ultimately, his official, public duty and his private, personal intention are one and the same: to admonish Hester to expose her lover's — his own — immorality because he is too morally weak to do so himself.

## Glossary

Daniel: a prophet from the Old Testament.

Governor Bellingham (1592-1672): the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Halberds: combination battle-axes and spears used in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Skull-cap: a light, closefitting, brimless cap, usually worn indoors.

## Summary

Back in her prison cell, Hester is in a state of nervous frenzy, and Pearl writhes in painful convulsions. That evening, when Roger Chillingworth enters Hester's prison cell, she fears his intentions, but he gives Pearl a draught of medicine that eases the child's pain almost immediately, and she falls asleep. After he persuades Hester to drink a sedative to calm her frayed nerves, the two sit and talk intimately and sympathetically, each of them accepting a measure of blame for Hester's adulterous affair.

Chillingworth, the injured husband, seeks no revenge against Hester, but he is determined to discover the father of Pearl. Although this unidentified man doesn't wear a scarlet A on his clothes as Hester does, Chillingworth vows that he will "read it on his heart." He then makes Hester promise not to

reveal his identity. Hester takes an oath to keep Chillingworth's identity a secret, although she expresses the fear that her vow of silence may prove the ruin of her soul.

### Analysis

Unlike the previous chapter, Hawthorne does not summarize or discuss the actions of his characters, nor does he tell the readers what to think. Instead, he puts Hester and Chillingworth together and lets the reader learn about their attitudes and their relationship to each other through their dialogue. By juxtaposing heavily prosaic chapters, like Chapter 3, with ones dominated by the characters' dialogue, Hawthorne creates a pattern in the novel that heightens the dramatic content of the dialogic chapters.

Chapter 4 is especially important to understanding Chillingworth. Hawthorne gives a view of what he has been as well as what he is to become. Throughout the novel, he is referred to as a scholar, a man most interested in studying — reading about — human behavior. Unfortunately, however, Chillingworth hints that in his pursuit of scholarship, he has failed both Hester and himself. He admits to her, "I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay." We can initially sympathize with this lonely scholar who has been robbed of his wife, but we also can see the element of his future self-destruction in his grim determination to discover the man who has offended him. In fact, as Hester and Chillingworth continue their conversation, we see the development of Chillingworth as one of the novel's symbols of evil.

Of Hester, we learn that she has never pretended to love her husband but that she deeply loves the man whom Chillingworth has vowed to punish. Ironically, it is Hester's concern for Dimmesdale, more than her sense of obligation to her marriage that persuades her to promise never to reveal that Chillingworth is her husband. This promise will make both Hester and Dimmesdale suffer greatly later in the book.

### Glossary

Indian sagamores: chiefs or subchiefs in the Abnakis culture.

Stripes: [Archaic] welts on the skin caused by whipping.

Alchemy: the ancient system of chemistry and philosophy having the aim of changing base metals into gold.

Simples: [Archaic] medicines from herbs or plants.

Leech: [Archaic] a doctor. In Hawthorne's time, blood-sucking leeches were used to effect a cure by removing blood.

Lethe: the river of forgetfulness, flowing through Hades, whose water produces loss of memory in those who drink of it.

Nepenthe: a drug supposed by the ancient Greeks to cause forgetfulness of sorrow.

Paracelsus (1493-1541): The most famous medieval alchemist; he was Swiss.

Bale-fire: an outdoor fire; bonfire; here, a beacon fire.

Black Man: the devil who "haunts the forest."

## Summary

Her term of imprisonment over, Hester is now free to go anywhere in the world, yet she does not leave Boston; instead, she chooses to move into a small, seaside cottage on the outskirts of town. She supports herself and Pearl through her skill as a seamstress. Her work is in great demand for clothing worn at official ceremonies and among the fashionable women of the town — for every occasion except a wedding.

Despite the popularity of her sewing, however, Hester is a social outcast. The target of vicious abuse by the community, she endures the abuse patiently. Ironically, she begins to believe that the scarlet *A* allows her to sense sinful and immoral feelings in other people.

## Analysis

Chapter 5 serves the purposes of filling in background information about Hester and Pearl and beginning the development of Hester and the scarlet as two of the major symbols of the romance. By positioning Hester's cottage between the town and the wilderness, physically isolated from the community, the author confirms and builds the image of her that was portrayed in the first scaffold scene — that of an outcast of society being punished for her sin/crime and as a product of nature. Society views her ". . . as the figure, the body, the reality of sin."

Despite Hester's apparent humility and her refusal to strike back at the community, she resents and inwardly rebels against the viciousness of her Puritan persecutors. She becomes a living symbol of sin to the townspeople, who view her not as an individual but as the embodiment of evil in the world. Twice in this chapter, Hawthorne alludes to the community's using Hester's errant behavior as a testament of immorality. For moralists, she represents woman's frailty and sinful passion, and when she attends church, she is often the subject of the preacher's sermon.

Banished by society to live her life forever as an outcast, Hester's skill in needlework is nevertheless in great demand. Hawthorne derisively condemns Boston's Puritan citizens throughout the novel, but here in Chapter 5 his criticism is especially sharp. The very community members most appalled by Hester's past conduct favor her sewing skills, but they deem their demand for her work almost as charity, as if they are doing *her* the favor in having her sew garments for them. Their small-minded and contemptuous attitudes are best exemplified in their refusal to allow Hester to sew garments for weddings, as if she would contaminate the sacredness of marriage were she to do so.

The irony between the townspeople's condemnation of Hester and her providing garments for them is even greater when we learn that Hester is not overly proud of her work. Although Hester has what Hawthorne terms "a taste for the gorgeously beautiful," she rejects ornamentation as a sin. We must remember that Hester, no matter how much she inwardly rebels against the hypocrisy of Puritan society, still conforms to the moral strictness associated with Puritanism.

The theme of public and private disclosure that so greatly marked Dimmesdale's speech in Chapter 3 is again present in this chapter, but this time the scarlet A on Hester's clothing is associated with the theme. Whereas publicly the letter inflicts scorn on Hester, it also endows her with a new, private sense of others' own sinful thoughts and behavior; she gains a "sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts." The scarlet letter — what it represents — separates Hester from society, but it enables her to recognize sin in the very same society that banishes her. Hawthorne uses this dichotomy to point out the hypocritical nature of Puritanism: Those who condemn Hester are themselves condemnable according to their own set of values. Similar to Hester's becoming a living symbol of immoral behavior, the scarlet A becomes an object with a life seemingly its own: Whenever Hester is in the presence of a person who is masking a personal sin, "the red infamy upon her breast would give a sympathetic throb."

In the Custom House preface, Hawthorne describes his penchant for mixing fantasy with fact, and this technique is evident in his treatment of the scarlet A. In physical terms, this emblem is only so much fabric and thread. But Hawthorne's use of the symbol at various points in the story adds a dimension of fantasy to factual description. In the Custom House, Hawthorne claims to have "experienced a sensation . . . as if the letter were not of red cloth, but red-hot iron." Similarly, here in Chapter 5, he suggests that, at least according to some townspeople, the scarlet A literally sears Hester's chest and that, "red-hot with infernal fire," it glows in the dark at night. These accounts create doubt in the reader's mind regarding the true nature and function of the symbol. Hawthorne's imbuing the scarlet A with characteristics that are both fantastical and symbolic is evident throughout the novel — particularly when Chillingworth sees a scarlet A emblazoned on Dimmesdale's bare chest and when townspeople see a giant scarlet A in the sky — and is a technique common to the romance genre.

## Glossary

Ordinations: regulations, laws.

Sumptuary: laws set up by the colony concerning expenses for personal items like clothing.

Plebeian: order the commoners.

Emolument: profit that comes from employment or political office.

A rich, voluptuous, Oriental characteristic: the gorgeous, exquisite, exotically beautiful.

Contumaciously: disobedient stubbornly resisting authority.

Talisman: anything thought to have magic power; a charm.

## Summary

During her first three years, Pearl, who is so named because she came "of great price," grows into a physically beautiful, vigorous, and graceful little girl. She is radiant in the rich and elaborate dresses that Hester sews for her. Inwardly, however, Pearl possesses a complex character. She shows an unusual depth of mind, coupled with a fiery passion that Hester is incapable of controlling either

with kindness or threats. Pearl shows a love of mischief and disrespect for authority, which frequently reminds Hester of her own sin of passion.

Because both Hester and Pearl are excluded from society, they are constant companions. When Pearl is on walks with her mother, she occasionally finds herself surrounded by the curious children of the village. Rather than attempt to make friends with them, she pelts them with stones and violent words.

Pearl's only companion in her playtime is her imagination. Significantly, in her games of make-believe, she never creates friends; she creates only enemies — Puritans whom she pretends to destroy. But the object that most captures her imagination is the scarlet letter *A* on her mother's clothing. Hester worries that Pearl is possessed by a fiend; an impression strengthened when Pearl denies having a Heavenly Father and then laughingly demands that Hester tell her where she came from.

### Analysis

This chapter develops Pearl both as a character and as a symbol. Pearl is a mischievous and almost unworldly child, whose uncontrollable nature reflects the sinful passion that led to her birth. Pearl's character is closely tied to her birth, which justifies and makes the "other worldliness" about her very important. She is a product and a symbol of the act of adultery, an act of love, an act of passion, a sin, and a crime. Hawthorne, the narrator, states, "[Pearl] was worthy to have been brought forth in Eden; worthy to have been left there, to be the plaything of the angels . . ." However, she "lacked reference and adaptation to the world into which she was born."

The Puritan community believed extramarital sex to be inherently evil and influenced by the devil, and, because Pearl is a product of her mother's extramarital sex, Hawthorne raises the issue of Pearl's nature. Can something good come from something evil? Is Pearl inherently evil because she was born from what the Puritans conceived to be an immoral, sinful union? Perhaps, thinks Hester, who is fearful at least of such a predetermined outcome. Our modern sensibilities, however, shudder at the implication that an immoral act between two adults necessarily means that a child born from that sexual affair will be inherently evil.

Hawthorne's condemnation of Puritanism continues in this chapter. His strongest rebuttal of the society's self-serving, false piety occurs when he ironically contrasts the Puritan community's treatment of Hester and God's treatment of her. He notes of Hester's fellow citizens, "Man had marked this woman's sin by a scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like her." Ironically juxtaposed against the Puritan's sentence that Hester wear the scarlet letter *A* is "God, [who] as a direct consequence of the sin which man thus punished, had given her a lovely child . . . o be finally a blessed soul in heaven!" The comparison between the community's (Puritan's) and God's responses to Hester's extramarital affair is dramatic.

### Glossary

Anathemas: curses things or persons greatly detested.

Sprit: elf-like.

Gesticulation: a gesture, esp. an energetic one.

Luther Martin Luther (1483-1546): the first rebel against Catholicism; leader of the Protestant Reformation in Germany.

### Summary

Hester has heard that certain influential citizens feel Pearl should be taken from her. Alarmed, Hester sets out with Pearl for Governor Bellingham's mansion to deliver gloves that he ordered. More important, however, Hester plans to plead for the right to keep her daughter.

Pearl has been especially dressed for the occasion in an elaborate scarlet dress, embroidered with gold thread. On the way to the governor's mansion, Hester and Pearl are accosted by a group of Puritan children. When they taunt Pearl, she shows a temper as fiery as her appearance, driving the children off with her screams and threats.

Reaching the Governor's large, elaborate, stucco frame dwelling, Hester and Pearl are admitted by a bondsman. Inside a heavy oak hall, Hester and Pearl stand before Governor Bellingham's suit of armor. In its curved, polished breastplate, both Hester's scarlet A and Pearl are distorted. Meanwhile, as Hester contemplates her daughter's changed image, a small group of men approaches. Pearl becomes quiet out of curiosity about the men who are coming down the path.

### Analysis

In addition to preparing the way for the dramatic and crucial interview to come between Hester and the governor, this chapter displays Hawthorne's imagination in developing Pearl's strange nature and the scarlet symbol. Like a symphony with variations, the assorted scarlet references in this chapter add to the richness of the letter's meaning.

Hester comes to Governor Bellingham's house because she has heard that people — particularly the governor — want to deprive her of Pearl. Once again Hawthorne shows his disdain for the smug attitudes of the Puritans. They reason that their "Christian interest" requires them to remove Pearl — the product of sin — from her mother's influence. If Pearl is "capable of moral and religious growth" and perhaps even salvation, they see it as their "duty" to move her to a more trustworthy Christian influence. Hawthorne chides these self-righteous Puritans and likens their concern to a dispute in Puritan courts involving the right of property in a pig.

Hawthorne also designs this chapter to advance the reader's knowledge of Pearl, both in appearance and actions. She is constant motion with "rich and luxuriant beauty." Her actions are full of fire and passion. When the Puritan children fling mud at Pearl, she scares them off. She is an "angel of judgement," an "infant pestilence." Once her fire is spent, she returns quietly to her mother and smiles. Her actions seem to be preternatural behavior in such a young child. Her scarlet dress, a product of Hester's imagination and needle, seems to intensify her "fire and passion." Pearl's scarlet appearance is closely associated with the scarlet letter on Hester's bosom, and Hawthorne continues this relationship as the novel unfolds.



When Hester is told the governor cannot see her immediately, she firmly tells the servant she will wait. Her determined manner indicates to the servant how strongly she feels about the issue of Pearl's guardianship. Because the servant is new in the community, he has not heard the story of the scarlet letter. The beautifully embroidered emblem on her dress and her determination cause him to think she is a person of some influence. Hawthorne emphasizes the servant's recent arrival to impress upon the reader the well-known nature of the scarlet letter's story.

Bellingham's house is described as a mansion of fantasy: cheery, gleaming, sunny, and having "never known death." It comes to life as the only interior description in the novel. Bellingham's home is a mixture of stern Puritan portraits and Old World comforts. Is it any wonder that the polished mirror of the breastplate on Bellingham's armor plays tricks on the eyes? Here in this fortress of Puritan rules where men will decide her fate, Hester virtually vanishes behind the scarlet A in the breastplate's reflection. Even Pearl's naughtiness and impish qualities are exaggerated — at least in Hester's mind — as if to defy the stifling, moralistic atmosphere of this place. The governor and his cronies arrive, and Pearl lets out an eerie scream. Their future approaches.

## Glossary

Cabalistic: figures secret or occult figures.

A folio tome: here, a large book.

Chronicles of England: a history of England by Holinshed, written in 1577.

Tankard: a large drinking cup with a handle and, often, a hinged lid.

Steel: headpiece, a cuirass, a gorget, and greaves ... gauntlets here, all parts of a suit of armor.

Pequot war: raids on Indian villages by Massachusetts settlers in 1637.

Bacon, Coke, Noye and Finch: English lawyers of the 16th and 17th centuries who added to British common law.

Exigencies: great needs; a situation calling for immediate action or attention.

Eldritch: eerie, weird.

The group of men approaching Hester and Pearl include Governor Bellingham, the Reverend John Wilson, the Reverend Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth, who, since the story's opening, has been living in Boston as Dimmesdale's friend and personal physician.

The governor, shocked at Pearl's vain and immodest costume, challenges Hester's fitness to raise the child in a Christian way. He asks Reverend Mr. Wilson to test Pearl's knowledge of the catechism. Pearl deliberately pretends ignorance. In answer to the very first question — "Who made thee?" — Pearl replies that she was not made, but that she was "plucked . . . off the bush of wild roses that grew by the prison door."

Horrified, the governor and Mr. Wilson are immediately ready to take Pearl away from Hester, who protests that God gave Pearl to her and that she will not give her up. Pearl is both her happiness and

her torture, and she will die before she relinquishes her. She appeals to Dimmesdale to speak for her. Dimmesdale persuades Governor Bellingham and Mr. Wilson that Hester should be allowed to keep Pearl, whom God has given to her as both a blessing and a reminder of her sin, causing Chillingworth to remark, "You speak, my friend, with a strange earnestness." Pearl, momentarily solemn, caresses Dimmesdale's hand and receives from the minister a furtive kiss on the head.

Leaving the mansion, Hester is approached by Mistress Hibbins, Governor Bellingham's sister. Hester refuses the woman's invitation to a midnight meeting of witches in the forest, saying she must take Pearl home, but she adds that, if she had lost Pearl, she would willingly have signed on with the devil.

### Analysis

This chapter brings back together the major characters from the first scaffold scene — Hester, Pearl, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth — as well as representatives of the Church, the State, and the World of Darkness. Note, too, that underneath the surface action, Hawthorne offers several strong hints concerning the complex relationships of his characters. In Hester's appealing to Dimmesdale for help, in Pearl's solemnly caressing his hand, and in the minister's answering kiss lie solid hints that Dimmesdale is Pearl's father.

Hester calls on her inner strength in her attempt to keep Pearl. She argues quite eloquently that the scarlet letter is a badge of shame to teach her child wisdom and help her profit from Hester's sin. However, Pearl's refusal to answer the catechism question causes the decision of the Church and the State to go against her. Now Hester's only appeal is to Dimmesdale, the man whose reputation she could crush.

Pearl once again reveals her wild and passionate nature. In saying that her mother plucked her from the wild roses that grew by the prison door, she defies both Church and State. While such an answer seems precocious for a small child, the reader must remember that Hawthorne uses characters symbolically to present meaning. Pearl's action recalls Hester's defiance on the scaffold when she refuses to name the father of her child. The dual nature of Pearl's existence as both happiness and torture is restated in Hester's plea, and this point is taken up by Dimmesdale. The minister's weakened condition and his obvious nervousness suggest how terribly he has been suffering with his concealed guilt.

Nevertheless, Dimmesdale adds to Hester's plea when he states that Pearl is a "child of its father's guilt and its mother's shame" but still she has come from the "hand of God." As such, she should be considered a blessing. The minister argues that Pearl will keep Hester from the powers of darkness. And so she is allowed to keep her daughter. Those powers of darkness can be seen in both the strange conversation with Mistress Hibbins and also in the change in Chillingworth.

As if to prove that Hester *will* be kept from the darkness by Pearl, Hawthorne adds the scene with Mistress Hibbins. While Mr. Wilson says of Pearl, "that little baggage has witchcraft in her," Hester says she would willingly have gone with the Black Man except for Pearl.

These dark powers are also suggested by the fourth main character, Chillingworth. The change noted by Hester in Chillingworth's physical appearance, now more ugly and dark and misshapen, is a hint

that in the scholar's desire for revenge, evil is winning the battle within him and is reflected in his outward appearance. That Chillingworth is Dimmesdale's personal physician and supposed friend gives him the opportunity to apply psychological pressure on the minister. Chillingworth's comment on Dimmesdale's strange earnestness and his statement that he could make a "shrewd guess at the father" suggest that he may already have decided on Dimmesdale's guilt.

The battlefield has been marked: The forces of light and darkness are vying for human souls.

## Glossary

**King James:** King James I (1603-1625) of England. He ordered the translation of the Bible, now called the *King James Version*.

**John the Baptist:** the preacher who announced in the Bible the coming of Jesus. He was beheaded by Herod whom he accused of adultery.

**John Wilson:** the Reverend John Wilson (1583-1667) a minister who was considered a great clergyman and teacher. He was a prosecutor of Anne Hutchinson.

**Physic:** [Archaic] medicine.

**The Lord of Misrule:** a part acted out in court masques in England during the Christmas season. He was part of a pagan, not Christian, myth.

**A pearl of great price:** see the story in Matthew 13:45-46, about a merchant who sold all his goods for one pearl of great worth, which represents the kingdom of heaven. Wilson is saying here that Pearl may find salvation.

**New England Primer:** a book used to teach Puritan children their alphabet and reinforce moral and spiritual lessons.

**Westminster Catechism:** printed in 1648, it was used to teach Puritan religious lessons and the pillars of church doctrine.

**Tithing-men:** men who collect church taxes.

## Summary

Since first appearing in the community, Chillingworth has been well received by the townspeople, not only because they can use his services as a physician, but also because of his special interest in their ailing clergyman, Arthur Dimmesdale. In fact, some of the Puritans even view it as a special act of Providence that a man of Chillingworth's knowledge should have been "dropped," as it were, into their community just when their beloved young minister's health seemed to be failing. And, although Dimmesdale protests that he needs no medicine and is prepared to die if it is the will of God, he agrees to put his health in Chillingworth's hands. The two men begin spending much time together and, finally, at Chillingworth's suggestion, they move into the same house, where, although they have separate apartments, they can move back and forth freely.

Gradually, some of the townspeople, without any real evidence except for the growing appearance of evil in Chillingworth's face, begin to develop suspicions about the doctor. Rumors about his past and suggestions that he practices "the black art" with fire brought from hell gain some acceptance. Many of the townspeople also believe that, rather than being in the care of a Christian physician, Arthur Dimmesdale is in the hands of Satan or one of his agents who has been given God's permission to struggle with the minister's soul for a time. Despite the look of gloom and terror in Dimmesdale's eyes, all of them have faith that Dimmesdale's strength is certain to bring him victory over his tormentor.

### Analysis

The theme of good and evil battling is carried through in Chapter 9, "The Leech," a ponderous and philosophical chapter with little action and much positioning of characters. We see the double meaning of the word "leech," the decline of Dimmesdale under his weight of guilt, the development of his relationship with Chillingworth, and the point of view of the townspeople, which have strikingly opposing opinions about the influence of Chillingworth on the minister. As he ingratiates himself with the young minister, the town sees Chillingworth as "a brilliant acquisition." On the other hand, they suspect that the relationship and proximity of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale have led to Dimmesdale's deterioration.

Hawthorne purposely uses the old-fashioned term "leech" for "physician" because of its obvious double meaning. As a doctor, Chillingworth seems to be making complicated medicines that he learned at the feet of the Indians; he also appears to be sucking the life out of Dimmesdale.

Chillingworth's devious and evil nature is developed in this chapter. As he moves into a home with Dimmesdale and the two freely discuss their concerns, there begins to develop "a kind of intimacy" between them. To Dimmesdale, Chillingworth is the "sympathetic" listener and intellectual whose mind and interests appeal to him. The reader, however, is told that, from the time Chillingworth arrived in Boston, he has "a new purpose, dark, it is true." As Chillingworth becomes more and more absorbed in practicing "the black art," the townspeople notice the physical changes in him, and they begin to see "something ugly and evil in his face." His laboratory seems to be warmed with "infernal fuel," and the fire, which also leaves a sooty film on the physician's face, appears to come from hell.

As the people in town watch this struggle, they feel that this disciple of Satan cannot win and that the goodness of Dimmesdale will prevail. Dimmesdale, however, is not so sure. Each Sunday, he is thinner and paler, struggling under the unrevealed guilt of his deed. The occasional habit of pressing his hand to his ailing heart has now become a constant gesture. He turns down suggestions of a wife as a helpmate, and some parishioners associate his illness with his strong devotion to God. Dimmesdale, although he discusses the secrets of his soul with his physician, never reveals the ultimate secret that Chillingworth is obsessed with hearing. Their relationship is further explored in the next few chapters.

### Glossary

Appellation: a name or title that describes or identifies a person or thing.

Ignominious: shameful; dishonorable; disgraceful.

Deportment: the manner of conducting or bearing oneself; behavior; demeanor.

Elixir of Life: a subject of myth, a substance that was supposed to extend life indefinitely.

Pharmacopoeia: a stock of drugs.

Oxford: Oxford University in England.

Importunate: urgent or persistent in asking or demanding; insistent; refusing to be denied; annoyingly urgent or persistent.

New Jerusalem: might mean Boston, the city on the hill.

Healing: balm or ointment used for healing.

Gobelin looms a tapestry factory in Paris that made the finest tapestries.

David and Bathsheba: the biblical story of King David's adultery with Bathsheba.

Nathan the Prophet: the biblical prophet who condemned David's adultery.

Erudition: learning acquired by reading and study; scholarship.

Vilified: defamed or abused.

Commodiousness: the condition of having plenty of room; spaciousness.

Sir Thomas Overbury and Dr. Forman: the subjects of an adultery scandal in 1615 in England. Dr. Forman was charged with trying to poison his adulterous wife and her lover. Overbury was a friend of the lover and was perhaps poisoned.

## Summary

In this and the next few chapters, Chillingworth investigates the identity of Pearl's father for the sole purpose of taking revenge. Adopting the attitude of a judge seeking truth and justice, he quickly becomes fiercely obsessed by his search into Dimmesdale's heart. He is frequently discouraged in his attempts to pry loose Dimmesdale's secret, but he always returns to his "digging" with all his intelligence and passion.

Most of Chapter 10 concerns the pulling and tugging by Chillingworth at the heart and soul of Dimmesdale. One day in Chillingworth's study, they are interrupted in their earnest discussion by Pearl and Hester's voices outside in the graveyard. They comment on Pearl's strange behavior and then return to their discussion. Watching Hester and Pearl depart, Dimmesdale agrees with Chillingworth that Hester is better off with her sin publicly displayed than she would be with it concealed.

When Chillingworth renews his probing of Dimmesdale's conscience, suggesting that he can never cure Dimmesdale as long as the minister conceals anything, the minister says that his sickness is a

"sickness of the soul" and passionately cries out that he will not reveal his secret to "an earthly physician." Dimmesdale rushes from the room and Chillingworth smiles at his success.

One day, not long afterward, Chillingworth finds Dimmesdale asleep in a chair. Pulling aside the minister's vestment, he stares at the clergyman's chest. What he sees there causes "a wild look of wonder, joy, and horror," and he does a spontaneous dance of ecstasy.

## Analysis

This chapter allows the reader to witness Chillingworth's evil determination to accomplish his revenge on and to increase the painful inner suffering of young Arthur Dimmesdale. The reader is also given the best insight yet into the nature of Dimmesdale's tortured battle with himself. Clearly, the struggle within his soul is destroying him, as evidenced by his physical appearance and his mental anguish, yet he still cannot confess his role in the adulterous affair with Hester. It should be noted that Dimmesdale articulates his justification for his silence, but, in the face of Chillingworth's diabolical logic and questioning intended to manipulate the minister into a confession of his sin, Dimmesdale breaks off the colloquy.

Hawthorne refers in this chapter to Chillingworth's earlier reputation as once a "pure and upright man." His shadowy and fiendish descriptions and images of him, however, further develop his symbolic representation of one who now appears to be doing the work of the devil. Just as he was earlier connected to the devil by soot and fire, now Hawthorne uses an allusion to the door of hell in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and a reference to the breach of physician-patient relationship and trust in describing Chillingworth as "a thief entering a chamber where a man lies only half asleep" to further emphasize his evilness.

The methodical and devious scholar argues by example and innuendo that Dimmesdale should not die with sin on his conscience; confession will offer him relief in this life and the next. He further argues that the minister cannot serve his fellow man while he has terrible secrets in his soul. Dimmesdale at first resists these arguments saying that they are all fantasy. He feels that people have been able to help their fellow men despite spotted consciences. The minister is a match for Chillingworth until a new sound enters the room.

Pearl's voice comes through the chamber window. She is skipping about on the gravestones in the cemetery and even dancing on one. While Hester tries to restrain her, Pearl will not be controlled by human rules. She calls out to her mother that the minister is already in the grip of the Black Man, and she mischievously throws the burrs at him that she has been using to decorate her mother's token of sin. Chillingworth says, "There is no law, nor reverence for authority, no regard for human ordinances or opinions, right or wrong, mixed up in that child's composition." Dimmesdale agrees, except that she has "the freedom of a broken law."

Following this interruption, Chillingworth asks if Hester is not better off for having confessed her sin rather than hiding it. The young minister agrees, but remains steadfast in his refusal to confess to an earthly doctor rather than talking with God. Because of Chillingworth's constant probing, Dimmesdale becomes angry and rushes from the room.

Later, the minister is asleep in a chair and Chillingworth makes his dark discovery. The spectacular but mysterious reference to Dimmesdale's chest, at the end of the chapter, is an important "clue" that we should remember when we reach Chapter 23. At this point, Chillingworth has identified his quarry.

In this chapter, Hawthorne further develops an important thematic purpose by establishing a firm connection between the body and the soul, the external representation of the inner character ("A strange sympathy betwixt soul and body"). The reader is explicitly led to interpret the appearances and actions of the characters symbolically with the description of Chillingworth's appearance and actions as he uncovers the secret that lay on Dimmesdale's bosom. The major characters, in fact, are more important as symbols than real people. If their actions seem extraordinary or preternatural to one's sense of reality, he should look carefully to the development of the symbol where objects "lose their actual substance, and become things of intellect." (See The Custom House commentary.)

### Glossary

Sexton: a church officer or employee in charge of maintenance of the church property.

From Bunyans' awful doorway Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* was an allegory of the late 1600s; the doorway is the entrance to hell.

Dark miner: worker of the devil; in this case, Chillingworth.

Holy Writ: the Bible.

In Spring Lane: a crossroad in downtown Boston

### Summary

Feeling that he is in full possession of Dimmesdale's secret, Chillingworth begins his unrelenting torture of the minister, subtly tormenting him with comments designed to trigger fear and agony. Dimmesdale does not realize Chillingworth's motives, but he nonetheless comes to fear and abhor him.

As Dimmesdale's suffering becomes more painful and his body grows weaker, his popularity among the congregation grows stronger. Such mistaken adoration, however, further tortures Dimmesdale and brings him often to the point of making a public confession that he is Pearl's father. The minister's sermons are eloquent, but his vague assertions of his own sinful nature are taken by his parishioners as further evidence of his holiness.

Because Dimmesdale is incapable of confessing that he was Hester's lover and that he is Pearl's father — the one act necessary to his salvation — he substitutes self-punishment. He beats himself with a bloody whip and keeps frequent all-night vigils during which his mind is plagued by frightening visions. On one such night while he is seeking peace, Dimmesdale dresses carefully in his clerical clothes and leaves the house.

### Analysis

This chapter and the previous one give an in-depth description of a heart "of human frailty and sorrow." The focus of this chapter continues to be Dimmesdale's painful agony, as he writhes beneath the burden of a guilt he seems powerless to confess. Along with strong characterizations of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, Hawthorne makes two additions to the plot in this chapter: first, the confirmation that Chillingworth no longer has doubts about the minister's guilt; thus, he has undertaken a planned (and successful) campaign to wreak vengeance on the man who seduced his wife and fathered a child by her; second, a specific statement about the methods and degrees of Dimmesdale's own self-punishment.

Hawthorne's irony is evident again in the clever paradox of Dimmesdale's futile attempts at public confession. His suffering has given him sympathies that cause him to understand the sins of others, which results in eloquent and moving sermons. The more Dimmesdale asserts his own sinfulness, the holier his congregation believes him to be. The clergyman is aware that his inadequate confessions are being misunderstood; in fact, he is consciously taking advantage of that misunderstanding: "The minister well knew — subtle, but remorseful hypocrite that he was! — the light in which his vague confession would be viewed." Thus, his sin is compounded by his actions during his period of psycho-spiritual struggle. Hawthorne ensures that readers' sympathy for Dimmesdale's suffering does not blind them to the fact that the minister is a sinner whose troubles are largely of his own making.

At the same time, the symbol of human evil, Chillingworth, appears more evil than ever in this chapter. Chillingworth, Hawthorne says, is a "poor, forlorn creature . . . more wretched than his victim." His revenge is coming at a cost: He is becoming the personification of evil.

## Glossary

**Pentecost:** a Christian festival on the seventh Sunday after Easter; it celebrates the Holy Spirit descending on the Apostles.

**A miracle of holiness:** In a similar story of Hawthorne's, "The Minister's Black Veil," the clergyman experiences a similar sympathy from sharing the sin of his fellow men.

**The sanctity of Enoch:** a man in the Bible who lived to be 365 years old. Enoch was pure enough that he walked with God and went to heaven without having to die first.

## Summary

After leaving the house, Dimmesdale walks to the scaffold where, seven years earlier, Hester Prynne stood, wearing her sign of shame and holding Pearl. Now, in the damp, cool air of the cloudy May night, Dimmesdale mounts the steps while the town sleeps. Realizing the mockery of his being able to stand there now, safe and unseen, where he should have stood seven years ago before the townspeople, Dimmesdale is overcome by a self-hatred so terrible that it causes him to cry aloud into the night.

Hester and Pearl, who are returning from Governor Winthrop's deathbed, mount the scaffold, and the three of them stand hand-in-hand, Hester and Dimmesdale linked by Pearl. Twice, Pearl asks Dimmesdale if he will stand there with them at noon the next day; the minister says he will stand there with them on "the great judgment day." As he speaks, a strange light in the sky illuminates the



scaffold and its surroundings. Looking up, Dimmesdale seems to see in the sky a dull red light in the shape of an immense letter A. At the same instant, Dimmesdale is aware that Pearl is pointing toward Roger Chillingworth who stands nearby, grimly smiling up at the three people on the scaffold. Overcome with terror, Dimmesdale asks Hester about the true identity of Chillingworth. Remembering her promise to Chillingworth, Hester remains silent.

After the next morning's sermon, the sexton startles the minister by returning one of his gloves, which was found on the scaffold. ("Satan dropped it there; I take it, intending a scurrilous jest against your reverence.") The sexton also asks about the great red letter A that appeared in the sky the past night.

### Analysis

This chapter, the second of three crucial scaffold scenes, appears exactly in the middle of the novel. Again, Hawthorne gathers all of his major characters in one place — this time in a chapter so foreboding, so convincing in its psychology, and so rich in its symbolism that it is unquestionably one of the most powerful in the novel.

In his description of Dimmesdale's actions while alone on the scaffold, Hawthorne demonstrates his mastery of psychological realism. The sudden changes in mood that take place in the minister's tired mind, the self-condemnation for his cowardice, the near-insanity of his scream, and his impulse to speak to Mr. Wilson all are developed convincingly. The first scaffold scene took place during the noon hours and concentrated on Hester's guilt and punishment. This second scene, occurring at the midnight hours, puts both "sinners" on the scaffold and concentrates on Dimmesdale's guilt and punishment. All the major characters of the first scene are again present. The town, although present, sleeps or is otherwise unaware of the action.

Previously, we have seen Dimmesdale's conscious mind attempting to reason through the problem of his concealed guilt. In contrast, in this chapter, we see the tortured workings of his subconscious mind, which is the real source of his agony. When Dimmesdale is forced by Pearl's repeated question to bring the issue into the open, his fear of confession still dominates his subconscious desire to confess. Just as the town was asleep earlier and there was "no peril of discovery," now he backs off once again. His two refusals to publicly acknowledge his relationship with Hester and Pearl suggest, perhaps, Peter's first two denials of Christ.

Hawthorne's flair for Gothic detail is demonstrated in the appearance of a spectacular, weird light and the startling revelation of the diabolical Roger Chillingworth, who is standing near the scaffold. However, although both details have the effect of supernatural occurrences, Hawthorne is careful to give a natural explanation for each of them. The light, Hawthorne says, "was doubtless caused by one of those meteors, which the night-watcher may so often observe, burning out to waste."

Of course, the meteor seemed otherwise to those who saw it: "Nothing was more common, in those days, than to interpret all meteoric appearances . . . as so many revelations from a supernatural source." And the question of whether the ominous red A appeared at all is ambiguous. Although the sexton refers to the letter, Hawthorne suggests that the A may have appeared only in Dimmesdale's imagination: "We impute it . . . solely to the disease in his own eye and heart, that the minister,

looking upward to the zenith, beheld there the appearance of an immense letter." Hawthorne also indicates that the meaning is in the mind of the beholder: The sexton sees it as an A for angel because Governor Winthrop had recently become an angel. Similarly, Chillingworth's appearance, although it suggests his knowledge of Dimmesdale's whereabouts, is logically explained by his having attended the dying Governor Winthrop.

As in the first scaffold scene, this chapter abounds in both major and minor symbols: the scaffold itself; Dimmesdale's standing on it; the three potential observers representing Church, State, and the World of Evil; the "electric chain" of Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale; Pearl's appeal to Dimmesdale; the revealing light from the heavens; and the variation on the letter A.

### Glossary

Scourge: a whip used for flogging.

Expiation: atonement; to pay a penalty for something.

Geneva cloak: a black cloak that Calvinist ministers wore.

Cope: a vestment worn by priests for certain ceremonies. Here, anything that covers like a cope, a canopy over, or the sky.

Scurrilous: vulgar, indecent, and abusive.

Governor Winthrop: John Winthrop (1588-1649), first governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony.

### Summary

Following her conversation with Dimmesdale on the scaffold, Hester is shocked by the changes in him. While he seems to have retained his intelligence, his nerve is gone. He is morally weak, and she can only conclude that "a terrible machinery had been brought to bear, and was still operating on Mr. Dimmesdale's well-being and repose." Hester decides she has an obligation to help this man.

Four years have gone by, and Hester's position in the community has changed: She has been given credit for bearing her shame with courage, and her life has been one of purity since Pearl's birth. While Dimmesdale's sermons have become more humane and praised because of his suffering, Hester's position has risen because of her charity. Her scarlet A now stands for "Able." But this has come with a price: no friends, no passion, no love or affection.

Through adversity, Hester has forged a new place for herself on the edge of Puritan society. In contrast, Dimmesdale's mental balance has suffered greatly. Now she must help the man who seems to be on "the verge of lunacy." In fact, she feels it has been an error on her part not to step forward before. So she resolves to speak with her husband.

### Analysis

It is important to note the chapter title: "Another View of Hester." This chapter is a discussion of Hester's personality, character, and intellect as well as a summary and an update of her past four

years (Pearl is now seven). This "other view" refers to both the changing perception of the Puritan community toward Hester and the narrator's telling description of her.

Hester's position in the eyes of the Puritan community has changed considerably due to her grace and her charity. She has borne her shame and sorrow with great dignity. The town describes her now as one "who is so kind to the poor, helpful to the sick, so comfortable to the afflicted!" Now the scarlet letter has magical qualities, and myths are growing around its power. But this new definition of Hester Prynne is not without a price. Her luxuriant beauty, and the warmth, charm, and passion that she once showed have been replaced by coldness, severity, and drabness. There is no affection, love, or passion in her life. Her humanity has been stripped from her by the severity of her punishment, and her charity and benevolence seem mechanical. No one crosses the threshold of her cottage in friendship. To add to this burden, her daughter seems to have been "born amiss."

Another view of Hester identified in the chapter title is that of the narrator, not the Puritan community. Her life, having "changed from passion and feeling to thought . . . she assumed a freedom of speculation . . . which [the Puritans], had they known it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter." The narrator speculates that, had it not been for her responsibilities to little Pearl, Hester "might have come down to us in history, hand in hand with Anne Hutchinson, as the foundress of a religious sect" and quite probably would have been executed for "attempting to undermine the foundations of the Puritan establishment." Tellingly, the narrator remarks, "The scarlet letter had not done its office."

This chapter also describes Hester's motive in speaking with Chillingworth, a conversation that will take place in the next chapter. Having seen the terrible toll Chillingworth is taking on Dimmesdale, she decides that she is partly to blame. Now she must do something to redeem her error in not identifying him to her former lover.

## Glossary

Pristine: original or characteristic of an earlier period.

## Summary

While walking on the peninsula with Pearl, Hester sees Chillingworth and sends Pearl down to play by the seashore while she speaks with her husband. She is surprised at the changes in Chillingworth just as she was shocked by Dimmesdale's spiritual ailment and aging. Realizing Chillingworth is in the grip of the devil, she feels responsible for "another ruin." According to Hester, her promise has caused Chillingworth to do evil to the minister, but Chillingworth denies his role at first. Then he admits that, although he used to be kind, gentle, and affectionate, he now allows evil to use him. The physician believes it his fate to become a fiend. He releases Hester from her promise of silence.

## Analysis

During these long seven years, Chillingworth has become obsessed with revenge, and this deadly sin has changed him considerably. He pities Hester because he feels she is not really sinful, and any

breach with God's law has been paid many times over by her wearing of the scarlet letter. He further feels that if she had "met earlier with a better love than mine, this evil had not been." On the other hand, he also says it is his fate to change from a "kind, true, just" man to a fiend who does the devil's work.

By placing these two characters together in this chapter without Pearl, Hawthorne shows what the years have done to Chillingworth. We see a side of the old scholar that makes us pity him despite his treatment of Dimmesdale, and we feel that of them all, Hester has paid her dues and deserves our respect.

### Summary

As Chillingworth leaves, Hester recognizes how evil he has become and realizes she hates him. Meanwhile, Pearl has entertained herself quite well: she played with her image in a pool, made boats of birch bark, and threw pebbles at beach-birds. Finally, she uses seaweed to make a scarf and then decorates her bosom with a green letter A.

Pearl wants to know what the scarlet letter means. Hester is tempted to tell her because she has no one else in whom she can confide. But despite repeated questions by Pearl, Hester says she wears the letter for "the sake of the gold thread" — the first time she had "been false to the symbol on her bosom." Pearl is not satisfied and continues to question Hester until Hester threatens to shut Pearl in a dark closet.

### Analysis

Despite her pity for Chillingworth in Chapter 14, Hester reveals her deep hatred for him in this chapter. She realizes that he set off a chain of events beginning with an unnatural, loveless marriage. "Be it sin or no, I hate the man!" is her final word on the subject. We hear for the first time her thoughts about her marriage to Chillingworth. He spent long hours among his books, emerging to "bask himself in [her] . . . smile." While she used to think of this domestic scene as happy long ago, she now sees how dismal it was and counts it among "her ugliest remembrances."

By now the careful reader should be examining the differences in the two relationships that are presented in the novel. First, in the Hester-Chillingworth relationship is a marriage accepted and legal in every way but without love and passion. In the Hester-Dimmesdale relationship is love and passion without marriage. The plot and themes of this novel are set in the Puritan society at the confluence of these two relationships.

Another variation on the scarlet letter occurs in Hester's conversation with Pearl. The pathetic loneliness of Hester's position is obvious as she wonders if she should confide in her daughter. Except for the two men in her life, she has no one to whom she can unburden her mind. Hester is strongly tempted to talk with Pearl but then decides to keep the story to herself.

### Glossary

Sedulous: hardworking and diligent.

Deleterious: harmful or causing injury.

Malignant: having an evil influence.

Nightshade: dogwood, henbane plants used as poisons and in witches charms.

Horn-book: a sheet of parchment with the alphabet, table of numbers, etc. on it, mounted on a small board with a handle and protected by a thin, transparent plate of horn. It was formerly used as a child's primer.

Precocity: matured or developed beyond chronological age.

Asperity: harshness or sharpness of temper.

## Summary

For several days Hester tries unsuccessfully to intercept Dimmesdale on one of his frequent walks along the shore or through the woods. When she hears that he will be returning from a trip, she goes with Pearl into the forest, hoping to meet the minister on his return home. As she and Pearl walk along the narrow path through the dense woods, flickering gleam of sunshine breaks through the heavy gray clouds above them. Pearl suggests the sunshine is running away from Hester because of the A on her bosom. In contrast, Pearl, being a child without any such letter runs and "catches" a patch of light; then, as Hester approaches, the sunshine disappears.

Pearl asks Hester to tell her about the Black Man. She has heard stories about him and questions Hester about her dealings with him and whether the scarlet letter is his mark. Under Pearl's questioning, Hester confesses, "Once in my life I met the Black Man! . . . This scarlet letter is his mark!"

Having reached the depths of the forest, Hester and Pearl sit on a heap of moss beside a brook. Just then footsteps are heard on the path, and Hester sends Pearl away, but not before the girl asks whether it is the Black Man approaching and whether Dimmesdale holds his hand over his heart to cover the Black Man's sign. Before Hester can answer, Dimmesdale comes upon them. The minister looks haggard and feeble and moves listlessly as though he has no purpose or desire to live. He holds his hand over his heart.

## Analysis

This chapter and the four chapters that follow contain the longest section of continuous dramatic action in the book. Although the novel covers seven years, fully one-fifth of its total words are concentrated here, during the action of this single, crucial day. This particular chapter serves primarily to set the stage for the confession to follow. It is also rich in atmosphere and symbolism. The chilly gloom of the forest almost perfectly reflects Hester's state of mind and the mood of the following scene. Nearly every element mentioned in the chapter carries some symbolic significance. The narrow footpath through the dense forest is suggestive of the "moral wilderness" Hester has been forced to follow for the past seven years. The story of the Black Man and his mark is described as a "common superstition," yet for Hester, the Black Man and his mark have a special, personal meaning. Here Hawthorne connects the letter with the Black Man and eventually with Dimmesdale's burden, and he does so mainly through their conversations.

Hawthorne spends part of this chapter connecting Pearl with nature and the wilderness around them. The brook is suggestive of Pearl, "inasmuch as the current of her life gushed from a well-spring as mysterious, and had flowed through scenes shadowed as heavily with gloom." Pearl, being a product of passion, seems to speak to nature and understand its wildness and beauty. She sees how the sunshine loves her yet disappears for Hester. Added to this insight is the idea that Hester hopes Pearl will never have to wear a scarlet letter, or symbol of a "sinful" act. Pearl has not yet had a grief that will fill her with compassion and sympathy, humanizing her as Hester has been humanized.

In coming conversations between Hester and the minister, the symbols of nature, natural law, and humanity will be placed next to the more artificial laws of Puritan society as Hawthorne develops the conflict between them.

### Glossary

Apostle: Eliot the Rev. John Eliot who preached to Native Americans near Boston.

Scintillating: sparkling, bright, witty.

Scrofula: tuberculosis of the lymph glands in the neck.

### Summary

As Dimmesdale walks in the wilderness, returning from a visit with Apostle Eliot, he hears Hester's voice and is surprised by her presence. At first, he cannot tell whether she is a human or a ghost. In fact, they are both ghosts of their former selves, and their chill hands and hesitant words reveal the strangeness of this meeting.

Both Hester and Dimmesdale talk with each other about the past seven years, and Dimmesdale confesses his misery and unhappiness. While Hester consoles him and mentions people's reverence for him, the minister feels his guilt and hypocrisy even more. He compares his silence with her public confession and realizes how his hidden guilt is tormenting him.

Hester, realizing how deeply her silence has permitted Dimmesdale to be tortured by her husband, seizes the moment to reveal Chillingworth's secret. This torture has led to insanity and "that eternal alienation from the Good and True, of which madness is perhaps the earthly type." Hester also realizes that she still loves Dimmesdale, and she begs his forgiveness for her silence.

The minister reacts to this revelation with anger at first, blaming her for his torture and realizing why he intuitively recoiled from Chillingworth on their first encounter. Hester, who has silently borne the disdain and scorn of the community and who has lived these seven years without human sympathy, cannot bear Dimmesdale's condemnation, and she falls beside him and cries, "Thou shalt forgive me! Let God punish! Thou shalt forgive!" She hugs him with great tenderness and feels such a compassion for his sorrow that her seven years of punishment seem to fall away.

Dimmesdale, for his part, forgives her and asks God to forgive them both. He believes that Chillingworth is the worst sinner of them all because he "violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of the human heart," unlike he and she, who "never did so." They are reluctant to leave this place in the forest because here they find a peace and harmony that they cannot feel in the Puritan community.

Dimmesdale fears Chillingworth's course now that he, no doubt, knows "her purpose to reveal his true character," and he asks Hester to give him courage.

Hester's plan is for Dimmesdale to go deeper into the wilderness and live in natural freedom away from the eyes of Puritan society or to return to Europe, where he will be free of "these iron men and their opinions." But Dimmesdale feels he has not the strength to do either. While he falters, Hester encourages him, claiming that he can lead a powerful life for good and still fulfill his mission on earth. When the minister says he cannot do this alone, she tells him she will go with him.

### Analysis

This chapter is pivotal in many respects: It advances the plot and characters by revealing Hester and Dimmesdale's feelings of the past seven years and the reawakening of their dormant love. Also in this chapter, Hawthorne reveals his philosophy on punishment and forgiveness that deliberate, calculated acts of malice are far worse than sins of passion. In this way, Chillingworth is the worst of the three sinners. Finally, the author provides hope that his characters will find an escape, a way out of their earthly torment. He explores the conflict between natural law and Puritan law in their escape plans.

During the past seven years Dimmesdale has been continually tormented by the dichotomy between what he is and what people believe him to be. His parishioners are "hungry for the truth" and listen to his words as if "a tongue of Pentecost were speaking!" But as often as he has confessed his guilt to God, he has not told it to any other human being. He bears his shame alone. Hawthorne contrasts this with Hester's visible sign of her guilt, confession, and hope for redemption. While Hester tries to console the minister and persuade him that he has repented and left his sin behind, Dimmesdale knows that he can go no place without carrying his hidden guilt along.

Hester realizes that she still loves Dimmesdale, and she courageously tells him this, even as she reveals her silence concerning Chillingworth. Hawthorne contrasts their love — "which had a consecration of its own" — and Chillingworth's revenge and asks the reader which sin is worse. Who has violated God's law with sure and certain knowledge? And whose place is it to provide redemption and forgiveness? While Hester believes they can outrun "these iron men" with their rules, guilt, and punishment, Dimmesdale is not so sure. Two forms of moral law are at work here — the laws of God and nature and the laws interpreted and written by "these iron men." In the long run, can escaping the rules of man enable them also to do God's will?

Dimmesdale is reluctant to leave because he believes God has given him a post which he must not desert. This wilderness of God's world is in need of his gifts. Hester assures him that he can do God's will in another place — Europe — and it is only the Puritan laws that hold him in bondage. He can "Preach! Write! Act!" and live a true life in Europe instead of dying, as he seems to be doing here in the wilderness, with fear and shame by his side.

Hawthorne shows the relative strengths of his characters in this argument. Hester reaches within herself and uses the strength and inner courage she has relied on over her seven long and lonely years. In fact, for Hester, "the whole seven years of outlaw and ignominy had been little other than a preparation for this very hour." Deep inside, she knows they can leave the Puritan colony and still

have a life of spiritual richness. They have paid for their sins and can still respect and uphold God's laws. Dimmesdale, on the other hand, lacks this perspective and Hester's courage, and several times he calls on her for strength.

## Glossary

Misanthropy: distrust or hatred of people.

These iron men here: meaning the stern Puritan forefathers who make the rules.

## Summary

The minister takes courage from Hester's strength and resolves to leave the Puritan colony, but not alone. He reasons that if he is doomed irrevocably, why not be allowed the solace of a "condemned culprit before his execution?" Hester agrees with him and casts off the scarlet letter. She takes off her cap and lets down her full, rich, luxuriant hair. Nature reflects on her passionate action by allowing sunshine to burst forth.

Now Hester wants Dimmesdale to know Pearl. He is reluctant at first, but she assures him Pearl will love him. While the child slowly comes toward them, all of nature seems to tag along as her playmate and kindred spirit.

## Analysis

This chapter is a variation on the preceding one and develops more fully Hawthorne's contrast between God's laws as interpreted through nature and God's laws as interpreted by man. Dimmesdale is sorely tempted by the idea of fleeing. He is the chief proponent of the religious tenets in this Puritan community (see "The Puritan Setting of *The Scarlet Letter*" in the Critical Essays). Because the Puritans believe that God allows redemption only for the elect and that salvation is attained solely through faith and the gift of divine grace, Dimmesdale rationalizes that he is a doomed soul and is momentarily attracted to "the solace allowed to the condemned culprit before his execution." He feels he is already a condemned. By removing the symbols of Puritan law (the scarlet letter) and Puritan society (the formal cap that confined her hair), Hester is transformed from the dull, drab, gray "fallen woman" into the passionate, voluptuous human who follows natural law and expresses her love for Dimmesdale. Nature shows its support for her actions as the sunshine follows her. Dimmesdale relies on her to redeem him and believes she can provide the mercy and forgiveness he has not felt at the hands of God. Taking off the scarlet letter, Hester seems to release them both from an earthly prison. But there is one last hurdle to cross: the meeting between Pearl and Dimmesdale.

In this chapter, Hawthorne's descriptions of Pearl reinforce her mysterious and ethereal nature. She is so closely linked with nature that here, in the forest, the sunlight plays with her, and forest creatures (a partridge, a squirrel, a fox, and a wolf) approach her and recognize "a kindred wildness in the human child." Even the flowers respond to her and, as she passes, seem to say, "Adorn thyself with me, thou beautiful child, adorn thyself with me!" Pearl is "gentler here (in the forest) than in the grassy margined streets of the settlement, or in her mother's cottage," reinforcing that she is in accord with the natural world and not the man-made world. If Hester and Dimmesdale are to pass the test of



natural law, they must meet with Pearl's approval. That Pearl advances "slowly; for she saw the clergyman" does not bode well for the reunited lovers.

### Glossary

Effluence: a flowing forth or outward.

Anemones: and columbines flowers of the buttercup family.

Nymph-child: a young maiden; here, Pearl.

Dryad: a nymph living in the forest among the trees.

### Summary

Hester decides the time has come for Dimmesdale to meet Pearl. Hester and Dimmesdale are joined spiritually and genetically to this child, and "in her was visible the tie that united them." While Dimmesdale confesses that he has always been afraid someone would recognize his features in Pearl, Hester simply speaks of Pearl's beauty and sees her as a "living hieroglyphic." Dimmesdale remembers Pearl being kind to him, yet he also feels ill at ease around children and is not very confident about this meeting. Hester, however, assures him that Pearl will love him and that he should be careful not to overwhelm her with emotion.

Pearl moves very slowly toward them, trying to discern her parents' relationship. Dimmesdale senses her hesitation and puts his hand once again over his heart. Seeing the scarlet letter on the ground and her mother's hair sensuously falling about her shoulders, Pearl points her finger, stamps her foot, shrieks, and "bursts into a fit of passion."

Hester's and Dimmesdale's reactions to Pearl's behavior vary. Hester realizes that Pearl recognizes the change in her (the letter is gone from her bosom and her hair is no longer hidden under a cap), and she hurries to fasten the hated badge to her dress and to draw her cap over her hair. She excuses Pearl's actions by saying children cannot abide change easily. Dimmesdale, on the other hand, begs Hester to do whatever will stop this fit and pacify Pearl. As soon as Hester changes her appearance, Pearl willingly comes to her and mockingly kisses the scarlet letter.

Pearl desires the minister to acknowledge her in public. While Hester assures her that this admission will happen in the future, Dimmesdale kisses Pearl's forehead in an attempt to mollify her. Pearl immediately goes to the brook and washes off the kiss. There she remains apart from the adults, and the brook babbles cheerlessly on.

### Analysis

Pearl is the one who moves the action in this chapter, and her response to Dimmesdale and Hester together does not foreshadow a happy ending. In fact, more than ever, Pearl is a symbol of the passionate act of her parents. She is a constant reminder of Hester's sin and, if Hester tries momentarily to forget the past, Pearl certainly disapproves. Pearl, throughout the novel, has shown to be unamenable to human rules and laws and seems to lack human sympathy.

Pearl as interpreted on one level, acts like a child who has suddenly realized that her world may be changing. On another level, Pearl is one with nature in the wilderness. Her image is reflected perfectly in the brook, which separates her from Hester and the minister, and as she bursts into a fit of passion at the absence of Hester's scarlet letter, ". . . it seemed as if a hidden multitude were lending her their sympathy and encouragement."

## Summary

Dimmesdale leaves the forest first; almost believing what has transpired has been a dream. When he looks back, he sees Hester weighed down with sadness and Pearl dancing because he is gone. Turning over their plan in his mind, he believes that going to Europe is the better choice. He is not healthy enough to endure a life in the forest converting natives, and Europe offers more civilization and refinement. Furthermore, a vessel currently in the harbor is soon sailing for England, and Hester will discreetly secure their passage for a departure in four days. The timing of the voyage enables him to give the Election Sermon, an opportunity he can use to terminate his career "honorably."

Thus decided, Dimmesdale is a new man. He walks with great energy and sees everything differently. In fact, he sees things so differently that he almost becomes afraid for himself. Three times, he meets people of his congregation, and each time he is tempted to do something terrible. The venerable and upright deacon of his church is narrowly saved from Dimmesdale uttering blasphemy.

The eldest dame of the congregation — she who worshiped the minister — is almost treated to a sacrilegious argument against the soul's immortality. And, finally, a sweet, young virgin narrowly escapes a wicked look from her beloved minister. Finally, he barely refrains from teaching bad words to a group of children and trading curses with a sailor.

Mistress Hibbins invites Dimmesdale to the forest and tells him she admires the way he covers up his true feelings during the day. But she knows she will see him in the forest with the Black Man when midnight comes. Dimmesdale hurries home and, because he is agitated, Chillingworth offers to give him some medicine to calm him down. Dimmesdale lies to Chillingworth, telling him that though he knows his medicine is dispensed by a loving hand, he does not need it. Then he goes to his study and furiously writes his Election Sermon.

## Analysis

This entire chapter — note the title — focuses on the spiritual battle warring within Dimmesdale. He has been transformed from the weak and dying man who went into the forest. Hawthorne here examines the nature of the fight and interjects his own comments at various points.

When Dimmesdale says that he will leave after his Election Day sermon so that he will be seen as leaving "no public duty unperformed," Hawthorne writes, "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true." The formerly weak, pitiful Dimmesdale leaves the forest with a new sense of purpose and energy. His thinking has been transformed by his will and that of Hester.

As if possessed, Dimmesdale returns to the town, a man on fire. He is tempted several times by the irrational, wild, blasphemous, and — what Dimmesdale calls "involuntary" — desire to do wicked

things to members of his congregation and perfect strangers. Even Mistress Hibbins recognizes him as a kindred spirit.

Dimmesdale is the "wretched minister! . . . Tempted by a dream of happiness, he had yielded himself, with deliberate choice, as he had never done before, to what he knew was deadly sin." This choice is taking him down the road to hell and reviving a multitude of sinful impulses from somewhere. Even his affair with Hester seven years ago had not been "a deliberate choice" and hence, although a sin, not a deadly one.

Dimmesdale works with great passion on his Election Sermon, putting this new energy to good use. When Chillingworth says that his congregation may find their ill pastor gone the next year, Dimmesdale agrees. In fact he answers Chillingworth, "Yea, to another world" with "pious resignation." Hawthorne's delicious sense of irony is evident when the reader senses that Chillingworth and Dimmesdale are not talking about the same destinations. Why is Dimmesdale so able to lie to his tormenter? Mistress Hibbins would say it is because his soul has been sold. Whatever the reason, it is definitely providing inspiration for the minister's speech.

#### Glossary

Vicissitude: unpredictable changes or variations that keep occurring in life, fortune, etc.; shifting circumstances.

Vexed: distressed, afflicted, or plagued.

Disquietude: a disturbed or uneasy condition; restlessness; anxiety.

The Spanish Main: The Caribbean.

Bristol: a British seaport.

Election Sermon: the speech given when a governor is installed. It is a great honour to be asked to give this speech.

Irrefragable: that cannot be refuted; indisputable; impossible to change.

Mutability: ability to be changed.

Obeisance: homage, deference.

Buckramed: having a covering of cloth made stiff with paste.

Ann Turner: an alleged witch who supposedly helped in the poisoning in the previously mentioned Overbury case.

The New Jerusalem: another name for Boston; also, a place for sinners who have been saved.

The King's own mint-mark here: a mark guaranteeing authenticity.

#### Summary

Hester and Pearl go to the marketplace to watch the procession and celebration as elected officials assume their offices. Hester thinks about leaving Boston with Dimmesdale and having a life as a woman once again. While she meditates on her future, Pearl, agitated by the crowd and celebration, dances as she waits for the procession. She alone senses Hester's excitement; to other observers, Hester appears to watch the procession passively.

Pearl continues to ask Hester precocious questions. She wants to know about the procession and asks whether the minister will acknowledge them as he did on the midnight scaffold. Hester quiets her and tells her she must not call out to Dimmesdale.

The captain of the Bristol-bound ship sees Hester and tells her that they will have company on their trip to Europe: Roger Chillingworth.

### Analysis

Chapter 21 is the first of several chapters that constitute the third scaffold scene and that lead to the climax of the novel. In these chapters, Hawthorne again brings together his main characters and, in these few pages, illustrates the major conflicts in the light of day and in a very public place.

One of the first issues addressed is the difference in public and private behaviour. Hawthorne uses pointed satire when he comments that, on this most festive day, the people "compressed whatever mirth and public joy they deemed allowable to human infirmity; thereby so far dispelling the customary cloud, that, for the space of a single holiday, they appeared scarcely more grave than most other communities at a period of general affliction." Even Hester serves as a solitary example of the difference between the gloom of Puritan outward life and the excitement she feels within. She must show little joy and certainly no indication that she plans to leave the colony with Pearl and Dimmesdale. At the same time, she is exulting in the fact that soon she will no longer have to wear the scarlet letter that it will be flung to the bottom of the ocean. For a few hours more, however, she must endure her badge of shame until they are safely away.

Pearl's comments are also important in this chapter because they point to the doom facing Dimmesdale unless he publicly repents. She prophetically describes the minister as a "strange, sad man . . . with his hand always over his heart!" She does not understand why the minister cannot acknowledge her or her mother "here, in the sunny day." The reader sees Hawthorne's message: No matter how far away the three may sail or how long they may live, Dimmesdale can never be at peace with Hester or his tortured conscience if he does not confess his part in their sin.

This idea is further demonstrated when Hester discovers that Chillingworth also plans to leave on the ship to Bristol. Perhaps Dimmesdale will be able to outrun his conscience in this life or his Creator's knowledge in the next. It appears, however, that Chillingworth does not plan to allow him escape from punishment wherever he goes on the face of the earth.

### Glossary

Plebeian: inhabitants, commoners.

Draught of the cup of wormwood and aloes: symbolically, a cup of bitter herbs; here, representing what Hester feels inside behind her composed face.

Elizabethan epoch: the late 1500s named for Elizabeth I and called the Golden Age in arts and literature.

Cornwall and Devonshire: two counties in Southwestern England.

Aqua-vitae: literally, water of life. Here, strong liquor such as whiskey.

Depredations: robbing, plundering, laying waste.

Probity: uprightness in one's dealings; integrity; honesty.

Scurvy or ship-fever: a disease caused by lack of vitamin C.

Mien: a way of looking; appearance.

### Summary

While Hester ponders Chillingworth's smile, the Election Day procession begins. First music adds a "higher and more heroic air." Then comes a company of gentlemen soldiers, brilliantly garbed. Next are the political dignitaries, stately, dignified, and drawing a reverent reaction from the crowd. Finally the minister, Dimmesdale comes, whose intellectual prowess is mentioned by Hawthorne. He has changed, showing great energy and an air of purpose in his walk and demeanour. His strength is spiritual, and he has an abstracted air as though he hears things not of this earth.

The focus now goes to Hester and her reaction to Dimmesdale. How far away he seems and how remote from the man she met only three days ago in the forest! She realizes what a great gulf there is between them, and she can scarcely forgive him for his remoteness. Even Pearl does not recognize him because he has changed so completely.

Meanwhile, Mistress Hibbins appears and speaks with Hester and Pearl. As Pearl questions Mistress Hibbins about what the minister hides, the witch tells Hester that she knows the minister also has a hidden sin comparable to Hester's scarlet token. When pressed about how she knows this, Mistress Hibbins explains that intuitively recognizing a fellow sinner is not difficult. She leaves, having said that soon the world will know of Dimmesdale's sin.

Now Hester hears the voice of Dimmesdale giving his sermon; while she cannot hear the words, she does hear sympathy, emotion, and compassion mixed with a "low expression of anguish." He may not be telling the world of his sin, but Hester hears the sadness and despair in his tone because she is so in sympathy with his heart.

Then Pearl scampers off through the crowd in her bright red dress and sees the shipmaster, who gives her a message for her mother: Chillingworth has secured passage for himself and Dimmesdale on the ship. When Hester hears this, she glances around the crowd and sees the same faces that were at the first scaffold scene. The chapter ends with the lines "The sainted minister in the church! The woman

of the scarlet letter in the marketplace!" Who would believe "that the same scorching stigma was on them both?"

### Analysis

In this chapter, Hawthorne interrupts the plot to comment on the state of politicians in his time. He describes the early politicians of the colony as lacking mental brilliance but full of "ponderous sobriety." They had great fortitude and inner strength, and, in an emergency, they made wise decisions and stood up to any attack on the colony. Hawthorne even feels they would have peers in the Old World who would see in them the same authority as English statesmen. The people revere them in the Puritan colony, but by Hawthorne's time, that esteem had diminished. He writes that the people of the 1600s had a "quality of reverence; which, in their descendants, if it survive at all, exists in smaller proportion, and with a vastly diminished force, in the selection and estimate of public men."

After this pleasant sojourn into seventeenth century politics, Hawthorne turns the focus on Hester. When Hawthorne describes Hester's reaction to Dimmesdale's remoteness, he virtually eliminates the possibility that they have a future together. In her mind, Hester compares Dimmesdale as he appears at the celebration ("He seemed so remote from her own sphere, and utterly beyond her reach") with how he was just three days earlier in the forest ("how deeply had they known each other then!"). She begins to think she must have dreamed that meeting in the forest because now Dimmesdale seems wholly unsympathetic and removed to his Puritan world. While she can still feel his emotions, she also can hardly forgive him for withdrawing from her and their plans to share their lives.

Hawthorne uses Mistress Hibbins to foreshadow the ending and emphasize the intuitive understanding of human hearts. The old witch reveals that the minister's sin will soon be public knowledge and, when pressed by Hester to explain, says that the forest leaves its mark on everyone; even without tell-tale signs, such as leaves or twigs in a person's hair, the evidence is in his demeanour. When Pearl asks about sinful secrets, the witch warns the child that she will see the work of the devil "one time or another."

In this passage, Hawthorne not only describes his ideas about sin, temptation, and human frailty, but he also explains the intuitive nature of human knowledge. Dimmesdale may have removed himself from Hester's emotional sphere on this day, but she has certainly not lost her intuitive connection with him. In his voice, she hears and recognizes the voices of his heart and also the "low expression of anguish." She may not be able to hear his words distinctly, but she can feel his sorrow-laden and guilty heart. In the tone of voice is a plea for forgiveness.

Somehow the two sinners must come together. To move toward the climax, Hawthorne has cut off escape with Chillingworth's actions, and he ends the chapter by describing the saint and the sinner side by side. Although the world remains unaware, the principal characters are moving closer to this revelation.

### Glossary

College of Arms: a group which approves titles and coats of arms for hereditary aristocracy in England.

Knights Templars: a medieval order of knights founded in 1119 in Jerusalem.

Morion: a hatlike, crested helmet with a curved brim coming to a peak in front and in back, worn in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Compeer: a person of the same rank or status; equal; peer.

Triple ruff: an elaborate collar

Necromancy: black magic; sorcery.

Plaintiveness: melancholy, suffering.

Indefatigable: untiring; not yielding to fatigue.

Disquietude: a disturbed or uneasy condition; restlessness; anxiety.

### Summary

At the end of Dimmesdale's Election Day sermon, the crowd emerges from the church, inspired by powerful words they have just heard from a man whom they feel is soon to die. This moment is the most brilliant and triumphant in Dimmesdale's public life. As the procession of dignitaries marches to a banquet at the town hall, the feelings of the crowd are expressed in a spontaneous shout of tribute to Dimmesdale. "Never, on New England soil, has stood the man so honored by his mortal brethren, as the preacher!" But the shout dies to a murmur as the people see Dimmesdale totter feebly and nervously in the procession. His face has taken on a deathly pallor, and he can scarcely walk. Several people attempt to help him, but the minister repels them until he comes to the scaffold where Hester stands holding Pearl by the hand. There Dimmesdale pauses.

As the minister turns to the scaffold, he calls Hester and Pearl to his side. Suddenly, Chillingworth appears and attempts to stop Dimmesdale, but the minister scorns the old physician and cries out to Hester to help him get up to the scaffold. The crowd watches in astonishment as the minister, leaning on Hester and holding Pearl's hand, ascends the scaffold steps. Chillingworth's face darkens as he realizes that nowhere else but on the scaffold can Dimmesdale escape him.

The minister tells triumph before the horrified crowd. Then he sinks down upon the scaffold.

Hester lifts Dimmesdale's head and cradles it against her bosom. Chillingworth, meanwhile, kneels down and, in a tone of defeat, repeats, over and over, "Thou hast escaped me!" The minister asks God's forgiveness for Chillingworth's sin; then he turns to Pearl and asks for a kiss. Pearl kisses him and weeps.

Dimmesdale, obviously dying now, tells Hester farewell. She asks whether they will spend eternity together. In answer, he recalls their sin and says he fears that eternal happiness is not a state for which they can hope. The minister leaves the matter to God, whose mercy he has seen in the afflictions leading to his public confession. His dying words are "Praised be his name! His will be done! Farewell!"

## Analysis

Hawthorne brings all the principal characters together at a third scaffold scene in this chapter, which begins with the triumph of Dimmesdale's sermon and ends with his death.

Dimmesdale's sermon is a personal triumph. In fact, Hawthorne ironically compares him to an angel who had "shaken his bright wings over the people" and "shed down a shower of golden truths upon them." This final irony between his public and private lives is revealed when he confesses his sin on the scaffold to all of the people who think of him as a saint. He gives up everything: his child, his love, his life, and his honour. The relationship to God that he has been preaching about cannot be based on a lie. God sees everything, and Dimmesdale, no matter how hard he has tried, cannot outrun the truth that his conscience and his mind believe. Sailing to Europe will not bring him beyond the reach of God's knowledge.

Not only does Dimmesdale confess, but he must do so alone. Although Hester helps him to the scaffold where she was punished seven years before, she cannot help him make his peace with God. The Church, in the form of Mr. Wilson, and the State which was symbolized by Governor Bellingham, both try to hold Dimmesdale up, as he approaches the scaffold, but he repels them and goes on alone. He does turn to Hester prior to his death and ask for her strength, guided by God. Having escaped the clutches of Chillingworth, he turns to Hester with "an expression of doubt and anxiety in his eyes."

Before actually confessing, he asks her, "Is this not better than what we dreamed of in the forest?" He is asking Hester to confirm the righteousness of this act and explains to her: "For thee and Pearl, be it as God shall order . . . Let me now do the will which He hath made plain before my sight." Although Dimmesdale may still doubt his choice and requires Hester's strength, in the end, he leaves his fate to God, trusting that His mercy will be more certain in death than Chillingworth's relentless torment is in life.

Given that he is dying, Dimmesdale asks Hester whether confession is better than fleeing. She has lived for seven long years with the torment of her neighbours and the shame of her scarlet letter. She hurriedly answers him that perhaps the three of them dying together would be preferable, but if Dimmesdale dies alone what will she have? She will have no love, no life other than the loneliness she has already has, and a daughter who will have no father.

Pearl is given the most wonderful gift: a life that is filled with love and happiness. When her father finally publicly acknowledges her, she kisses him and weeps an actual tear. As Hawthorne says, "the spell is broken." There is hope that Pearl will grow up, be able to interact with other human beings, find love, and live a long and happy life.

Chillingworth loses his victory in two ways. First, he no longer has Dimmesdale to torment, and second, he receives Dimmesdale's blessing. Even as he is dying, the minister manages to retain his reverence and his kindness by asking God's forgiveness for Chillingworth. As Hester noted in her husband's changed appearance earlier, revenge is never a positive motive and generally consumes its possessor.

## Glossary



The utterance of oracles: the telling of wise predictions about the future.

Auditors: hearers or listeners.

Pathos: the emotion of compassion.

Transitory: stay a very brief stay, as in this life compared to an eternal one.

Zenith: the point directly overhead.

Apotheosized: elevated to the status of God, glorified, exalted.

Fathomless: too deep to be measured; incomprehensible.

### Summary

Several versions circulate of what actually transpired in the marketplace. Most people say they saw a scarlet 'A' imprinted on Dimmesdale's chest, but there is conjecture as to its origin. Some think the emblem is a hideous torture the minister inflicted on himself, others think it is the result of Chillingworth's drugs, and still others believe it was remorse gnawing its way out of Dimmesdale's conscience. Still other observers claim that the minister's death serves as a parable showing that even the most saintly of us are sinners. Hawthorne puts this latter version down to the loyalty of friends and gives it little credence. He does state that a moral lesson is to be found in the original manuscript from the Custom House. That precept is "Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!"

In considering which characters follow this caveat, Hawthorne discusses their fates. Chillingworth, consumed by his revenge, shrivels up and vanishes. He leaves Pearl great wealth in his will, and she and her mother disappear, presumably to Europe. After their departure, the legend of the scarlet letter grows. Finally, one day Hester returns alone and inhabits once again the little cottage. She wears gray and reapplies the scarlet 'A' to her bosom.

No one knows Pearl's fate, but people assume that she married well and had a family because letters with the seals of heraldry arrive for Hester and articles of comfort and luxury are found in her cottage. Hester is also seen embroidering baby garments; instead of Puritan colours, she uses most un-Puritan-like lavish and rich materials.

Finally, Hester becomes a symbol of comfort and compassion, and upon her death, she is buried in the cemetery near the prison door where she first was incarcerated. While alive, she gives hope and comfort to those who feel sorrow and pain, and, accordingly, the scarlet letter becomes a symbol of help. She becomes a prophet of a better time where human happiness will be easier to obtain than in the rigid rules of Puritan society. When she dies, she is buried next to Dimmesdale. Their graves are slightly apart but with a single gravestone bearing the inscription: "On a field, sable, the letter A, gules."

### Analysis

This concluding chapter serves to answer whatever questions the reader may have after the final scaffold scene. As is his fashion, Hawthorne lends his customary ambiguity and vagueness to many of the questions by citing various points of view or options related to incidences without anointing any one of them as true. One such incident involves what people actually saw when Dimmesdale exposed his bosom on the scaffold. He presents several possible versions of the spectators at the scaffold that day including that some saw no letter on Dimmesdale's chest. He attributes this last version to the loyalty of friends to Dimmesdale.

Hawthorne explains that the moral of the story, gleaned from an old manuscript of testimony of people who had known Hester, is based on "the poor minister's miserable experience, and he states a kind of moral for us: "Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait by which the worst may be inferred." This often quoted moral about being true to oneself leaves the reader thinking about the characters in the story and which ones were true and what prices they paid.

Chillingworth shrivels up and vanishes because his revenge has consumed him and made him inhuman. Without his victim, he has no reason to live. But Hawthorne also adds mercy to Chillingworth's death: He explains in a lengthy paragraph that love and hate have a lot in common, and perhaps in the next life, both the spurned husband and the minister will rest in peace.

Pearl's fate is most interesting. The reader is never given a confirmed version of her life but is left to believe she lived a long and happy one, married and the mother of children. Hawthorne ironically notes that her rise in wealth certainly elevated her and Hester in the eyes of the colony that once spurned them. And he further adds that she could have married a "Puritan of the most devout nature." Having seen her father, the devout Puritan, one would certainly not wish that fate on Pearl. Hawthorne hints that her life elsewhere is much happier than it would have been had she married in the New World. The tear she shed at Dimmesdale's death was truly evidence that she would grow up to be humane. And her love and generosity toward Hester are obvious.

Finally, Hester's fate ends the book. One might ask why she returns to Boston, the scene of "her sin . . . her sorrow . . . her penitence." Hawthorne leaves the reader, once again, to decide. Perhaps she feels drawn to the place. Why does she resume wearing the scarlet A? Is it a sign that she accepts the rigid standards of Puritan society, or is it a sign that she stayed true to herself by daring to live beyond the petty rules of Puritan society? Hawthorne, perhaps, leans toward the latter idea when he views her as a seer of a future age where "a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness."

The graceful and dignified woman Hester has become is a survivor through suffering. Now that she has suffered, she can give what Dimmesdale could not: hope to those who are hopeless and help to those who have sorrow and are in trouble. Because her heart has felt these emotions, she is able to comfort others.

Even in death Dimmesdale and Hester are not allowed to mingle their dust. Perhaps Dimmesdale was right in questioning whether they would have a life together beyond this one. While their graves are slightly apart, the last irony is that they share a common tombstone. They could not be together in life, but in death they share a scarlet letter.

## Glossary

Portent: an omen.

Nugatory: trifling; worthless; invalid.

Parable: a short, simple story from which a moral or religious lesson may be drawn.

Recluse: a solitary person; shut away from the world.

Stigma: mark or brand; usually shameful.

Escutcheon: a shield or shield-shaped surface on which a coat of arms is displayed.

Gules red: a term used in heraldry.

## 2. Themes, symbols and structure of *The Scarlet Letter*

### 2.1 Detailed Storyline:

#### *Introductory chapter-*

Preceding the plot of *The Scarlet Letter* is an essay called ‘The Custom-House’. In it the narrator says he found a mysterious package-- dating back two centuries—on the second floor of the Salem Custom-House, where he worked as surveyor of the Revenue. The package contained a ragged piece of red cloth in the shape of the letter ‘A’ and a manuscript describing the story of a woman required to wear the letter as a symbol of shame for committing adultery. Hawthorne then informs the reader that the plot of *The Scarlet Letter* tells the story of that woman as he imagines it to have unfolded.

#### *The Story-*

In Puritan Boston of the 1600’s lives a woman called Hester Prynne. She is a native of a village in England. The novel tells us about her background through dialogue and flashbacks.

After marrying a scholar who spent long hours poring over books- Hester and her husband move to Amsterdam, Holland. They live there for some time before deciding to begin a new life in colonial America. He sent her alone to the town of Boston in the Massachusetts Bay Colony while he remained behind to conclude business before following her across the sea. But in the next two years, he never arrived and the citizens of Boston presumed him to be dead. During these two years Hester committed adultery and bore a child.

The action of the novel begins at the town prison, where Hester is being held. According to the moral code of the Puritans, adultery is a grave offence, the punishment is death. However the Boston authorities spare her life, instead they impose two humiliating penalties: first, she must, for the rest of her life, wear a patch of red cloth in the shape of the letter ‘A’, standing for ‘adulteress’, on her chest. Second, she must stand on the pillory in the marketplace to endure the burn of reproving eyes.

Hester had made the scarlet letter herself, bordering it with gold thread so that it looked like a work of art. When she comes out of the prison, she carries herself proudly. Hawthorne writes:

“The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance, on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes. She was lady-like, too, after the manner of feminine gentility of those days...”

After arriving at the market-place, she endures the glare of the townspeople while cradling her infant. As Hester looks out over the crowd, she notices a small misshapen man and recognizes him as her long lost husband, who has been presumed lost at sea. When the husband sees Hester’s shame, he asks a man in the crowd about her and is told the story of his wife’s adultery. He angrily exclaims that the child’s father should also be punished and vows to find the man. He chooses a new name—Roger Chillingworth—to aid him in his plan.

Reverend John Wilson and the minister of her church, Arthur Dimmesdale, question Hester, but she refuses to name her lover. After she returns to her prison cell, the jailer brings in Roger Chillingworth, a physician, to calm Hester and her child with his roots and herbs. Dismissing the jailer, Chillingworth demands to know the name of the child’s father. When Hester refuses, he insists that she never reveal that he is her husband. Hester agrees to Chillingworth’s terms even though she suspects she will regret it.

After being released from prison, Hester settles in a cottage at the edge of town and earns a meagre living with her needlework. She lives a quiet life with her daughter Pearl. She is troubled by her daughter’s unusual character. As an infant, Pearl is fascinated by the scarlet letter. As she grows older she becomes moody and unruly. Her conduct starts rumours and the church members suggest Pearl be taken away from Hester.

Hester, hearing the rumours that she may lose Pearl, goes to speak to Governor Bellingham. With him are Reverends Wilson and Dimmesdale. When Wilson questions Pearl about her catechism, she refuses to answer, even though she knows the correct response. Hester appeals to Reverend Dimmesdale in desperation, and the minister persuades the governor to let Pearl remain in Hester’s care.

Because Dimmesdale’s health has begun to fail, the townspeople are happy to have Chillingworth take care of their minister. Being in close contact with Dimmesdale, Chillingworth begins to suspect that the minister’s illness is the result of some unconfessed guilt. He pressurizes the minister psychologically because he suspects Dimmesdale to be Pearl’s father. One evening, pulling the sleeping Dimmesdale’s vestment aside, Chillingworth sees something startling on the chest of the sleeping minister: the scarlet letter A.

Tormented by his guilty conscience, Dimmesdale goes to the square where Hester was punished. Climbing the scaffold, he calls Hester and Pearl to join him. He admits his guilt to them but cannot find the courage to do so publicly. Suddenly Dimmesdale sees a meteor forming a gigantic A across the sky; simultaneously, Pearl points towards the shadowy figure of Roger Chillingworth. Hester,

shocked by Dimmesdale's deterioration, decides to obtain a release from her vow of silence to her husband. In her discussion of this with Chillingworth, she tells him that his obsession with revenge must be stopped in order to save his own soul.

Several days later, Hester meets Dimmesdale in the forest, where she removes the scarlet letter from her dress and tells Dimmesdale about Chillingworth and his revenge. In this conversation, she convinces Dimmesdale to leave Boston in secret on a ship to Europe where they can start a new life together. Renewed by this plan, the minister seems to gain energy. Pearl, however, refuses to acknowledge either of them until Hester replaces her symbol of shame on her dress.

Returning to town, Dimmesdale loses heart in their plan: he has become a changed man and knows that he is going to die. Meanwhile Hester is informed by the captain of the ship, on which they are to sail to Europe, that Roger Chillingworth will also be a passenger.

On Election Day, Dimmesdale gives what is declared to be one of his most inspiring sermons. But as the procession leaves the church, Dimmesdale stumbles and almost falls. Seeing Hester and Pearl in the crowd watching the parade, he climbs upon the scaffold and confesses his sin, dying in Hester's arms. Later, witnesses swear that they saw stigmata in the form of the scarlet A upon his chest. Chillingworth losing his revenge dies shortly thereafter and leaves Pearl a great deal of money, enabling her to go to Europe with her mother and make a wealthy marriage.

Several years later, Hester returns to Boston, resumes wearing the scarlet letter, and becomes a person to whom other women turn for solace. When she dies, she is buried next to Dimmesdale, and they share a simple slate tombstone with the inscription "on the field, sable, the letter A gules."

## 2.2 Structure of *The scarlet Letter*:

The Scarlet letter is one of the noted novels in American literature. The action takes place in Boston, a colony of the Massachusetts Bay Company whose residents were puritans. Puritans were members of a religious movement founded in England and whose congregations promoted ideals that helped lay the foundations for American democracy. They followed a strict moral code and were always on the look out for satanic influences. Their government was theocratic, and they emphasized divine guidance over human reason. The story is about Hester Prynne who is given a scarlet letter to wear as a symbol of her adultery. Her life is closely tied to two other characters Roger Chillingworth, her husband and Arthur Dimmesdale, her minister and the father of the child. The structure is tight and all the events are interrelated and skilfully integrated into a logical sequence.

It is structured around three crucial scaffold scenes and the three major characters that are all related. At the first scaffold scene, located in the very beginning of the novel, Hester openly confesses her sin of adultery in the light of day while Dimmesdale and Chillingworth look on from the crowd that has gathered. The second scaffold scene occurs in the middle of the book and is the climax of the plot where Dimmesdale climbs on the scaffold alone and calls for Hester and Pearl to join him. It is not a public confession, for it is done under the cover of darkness with no witnesses except for the wicked Chillingworth. The third and final scaffold scene occurs at the end of the novel. Dimmesdale climbs the scaffold once again with Hester and Pearl at his side. This time in the light of day and before a crowd, and he publicly confesses his sin.

Author Brenda Wineapple describes Hawthorne's writing of *The Scarlet Letter* this way:

“Though its prose is slightly formal, its phrasings aphoristic and rhythmically exact. The story's smouldering emotions are so volatile that Hawthorne regulates them in the books' shapely design. The tale of Hester Prynne unfolds in twenty four chapters, with the first, twelfth and the last symmetrically organised around the scaffold on which Hester appears to suffer for the crime of adultery. Similarly the plot of the story shuttles between interior and exterior locations. One chapter, for example, is called 'The interior of the heart' suggesting how the private and public worlds are so often at tragic variance” Wineapple, Brenda. *Hawthorne, A Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003 (page 212).

## **2.3 Themes**

### **2.3.1 Sin, Rejection and Redemption**

Hester must wear a red badge of shame, identifying her an adulteress and making her an outcast in her community. On the pillory, she endures the glare of scornful eyes and thereafter lives on the outskirts of the town with her child, Pearl. However, though Hester has committed a grave sin, she redeems herself by acknowledging her immoral behaviour, accepting her punishment, and living an exemplary life. In a way the Rev. Arthur Dimmesdale is also an outcast in that he lives as a coward outside the favour of heaven and of his own conscience. However, at the end of the novel, he too redeems himself by exposing his sin.

### **2.3.2 Identity and Society**

After Hester is publicly rebuked and forced by the people to wear a badge of shame, her unwillingness to leave Boston is surprising. She is not physically imprisoned, and leaving the town would allow her to remove the badge and lead a normal life. Unexpectedly, Hester reacts with dismay when Chillingworth tells her that the town fathers are considering letting her remove the letter. Hester's behaviour is premised on her desire to determine her own identity than let others determine it for her. To her, running away or removing the letter would be admitting that the society has power over her. Instead, she stays, refiguring the scarlet letter as a symbol of her own experiences and character. Her past sin is a part of who she is; to pretend that it never happened would mean denying a part of herself. Thus, Hester is determined to integrate her sin into her life.

Dimmesdale also struggles against a socially determined identity. As the minister, he is more symbol than a human being. Except for Chillingworth, those around the minister wilfully ignore his internal torment, misinterpreting it as holiness. Unfortunately, Dimmesdale never fully recognizes the truth of what Hester has learned: that individuality and strength are gained by quiet self-assertion and not by a rejection of one's assigned identity.

### **2.3.3 The Nature of Evil**

The characters in the novel frequently debate the identity of the “black man”, the representation of evil. Over the course of the novel, the “black man” is associated with Dimmesdale, Chillingworth and Mistress Hibbins, and little Pearl is thought by some to be the Devil’s child. The characters also try to root out the causes of evil: did Chillingworth’s selfishness in marrying Hester force her to commit the adultery? Is Hester and Dimmesdale’s deed responsible for Chillingworth transformation into a malevolent being? This confusion over the nature and causes of evil reveals the problems with Puritan conception of sin. As the narrator points out in the concluding chapter, both emotions, hate and love, depend upon “a high degree of intimacy; each renders one individual dependent.... upon another.” Evil is not found in Hester and Dimmesdale’s physical relationship, nor even in the ignorance of the Puritan fathers. It is found in the carefully plotted revenge of Chillingworth, whose love has been perverted. Perhaps Pearl is not entirely wrong when she thinks that Dimmesdale is the “black man” because her father, too, has corrupted his love. He, who should love Pearl, will not even publicly acknowledge her. This denial of love to one’s own child is perpetrating evil further.

## **2.4 Symbols**

### 2.4.1 The letter A

The chief symbol in the novel is the scarlet letter A, which openly symbolizes Hester’s adultery. For Dimmesdale and Hester, the letter stands for agony, which Hester displays in her isolated life and which Dimmesdale displays in her deteriorating health. By the end of the novel, the townspeople think that Hester’s scarlet letter A stands for “ability”, for she has become a generous helper for the poor and downtrodden and a wise counsellor for their problems.

The gesture of Dimmesdale placing his hand over his heart is also symbolic. It is the minister’s attempt to cover his mark of sinfulness. It also suggests his nervous condition and reflects his grieved state.

### 2.4.2 The Meteor

As Dimmesdale stands on the scaffold with Hester and Pearl, a meteor trace an A in the night sky. To Dimmesdale, the meteor implies that he should also wear a mark of shame just as Hester does. The meteor is interpreted differently by the rest of the community, which thinks it stands for ‘Angel’ and marks Governor Winthrop’s entry into heaven. But ‘Angel’ is awkward reading of the symbol. The Puritans commonly looked to symbols to confirm divine sentiment. In this narrative, however, symbols are taken to mean what the beholder wants them to mean. The incident with the meteor highlights two different uses of symbols: Puritan and literary.

### 2.4.3 Darkness and light

By emphasising the alternation between sunlight and darkness, the novel organizes the plot’s events into two categories: those which are socially acceptable, and those which must take place covertly. Daylight exposes an individual’s activities and makes him/her vulnerable to punishment. Night on the other hand, conceals and enables activities that would not be possible or acceptable during the day—for example, Dimmesdale’s encounter with Hester and Pearl on the scaffold. These notions of

visibility versus concealment are linked to two of the book's larger themes- inner versus socially assigned identity and of outer appearances versus internal states. Night is the time when inner natures can make themselves visible. During the day, interiority is once again hidden from public view, and secrets remain as they are.

### **3. Character List**

#### ***3.1 Major Characters***

##### **3.1.1 Hester Prynne**

What is most remarkable about Hester Prynne is her remarkable strength of character. While Hawthorne doesn't give much information about her life before the book opens, he does show her remarkable character, revealed through her public humiliation and subsequent, isolated life in Puritan society. Her inner strength, her defiance of convention, her honesty, and her compassion may have been in her character all along, but the scarlet letter brings them to our attention.

Hester is physically described in the first scaffold scene as a tall young woman with a "figure of perfect elegance on a large scale". Her most impressive feature is her "dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam". This appearance can be contrasted with her appearance after seven years of punishment. Her beautiful hair is hidden under her cap; her beauty and warmth are gone, buried under the burden of the scarlet letter. When she removes the letter and takes off the cap in chapter 13, she once again becomes the radiant beauty of seven years ago. Symbolically, in doing this, Hester removes the harsh, stark, unbending Puritan social and moral structure. But she is only to have a brief respite, however, because Pearl angrily demands that she resume wearing that letter.

The reader first meets the incredibly strong Hester on the scaffold with Pearl in her arms, beginning her punishment. She displays a sense of irony and contempt. The irony is present in the elaborate needlework of the scarlet letter. While she might be feeling agony, her face betrays no such thoughts. She displays a dignity and grace that reveals a deep trust in herself.

Her refusal to name the child's father shows her determination to stand alone despite the opinion of the society. Despite her lonely existence, Hester somehow finds inner strength to defy both the townspeople and the local government. This defiance becomes stronger and will carry her through later interviews with both Chillingworth and Governor Bellingham. Her determination and lonely stand is repeated again when she confronts Governor Bellingham over the issue of Pearl's guardianship.

A second quality of Hester is that she is, above all, honest: she openly acknowledges her sin. She was honest enough to admit to Chillingworth that she felt no love, nor faked any, in their marriage. She kept her word in carrying her husband's secret identity, and tells the minister the truth only when she is released from the pledge. In this life of public repentance, she retains her sanity while Dimmesdale seems to be losing his.

Finally, Hester becomes an angel of mercy who eventually lives out her life as a figure of compassion in the community. She becomes known for her charitable deeds. She offers comfort to



the poor, downtrodden and the sick. Hawthorne attributes this transformation to her lonely position in the world and her suffering. In her solitude she had a great deal of time to think. Her shame in the face of public opinion, her loneliness and suffering, and her quiet acceptance of her position make her respond to the calamities of others.

Hester's strength, honesty and compassion carry her through her life. She lived on quietly by growing stronger and more at peace through her suffering, thus, becoming a legend in the colony of Boston.

### 3.1.2 Roger Chillingworth

Roger Chillingworth unlike Hester is a flat character. While he develops from a kind scholar into an obsessed fiend, he is less of a character and more of a symbol doing the devil's bidding. Hawthorne begins building this symbol of evil vengeance with Chillingworth's first appearance in the novel by associating him with deformity, wildness and mysterious powers. His appearance is hideous partly because of his strange mixture of "civilized and savage costume".

Even when he is better dressed, Chillingworth is far from attractive. He is small, thin, and slightly deformed, with one shoulder higher than the other. When he arrives at Massachusetts Bay Colony and finds his wife being publicly shamed, he chooses to take revenge.

Chillingworth is not a Puritan. While he was a captive of the Indians, he did not judge them as heathens or infidels, nor did he seek to convert them. Instead, he studied their knowledge of herbs and medicines which later links his work to the "black medicine" and helps him keep his victim alive. Hawthorne further develops this other world involvement when he describes the physician's presence as being just in time to 'help' Dimmesdale. Thus, for seven years he single-mindedly pursues Dimmesdale. This man of science, so lacking in sentiment, is coldly seeking what is only God's prerogative: vengeance. He has become such a fiend that his very existence depends on Dimmesdale. Here the cold intellect of the publicly emerging nineteenth century scientist is used as a framework for Chillingworth's pursuit. This is what makes him, in Hawthorne's eyes, the greatest sinner. He violates Dimmesdale's heart and soul to see how he will react. Thus, when his object is beyond reach, when he knows that the minister is about to escape from him by confessing his sin, Chillingworth ceases to exist. Obsession, vengeance and hatred consumed him, but despite all this, he leaves his fortune to Pearl. Perhaps this act can, to some extent, redeem the person whose sin was the blackest.

### 3.1.3 Arthur Dimmesdale

Arthur Dimmesdale is the other protagonist of the novel. He is a young Puritan pastor with handsome features and an attractive voice. Because of his pious spirit and inspired sermons, his congregation dearly loves him. The more the people honour him, the more his guilt grows. His first speech in the novel is ironic, for he is pleading with Hester to reveal his name 'if' she thinks it might lessen her misery or help him. This appeal is not understood by the spectators but is understood by Hester and the readers. He fears public exposure, thus leading a hypocritical life. This guilt-conscience affects his health and causes physical deterioration. This is aggravated by Chillingworth who seeks revenge.

Dimmesdale's lack of faith in himself is responsible for his tragic end. His guilt gnaws at his heart, gradually destroying the vital force of life, thus, rendering him a moving and visible phantom with no purpose in life. He wants to confess, but the consequences scare him. He isn't brave enough to do it. Though Dimmesdale's weakness and faults are revealed, Hawthorne still paints a sympathetic picture of him. He makes Dimmesdale very human in his suffering, as a result, the reader is made to feel sorry for him despite his sin and cowardice.

### **3.2 *Minor Characters***

#### **3.2.1 Pearl**

Pearl plays a significant role in the novel. Her mother has paid for this child with her honour; therefore, the name has importance. She is a living manifestation of the scarlet letter and a constant reminder of her parents' sin. She displays signs of wildness, rebellion and freedom. Her lively nature cannot be restricted and Hester worries about not being able to control her. Pearl seems to be happiest out in nature and she seems to communicate with the forces around her. Her alienation from the world of humans strengthens her bond with nature. She is a precocious child, wide beyond her years. The gloomy life of Hester affects her deeply. She even understands that Dimmesdale is somehow related to her because he avoids being seen with her in public. She also wonders why he always covers his heart with his hand.

Pearl's impish nature, her desire to lead a free life without obedience to any authority, and her open rebellion makes people wonder about her upbringing. However, she is transformed at the end of the novel when Dimmesdale stands with her on the end of the scaffold and makes his confession. It is obvious that the child has yearned for his love and acceptance in the open. When he asks her for a kiss this time, she willingly gives it. Her sense of human identity is established in her acceptance of Dimmesdale's paternity. As a result, she cries with real human emotion for the first time in the novel. Thus indicating that, her past is put away and she will be able to lead a normal in the future.

#### **3.2.2 The unnamed Narrator**

The unnamed narrator works as the surveyor of the Salem Custom-house some two hundred years after the novel's events take place. He discovers an old manuscript in the building's attic that tells the story of Hester Prynne; when he loses his job, he decides to write a fictional treatment of the narrative. The narrator is a rather high-strung man, whose Puritan ancestry makes him feel guilty about his writing career. He writes because he is interested in American history and because he believes that America needs to better understand its religious and moral heritage.

#### **3.2.3 Mistress Hibbins**

Mistress Hibbins is a widow who lives with her brother, Governor Bellingham, in a luxurious mansion. She is commonly known to be a witch who ventures into the forest at night to ride with the 'black man'. Her appearances at public occasions remind the reader of the hypocrisy and hidden evil in Puritan society.

### 3.2.4 Governor Bellingham

Governor Bellingham is a wealthy, elderly gentleman who spends much of his time consulting with the other town fathers. Despite his role as governor of an underdeveloped American society, he resembles a traditional English aristocrat. He tends to strictly adhere to the rules, but is easily swayed by Dimmesdale's eloquence. He remains blind to the misbehaviours taking place in his own house: his sister, Mistress Hibbins, is a witch.

## 4. Hawthorne's contribution to American Literature

Hawthorne's works belonged to romanticism or, more specifically, dark romanticism. Tales that suggest guilt, sin and evil are the most inherent natural qualities of humanity. Many of his works are inspired by Puritan New England, combining historical romance loaded with symbolism and deep psychological themes, bordering on surrealism. His depictions of the past are a version of historical fiction. His later writings also reflect his negative view of transcendentalism movement. Hawthorne was predominantly a short-story writer. His four major romances were written between 1850-1860: *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), *The Marble Faun* (1860). Another novel-length romance, *Fanshawe* was published anonymously in 1828. Hawthorne defined a romance as being radically different from a novel by not being concerned with the possible course of ordinary experience. In his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne describes his romance-writing as using "atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture".

He also wrote non-fiction. In 2008, The Library of America selected Hawthorne's *A Collection of Wax Figures* for inclusion in its two-century retrospective of American True crime.

## 5. Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the title of the book.
2. Contrast Hester's scarlet letter to Dimmesdale's scarlet letter.
3. How is symbolism effectively used in the novel?
4. Discuss the significance of the scaffold scenes.
5. What are the reasons behind Dimmesdale's physical deterioration?
6. Why is Chillingworth's sin judged to be the worst sin in the book?

## 6. Further Readings of Hawthorne

Short Stories

-*A Rill from the Town-Pump*

- *Chippings with a Chisel*
- *Circe's Palace*
- *David Swan*
- *Drowne's Wooden Image*
- *Edward Fane's Rose-bud*
- *Egotism*
- *Serpent*
- *Endicott and the Red Cross*
- *Ethan Brand*
- *Fancy's Show-Box*
- *Feathertop*
- *Footprints on the Seashore*
- *The Prophetic Pictures*
- *The Sister Years*
- *The Shaker Bridal*
- *The Village Uncle*
- *The Wedding Knell*
- *The Seven Vagabonds*
- *The Haunted Mind*
- *The Great Stone Face*
- *The Hollow of the Three Hills*
- *The Devil in Manuscript*
- *Sunday At Home*
- *Roger Malvin's Burial*
- *Sights from a Steeple*
- *Snowflakes*
- *Night-Sketches*

- *Dudley*

## **Paper-XVII. American Literature-I**

### **Unit 2: Moby Dick- Herman Melville**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Objective

1.2 Biographical sketch of Herman Melville

1.3 Major works of Melville

1.4 Themes and Outlines of Melville's works

1.5 Styles and Techniques used by Melville

1.6 Chapterwise summary and analysis of *Moby Dick*

#### **2. Themes, symbols and Structure of *Moby Dick***

2.1 Structure of *Moby Dick*

2.2 Themes

2.3 Symbols

#### **3. Character List**

3.1 Major Characters

3.2 Minor Characters

#### **4. Melville's contribution to American Literature**

#### **5. Questions**

#### **6. Further Readings of Herman Melville**

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Objective

This unit provides a biographical sketch of Herman Melville first. Then a list of his major works, their themes and outlines. It also includes a detailed discussion about the styles and techniques used by him. The themes, symbols and the structure of *Moby Dick* are discussed next, followed by the list of major as well as minor characters. This unit concludes with a discussion about Melville's contribution to American literature and a set of questions. Lastly there is a list of further readings of Herman Melville to gain knowledge about the critical aspects of the novel.

### 1.2 Biographical Sketch of Herman Melville

Herman Melville was born into an eminent family claiming war heroes and wealthy merchants on 1 August 1819 in New York City, New York State, son of Maria Gansevoort (1791-1872) and Allan Melville (1782-1832). As a successful import merchant, Allan afforded all the necessary comforts and more to his large family of eight sons and daughters. He loved to tell his children sea-faring tales of terror and adventure, and of places far away. After his death at the age of forty, his wife and children moved to the village of Lansingburg, on the banks of the Hudson River.

In 1835 Melville attended the Albany Classical School for a year then moved to Pittsfield, Massachusetts to work at the farm of his uncle, gentleman farmer Thomas Melville. It was not long however that Melville travelled back to New York and secured his place as cabin boy on a ship bound for Liverpool, England. Upon return to New York he held various unsatisfying jobs until he next set sail on the whaling ship *Acushnet* in 1841. His stay in the Marquesas Islands (now French Polynesia) with his friend Richard Tobias Greene would provide much fodder for his future novels. First published in England, *Typee* and *Omoo* (1847) are based on Melville's sea-faring adventures and stays in Polynesia and Tahiti. His next novel *Mardi: and A Voyage Thither* (two volumes, 1849) is 'a romance of Polynesian adventure', again reflecting much of Melville's own life on ships and the South Seas. Another semi-autobiographical novel *Redburn: His First Voyage* was published in 1849.

On 4 August 1847 Melville married Elizabeth Shaw, with whom he would have four children: Malcolm (b.1849), Stanwix (b.1851), Elizabeth (b.1853), and Frances (b.1855). In 1850 the Melvilles moved to what would be their home for the next thirteen years, 'Arrowhead' (now designated a National Historic Landmark) in Pittsfield, Berkshire County, Massachusetts. It was here that Melville made the acquaintance of fellow New Englander Nathaniel Hawthorne--he would become a great friend to Melville, and to whom he dedicated *Moby Dick*. It was the beginning of a prolific period of writing for Melville. He wrote sketches for such journals as *Putnam's Monthly* including *The Piazza* and *I and My Chimney*, and started on his masterpiece *Moby Dick*. The surrounding Berkshire Hills provided the necessary peace and quiet, but as Melville writes to Hawthorne in June of 1851,

he was also busy with other projects—“Since you have been here I have been building some shanties of houses (connected with the old one), and likewise some shanties of chapters and essays. I have been ploughing and sowing and raising and printing and praying.”

After the publication of *Moby Dick* in October of 1851, Melville was seeing positive reviews of his works in England and America, readers captivated by his authentic story telling of exotic adventures, although he struggled with self-doubt. While he wrote many other works including *White Jacket*(1850), *The Encantadas; or, Enchanted Isles* (novella, 1854), *Israel Potter*(1855), *Piazza Tales* (1856), and *The Confidence Man* (1857), it was with *Moby Dick* that Melville had reached his peak as writer and observer of human nature in all its strengths and weaknesses. Many of his works are steeped in metaphor and allegory, at times cynical, others satirical. In previous years he had travelled throughout Europe and the Holy Land; in 1857 he launched into a three year lecture tour of major North American cities where he spoke of his writings and travels.

In 1863 the Melvilles gave up country life and moved to New York City and the home of Herman's brother Allan at 104 East Twenty-Sixth Street. Melville soon obtained a position with the New York Custom House where he remained for the next twenty years. Almost ten years since his last published novel, Melville was now writing poetry; *Battle Pieces* (1866) was well-received. *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (1876) was followed by his collection *John Marr and Other Poems* (1888), and *Timoleon* (1891). While they are appreciated now, by the time of Herman Melville's death he had slipped into obscurity as a writer. He died at his home on East 26th Street on 28 September 1891 and now rests beside his wife Elizabeth in Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, New York.

### 1.3 Major works of Melville

*Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846)

*Omoo* (1847)

*Redburn* (1849)

*Mardi* (1849)

*White-Jacket; or, the World in a Man-of-War* (1850)

*Moby-Dick, or the Whale* (1851)

*Pierre, or The Ambiguities* (1852)

"*Bartleby the Scrivever*" *Israel Potter* (1855)

*The Confidence-Man* (1857)

*Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866)

*Clarel: A Poem and a Pilgrimage* (1876)

*Billy Budd, Sailor* (1924)

### 1.4 Themes and Outline of Melville's works

Herman Melville is remembered as the man who wrote the novel *Moby-Dick*. However, Melville accomplished a great deal more in his life. He was born into a prosperous New York family that



proudly traced genealogical lines to the noble family of Melvill of Scotland on his father's side and, on his mother's side, the Gansevoorts, who were of Dutch ancestry and had ruled immense manors along the Hudson River. He was the third of eight children and was considered to be slow and dull by his parents (Compton's).

The Melville family added the "e" to their last name in the 1830s. Both of Melville's grandfathers had been heroes in the American Revolution. His grandfather, Major Thomas Melvill, had been a ringleader of the Boston Tea Party. His other grandfather, General Peter Gansevoort, successfully defended Fort Stanwix during the revolution. These great ancestral lines awarded no such fame to Melville. He died more or less forgotten in 1891. Only after his death did he receive the honor and recognition that he had always felt he deserved.

His first novel, *Typee*, appeared in 1846 and brought him instant recognition. *Typee*, a novel about Polynesian life, was Melville's own story of living with a tribe of cannibals of Nuku Hiva. At the age of 27, Melville met and married Elizabeth Shaw. The wedding location had to be changed at the last minute for fear that admirers would "crash" the wedding (Madden). Following *Typee*, Melville produced a sequel, *Omoo*, which is a story about beach combing in Tahiti and Eimeo. Melville's early years as a seaman seemed to fuel his ideas and words into stories. Melville had written five books by age 30 and had moved to a farm in the Berkshires to work on a new book called "The Whale."

After completing "The Whale," which was now called *Moby Dick*, Melville was physically and emotionally exhausted. *Moby Dick* earned some favorable reviews, sold well, and remained in print for many years. However, it was far from a sensation, and his income from writing was not enough to support his family. Melville tried the lecture circuit and even politics, but to no avail. *Moby-Dick* was not recognized as a masterpiece until the 1920s. An exciting adventure story on one level, it also is a profound study of man's struggle against the forces of evil on a more psychological level. Melville taught himself the art of verse, and he then went on to write poetry for 30 years. In August of 1891, Melville gathered poems he had written into a collection, which he called "Weeds and Wildings" and dedicated to his wife.

Melville's life and writings are filled with problems between sons and fathers. His father, Allan Melvill, was a bankrupt merchant who left his family in economic dire straits. Allan Melvill chose his fortune over his family. Melville himself had a rocky relationship with his son Malcolm, who committed suicide. He drew on his own father-son relationships in many of his major works, such as *Redburn*, *Moby-Dick*, *Pierre*, and *Billy Budd*. In *Redburn*, the narrator, Wellingborough Redburn, praises his dead father, "but contrasts his own humble position as a sailor with that of his father, a successful business man" who died bankrupt (Robillard). In *Moby-Dick*, the character Ishmael, an unhappy, fatherless son, seeks a father figure and finds one in Queequeg, and the main character of *Pierre*, Pierre Glendennin, reveres a dead father who was not who Pierre thought he was (Robillard). In *Billy Budd*, Billy, a young sailor, discovers a "father figure" in Captain Vere, but is betrayed by him in the end. All these stories illustrate Melville's theme.

Melville compared himself to the century plant, which flowers after 100 years. In the years since his death, Melville's reputation indeed has blossomed. After years of neglect, he has secured a reputation as a great American writer.

### **1.5 Styles and Techniques used by Melville in his works**

American author Herman Melville (1819-1891) is best known for his novel *Moby-Dick*. His work was a response, though often in a negative or ambivalent way, to the Romantic Movement that dominated American literature in the mid-19th century.

Herman Melville's early autobiographical novels of adventure in the South Seas earned him a popularity that diminished as his writing turned to metaphysical themes and allegorical techniques, moving in directions that later generations would recognize as existentialism, Freudian psychologizing, and blackly comic satire. He had some success with his magazine sketches and short stories, but his poetry, a main concern during the latter part of his life, was ignored. Largely forgotten at the time of his death, he was rediscovered with the shift in taste that followed World War I. His reputation continues to grow, and *Moby-Dick* has become a world classic.

### **1.6 Chapterwise Summary and Analysis of *Moby Dick***

#### **Chapters 1-20**

Chapter One: Loomings:

The novel begins with the famous statement by the book's narrator: "Call me Ishmael." He has the habit of going to sea whenever he begins to grow "hazy about the eyes." He goes to sea as a laborer, not as a Commodore, a Captain or a Cook, but as a simple sailor. He does so because he may be paid and because it affords him wholesome exercise and pure sea air.

Analysis:

The novel *Moby Dick* is one of the most ambitious in American literature, one which encompasses several genres and styles of writing. It is a travelogue, a character study and an allegory. Linking each of the episodes of the novel and bridging these various genres is the character Ishmael, the narrator of the novel and the lens from which the reader views the action of Melville's work. The first chapter establishes Ishmael as a prototype, a working man and observer who claims no defining characters; his simplicity is a key to the novel, for it places Ishmael as an everyman whose character is subordinate to the other characters and occurrences of the novel. The name Ishmael, however, imbues the novel with religious undertones that will prevail through the course of *Moby Dick*.

Chapter Two: The Carpet-Bag:

Ishmael arrives in New Bedford on his way to Nantucket to embark on a whaling voyage. He passes by several inns, including the "Sword-Fish Inn," "The Crossed Harpoons" and "The Trap" before reaching "The Spouter Inn," where he chooses to rest that night.

Analysis:

The religious undertones of *Moby Dick* continue through this second chapter, in which Ishmael travels from inn to inn, searching for an appropriate place to stay for the night. This is a subtle reference that parallels the travels of Mary and Joseph, as Ishmael finally finds a place where he may stay, in equally questionable accommodations.

#### Chapter Three: The Spouter Inn:

The Spouter Inn reminds Ishmael of the bulwarks of some condemned old craft. There is a long, limber portentous, black mass of something hovering in the center of a picture of a painting there; it bears a faint resemblance to a gigantic fish, but in fact represents a Cape-Horner in a great hurricane. On the opposite wall is an array of monstrous clubs and spears. The innkeeper tells Ishmael that he must sleep two in a bed, which he dislikes and will do so only if the innkeeper has no other place for him. The innkeeper tells Ishmael about the ship harpooner, a "dark-complexioned" man with whom Ishmael will share a bed. Ishmael suggests that he will sleep on a bench instead, but it is too uncomfortable and he must sleep in a bed. Ishmael goes into the harpooner's room, where there are fishhooks and harpoons. The harpooner, who is from New Zealand, appears dangerous. The harpooner, Queequeg, undresses to show his tattooed chest and arms, and has a tomahawk with him. Ishmael gets in bed with him only after the landlord makes him stash his tomahawk away. Ishmael never slept better in his life.

#### Analysis:

Even long before Ishmael begins his whaling voyage, Melville creates a portentous atmosphere that foreshadows great tragedy and hardship. Even the name of the innkeeper, Peter Coffin, is a reminder of death. The painting in the Spouter Inn emphasizes the possible dangers of the sea, while the décor of the Spouter is intensely violent imagery that suggests pain and hardship. The painting in the Spouter Inn is of particular significance; it shows a picture that could either be a ship or a gigantic fish, thus blurring the lines between the two different entities. This suggests that the difference between the whaling ship and the titular character of the novel, the great whale, are in some sense one and the same.

The character Queequeg lends himself to several different symbolic interpretations. As an aborigine from New Zealand, Queequeg represents the uncivilized and the foreign. His particular heritage is relatively unimportant to the novel; it is more important to note that he represents the 'other,' a person from a different heritage from the conventional American society which Ishmael may in some sense represent. Yet despite Queequeg's background, he proves himself to be more 'civilized' and refined than originally suggested; his reputation as a savage stems primarily from the tales of the innkeeper and not from any direct behavior.

#### Chapter Four: The Counterpane:

Ishmael awakes to find Queequeg's arm thrown over him in an affectionate manner. Ishmael finally awakens Queequeg, who dresses by first putting on his hat and his boots. Queequeg is a creature in a transition state, "neither caterpillar nor butterfly . . . just enough civilized to show off his outlandishness in the strangest possible manner." Queequeg washes himself, but only his chest and arms and not his face.

#### Analysis:

Melville portrays the relationship between Queequeg and Ishmael as a perverse romance, placing the two men in bed together and even sleeping with one another in an affectionate manner. The intent of this is not to seriously suggest homoeroticism, but rather to demonstrate that the patterns of behavior demonstrated by Queequeg are unconventional, as when he dresses himself by first putting on his boots. The comparison of Queequeg to a creature in the state of metamorphosis is apt, showing him to be a person in the state of transition, neither entirely part of a savage world nor fully accepted and integrated into civilized society.

#### Chapter Five: Breakfast:

Ishmael goes to the bar-room, which is now full of boarders who are nearly all whalers. There are some men who appear more at ease in manner because of their travels, although Ledyard and Mungo Park, the great New England and Scotch travelers, respectively, possess the least assurance of the group. Queequeg sits at the head of the table, having brought his harpoon to the breakfast table and using it during the meal.

#### Analysis:

Melville continues to establish Queequeg as a combination of civilization and savagery. While Ishmael respects his behavior at breakfast, in which Queequeg somehow assumes a position as the head of the table, Queequeg nevertheless brings his harpoon to the breakfast table, considered an obvious breach of polite behavior.

#### Chapter Six: The Street:

During his first daylight stroll through New Bedford, Ishmael sees around the docks the queerest looking nondescripts from foreign parts. In New Bedford, fathers reportedly give whales for dowries to their daughters, and portion off their nieces with a few porpoises a piece.

#### Analysis:

This chapter is significant primarily in order to establish the predominance of whaling in the New Bedford community, in which the whales are considered prizes significant enough to be a dowry. Melville also establishes New Bedford as a microcosm of society in which all races and classes are present, thus suggesting a larger applicability of the story outside of its more specific locale.

#### Chapter Seven: The Chapel:

In New Bedford there is a Whaleman's Chapel, where a scattered and silent congregation worships. There are numerous memorials to whalers lost at sea. Queequeg has a gaze of incredulous curiosity in this chapel, and is the only one to notice Ishmael's entrance into the chapel. Ishmael regards these memorials with deep feelings, knowing that the same fate may be his own, but he somehow grows merry again. There is death in the business of whaling, but he thinks that we have mistaken the matter of Life and Death, and that persons are like oysters observing the sun, thinking the thickest water to be the thinnest of air.

#### Analysis:

The Whaleman's Chapel serves as yet another reminder of the high mortality rate at sea, foreshadowing the inevitable hardship that will ensue. Whaling takes on a greater significance in this chapter, representing matters of human mortality and the afterlife. The analogy that Melville uses to show the mistaken human perspective on mortality is significant, for he uses the perspective of the ocean and of the whale to show the errors in human thought.

#### Chapter Eight: The Pulpit:

Ishmael has not been seated long in the chapel when Father Mapple, the famous preacher, enters. He was once a sailor and a harpooner, but had dedicated his life to the ministry for several years. Father Mapple enjoys a wide reputation for sincerity and sanctity, so Ishmael cannot suspect him of any mere stage tricks. On the front of the pulpit is the likeness of a ship's bluff bows and the Holy Bible rested on a projecting piece of scroll work, fashioned after a ship's fiddle-headed beak. Ishmael wonders what the meaning could be, for the pulpit is the earth's foremost part; all the rest comes from in its rear, and the pulpit leads the world. According to Ishmael, "the world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete, and the pulpit is its prow."

#### Analysis:

The dominant theme of this chapter is the relationship between whaling and the Melville relates whaling to spiritual matters once again through this chapter, in which Father Mapple represents both of these disparate aspects. The pulpit from which Mapple preaches also relates whaling to spiritual matters. Melville explicitly makes the comparison between the world and a ship on a voyage, thus preparing the reader to relate the actual ship on its impending voyage to the world in general.

#### Chapter Nine: The Sermon:

Father Mapple arises to the pulpit and pauses, then offers a prayer in which he states "I saw the opening maw of hell, / With endless pains and sorrows there; / Which none but they that feel can tell / Oh, I was plunging to despair." He then gives a sermon that considers Jonah and the whale, wondering that the lesson of this tale is. He claims that it is a lesson to sinful men and to God, for Jonah flouts God with the sin of disobedience, thinking that a ship made by men will carry him into countries where God does not reign. Father Mapple recounts the terrors in Jonah's soul. The lesson of Jonah is to preach the Truth in the face of Falsehood, even if this truth may be appalling.

#### Analysis:

Father Mapple's sermon continues to set the tone for the novel, making the obvious comparison between the story of Jonah and the whale and the impending conflict between Captain Ahab and Moby Dick. Several chapters before the character of Ahab is even introduced, Melville prepares the reader for a comparison between Ahab and Jonah, for both characters flout God through their arrogance and disobedience against God. The story that Father Mapple recounts of Jonah is a long detail of hardship and pain, thus foreshadowing the difficult voyage of the Pequod, and constructs Jonah to be a complex man gripped by terrors in his soul, another important comparison between Jonah and Captain Ahab.

Other than the comparisons between Jonah and the as yet not introduced Ahab, Father Mapple's sermon is also significant for its final instruction to preach the truth in the face of falsehood, even if that truth may be very difficult to take. This part of the sermon relates most directly to Ishmael himself, as the narrator of the novel. This suggests that Ishmael must tell some unspeakable and harsh truth about his voyage with Captain Ahab, no matter how unpleasant that truth may be.

In general, Father Mapple's sermon continues to imbue the novel with a striking religious theme. This religious atmosphere is one with a particular emphasis on pain and suffering which leads to redemption; it is a harsh and brutal form of spirituality that conforms to the brutal setting and nature of the novel. Melville relates spirituality to intense struggle, thus giving the voyage that will be the heart of the novel a larger significance.

#### Chapter Ten: A Bosom Friend:

Ishmael returns to the Spouter Inn to find Queequeg there alone, having left the Chapel before the benediction. Ishmael notices that, despite Queequeg's marred face, he did not have a disagreeable countenance. He even reminds Ishmael of George Washington, "cannibalistically developed." Queequeg had not consorted with any of the men at the inn, yet seems entirely at ease and preserving the utmost serenity. Ishmael no longer feels threatened by the world, but instead feels as if "the soothing savage had redeemed it." Ishmael asks him if they are again to be bedfellows, and proposes a social smoke. That night they join in a pagan ceremony together, despite Ishmael's Christian upbringing. Ishmael questions the use of worship and the will of God, to do to a fellow man what one would have done to him, and thus decided to turn "idolator." Queequeg and Ishmael fall asleep together, as "man and wife."

#### Analysis:

While Ishmael initially feared Queequeg, he soon comes to respect and admire him, despite his supposed savagery. In this chapter, Melville explores the idea that within the uncivilized Queequeg there is a greater sense of civility and honor. Ishmael nearly idolizes Queequeg, comparing him to George Washington and finding that Queequeg has given him a sense of serenity and ease. Melville does explore the idea that there is some perversity in the relationship between the two men, at least in the estimation of Ishmael, who worries that he is engaging in a pagan, idolatrous activity. Melville does indicate a certain homoerotic element to the relationship between the two, even comparing the two men sleeping together to a husband and wife. The anxiety that Ishmael feels concerning whether or not he is engaging in some sinful activity with Queequeg definitely lends to this interpretation as well. Yet Ishmael's musing on pagan activity demonstrate that he and the novel are moving past the strict Christian spiritualism that has dominated the novel and approaching a different religious interpretation. Ishmael, and by extension Melville, are questioning the idea of the will of God beyond strictly Christian tenets.

#### Chapter Eleven: Nightgown:

Queequeg and Ishmael lie in bed, napping at short intervals and often chatting. Upon opening his eyes, Ishmael finds that his strong repugnance to Queequeg smoking in bed begins to

fade, for he now likes nothing better to have him smoking because he seems to full of serene household joy.

Analysis:

Melville continues to show the intense bond between Queequeg and Ishmael in this chapter, further continuing the analogy of marriage to demonstrate how Ishmael has become progressively more tolerant toward Queequeg. This also suggests that Ishmael longs for a domestic life that he lacks as sailor, appreciating the intimacy that he shares with Queequeg as a replacement for a conventional household life.

Chapter Twelve: Biographical:

Queequeg is a native of Kokovoko, an island far away to the West and South. His father was a High Chief, a King, and his uncle a High Priest. A Sag Harbor ship visited Queequeg's father's bay, and there he sought passage to Christian lands. The captain threatened to throw Queequeg overboard, and suspended a cutlass over his naked wrists, but Queequeg did not relent. He was put among the sailors, but did not mind. He was motivated by a profound desire to learn among the Christians. Ishmael wonders why Queequeg did not propose going home and having a coronation, but he is fearful that Christians had unfitted him for ascending the undefiled throne of thirty pagan kings before him. A harpoon had taken the place of a scepter for Queequeg. Queequeg intends to go to sea again in his old vocation. They resolve to go to Nantucket together.

Analysis:

Melville explores the distinction between savage and civilized through the biographical details concerning Queequeg, whose history suggests greater culture and civility than the Europeans with whom he comes in contact. While the sailors believe Queequeg to be a savage, he instead proves to be a literal nobleman whose behavior is highly honorable in contrast to their brutality. The irony of Queequeg's tale is that, having traveled to America and lived among the supposedly civilized, he has in fact become defiled and unfit for his royal position; this calls into questions definitions of savagery and civilization, for Queequeg presumably becomes a savage to his people as he adopts more European customs.

Chapter Thirteen: Wheelbarrow:

The boarders seem amused by the sudden friendship between Ishmael and Queequeg. They borrow a wheelbarrow, and start on their way to Nantucket. Queequeg tells a funny story about the first wheelbarrow Queequeg had ever seen, and how he did not know what to do with it. Ishmael and Queequeg board a schooner to Nantucket. On this schooner, a local bumpkin mocks Queequeg, who responds by pushing him back. The bumpkin complains to the Captain that Queequeg is the devil, but the Captain merely warns him. When the bumpkin is swept overboard when the mainsail breaks, Queequeg saves him and thus receives an apology from the captain. Queequeg seems to deserve a medal for his action, but behaves quite magnanimous.

Analysis:

The descriptions of Queequeg as an intensely honorable and admirable character become an actuality in this chapter, in which Queequeg saves a man from drowning despite the fact that he earlier mocked Queequeg. He even behaves with dignity and great humility after doing so, refusing accolades for his bravery.

#### Chapter Fourteen: Nantucket:

Nantucket is a mere hillock and elbow of sand, all beach without a background. There is a wonderful traditional story of how the island was settled by the red-men when an eagle carried an infant Indian in his talons, and his parents followed the eagle in their canoes to the island, where they found the infant's skeleton.

#### Analysis:

Melville frequently shifts styles throughout *Moby Dick*, veering from the narrative to explore different genres of writing. In this chapter, he indulges in writing a travelogue describing the history and locale of Nantucket. The purpose of this is somewhat experimental and purely informative, adding depth and shading to the setting of the novel without actually contributing to the narrative drive of the story.

#### Chapter Fifteen: Chowder:

It is late in the evening when Queequeg and Ishmael reach Nantucket, and go to the Try Pots, owned by Hosea Hussey, the cousin of Peter Coffin. Two pots hang from a tree near the inn, looking like a gallows. The Try Pots serves chowder for breakfast and dinner, and is paved with clamshells.

#### Analysis:

Melville deflates a great deal of the tension that he had been building throughout the previous chapters through Ishmael's self-aware observations concerning the various ill omens he has discerned. Ishmael notes the various signs of death, including the gravestones, the name of his previous innkeeper (Peter Coffin), and the gallows imagery, as if performing a symbolic literary analysis of the novel as he narrates. Nevertheless, this does make the reader explicitly aware of the death-related imagery that pervades the novel, muting its ominous, foreboding tone but still making the possibility of great pain and suffering inevitable.

#### Chapter Sixteen: The Ship:

Queequeg had been diligently consulting Yojo, the name of his black little god, in preparation for selecting their craft. There are three ships up for three-year voyages: the Devil-Dam, the Tit-bit, and the Pequod. The Pequod is named after a celebrated tribe of Massachusetts Indians. The Pequod is a ship of the old school, rather small and with an old fashioned claw-footed look. The Captain was once Peleg, now retired after many years. Ishmael introduces himself to Peleg, who is suspicious because Ishmael has no whaling experience. Peleg tells Ishmael that Ahab is now captain of the ship, and he has only one leg, for the other was lost by a whale. Peleg and Bildad, both Quakers, are owners of the boat, and are "fighting Quakers." Bildad and Peleg look over Ishmael. Bildad is the "queerest old Quaker" he ever saw. Peleg and Bildad negotiate the lay (share of the profits) for the voyage, and Ishmael demands the three-hundredth lay. Peleg and Bildad argue with one another about how much



of the lay they should offer, and their argument nearly leads to violence between the two. After Bildad leaves, Ishmael signs the paper and asks to see Captain Ahab. Peleg describes him as a queer man, but a good one, "grand, ungodly, god-like." Peleg compares him to the Ahab of old, who was crowned king, but a vile one. Before even meeting Ahab, Ishmael feels a sympathy and a sorrow for him.

Analysis:

The most significant aspect of this chapter is the introduction of Ahab, who is the central character and the primary focus of the novel, despite his mysterious and long-delayed appearance. Long before Ahab actually interacts with Ishmael and the other characters, Melville establishes him as an imposing and tragic figure, deserving of sympathy and sorrow. Most of the details surrounding Ahab contain some element of legend, such as the story that he lost one of his legs, and Melville further creates a tension between Ahab's supposed grandeur and his more fearsome qualities. Peleg describes him as simultaneously ungodly and godlike, thus suggesting that the dynamic between these sides of Ahab's personality will form the primary internal struggle of *Moby Dick*. Melville additionally continues the Biblical allusions that dominate the character names; here the name Ahab describes a king who turns vile, suggesting that the Ahab of this novel will be a similarly conflicted leader.

While Ahab is the central character of the novel, Melville introduces in this chapter several minor characters who add shading to the novel. The "fighting Quakers" Bildad and Peleg continue the relationship between whaling and religion, incorporating their religious tradition into their merchant work ethic. Yet, as Queequeg's consultation of his god demonstrates, this relationship between religion and whaling is not specifically Christian; the relationship is more general and related to basic spirituality than to any particular sect.

Chapter Seventeen: The Ramadan:

Queequeg's Ramadan, or Fasting and Humiliation, continues all day, so Ishmael does not disturb him until night. Ishmael considers how foolish some religious traditions are, whether Presbyterian or Pagan. When Ishmael returns to his room, he finds it locked, and panics because he sees that Queequeg's harpoon is missing. He makes Mrs. Hussey unlock the door (there is some suspicion that Queequeg has committed suicide), but they find Queequeg inside, calm and self-collected, holding his Yojo idol on his head and not saying a word. Queequeg does not speak for the entire day, until finally he presses his forehead against Ishmael's and declares that his Ramadan is over. Ishmael suggests to Queequeg that fasts are nonsense, bad for the health and useless for the soul. Ishmael believes that fasting makes the body and the spirit cave in.

Analysis:

Although Herman Melville has approached matters of religious belief with a directness and seem approval as a significant part of human existence, he still remains quite critical of some aspects of religious belief. This chapter illustrates the belief espoused by Ishmael that religious practices are in some sense odd and in many instances detrimental; the message appears to be that spiritual practices should be, in a very distinct sense, useful, and that practices such as fasting have direct negative consequences. Ishmael relates the possibility

that Queequeg has committed suicide to his religious beliefs, and cites experience to show that those religions with the harshest practices are those whose followers become sickly in mind and in temperament.

The greatest argument refuting Ishmael's claim is the very character of Queequeg himself. As the most poised and noble of the characters in the novel, Queequeg demonstrates the judgment and temperament that contradicts the idea of sickness and ill-humor as promoted by Ishmael.

#### Chapter Eighteen: His Mark:

Captain Peleg gruffly tells Ishmael that no cannibals such as Queequeg can go aboard unless they previously produce their papers. Ishmael tells Peleg that Queequeg is a member of the First Congregational Church, but Peleg and Bildad are both skeptical. Ishmael finally says that Queequeg belongs to the same ancient Catholic Church as all do the congregation of the world. Peleg makes Queequeg, whom he calls Quohog, write his name, and he signs using the infinity symbol, an exact counterpart of a figure tattooed on his arm.

#### Analysis:

The idea of naming is a significant theme throughout *Moby Dick*, for each of the odd names of the novel has some significance, usually biblical. Melville has established a strong relationship between the name of many characters and the characters themselves (Ishmael, Peter Coffin). In *Moby Dick*, names serve as a key to the character, more than just an identifying mark and rather a key to their respective personalities. For Queequeg, his name as he writes it is literally part of him, tattooed on his arm. Therefore the assumption that Queequeg cannot be Christian because of his name and the mispronunciation of his name as "Quohog" symbolizes a loss of identity on his part by the estimation of Peleg.

#### Chapter Nineteen: The Prophet:

A stranger passes Ishmael and Queequeg and asks them whether they have signed the articles, and whether this means that they have signed their souls. He then asks if they have souls at all to sell. The stranger asks if they have met Old Thunder (Captain Ahab). Ishmael says that Captain Ahab is ill, but the stranger says that when Captain Ahab is all right, then his left arm (which he does not have) will be all right. The stranger tells them that Ahab lost his leg. The stranger introduces himself as Elijah, and then Ishmael and Queequeg leave him.

#### Analysis:

The character Elijah has a small but significant role in the novel, serving much as his biblical counterpart as a prophet for Ishmael as he begins his voyage. The whaling voyage appears more and more ominous thanks to the appearance of this prophet, who indicates that Ishmael has sold his soul by agreeing to undertake the three year voyage on the *Pequod*. Also, the mythic connotations to Ahab continue in this chapter with the reference to him as "Old Thunder," an allusion to the Norse God of War.

#### Chapter Twenty: All Astir:

There is great activity aboard the Pequod, as the sails are mended and preparations for departure come to a close. The sailors store the Pequod with the food and amenities necessary for the three year voyage. Ishmael only half fancies being committed to so long a voyage, but prepares to sail the next morning.

Analysis:

The preparations for departure underscore the vast nature of the voyage on the Pequod. This is no short-term commitment that Ishmael and Queequeg are making; they are sacrificing three years of their lives for this voyage, and Ishmael only has a partial commitment to the journey. The ambivalence that Ishmael feels toward the voyage affects his narrative; by making his view of the voyage unclear, Melville makes him an even more impartial narrator rather than one with a specific and identifiable agenda.

Chapter Twenty-One: Going Aboard:

Elijah sees Ishmael again, and asks him if he is going aboard, then attempts to detain him. However, Ishmael and Queequeg board the Pequod, where they find everything quiet. Ishmael believes that he sees shadows on board, and he and Queequeg awake the chief mate of the ship, Starbuck. The crew comes on board in twos and threes, while Captain Ahab remains invisible to everyone within his cabin.

Analysis:

The second appearance of Elijah reinforces his importance as a prophetic character as well as the grave undertones of the voyage, solidifying his claims of impending tragedy upon the Pequod. Melville creates a sense of ominous tension through the stillness and quiet of this chapter; the nearly silent ship and the seemingly dead Starbuck create the mood of a cemetery or crypt. Melville compounds this through the shadows that Ishmael sees which contain elements of a ghost story. In addition, the religious connotations to the novel continue as the crew boards the ship; their arrival in pairs recalls the story of Noah and the Ark, as if the crew were the last remnants of a world they are leaving behind.

Chapter Twenty-Two: Merry Christmas:

Peleg asks Starbuck whether everything is all right, and orders him to get Captain Ahab. Peleg gives orders to the crew, while Bildad scolds the crew for profanity. Bildad paces about the deck, somewhat loath to leave the boat on such a long voyage. Peleg takes the departure more "like a philosopher," but despite this there is still some regret as he and Bildad board their boat and leave the Pequod for the shore as it sails out to sea.

Analysis:

The title of this novel is ironic, for it is the only significant mention of the holiday throughout the chapter; upon boarding the Pequod, such details as dates and holidays lose their significance as the crew removes themselves from normal society. Yet the characters Peleg and Bildad contribute to the notion that this removal from society is somewhat regrettable. Despite their return to the comforts of land, Bildad and Peleg are mournful that they must leave the Pequod.

### Chapter Twenty-Three: The Lee Shore:

When the Pequod thrusts into the waves, Ishmael sees Bulkington, a dangerous man just landed from a four years' dangerous voyage that he had seen at the Coffin inn. The land seems "scorching" to Bulkington's feet, and Ishmael begins to think about how "in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, indefinite as God," and thus it is better to die at sea than on land.

#### Analysis:

Both this and the previous chapter posit the idea that a certain class of persons exist who operate better on the sea than on land, as shown by Bildad and Peleg, both regretful that they must leave the Pequod for shore, and Bulkington, who seemed unnatural when Ishmael saw him on land at the Coffin inn. Ishmael attributes this to a certain psychological attainment, claiming that truth belongs at sea for its indefinite quality and flexibility. For Melville, the sea represents a degree of mystery and abstraction compared to the more definite atmosphere of dry land.

### Chapter Twenty-Four: The Advocate:

The business of whaling is not considered by those in the liberal professions and is largely unnoticed, likely because others believe that the vocation amounts to a butchering sort of business. Yet this is an important business, as shown by the Dutch, who have admirals of their whaling fleets, or the lavish expenses bestowed on whaling fleets by Louis XVI. Ishmael refutes the claim that the whaler has no famous author or chronicler by citing Job, who wrote the first account of the Leviathan. There is dignity in whaling, an imperial profession. Ishmael calls a whale ship his Yale and his Harvard.

#### Analysis:

One of the primary reasons that *Moby Dick* is considered a paramount of American literature is its stylistic ambition; the novel encompasses a wide range of genres and shifts in and out of them while interrupting the narrative. Here Melville abandons the actual plot of the novel to indulge in an argumentative essay concerning the merits of whaling. In terms of the novel as a whole, this chapter serves to equate whaling with something larger and more significant through the allusions to Louis XVI and Jonah. The numerous reference to the whale as a Leviathan are certain significant in a political context as well, recalling the title of the famous political tract by Thomas Hobbes in which he names the machinery of the state a "Leviathan." These allusions give added significance to the whaling mission, imbuing it with political and social connotations that will become clearer as the novel progresses.

### Chapter Twenty-Five: Postscript:

Ishmael notes that the same oil used for the coronation of kings is sperm oil in its unmanufactured, unpolluted state.

#### Analysis:

This chapter is essentially as its title states, a postscript; this is important for stylistic integrity, lending integrity to the essay style of the previous chapter in its complete form.

#### Chapter Twenty-Six: Knights and Squires:

Starbuck is a native of Nantucket and a Quaker by descent. He is quite thin, which seems to be a condensation of the man, who is by no means ill-looking. He is no crusader after perils, for in him courage is not a sentiment but a thing that is useful. Ishmael posits that man in the ideal, is so noble and sparkling, that "over any ignominious blemish in him all his fellows should run to throw their costliest robes."

#### Analysis:

Starbuck serves as a contrast to the grand and obsessive Ishmael; he is more rational and grounded than Ishmael, a man pared down to his most basic values and ideals. In some sense, Starbuck represents efficiency and rationality, but he also has a core of idealism that endows him with a great sense of nobility and a faith in mankind that starkly conflicts with the dark and brooding sense of humanity held by Ahab. These qualities in Starbuck foreshadow later conflict between Ahab and Starbuck; Melville creates such a contrast between the two characters' values that a conflict between the obsessive Ahab and the rational Starbuck seems inevitable.

#### Chapter Twenty-Seven: Knights and Squires:

Stubb is the second mate of the voyage, a native of Cape Cod and a happy-go-lucky man. He is good-humored, easy and careless. There is no telling what he thought of death, and Ishmael wonders how he can remain so easy-going and unfearing. Ishmael attributes it in part to his smoking. The third mate of the ship is Flask, a native of Martha's Vineyard who is very pugnacious concerning whales. Starbuck, Flask and Stubb are momentous men. Queequeg is selected as Starbuck's harpooner. Tashtego, an Indian from Martha's Vineyard, is the harpooner for Stubb. The third harpooner is Daggoo, a gigantic black man from Africa who still retains his barbaric virtues. According to Ishmael, islanders make the best whale men; he dubs them Isolatoes, not acknowledging the common continent of men but living on a separate continent of one's own.

#### Analysis:

Melville adds greater depth to the characters that make up the crew of the Pequod in this chapter, in which he portrays Stubb as a jovial and good-humored person who remains undaunted by the events around him, and Flask as an aggressive New Englander. The division of labor among the ship seems significant; while all of the officers are from the eastern United States, specifically New England, their assistants are drawn strictly from less civilized cultures: American Indian, African and Aboriginal. Yet Ishmael seems to indicate that there is an order to the ship apart from race or national identity despite the hierarchy of the ship; the men who are the superior whalers are those who are "isolatoes," not bound to particular allegiances and instead living as independent persons separate from their culture. This further continues the theme of *Moby Dick* concerning the whale voyage as an escape from the normal confines of civilization; on the whale ship men need not be concerned with their identities and become an independent part of their particular crew.

#### Chapter Twenty-Eight: Ahab:

For several days after leaving Nantucket, nothing is seen of Captain Ahab. The seclusion of Ahab begins to disturb Ishmael, who remembers Elijah's diabolical rants about him. Still, Ishmael concedes that three better chief officers could not be found for the ship. Captain Ahab finally appears on deck one day, bearing no signs of illness and looking like a man cut away from the stake. He seems to be made of solid bronze. There is a slender rod-like mark on his face that appears branded upon him. Ahab stands on an ivory leg, fashioned from the bone of a Sperm Whale's jaw. Ahab gives an appearance of fortitude, but soon withdraws into the cabin. After that morning, he is visible every day to the crew and eventually becomes a little genial and less and less a recluse. In one instance, he even appears to give what in another man would be considered a smile.

Analysis:

Ahab finally receives an introduction in this chapter after a long period of foreshadowing by Melville. In contrast to the portrayals of the other ship officers by Melville, the description of Ahab focuses on the qualities that are inhuman and even mechanical. There are few details akin to those given for Stubb or Starbuck, which emphasize their personalities and ideals; instead, Melville gives a basic physical description of Ahab that compares him to largely inhuman and inanimate objects. The basic impression that Melville gives of Ahab is one of durability; Ahab is a man who shows few basic human characteristics, but instead has been chiseled and formed by his whaling experiences. His ivory leg is a significant aspect of his character, demonstrating both this somewhat inhuman quality to Ahab as well as showing that the whale is an inseparable part of Ahab himself, literally part of his body.

Chapter Twenty-Nine: Enter Ahab; to Him, Stubb:

Some days elapse and the Pequod reaches the bright Quito spring in the Tropics. Every twenty-four hours at night Ahab would aid the sailors with the rope, a "touch of humanity" in him. When Stubb makes a joke at Ahab's expense, Ahab sharply reprimands him and calls him a donkey, then a mule. He finally kicks Stubb. Stubb wonders how Ahab seems to sleep only three hours each night, and says that Ahab is afflicted with "what some folks ashore call a conscience." Stubb admits that "coming afoul of that old man has a sort of turned me wrong side out."

Analysis:

The occasion details marking Ahab's friendly or cordial behavior serve not to humanize Ahab, but instead to emphasize how separate and distinct he remains from the rest of the crew. Whenever he performs a kindly action, it is a departure from his conventional behavior and thus notable. More appropriate to Ahab's demeanor is his stern treatment of Stubb, which instills a great fear and loathing in him. Melville even portrays Ahab as a person who does not even need to follow conventional human behaviors, living on barely any sleep. However, Stubb draws an interesting conclusion from this behavior by Ahab, finding that this is evidence that Ahab has a conscience. This suggests that particular human qualities may exist within Ahab, despite his stoic and harsh behavior; in particular, Ahab is a haunted man, afflicted by his experiences and obsessed with these.

Chapter Thirty: The Pipe:

When Stubb had departed, Ahab stands leaning over the bulwarks, where he remarks that smoking no longer soothes, and he tosses the lighted pipe into the sea then paces around the ship.

Analysis:

Melville demonstrates Ahab's power and influence over his crew through the effect that Ahab has on Stubb, who is shaken by his confrontation with Ahab. This bolsters the idea that Ahab is a fearsome man not to be opposed, not only because of his physical and direct influence over others but also because of the psychological stress that he places on others. Ahab is capable of creating a sense of turmoil and unease in Stubb, who finds no solace for his anxiety concerning Ahab.

Chapter Thirty-One: Queen Mab:

Stubb tells Flask that he dreamed that Captain Ahab kicked him with his ivory leg, and when he tried to kick back he kicked Ahab's leg right off. Stubb muses on the difference between a living leg and a false one, and claims that a blow from the hand is fifty times more savage than a blow from a cane. Flask tells him that a kick from Ahab bestows honors akin to a slap by a queen.

Analysis:

Melville continues to elaborate the theme of Ahab as inhuman through this chapter, in which Stubb muses on the difference between a living leg and a false one, finding a strike by a living one to be far more insulting than being hit by a wooden leg.

The title of this chapter, Queen Mab, refers to a famous soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* by Mercutio, in which he speaks of the fairy queen who visits persons to instill dreams in them. The title is this ironic, considering the Queen Mab soliloquy refers to dreams of romance while Stubb instead has bizarre dreams of revenge.

Chapter Thirty-Two: Cetology:

Cetology is the study of whales, and the subject has been lengthily handled by numerous authors including Captain Scoresby, the best existing authority on the Greenland whale. There are only two books that pretend to put the living Sperm Whale as their subject and succeed at the task, by Bennett and by Beale, both surgeons to English whale ships. Ishmael finally defines a whale as a spouting fish with a horizontal tail, going back to the claim by Jonah that the whale is a fish. Ishmael discusses the differences between the various whales, noting each type and the characteristics of the respective types of whale.

Analysis:

Melville once again abandons the narrative of the novel to adopt a different stylistic tone for *Moby Dick*. The novel now shifts to a scientific discourse on the study of whales in an attempt to elucidate their particular characteristics. The effect of this description of cetology, however, has an opposite effect; instead of giving a clear indication of the Sperm Whale, the chapter on cetology contributes to the idea that the sperm whale is something difficult to study and define. This lends credence to more symbolic definitions of the white whale that is

the novel's title character; since it is more difficult to define the whale in scientific terms, the whale thus lends itself to more vague and creative symbolism.

#### Chapter Thirty-Three: The Specksynder:

In the days of the Dutch Fishery, the Chief Harpooner or Specksynder reigned supreme. In the American Fishery is not only an important officer in the boat, but under certain circumstances the commander of the ship's deck. Captain Ahab tends to mask himself behind the forms and usages of the sea, for he has an intellectual superiority that can manifest itself in irresistible dictatorship. Ahab moves among his crew in all his "Nantucket grimness and shagginess."

#### Analysis:

In this chapter, Melville contributes additional information concerning the operations of the whaling ship and its hierarchy, framing the role of the harpooner or Specksynder in comparison with the rest of the crew. More importantly, Melville continues to elucidate the character of Ahab as not only an imposing and obsessive man, but a person whose intellectual capacity lends itself to a strong sense of dictatorship and control. It is these qualities that will become significant once the conflict with Moby Dick comes to prominence as the novel progresses.

#### Chapter Thirty-Four: The Cabin-Table:

At noon Dough-Boy the steward announces dinner to the ship officers. Ahab presides over the table like a mute sea-lion surrounded by his deferential cubs, but in him there seems to be no social arrogance. The table is silent, but because Ahab forbade conversation; it is only that he is silent. Flask is the last person down at the table and the first one to leave; since Flask had become an officer he had never known what it was to be otherwise than hungry, more or less, for what he eats does not relieve his hunger as keep it immortal in him. In contrast to the captain's table is the cabin's table where everyone else eats. Dough-Boy seems tense while serving Queequeg and Tashtego. Ahab seems no exception to most American whale captains, who believe that the ship's cabin belongs to them and it is by courtesy alone that anybody else is permitted there. Socially, Ahab is inaccessible, nominally included in the census of Christendom, but still alien to it.

#### Analysis:

The particularly inhuman qualities to Ahab manifest themselves in strange and surprising ways; despite his dictatorial streak and fearsome manner, he has no hierarchical sense of social propriety nor "social arrogance." Melville thus makes an important distinction, finding Ahab to be inaccessible not because he considers himself a social superior to his crew, but because he is not part of this crew. This further relates to the idea of Ahab as inhuman and, as Melville calls him, "alien" to others.

As well as the separation between Ahab and his crew, an additional division that Melville describes in this chapter is the line between the officers and the crew, who take their meals at different tables and eat under more tense conditions. Melville does not strongly develop the



contrast between the two tables in order to make an explicit statement, but does leave the difference between the two as a reminder of the hierarchy of the Pequod.

#### Chapter Thirty-Five: The Mast-Head:

In most American whalemens the mast-heads are manned almost simultaneously with the vessel's leaving her port. There is a long history of mast-heads dating back to the Egyptians. Obed of Nantucket tells that in the early times of whale fishery, before ships were regularly launched in pursuit of game, people of Nantucket erected spars along the sea-coast as lookouts, but this custom has now become obsolete. There are unfortunate whale ships unprovided with crow's nests, the little tents or pulpits that protect the whaler from inclement weather.

#### Analysis:

This chapter is yet another instance in which Melville abandons the narrative to employ a different style of writing. He once again returns to a historical view of whaling, citing developments in the industry and changes to it.

#### Chapter Thirty-Six: The Quarter-Deck:

Ahab ascends the cabin-gangway to the deck and paces as usual; his pacing has made dents that look deeper and deeper. Stubb remarks to Flask that "the chick that's in him pecks the shell. 'Twill soon be out." Ahab asks the men what they will do when they see a whale, as if building up their energy for the task at hand. He tells the crew that whichever one raises Ahab a white-headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw will have an ounce of gold. Tashtego asks Ahab if this white whale is the one called Moby Dick. Starbuck asks Ahab if it was Moby Dick who took Ahab's leg, and Ahab admits as such. Stubb whispers that Moby Dick smites Ahab's chest and that "it rings most vast, but hollow." Starbuck tells Ahab that his obsession with Moby Dick is madness. Ahab claims that all things are but masks but in each event there is some unknown reasoning behind that mask, and man must strike through this mask. For Ahab, the white whale is that mask. He says that "that inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate" and "truth has no confines."

#### Analysis:

It is in this chapter that Herman Melville first mentions the titular character of the novel, the white Sperm Whale responsible for the loss of Ahab's leg. Body parts are a prevalent motif throughout this chapter, with the mention of Ahab's lost leg and the reference to Stubb about how Ahab's chest "rings most vast, but hollow." This lends credence to the idea that Moby Dick afflicts Ahab in a very personal way, striking at not only his leg but his mind and his heart. Even at this first mention of Moby Dick, Melville indicates that Ahab's obsession with the whale is a sign of madness.

For Ahab, the defeat of Moby Dick will represent a personal redemption and a means of achieving clarity and peace. Claiming that Moby Dick is "chiefly what I hate" gives the whale greater significance for Ahab, who finds that the whale represents all of the mysteries of his life. This creates an interesting duality; the quest to find Moby Dick is therefore both

an external conflict between Ahab and the whale as well as an internal conflict within Ahab for a sense of peace and happiness.

#### Chapter Thirty-Seven: Sunset:

Ahab sits alone in the cabin by the stern windows, gazing outward. This chapter is told from the perspective of Ahab, who claims that there was once a time when the sunrise nobly spurred him, but no more. He considers what he has dared and willed, and what he will do, despite the fact that Starbuck may think him mad. Ahab calls himself "madness maddened."

#### Analysis:

With Moby Dick yet to appear, Melville develops the primary conflict of this section to be the struggle of Ahab against his intense desire to defeat the white whale. These internal thoughts by Ahab are significant, for they demonstrate that Ahab has a sense of self-awareness concerning his supposed madness; he is not a man completely possessed by his need for justice, but a man who realizes his faults and in some sense attempts to suppress them.

#### Chapter Thirty-Eight: Dusk:

Starbuck leans against the mainmast. This chapter is told from the perspective of Starbuck, who says that his soul is more than matched and is over-manned by a madman. Starbuck thinks that he will see Ahab's impious end, but he feels that he must help him to it. Starbuck nevertheless retains some sense of hope.

#### Analysis:

Through the shift of perspective during this chapter, Melville develops yet another internal character conflict, this time within Starbuck, whom Melville further establishes as the character most likely to oppose Ahab over his quest against Moby Dick. However, while foreshadowing a conflict between Starbuck and Ahab, Melville also makes the important note that whatever opposition Starbuck voices will be significant, for Starbuck has great reservations about opposing Ahab, whom he both fears and pities.

#### Chapter Thirty-Nine: First Night-Watch:

Stubb is alone at the fore-top, mending a brace. Melville writes this chapter from his perspective. Stubb muses that a laugh is the wisest, easiest answer to all that is queer.

#### Analysis:

In contrast to the grave and serious Starbuck and Ahab, Stubb maintains a light and casual perspective concerning the impending conflicts. Stubb refuses to take anything seriously, but does so out of a staunch refusal to give in to the same ponderous gravity that afflicts the others. He is light-hearted, but adopts this attitude in some sense as a defense mechanism.

#### Chapter Forty: Midnight, Forecastle:

The various harpooners and sailors sing in chorus "farewell and adieu to you, Spanish ladies." They sing "our captain stood upon the deck, / a spy glass in his hand, / a viewing of those

gallant whales / that blew at every strand." Sailors from various nationalities give their various thoughts on the voyage. The crew cheers at the impending arrival of the white whale.

Analysis:

Despite the definite feelings of misgiving on the part of Starbuck and the distrustful narrator's voice of Ishmael, there is little atmosphere of gloom and foreboding among the rest of the crew concerning Ahab's obsession with the whale. This chapter describes the cheerful reaction of the crew, who eagerly anticipate their adventure. This is significant, for Melville prepares the reader for the eventual doubts of the crew concerning Ahab's quest against Moby Dick.

## **Chapters 41-60**

Chapter Forty-One: Moby Dick:

Ishmael was one of the crew that cheered, and feels that Ahab's struggle is his own. Wild rumors surface of the whale that fails to exaggerate the deadly encounters with Moby Dick. The rumors of the White Whale incorporate with all manner of morbid hints and half-formed suggestions of supernatural agencies. There are some who are ready to give chase to Moby Dick despite the warnings against such an undertaking. The body of Moby Dick is so streaked and spotted and marbled that in the end it has gained his distinctive appellation of the White Whale. Ahab had piled on all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down into the whale. Ahab has a "special lunacy" that storms his general sanity and carries it.

Analysis:

Even Ishmael is not immune to the hysteria and jubilation with regard to Moby Dick, as he readily admits at the start of this chapter. However, it is more important to note the intense danger of this mission that Melville foreshadows through this chapter. Melville describes the whale as not only dangerous, but nearly supernatural and ghostly. He explicitly states what Moby Dick represents for Ahab; the whale symbolizes the hatred and rage of humanity. This redefines the quest against the whale, for Ahab thus comes to represent humanity's attempts to fight against its own worst impulses. Therefore, even when the conflict comes down to the fight between Ahab and Moby Dick, it will nevertheless still remain an internal conflict within Ahab.

Chapter Forty-Two: The Whiteness of the Whale:

In many natural objects, whiteness refines and enhances beauty, as in pearls, or confers special qualities such as innocence or purity. There is an elusive quality that causes the thought of whiteness to heighten terror, such as the white bear of the poles or the white shark of the tropics. Among humans, the Albino is considered shocking and loathed, while the whiteness of a corpse is a distinguishing and disturbing feature. In its most profound, idealized significance it calls up a peculiar apparition to the soul. White is portentous because it is indefinite, not so much a color as the visible absence of color.

Analysis:

In this chapter, Herman Melville attempts to define Moby Dick through its whiteness, instead finding that the very nature of the color white defies definition. While Melville does confront symbolic interpretation of the color white as symbolic of purity or innocence, he instead finds whiteness to represent absence or opacity. This suggests that the white whale Moby Dick resists any definition or internal meaning. Whatever meaning or symbolism that the whale holds exists entirely in relation to others' perceptions of it. To be explicit, Moby Dick gains definition and symbolic value only in terms of its relation to Ahab and, to a much lesser extent, the other members of the Pequod crew.

#### Chapter Forty-Three: Hark!:

There is a noise as the crew passes buckets from one man to another. Rumors of something as yet undefined abound among the crew.

#### Analysis:

Melville returns to the narrative of the novel in this chapter, as a reminder of the ever-present possibility that the crew may come upon Moby Dick at any moment.

#### Chapter Forty-Four: The Chart:

To Ahab, it does not seem improbable to find Moby Dick through the vast ocean, for he knows the sets of all tides and currents and could calculate the drifting of the Sperm Whale's food and could arrive at reasonable estimates of the whale's location. Ahab had selected a premature date to sail the Pequod with a view to finding Moby Dick, because he had a year in which he could spend in a miscellaneous hunt in which the whale might appear. Ahab is often awakened by exhausting and intolerably vivid dreams of the whale, in which he experiences great spiritual anguish.

#### Analysis:

Melville retreats from the notion that Ahab's quest for Moby Dick is pure insanity in this chapter, in which he reinforces Ahab's seafaring knowledge and justifies the seemingly random quest for the whale by demonstrating that Ahab can make reasonable calculations concerning Moby Dick's location. Yet this also reinforces the grand stature of the quest against Moby Dick by showing that Ahab has long planned the Pequod voyage to best facilitate a confrontation with the white whale. Melville also once again reminds the reader of the great psychological weight that Moby Dick places upon Ahab, afflicting him even in his dreams.

#### Chapter Forty-Five: The Affidavit:

There are instances in which a whale, after receiving a harpoon, completely escapes. There are also instances in which a whale enjoys a type of 'celebrity' because of distinguishing physical features and characteristics. There is an indefinite idea that a whale is an enormous creature of enormous power, but Ishmael has often found that his reports of whales have been taken as exaggeration. A Sperm Whale is in some cases sufficiently powerful, knowing and malicious to completely destroy a ship, as has happened during several historical instances.

#### Analysis:

Melville once again diverts from the narrative for a historical digression concerning facts about whaling. The purpose of this chapter is primarily to remind the reader of the tragic possibilities that might occur when facing Moby Dick; as Ishmael ominously notes, the seemingly exaggerated stories of fearsome whales are actually true.

#### Chapter Forty-Six: Surmises:

Although Ahab was consumed with finding Moby Dick, he nevertheless was by nature too wedded to a whaleman's ways to abandon the main point of his voyage. Ahab knows that he has a great influence over Starbuck, but this influence is not indefinite; Starbuck does certainly abhor Ahab's quest and would stop it if he could. Ahab was also mindful that his crew has common, daily appetites that compete with grander aspirations to find Moby Dick. Ahab finally realizes that he is opening himself up to charges of usurpation by single-mindedly pursuing the whale.

#### Analysis:

This chapter continues to develop the significant conflicts of the novel, primarily the internal struggle that Ahab faces between his prudent and rational nature and his obsessive impulses against Moby Dick. As a ship captain, Ahab cannot abandon his duties on the voyage, yet this is the only hindrance he finds in his search for Moby Dick. Additionally, Melville continues to construct a conflict between Starbuck and Ahab by showing that Ahab knows that it will be Starbuck who will oppose his quest. The effect of this is to construct Ahab as an even more formidable antagonist, for despite his seeming insanity he remains knowledgeable of the motivations and attitudes of those around him.

#### Chapter Forty-Seven: The Mat-Maker:

Queequeg and Ishmael weave a sword-mat for an additional lashing to their boat. Ishmael compares their weaving to work on "The Loom of Time." While the two men weave, Ishmael gazes up at the clouds and hears the voice of Tashtego, who announces that "there he blows." Ahab quickly orders his crew to their boats. Everyone glares at Ahab, who is surrounded by five dusky phantoms (these are Ahab's personal boat crew) that seem fresh formed out of air.

#### Analysis:

The description of Queequeg and Ishmael weaving the sword mat is highly symbolic, as Ishmael compares their work to working on the "Loom of Time" in which he mechanically weaves away at the Fates. In the passage, Melville simultaneously promotes the idea that people are beholden to a sense of fate and the conflicting idea of free will and autonomy, as when Ishmael states that "with my own hand I ply my own shuttle and weave my own destiny into these unalterable threads." This adds an additional frame of conflict within the novel, that between destiny and personal choice, and gives another dimension to the conflict between Ahab and Moby Dick.

Ahab appears progressively more ominous in this chapter with the appearance of the "dusky phantoms" who seem to suddenly appear on the ship when Ahab prepares for the first launch against a whale. This contributes to the idea of Ahab as an otherworldly character, different from the rest of the crew and existing on a different plane.

#### Chapter Forty-Eight: The First Lowering:

The 'phantoms' cast loose the tackles and bands of the boat. Stubb issues orders to his men in a peculiar manner. Stubb will say things in a fun and furious tone that makes his crew work as if they are pulling for dear life and as a joke. Stubb expresses disappointment when they learn that they did not find the white whale. During this first pursuit, there is little sign of a whale because of the mist. Ahab berates his crew for not catching a whale. At last, when one whale surfaces Queequeg is able to strike it, but this is insufficient to kill the whale.

#### Analysis:

The first attempt to slay a whale by the Pequod crew is unsuccessful, but it nevertheless allows some insight into the characters, in particular the jovial Stubb. While Stubb serves as comic relief in some sense, his light-hearted manner belies a surprising competence and ability to elicit strong work from his crew. While this character development is surprising, the details concerning Ahab merely confirm previous suspicions about his character that he is dictatorial and difficult toward his crew.

#### Chapter Forty-Nine: The Hyena:

Ishmael muses that there are certain times when a man takes the universe for a vast practical joke. This attitude comes only in times of extreme tribulation. Ishmael questions Stubb on whether it is prudent to go after a whale under the circumstances that they did. Ishmael realizes that he is implicated in the chase for Moby Dick and subject to the irrational whims of the officers. Ishmael decides to draw up a will, and asks Queequeg to come along and be his "lawyer, executor and legatee."

#### Analysis:

While Melville has essentially abandoned the relationship between Queequeg and Ishmael during the previous chapters, he returns to it once again in this chapter, which serves as a reminder of the close bond between the two characters. For Ishmael, Queequeg is his closest advisor and companion, and in fact takes an active role in Ishmael's life, as his 'executor.' The rationale for the return to their relationship is the increasingly dire atmosphere on the Pequod, in which Ishmael faces his own mortality. Before any legitimate sightings of the white whale, the crew already begins to question Ahab's prudence; greater conflict between captain and crew will certainly arise once the quest for Moby Dick becomes more prominent.

#### Chapter Fifty: Ahab's Boat and Crew. Fedallah:

Stubb remarks to Flask that it is remarkable that Ahab was in a boat pursuing a whale, despite his single leg. Ishmael recalls the frequent debate about whether it is proper for a captain to risk his crew's life for a voyage. Of the 'phantoms,' the one named Fedallah remains a "muffled mystery" to the last. He is a creature as civilized, domestic people see only in their dreams, a member of those unchanging Asiatic and Oriental Isles.

#### Analysis:

The character of Fedallah, introduced in this chapter, represents an amalgam of cultures different from the dominant western tradition. He is from an indistinct Asiatic culture,

representing a vague 'other' with his appearance and inscrutable demeanor. In contrast to Queequeg, Fedallah represents an entire removal from the western tradition; while Ishmael could relate Queequeg's qualities to the dominant mold and find what is universal in him, there is no sense of association between Fedallah and the other characters.

#### Chapter Fifty-One: The Spirit-Spout:

Several weeks pass under easy sail, and the Pequod reaches several different grounds. It was while in the area south of St. Helena that a silvery jet is seen far in advance of the white bubbles at the bow. Fedallah first sees it, and Ahab commands that the sails be set to find the whale. Some days later, after this brief sighting has nearly been forgotten, the whale is again found. These are "temporary apprehensions, so vague but so awful." The Pequod reaches the Cape of Good Hope, which Ishmael deems Cape Tormentoto because of its turbulent sea. Ahab would spend hours and hours gazing dead outward, with few or no words spoken. Starbuck finds Ahab asleep in his chair, rain still dripping from his clothes from his recent trip outside, his head pointed toward the ceiling.

#### Analysis:

The pacing of this chapter is slow and deliberate, emphasizing the arduous conditions of the voyage as well as the long periods of boredom and inaction. Meanwhile, Melville continues to add more details demonstrating that Ahab remains psychologically tormented by Moby Dick.

#### Chapter Fifty-Two: The Albatross:

The Pequod comes across another ship, the Goney (Albatross), a craft bleached like the skeleton of a stranded walrus. The two ships pass one another, and Ahab asks whether they have seen Moby Dick. The captain of the other ship tries to answer, but he cannot be heard because his trumpet blows away into the ocean.

#### Analysis:

The brief interaction between the Pequod and the Goney shows the emptiness and isolation of the Pequod at sea, in which what little contact that the crew of the Pequod has with other ships is fleeting and barely decipherable. The isolation is compounded by Ahab's solipsism, in which he can focus only on Moby Dick and nothing else.

#### Chapter Fifty-Three: The Gam:

Ahab ostensibly does not go on board the Goney because the wind and the sea predict storms, but even had this not been the case he might not have boarded her. However, this is unorthodox behavior, for the 'gam' between two ships is a common occurrence; whalers from separate ships have great reason to be sociable. They may exchange letters and information that might be useful to the other boat, despite the small chance that one boat might have letters destined for the other.

#### Analysis:

This chapter serves as explanation for the event of the previous chapter, demonstrating that the behavior between the two ships deviates from normal standards of behavior. Boats are

generally more cordial, according to Ishmael's narration, yet Ishmael eschews this type of behavior in favor of essentially yelling for information on Moby Dick. For Ahab, there is one thing of concern to him and no other pleasantries or social graces are of any importance.

#### Chapter Fifty-Four: The Town-Ho's Story:

This story is as told at the Golden Inn by Ishmael some time after the voyage on the Pequod. The Pequod encounters the Town-Ho, manned almost wholly by Polynesians that, during a gam, gave the Pequod strong news of Moby Dick. Ishmael tells the story by the Town-Ho as he would later tell it at Lima to a circle of Spanish friends. He tells how the Town-Ho had been stabbed, presumably by a sword-fish, and was taking on water, but would have reached port safely if not for the brutal overbearing of Radney, the mate, and Steelkilt, a Lakeman from Buffalo. Radney becomes concerned as the Town-Ho takes on more water, for he is naturally nervous and cowardly. He also has a large investment in the ship. Steelkilt mocks Radney for his concern over the ship. Radney orders Steelkilt to sweep the deck of the ship, but he refuses to do so. The conflict between Radney and Steelkilt nearly leads to a mutiny, as the captains threaten to have the crew flogged for disobeying. Nearly a dozen of the mutineers are locked in the bottom of the ship, but most surrender, leaving Steelkilt with only several supporters. Steelkilt convinces them to burst out of their hole and rum amuck in order to seize the ship. Radney quells this uprising by Steelkilt, who plans his revenge. The Town-Ho comes upon Moby Dick just as Steelkilt is ready to attack again. When Moby Dick attacks, he crushes Radney between his jaws. The Town-Ho escapes and reaches her port where many desert the ship. The ship's company calls upon the Islanders to assist. Steelkilt finds his way to Tahiti and finds two ships about to sail for France.

#### Analysis:

The Town-Ho's Story is yet another interruption in the narrative, yet this is an interruption of time and narrative progression rather than a stylistic break as to inform the reader of the minutiae of the whaling industry. The story serves a significant purpose by introducing the Moby Dick as a threatening, tangible presence without actually placing the whale in direct conflict with the Pequod. The means by which Melville does this is jarring, subverting the expectations of the reader by framing the story originally in terms of the conflict between Radney and Steelkilt and ending it with the horrific story of Radney's death at the hands of Moby Dick.

It is important to note the setting of the story. Ishmael does not tell the story as it was told to him by the crew of the Town-Ho; rather, he tells the story as he told it from the Golden Inn in Spain after his voyage on the Pequod is complete. This serves as an explicit reminder that Ishmael survives his voyage on the Pequod and is telling the story from a perspective far removed from the actual voyage. By highlighting this dramatic aspect of the story, Melville further moves the narrative away from Ishmael, whose fate is certain, and focuses it on the more flexible fates of Ahab and his crew.

#### Chapter Fifty-Five: Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales:

In this chapter, Ishmael attempts to dispel "pictorial delusions" about whales, which come from the earliest pictures of whales from Hindu, Egyptian and Grecian sources. The most



ancient extant portrait purporting to be a whale comes from India, but this fails, as does a later Christian painter's portrait of the fish. Even in 1825 there is a book by a great naturalist, Bernard Germain, which features several pictures of the incorrect species of Leviathan, while Frederick Cuvier gives a picture of a Sperm Whale that actually best resembles a squash. While one might think it possible to find an accurate portrayal of a whale from its skeleton, but the skeleton bears little resemblance to the actual whale.

Analysis:

Melville once again indulges in a more intellectual discussion of whales in this chapter, in which Ishmael traces the history of representations of whales throughout history, noting the errors in each and their inability to capture the whale in actuality. This contributes to the idea that the whale is a mysterious and somewhat indefinable creature, unable to be accurately conveyed by those who see it. In essence, Melville continues to show that the presumed knowledge of whales is faulty, lending mystery to what the whale actually is and represents.

Chapter Fifty-Six: Of the Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales, and the True Pictures of Whaling Scenes:

Ishmael cites the only four published outlines of the Sperm Whale that he knows, claiming that the work by Beale is the superior, for all of his drawings are good except for a single one.

Analysis:

This chapter continues the discussion of the previous chapter, conceding the legitimacy of some of the various studies of whales.

Chapter Fifty-Seven: Of Whales in Paint; in Teeth; in Wood; in Sheet-iron; in Stone; in Mountains; in Stars:

On Tower-Hill in London one may come across a beggar holding a painted board representing the scene in which he lost his leg to a whale, while throughout the Pacific and in Nantucket one may come across lively sketches of whales and whaling scenes. The image of the Leviathan is prevalent throughout various societies and cultures.

Analysis:

Melville frames the whale in a more artistic-historical context in this chapter, in which he attempts to show that scenes of whales are prevalent throughout all societies and are a unifying theme throughout all cultures. Once again this intends to make the quest against Moby Dick a more universal voyage, specific not simply to the crew of the Pequod but to all persons.

Chapter Fifty-Eight: Brit:

The Pequod comes across vast meadows of brit, the minute, yellow substance upon which the Right Whale primarily feeds. The Pequod comes across great numbers of Right Whales who are safe from attack from a Sperm Whaler like the Pequod. The sound of the Right Whales reminds Ishmael of mowers.

Analysis:

In this chapter, Melville includes more information concerning the details of the whaling industry. This chapter serves simply as details, with no particular relevance to the narrative of the novel.

#### Chapter Fifty-Nine: Squid:

One morning Daggoo spots a white mass in the distance, and he calls out that he sees the White Whale. Ahab orders the boats to the water, where they find not Moby Dick but a vast pulpy mass. It is a great live Squid, which Starbuck finds a greater danger than Moby Dick, for according to legend few whale-ships ever see one and return safely to port.

#### Analysis:

Melville continues to build the tension concerning the arrival of Moby Dick, in which the crew thinks that the long-awaited whale has finally made an appearance. However, Melville diffuses this tension and delays the arrival of the whale once again. Nevertheless, this chapter is significant for building the ominous atmosphere surrounding the voyage of the Pequod. The live squid is an ill-omen, a harbinger foreboding doom for the Pequod. This provides a contrast to the information of chapter fifty-four, in which the survival of Ishmael becomes assured, showing that danger is still imminent for the crew of the Pequod.

#### Chapter Sixty: The Line:

The whale-line, which will shortly become important in a whaling scene to be described, is Manilla rope and not hemp, for it is stronger, softer and more elastic. The whale line folds the whole boat in its coils, and all the oarsmen on a boat are involved in its perilous contortions. According to Ishmael, all men live enveloped in whale-lines, born with halters round their necks, but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death that mortals realize the silent, subtle perils of life.

#### Analysis:

Once again, Melville devotes a chapter to the minutiae of the whaling industry, but in this case he extends his description of the whale line to its more metaphorical implications. Ishmael compares the whale line to a noose, and in turn compares this noose to the mortality of all humans. Once again, this metaphor takes on sinister implications, a reminder of impending death and destruction that may come at any moment.

### **Chapters 61-80**

#### Chapter Sixty-One: Stubb Kills a Whale:

To Queequeg, seeing the squid produces a different response; he thinks that it is a harbinger that a sperm whale is nearby. Ishmael spots a gigantic Sperm Whale rolling in the water. Ahab orders the boats out, and the whale becomes aware of his pursuers. Stubb strikes the whale with his harpoon; the whale rolls around in blood and finally dies.

#### Analysis:

After the dire superstition of seeing the whale, Melville allows Queequeg to voice a different and more rational perspective; his optimism concerning the whale is based on greater scientific and experiential foundations than Starbuck's dire prophecies. Also, this chapter returns to the main action of the novel, once again demonstrating Stubb's competence in his craft despite lacking the gravity and serious manner of his counterparts.

#### Chapter Sixty-Two: The Dart:

It takes a strong, nervous arm to strike the first iron into the fish, for it takes incredible rowing to reach the whale. If the dart is to be successful, then at the critical instant when the whale starts to run, the harpooner and boat-header must start running to the jeopardy of themselves and everyone else. Ishmael finds this foolish and unnecessary.

#### Analysis:

After the work of killing the whale is done, Melville backtracks in order to describe, in detail, what has occurred. While not particularly significant in itself, this chapter serves Melville's narrative technique; it enlarges the perspective of the previous chapter and allows a less cluttered narrative push to describe the events of the previous chapter. In essence, Melville breaks down the events chapter sixty-one into the smallest detail in order to show the danger and adversity that the crew of the Pequod faces.

#### Chapter Sixty-Three: The Crotch:

The crotch of the boat is a notched stick of a peculiar form, two feet in length, and perpendicularly inserted two feet in length near the bow to furnish a place for the harpoon.

#### Analysis:

This chapter describes yet another additional detail of the process of whaling.

#### Chapter Sixty-Four: Stubb's Supper:

The three boats begin to tow the whale to the Pequod. The task takes hours, for the whale seems hardly to budge at all. Captain Ahab seems to be somewhat dissatisfied, as if the sight of the dead whale reminded him that Moby Dick is still alive and no matter how many whales were brought to the ship, he would not be satisfied until he found that one. Stubb feels a sense of good-natured excitement. About midnight the steak of the whale is cut and cooked. Stubb believes that the steak is overdone, and he orders the cook, Fleece, to make the crew behave more politely. Stubb questions Fleece about his origin, and he claims Roanoke country. He asks Fleece where he expects to go when he dies. Fleece says that he will go 'up there,' but Stubb tells him that he cannot expect to get into heaven by going the wrong way (he uses the metaphor of 'going to the main-top' of the ship to mean 'going to heaven').

#### Analysis:

Melville imbues even the simple conversations among the crew members with religious connotations, in this chapter demonstrated by the banter between Stubb and Fleece concerning where Fleece will go once he dies. This continues the dominant themes of the novel, including mortality and the use of the whale ship as a symbol of larger human experience.

Along with Queequeg, Melville holds Stubb as a model for human behavior. Melville clearly relishes Stubb's good humor and flamboyance, which enhance his demonstrated competence as a whaler. He has a boisterous attitude that Melville portrays as endearing, as compared to the dour gravity of Ahab. For Melville, Ahab's tale is one of tragedy, while Stubb stands as his direct contrast, a man who is not consumed by the same demons that afflict Ahab.

#### Chapter Sixty-Five: The Whale as a Dish:

Three centuries ago the tongue of the Right Whale was esteemed a great delicacy in France, and commanded large prices there. Among his hunters at least, the whale would be considered a noble dish, were there not so much of him. The exceeding richness of the whale depreciates it as a civilized dish; it is too fat to be delicately good.

#### Analysis:

Once again, Melville interrupts the narrative to exalt the whale as a delicacy fit for elite consumption. However, Ishmael strains to justify the whale as a dish for the aristocracy, admitting that the sheer bulk of the whale resists its acceptance as a delicacy.

#### Chapter Sixty-Six: The Shark Massacre:

When a captured Sperm Whale is brought alongside a ship late at night, it is not customary to proceed at once to cut him in, for the business is laborious, but sometimes this plan will not do because the incalculable hosts of sharks gather around the carcass. The sharks begin to attack the whale that the Pequod has killed, and Queequeg nearly loses his hand while fending them off.

#### Analysis:

Continuing the descriptions of previous chapters, Melville adds greater information concerning the process of whaling and the dangers that it provides for the crew of the whale ship, such as Queequeg, who is nearly severely injured by sharks.

#### Chapter Sixty-Seven: Cutting In:

Starbuck and Stubb cut a hole in the whale's body for the insertion of a hook just above the nearest of the two side-fins, and the crew heaves the whale up, nearly toppling the ship. There is considerable friction during this event.

#### Analysis:

The dominant element of this chapter is the bulk of the whale. Melville creates a vivid portrait of the massive size of the whale in relation to the ship. The corpse of the whale nearly topples the Pequod as the workers attempt to cut into it; Melville thus allows the reader to infer the damage that a living whale could do to a ship.

#### Chapter Sixty-Eight: The Blanket:

The visible surface of the Sperm Whale is not the least among the many marvels he presents. Almost invariably it is all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array. The whale is wrapped in his blubber as in a real blanket or counterpane,

or like an Indian poncho slipped over his head and skirting his extremity. Ishmael compares the construction of the whale to the construction of the dome of St. Peter's cathedral.

Analysis:

The central point of this chapter is the idea that the whale's skin serves as a blanket; Melville therefore constructs the idea that the whale's skin serves as a mask and protection for the whale, hiding some inherent part of the whale. This returns to a dominant theme of the novel, the inscrutability and inability to essentially define the whale. While Melville through Ishmael can describe every detail of the whale and exalt the whale, even comparing it to St. Peter's Basilica, Melville cannot definitively grasp the implications of the whale. This allows the whale in general and specifically Moby Dick to defy any easy interpretation.

Chapter Sixty-Nine: The Funeral:

The white body of the beheaded whale flashes like a marble sepulcher; it has not perceptibly lost anything in bulk, and is still colossal. The remains float away as sharks gnaw at it. Ishmael calls it a "most doleful and most mocking funeral." While in life "the great whale's body may have become a real terror to his foes, in his death his ghost becomes a powerless panic to the world."

Analysis:

The funereal tone that pervades Moby Dick becomes literal during this chapter, in which Ishmael laments the death of the whale. The funeral for this whale, however, has larger implications; while previous chapters have focused on the power and strength of the whale, this one reverses the trend to show that this formidability is entirely ephemeral. This can apply to Moby Dick, but also equally if not more so to the human crew of the Pequod, most significantly Ahab. Melville foreshadows a tragic end to this fearsome character, whose power and threatening manner will certainly have a dire end.

Chapter Seventy: The Sphynx:

The beheading of the Sperm Whale is an anatomical feat upon which experienced whale surgeons pride themselves, for the whale has nothing that can be properly called a neck and the surgeon must operate from above, some ten feet between him and the whale. The Pequod's whale's head was hoisted against the ship's side about half way out of the sea and strained the craft. Ahab watches the head and says "speak thou vast and venerable head which, though ungarnished with a beard, yet here and there lookest hoary with mosses . . . thou hast seen enough to split the planets and make an infidel of Abraham, and not one syllable is thine."

Analysis:

Although Melville concentrates on the minutiae of the beheading of the Sperm Whale in this chapter, it is the coda to this chapter in which Ahab watches the head that endows this chapter with its significance. Ahab's 'conversation' with the whale's head sharply demonstrates the growing insanity within Ahab, who speaks to the whale's corpse with utter conviction. Yet as well as showing Ahab's dementia, the tone of the conversation returns to the Christian symbolism that permeates the novel, as Ahab references Abraham and speaks in a language

reserved for florid religious occasions. By invoking the whale to speak, Ahab asks it to define itself and give itself the symbolic interpretations for which Melville has searched, yet the whale's head obviously remains silent, unable to give Ahab that for which he asks.

#### Chapter Seventy-One: The Jeroboam's Story:

The Pequod comes upon the Jeroboam of Nantucket. The Jeroboam had a contagious epidemic on board, and Mayhew, her captain, fears infecting the Pequod's company. The two ships nevertheless find a way to communicate with one another. Stubb tells a story about the Jeroboam: There is a Shaker on the Jeroboam who had been a great prophet before leaving for Nantucket. Upon leaving Nantucket at sea, the Shaker announced himself as the archangel Gabriel and commanded the captain to jump overboard. Gabriel declared himself deliverer of the isles of the sea. The crew of the Jeroboam staged a mutiny to prevent maltreatment of Gabriel and became obedient to him.

Ahab tells Mayhew that he does not fear their epidemic and asks Mayhew to come aboard. Gabriel objects, but Ahab simply wants to know about Moby Dick. Mayhew tells a dark story about Moby Dick, despite frequent interruptions from Gabriel, about how the whale killed a member of the Jeroboam's crew, Macey. Ahab gives Mayhew a letter intended for Macey that had been on his boat. Gabriel warns Ahab to "think of the blasphemer's end."

#### Analysis:

The Jeroboam's story hints at the madness caused by the journeys out to sea while foreshadowing the greater occurrence of erratic and dictatorial behavior by Ahab. The similarities between the Jeroboam and the Pequod are obvious; both contain driven, messianic figures possessed by an utter conviction and a will to find themselves on a superhuman plane. Yet while the crew of the Jeroboam staged a mutiny to save Gabriel, the actions of the Pequod in response to Ahab are less certain.

Melville certainly intends the chapter to demonstrate that Ahab is courting blasphemy through his quest to find Moby Dick and will suffer a tragic end because of his actions. According to Melville, Ahab's actions are an attempt to secure a sense of divinity and an affront to God.

#### Chapter Seventy-Two: The Monkey-Rope:

Ishmael returns to the description of cutting in and attending to the whale. It is often the case in which a harpooner must remain on the whale until the entire stripping operation is concluded; Ishmael had to hold Queequeg there by a rope comparable to that used by Italian organ-boys holding a dancing ape by a cord. It is a humorously perilous business for both parties. Queequeg remains held by the rope as sharks near him, and Ishmael compares Queequeg's state to that of all whalers.

#### Analysis:

The special relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg is the focus of this chapter, which finds the two men literally bound together by the monkey-rope. The rope that links Queequeg and Ishmael, however, subverts the normal state of their relationship, for instead of promoting a relatively equal relationship between the two parties, the 'monkey-rope' places

Ishmael in control of the submissive Queequeg. However, this dynamic between the two characters does not signal a change in their relationship, but instead serves entirely metaphoric purposes; Queequeg may be dominated by Ishmael during this chapter, but Ishmael and Queequeg are both dominated by Melville's central metaphor, which intends to show the helplessness that whalers suffer with regard to their fate. All whalers are like Queequeg, merely marionettes whose actions are controlled by another.

Chapter Seventy-Three: Stubb and Flask Kill a Right Whale; and Then Have a Talk over Him:

Despite the fact that killing Right Whales is not on the Pequod's agenda, there is an announcement that a Right Whale should be captured if the opportunity provides itself, for there are great indications that Right Whales are nearby. Stubb and Flask kill a Right Whale, and Stubb wonders why Ahab would want so "ignoble a Leviathan." Flask mentions the prophecy that a ship that has a Sperm Whale's head on one side and a Right Whale's head on the other shall never capsize. Flask heard the rumor from Fedallah, whom Stubb calls "the devil in disguise." They mention the possibility that Ahab has sold his soul or something to Fedallah to catch Moby Dick. They also discuss the possibility that Fedallah wants to kidnap Captain Ahab.

Analysis:

Superstition dominates the voyage of the Pequod, as shown by Ahab's decision to pursue a Right Whale despite its irrelevance to the ship's agenda. In contrast to the Sperm Whale, the Right Whale is considered a lesser creature; it receives none of the exaltation that Ishmael lavishes upon the Sperm Whale, but Ahab pursues it simply out of superstition. This decision serves to show that Ahab is moving closer to a dark and blasphemous side. He takes the advice of Fedallah, whose character represents, as Stubb calls him, the devil in disguise. Melville uses this chapter to indicate that, in some sense, Ahab has sold his soul to Satan through a compact with Fedallah and in fact through his mission against Moby Dick altogether, thus corroborating accusations of blasphemy that have permeated the novel.

Chapter Seventy-Four: The Sperm Whale's Head Contrasted View:

Ishmael contrasts the Sperm Whale's Head with the Right Whales, finding the immense superiority of the Sperm Whale in dignity. Ishmael notes how such a vast creature can see the world through so small an eye and hear the thunder through an ear smaller than a hare's.

Analysis:

Melville, through Ishmael, continues to exalt the superiority of the Sperm Whale, this time in contrast with the Right Whale. This chapter becomes significant only in relation to the next chapter, which disparages the Right Whale.

Chapter Seventy-Five: The Right Whale's Head Contrasted View:

While the Sperm Whale's head may be compared to a Roman war-chariot, the Right Whale's head bears a resemblance to a gigantic shoe. The unfortunate whale that the Pequod kills is hare-lipped, with a fissure about a foot across. In the Right Whale there is no great well of

sperm, no ivory teeth, no long, slender mandible of a lower jaw. In the Sperm Whale there are no blinds of bone, huge lower lip, and scarcely any tongue.

Analysis:

This chapter continues the comparison of the previous chapter, moving from the grandeur of the head of the Sperm Whale to the embarrassing, coarse appearance of the Right Whale.

Chapter Seventy-Six: The Battering Ram:

In the ordinary swimming position of the Sperm Whale, the front of the head presents an almost wholly vertical plane to the water, with essentially no organs or tender prominence. This whole enormous boneless mass is as one wad, comparable to a battering ram.

Analysis:

This chapter gives additional information on the Sperm Whale that serves primarily as preparation for the conflict between the Pequod and Moby Dick. Through Ishmael, Melville describes the means by which the Sperm Whale may attack the Pequod, foreshadowing the battle that will be the climax of the novel.

Chapter Seventy-Seven: The Great Heidelburgh Tun:

The upper part of the Sperm Whale cranium, known as the Case, may be regarded as the great Heidelburgh Tun of the Sperm Whale, while the lower part, called the junk, is one immense honeycomb of oil. The Tun of the Sperm Whale contains the valuable spermaceti of the whale.

Analysis:

This chapter contains important details about the "Heidelburgh Tun" of the whale, the large reservoir of sperm that gives the whale its value. The facts contained in this chapter reinforce the following chapters, in which the crew drains the sperm from the whale.

Chapter Seventy-Eight: Cistern and Buckets:

Tashtego mounts the case of the Sperm Whale and attempts to tap the Tun. Tashtego is reckless in trying to tap the Tun of the whale, and he falls into the great Tun, clean out of sight. Daggoo holds on to the tackles and Queequeg rescues him.

Analysis:

The ordeal with Tashtego illustrates the omnipresent danger that the whalers face. The danger of whaling does not come merely from the battle with the living whale, but rather causes neverending danger for the whalers, who face mortal peril even when they perform the seemingly mundane tasks of the job.

Chapter Seventy-Nine: The Prairie:

The Sperm Whale is physiognomically an anomalous creature with no proper nose. The full front of the Sperm Whale's head is sublime. Ishmael calls the genius of a Sperm Whale its doing nothing particular to prove its genius, its pyramidal silence.

Analysis:



Once again Melville and Ishmael exalt the Sperm Whale for its ability to resist definition; in its "pyramidal" silence, the whale does nothing to offer itself for interpretation or to prove its genius, but rather stands as a monument to its own greatness. Melville continues to describe the whale as a thing that is unnaturally made, with the comparisons to the pyramids and other constructed objects.

Chapter Eighty: The Nut:

There is no indication of the true brain of the Leviathan. While the brain of the Sperm Whale is small, it is more than compensated for by the comparative magnitude of its spinal cord.

Analysis:

In this chapter, Melville stretches to find a means to praise the Sperm Whale for its brain, which is relatively small in comparison to its massive bulk. This somewhat tests the credibility of Melville's assertions, for he uses the large spinal cord as justification for the minimal brain of the whale.

### **Chapters 81-100**

Chapter Eighty-One:

The Pequod Meets the Virgin: The Pequod meets the ship Jungfrau (Virgin), a German ship whose captain, Derick De Deer, begs for oil from the Pequod. Ahab immediately asks about the White Whale, and De Deer claims complete ignorance of the White Whale. Ahab supplies the ship with oil, and then the Pequod departs from the German ships. The boats then come upon a large whale and compete for it. Derick De Deer taunts the Pequod as the ships rush after the whale, and he would have prevailed if his boat had not nearly capsized. The Pequod's boats bump the Germans aside and reach the whale. They kill the whale, which begins to sink as the crew of the Pequod attempts to secure it. Sperm Whales usually stay afloat because of their great buoyancy.

Analysis:

After a long hiatus interrupting the progression of the novel, Melville returns to the main narrative as the Pequod meets with another ship. This chapter creates greater momentum than any of the recent chapters, as the Jungfrau becomes a competitor with the Pequod in pursuit of a whale. This competition exists partially upon lines of nationality, as shown by Ishmael's dismissal of the German fleet, and elicits a metaphorical comparison between the ships and the countries that they represent. Each ship is a microcosm that can represent different segments of society, and in this instance the two ships represent their specific nationalities. Melville demonstrates the sense of patriotic competition through the chase for the whale, in which Ishmael uses the superiority of the Pequod as evidence of a general American superiority, both specifically in whaling and generally in all respects.

Chapter Eighty-Two: The Honor and Glory of Whaling:

According to Ishmael, the gallant Perseus, a son of Jupiter, was the first whaleman; those were the "knightly days" of the profession when "we bore arms to succor the distressed, and not to fill men's lamp-feeders." Akin to the adventure of Perseus is the famous story of St.

George and the Dragon, which Ishmael maintains to have been a whale. Ishmael calls the "great gods themselves" whalers, citing the story of Vishnoo, who became incarnate in a whale and rescued the sacred volumes from the bottom of a sea. He calls Vishnoo a whaleman even as a man who rides a horse is a horseman.

Analysis:

While previous chapters have regarded the history of whaling and the study of whales from a more realistic perspective, this chapter regards the whale as a mythological object that better aligns with the general tone of the novel. Once again, Melville aligns the business of whaling with stories from a number of different cultures in order to instill some sense of universality to the quest for the whale.

Chapter Eighty-Three: Jonah Historically Regarded:

Many Nantucket whalers distrust the story of Jonah. One Sag-Harbor whaleman cites his chief reason for doubting the story to be the pictorial representation of Jonah's whale with two spouts, and this type of whale is not large enough to swallow a person. Another reason why Sag-Harbor doubts the story is the whale's gastric juices, but the whale that swallowed Jonah may have been dead at the time. Ishmael calls Sag-Harbor's arguments foolish and lacking reason.

Analysis:

The scholastic and the epic mythological tones of *Moby Dick* collide during this chapter, in which Ishmael attempts to analyze the Biblical tale of Jonah and the Whale from a scientific perspective, justifying this Biblical tale by attempting to fit it into a plausible mode of intellectual study. The effect of this is jarring and somewhat tonally inconsistent, in contrast to the normally smooth flow of tones throughout the chapters of *Moby Dick*. While Melville can move effortlessly from the different styles that he employs throughout the chapters, within this individual chapter the move is strained.

Chapter Eighty-Four: Pitchpoling:

Queequeg strongly believes in anointing a boat in order to make it move more quickly. One of the most wondrous strategies that a whaleman has is called pitchpoling, a move with a lance in which a long lance is accurately darted from a violently rocking boat under extreme headway. A harpoon is seldom pitchpoled like a lance.

Analysis:

In this chapter, Melville returns to the practical details of the whaling industry, describing yet another detail of the hunt for the whale.

Chapter Eighty-Five: The Fountain:

The Sperm Whale breathes only about one seventh as much as a human, and it is when it rises to the surface to breathe that it exposes itself to hooks or nets. The whale spout is dangerous for the whale hunter, forming a fountain that will feverishly smart one's skin and is rumored to be poisonous. Ishmael hypothesizes that the spout is nothing but mist.

Analysis:

This chapter, detailing yet another aspect of the whale's anatomy, is significant primarily for the symbolism surrounding the spout of the whale. Once again, an aspect of the whale contributes to the idea that the whale is actually an object incapable of independent definition; Ishmael believes that the spout is nothing but a mist, thus downgrading a seemingly dangerous aspect of the whale to essential nothingness.

#### Chapter Eighty-Six: The Tail:

The largest Sperm Whale's tail comprises an area of at least fifty square feet. The entire tail seems a dense webbed bed of welded sinews, but there are three distinct strata that compose it: upper, middle and lower. It is an organ of subtle elasticity and has five special characteristics. The first is that it never wriggles. The second is that it uses the tail contemptuously when it conflicts with man. The third is that it seems that the sense of touch in the whale is centered in the tail. The fourth is that the whale often uses its tail to play "kitten-like" in the sea. The fifth is the peaking of the whale's flukes, perhaps the grandest sight to be seen in all animated nature. Ishmael finds the mighty tail almost inexpressible.

#### Analysis:

The significant detail of this chapter concerns the relationship between the whale and the humans who hunt it. Melville approaches this chapter from the perspective of a single facet of the whale, its tail, and places it in direct opposition to human hunters. According to Melville, the mere tail of the whale has such significance and power that it can relate to the hunters only with contempt. Yet again, Melville elevates the whale to a majestic state.

#### Chapter Eighty-Seven: The Grand Armada:

The Pequod reaches the Indian Ocean into the Javan Sea to reach waters known to be frequented by the Sperm Whale. Ahab does not stop for water. The Pequod chases after a large group of whales. Queequeg leads the boats and they attempt to capture or maim as many of the Sperm Whales as they can. They use druggs, which are ball-and-chain type instruments, to maim the numerous whales. The crew of the Pequod sees under the surface the nursing mothers of young whales, which seem to eye the crew themselves. The crew remains entranced by the activity they see. The Pequod captures only one of the drugged whales, and all the rest contrive to escape.

#### Analysis:

Returning to the narrative, Melville employs the metaphor of a grand armada, the title of this chapter, to describe the school of whales that the Pequod encounters in the Indian Ocean. However, yet again the bombastic exaltation of the whales seems undeserved; the "grand armada" that Melville describes is in fact a collection of nursing mothers of baby whales. While yet again elevating the status of the whales to epic proportions, Melville exceeds the grasp of his metaphor and allows it to reach absurd proportions.

#### Chapter Eighty-Eight: Schools and Schoolmasters:

Among a school of female whales there is invariably a male of full grown magnitude, but not old. Ishmael dubs this whale "a luxurious Ottoman" accompanied by his harem. A harem of whales is called a school and the lord is technically known as the schoolmaster. Schools

comprising only young and vigorous males are a different matter, for these are the most pugnacious of all Leviathans and the most dangerous to encounter.

Analysis:

Melville uses this chapter purely to examine further metaphors between whales and humans. Melville personifies the groups of whales in this chapter, describing them in terms of human relationships. This is significant in terms of its relationship to *Moby Dick* itself; operating under the assumption that whales can be compared to human and human behavior, this allows for the title whale to exhibit human characteristics akin to those of Ahab and Ishmael.

Chapter Eighty-Nine: Fast-Fish and Loose Fish:

It frequently happens that when several ships are cruising in company, a whale may be struck by one vessel, escape, and finally be killed and captured by another. This is problematic, but perhaps the only formal whaling code was that of Holland, which defined Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish. A Fast-Fish belongs to the party fast to it, and a Loose-Fish is fair game. A Fast-Fish is a fish, dead or alive, connected with an occupied ship by any medium at all controllable by the occupant. There are often disputes over possession of a whale, as have come to the British courts. Ishmael compares the Rights of Man and Liberties of the World to Loose-Fish.

Analysis:

Melville examines the subject of whaling from a legal perspective in this chapter, one which foreshadows later plot developments concerning the chase for a whale. Once again, Melville stretches the limits of his metaphors in comparing the Rights of Man and general liberties to Loose-Fish in an attempt to show the intangibility and disputability of these rights.

Chapter Ninety: Heads or Tails:

Ishmael details a story about a Fast-Fish secured by whalers that the Lord Warden attempted to take as his own under the law, despite the whalers's poverty. Ishmael inquires on what principle the Sovereign is invested the right to part of the whale. According to Plowdon, the whale belongs to the King and Queen because of its superior excellence.

Analysis:

This chapter considers yet another anecdote concerning the whaling industry. As has been established repeatedly before, the whale is an animal of particular excellence and this fact has been bolstered by royal decree and intellectual inquiry.

Chapter Ninety-One: The Pequod Meets the Rose-Bud:

The Pequod comes upon a French ship, the "Bouton-de-Rose." Starbuck asks about *Moby Dick*, but the sailor on the ship has not even heard of the notorious whale. The crew of the Rose-Bud has two whales that appear to have oil, but Stubb notices that one of the whales may have ambergris. Stubb concocts a plan in which he tells the captain of the Rose-Bud that his whales are useless and should be left behind lest they damage their ship. The captain of the Rose-Bud takes Stubb's advice, and after the Rose-Bud departs from the Pequod, Stubb secures the whale carcass with the ambergris for the Pequod.

Analysis:

The journey along the Pequod continues in this chapter, as the ship meets another boat in its search for Moby Dick. The trick that the crew of the Pequod plays on the Rose-Bud serves primarily to elucidate the character of Stubb, who reveals himself to be crafty and even a bit deceptive through this ruse. However, Melville approaches the trick on the Rose-Bud playfully. The incident does not necessarily darken Stubb's character; he remains at worst a prankster and not a man whose intentions seem overtly wicked.

Chapter Ninety-Two: Ambergris:

Ambergris is a curious substance, "gray amber," a fine delicacy that the Turks use for cooking and in the same manner as frankincense. Stubb finds certain hard, round plates in the ambergris. Ishmael rebuts the charge that all whales always smell bad, which is traceable to the first arrival of Greenland whaling ships in London. In truth, whales are by no means creature of ill odor.

Analysis:

This chapter of Moby Dick is merely explanatory, giving the rationale behind Stubb's behavior in the previous chapter while detailing the properties and explaining the value behind the ambergris.

Chapter Ninety-Three: The Castaway:

Several days after encountering the French boat, a lamentable event occurs on the Pequod. In a whale ship, not everyone goes in the boats, and a few hands remain on the ship while the boats pursue a whale. A young black man named Pippin, Pip by abbreviation, is one of these ship-keepers. Pip is a jovial fellow who loves life, tender-hearted and bright. In the aftermath of the ambergris affair one of Stubb's oarsmen sprains his hand, and Stubb places Pip in his place. When on a lowering after a whale, Pip becomes so frightened that he jumps from the boat and becomes entangled in the whale line, which wraps around his chest and neck. The line is cut, and Pip is saved but chastised severely for his cowardice and told that he will be left at sea if he jumps again. Pip, however, does jump again and Stubb remains true to his word. However, a nearby boat saves Pip. The event "drowned the infinite of his soul."

Analysis:

The fate of Pip in this chapter is one worse than mere death, as the poor and pathetic character is essentially condemned to death but by mere chance escapes this fate. The psychological weight of the event is so great that it pushes Pip into insanity, for he cannot effectively grasp the fact that the crew members of the Pequod would have let him die. Melville will return to the repercussions of this event later in the novel when Pip comes into contact with Captain Ahab, yet until then the significance of this chapter is that it demonstrates that the crew members of the Pequod are perfectly able to sacrifice others in order to perform their whaling tasks. The main tragedy of this chapter is that Pip learns that his life is not worth the success of the Pequod's whaling ventures, and that Stubb will sacrifice him for it. Along this same vein, this chapter provides an interesting comparison between Stubb, and by extension the other ship's mates, and Ahab. To some degree Ahab is

merely an extreme extension of his mates; while Stubb would sacrifice a single man if necessary, Ahab is willing to sacrifice himself and the entirety of his crew for a solitary objective.

#### Chapter Ninety-Four: A Squeeze of the Hand:

The crew of the Pequod squeezes the sperm from the whale caught by Stubb. Ishmael feels an "abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling" at this avocation, and wishes that he could "keep squeezing that sperm forever." Ishmael then describes the particular process of preparing the whale sperm for the try-works.

#### Analysis:

Chapter Ninety-Four provides an interesting mix of dry facts concerning the whaling industry (preparing the whale sperm) and jarringly unsubtle symbolism. This chapter is certainly the culmination of any homoeroticism found in *Moby Dick*, in which the crew of the Pequod feels its greatest sense of community when they squeeze sperm from the whale and Ishmael displays his most acute sense of satisfaction. Although Melville develops little more than a strong and blatant subtext from this chapter, for the remainder of the story allows little room for developing the character of Ishmael, the obvious implications of this chapter certainly recall the nearly marital relationship between Ishmael and Queequeg. To develop any definitive conclusion about Ishmael's sexuality from this chapter is nearly impossible and amounts to severe revisionism, yet Melville builds a strong foundation for innuendo and conjecture without building it into anything concrete.

#### Chapter Ninety-Five: The Cassock:

If one had stepped on board the Pequod during the "post-mortemizing" of the whale, one would see a strange, enigmatic object: an unaccountable cone, the ebony idol of Queequeg. The mincer has as his duty the mincing of horse-pieces of blubber for the pots, an operation which is conducted at a curious wooden horse planted against the bulwarks. The mincer occupies "a conspicuous pulpit" and cries out "Bible leaves" in order to keep his work diligent.

#### Analysis:

In this chapter, Melville juxtaposes the pagan religious iconography of Queequeg with the Christian religious symbolism exemplified by the mincer. The ebony idol is jarringly out of place among the dominant Christian iconography of the ship, much like Queequeg himself. Melville describes the mincer in terms of a preacher at a pulpit, and even keeps at his work through Biblical references. The comparison between Christianity and the workings of the whaling industry is a prominent theme in the book and one that Melville consistently develops; the author equates the mincer, as well as the carpenter of the novel, with particularly Christian religious practices and imbues them with strong Christian symbolism.

#### Chapter Ninety-Six: The Try-Works:

The try-works of the boat are a distinguishing feature of an American whale ship. While manning the try-works, Ishmael becomes aware that he had lost consciousness and was turned around. He realizes this just in time to prevent the boat from capsizing.

Analysis:

This chapter, like many in the middle section of *Moby Dick*, is simply a mix of mundane details of the *Pequod's* journey and more general details about the whaling industry in general. The primary effect of this chapter is to reinforce the idea that the crew of the *Pequod* is under constant danger and even Ishmael himself faces possibly fatal moments at every point.

Chapter Ninety-Seven: The Lamp:

In merchantmen, oil for the sailor is scarcer than the milk of queens, but for a whaleman, light illuminates the ship. The whaleman can take freedom with lamps, burning the purest of oil from the whale.

Analysis:

This chapter exists simply to give further distinction between the whaling ships and other merchant ships in an additional attempt to display the superiority of the whaling profession.

Chapter Ninety-Eight: Stowing Down and Clearing Up:

While still warm, the oil from the whale is stored in six-barrel casks. When the oil is cool, the oil goes to the bowels of the ship and the casks are tossed in the sea. The sperm oil has a cleansing quality that removes all traces of the blood and mess that occurs before the oil is finally released. Three watchmen continue to spy out more whales that may be in the distance.

Analysis:

Melville continues to describe the various workings of the entire whaling process. While such chapters certainly interrupt the momentum of the plot, in this case driving it into a nearly complete stop, they do serve two important purposes. First, Melville creates for the reader the full and detailed world of the whaling industry that lends the novel a sense of verisimilitude. The story, which in its barest outline is an adventure story, becomes more real and concrete. Second, Melville not only creates the world of whaling but recreates the momentum of the whaling journey. The search for *Moby Dick* is thus not a simple and short quest, but a long journey with several digressions and even periods of stasis.

Chapter Ninety-Nine: The Doubloon:

Ahab often paces about the quarter-deck and during this walk will often eye a particular object before him, a gold doubloon with strange figures and inscriptions stamped on it. One morning, Ahab looks at these inscriptions, judging the doubloon to be from the Republic of Ecuador. Starbuck notices how there's "something ever egotistical" about Ahab, "the volcano," "the courageous." Stubb compares Ahab to the "old Mogul." Ahab himself looks at the doubloon, promised to whoever catches the whale, and decides that the whale must be raised in a month and a day.

Analysis:

Melville abandons the strict perspective of the narrator Ishmael to frame chapter ninety-nine from the point of view of Ishmael. From Starbuck's perspective, Melville portrays the captain

partially in the conventional terms which have prevailed throughout the novel: Starbuck is consistent in framing Ahab as an egotistical and unstable man. However, from the perspective of Starbuck, Melville endows Ahab with a tragic, if outdated grandeur. The metaphors for Ahab are telling: whenever Melville describes him in respectful terms, he employs anachronistic terms relating to fallen societies. This cements Ahab's place as a tragic figure; he is a man surrounded by legend but still destined for an inevitable fall.

Chapter One Hundred: Leg and Arm. The Pequod, of Nantucket, Meets the Samuel Enderby, of London:

The Pequod comes upon yet another ship, the Samuel Enderby, which he asks for news about Moby Dick. This ship is an English ship, and a member of the crew claims to have seen the White Whale on the Line last season. Moby Dick had taken the arm off of the Englishman. The Englishman tells about his encounter with Moby Dick, telling how the whale snapped at the ship's fast line, and got caught. The crew of the ship attacked the whale, but Moby Dick bit the Englishman's arm off. The Englishman turns the story over to Dr. Bunger, the ship's surgeon, who tells about this severe injury and how the wound kept getting worse. Dr. Bunger and the Englishman argue over the lost arm, until Ahab becomes annoyed and demands to know about Moby Dick. Bunger tells Ahab that "what you take for the White Whale's malice is only his awkwardness. For he never means to swallow a single limb; he only thinks to terrify by feints." Bunger warns Ahab that the whale is best left alone. The English captain wonders whether Ahab is crazy.

Analysis:

Continuing a pattern of interaction between the Pequod and other ships that it passes during its journey, Melville introduces the Samuel Enderby, a British ship that bears news of Moby Dick. Among the various ships that the Pequod meets, the great whale assumes a legendary, nearly mythic quality. Dr. Bunger even gives Ahab the stern warning that he should leave Moby Dick alone. Nevertheless, Melville approaches the as-yet unseen whale from a different perspective during this chapter; Dr. Bunger does not frame Moby Dick as a formidable and entirely malicious opponent, but instead places the whale in a more animalistic framework. For perhaps the first time in the novel, a character treats Moby Dick as an animal without forethought and premeditation instead of an actual character or symbol for an abstract concept. Despite Dr. Bunger's lack of metaphor for Moby Dick, however, his conclusion concerning the whale is the same: Ahab faces a certain death if he persists in his quest against Moby Dick.

This chapter effectively demonstrates the particular greatness of Moby Dick. Melville allows the titular whale to assume a number of vastly conflicting interpretations, yet he remains consistent with regard to the concrete characterizations of Moby Dick. Melville allows a number of symbolic possibilities for the whale, ranging from the religious to the political or social, yet the formidability of the whale are never in question.

## **Chapters 101-120**

Chapter One Hundred and One: The Decanter:



Ishmael describes the ship that the Pequod encountered in the previous chapter. The Enderby hails from London, and is named after the late Samuel Enderby, a merchant of that city, the original of the famous whaling house of Enderby and Sons. That company was the first to send ships out to pursue the Sperm Whale. The Pequod and the Enderby had a gam that consisted of a fine meal between the two ships, and Ishmael praises their generosity.

Analysis:

Shifting from the mechanics of the plot to historical details, Melville (through the narrator Ishmael) uses the incidents from the previous chapter to provide a segue into a dissertation on British whaling history. This is one of the most smoothly rendered transitions in *Moby Dick*; while Melville often moves awkwardly from plot mechanics into historical or scientific details, this particular transition grows relatively easily from the material and serves to enlighten the reader without jarringly abandoning the plot of *Moby Dick*.

Chapter One Hundred and Two: A Bower in the Arscacides:

Ishmael devotes this chapter to the internal construction of the Sperm Whale, for he has had the opportunity to dissect the Sperm Whale in miniature. Ishmael credits Tranquo, king of the Tranque, one of the Arscacides, for his knowledge of the bones of the Leviathan. A Sperm Whale had washed ashore on the Arscacides, and the Tranque had brought its bones to a glen and made a grand temple of it. Ishmael found it surprising that the king should regard it as a chapel.

Analysis:

Whereas the previous chapter signaled a smooth segue into historical material not particularly relevant to the chase for the great whale, in this chapter Melville does not accomplish the same feat. This chapter is an uneasy return to the detailed scientific accounts of the Sperm Whale and the history behind it. The detail that has the most relevance in this chapter is the use of the Sperm Whale as a temple; in this anecdote Melville gives additional material relating to the theme of the whale as a religious symbol.

Chapter One Hundred and Three: Measurement of the Whale's Skeleton:

A Sperm Whale of the largest magnitude is between eighty-five and ninety feet in length, and less than forty feet in its fullest circumference. A whale will weigh at least ninety tons. The vast, ivory-ribbed chest of the whale resembles the hull of a great ship.

Analysis:

Another in a string of chapters designed primarily to give facts concerning the sperm whale, chapter one hundred and three does include one significant bit of information: the chapter essentially states that a whale is an equal match for a whaling ship in size and in weight. Melville thus foreshadows that the eventual conflict with *Moby Dick* may place the Pequod in great danger from a formidable foe that could not only defeat Ahab but his entire crew.

Chapter One Hundred and Four: The Fossil Whale:

The whale, from this mighty bulk, cannot be compressed. According to Ishmael, "by good rights he should only be treated of in imperial folio." Ishmael complains about authors who

inflate their subjects, however ordinary, and asks how he could deal with a subject so definitively grand such as the Sperm Whale. Ishmael recalls references to whales in Egyptian tablets. Ishmael deems the Sperm Whale as something that has come down from before mankind and will outlast it.

Analysis:

Ishmael's complaint that authors often use hyperbole in reference to their subjects is a grand irony concerning this chapter, in which he claims that the Sperm Whale will triumph over mankind and deserves only the loftiest treatment. The irony of Ishmael's complaint signals a divergence between the narrator and the author; for the first time in the novel, the viewpoint of Melville seems separate from the viewpoint of Ishmael, whose lavish praise for the whale is at last given gentle criticism. By doing this, Melville subordinates the narrator to a more secondary position, asserting his own voice and criticism of Ishmael for his effusive language and praise.

Chapter One Hundred and Five: Does the Whale's Magnitude Diminish? Will He Perish?:

Ishmael ponders the question of whether the whale has degenerated from the original bulk of his sires, and finds that the present day whales are superior in magnitude. Ishmael deems the pre-adamite whales, the largest of which was found in Alabama, slightly smaller than a large present-day Sperm Whale. However, Ishmael cites accounts by Pliny of the magnitude of whales. Ishmael accounts the whale immortal in his species, however perishable in the individual.

Analysis:

After Melville reasserts his narrative position through the irony of the previous chapter, he allows Ishmael to continue lavishing praise upon the whale as a species. This chapter lends itself well to symbolic interpretations of the whale in general and *Moby Dick* in general by posing questions of whether the whale has become larger or smaller throughout time and whether it will thrive or perish. Melville does not affix any particular symbolic meaning to whales in this chapter, but the vague nature of the chapter allows for the whale to stand for any number of particular concepts.

Chapter One Hundred and Six: Ahab's Leg:

Ahab sometimes did suffer because of his ivory leg, once falling to the ground when the leg gave out. Ahab, before and after sailing with the *Pequod*, would hide himself away with "Grand-Lama-like" exclusiveness and once did seek speechless refuge.

Analysis:

Without actually introducing the great whale until the final chapters of the novel, Melville dramatizes the conflict between *Moby Dick* and Ahab through the internal agony that plagues Ahab throughout the course of the novel. In a not insignificant respect, the conflict is between Ahab and the idea of *Moby Dick* as well as the actuality of the whale, for even apart from the whale's physical presence Ahab is so tormented by the whale that he falls into a state of catatonia. In this chapter, Melville indicates that Ahab's leg serves as a constant reminder of

the whale and its power over him, giving an additional rationale for his constant obsession with Moby Dick.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Seven: The Carpenter:

Ishmael appraises the "high, abstracted" man to be "a wonder, a grandeur, and a woe," but takes mankind in mass as a mob of unnecessary duplicates, both contemporary and hereditary. However, the carpenter of the Pequod is no duplicate, according to Ishmael, who finds him singularly efficient in the nameless mechanical emergencies continually occurring. Ishmael finds him most remarkable for his impersonal stolidity, which Ishmael calls the same "discernible in the whole visible world" which is pauselessly active, yet peaceful, yet ignores you. Ishmael claims that the carpenter's work involves a sort of unintelligence, for he does not seem to work by reason or by instinct or even by teaching, but by some spontaneous literal process.

#### Analysis:

In the beginning of this chapter, Melville delves into the psyche of his narrator as he has rarely done throughout Moby Dick. Ishmael emerges in this chapter as a man who views the world best in terms of concepts and abstractions while disdaining the actuality of life around him. In essence, Ishmael places greater value on humanity than on actual humans. While this character detail is explicit for the first time in the novel, Melville has certainly provided the foundation for Ishmael's view. Ishmael speaks grandly about historical concepts and gives lavish detail when discussing scientific advances, but as a narrator he devotes only fleeting attention to most of the personages on the journey. In this respect, Melville gives his best indication that the narrator may be, to some extent, an unreliable one and his account of the journey is not the entirely objective one that the reader may have heretofore assumed.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Eight: Ahab and the Carpenter:

Ahab approaches the carpenter at work to see about fixing his leg. Ahab laments that he is "proud as a Greek god," yet indebted to such a "blockhead" for a bone to stand on. The carpenter thinks about how strange Ahab appears and how Ahab looks on him with such scorn.

#### Analysis:

The relationship between Ahab and the carpenter is a fascinating one, for the two characters instantly have a mutual animosity that Melville never fully explains. In fact, the carpenter may be the only character in Moby Dick who stands on an equal footing with Ahab, able to criticize him and counter his complaints without having to humor the captain or behave diplomatically toward him, as Starbuck must do. The rationale for this relative equality between Ahab and the carpenter remains in necessity; Ahab must depend on the carpenter for his wooden leg, whereas with others Ahab finds them entirely unnecessary. Melville will return to the character of the carpenter in later chapters.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Nine: Ahab and Starbuck in the Cabin:

During the morning, Starbuck learns that the casks have sprung a bad leak and reports the news to Ahab. Starbuck advises that they "up Burtons and break out" or else lose more oil in

a day than they may make in a year. Ahab dismisses Starbuck's advice, saying that they should let it leak, for he himself is leaking. Starbuck becomes angrier, and Ahab pulls a musket on him. He tells Starbuck that "there is one God that is Lord over the Earth, and one Captain that is lord over the Pequod." Starbuck tells Ahab not to beware of Starbuck, for he is no threat to Ahab, but to beware of himself instead. Ahab finally consents to Starbuck's advice.

Analysis:

The omnipresent conflict between Starbuck and Ahab comes to a climax in this chapter, which places the values of these respective characters in direct conflict for the first time. Melville makes explicit in this chapter that Ahab will make nearly any sacrifice during the Pequod's voyage in order to pursue his objective against Moby Dick, while Starbuck remains the voice of reason and practicality, arguing for the long-term gains of the voyage over Ahab's personal vendetta.

Although the moral conflict between Ahab and Starbuck will continue through the remaining chapters of *Moby Dick*, this chapter signals a shift in the lines of conflict. The values of the respective characters remain a source of contention, but Melville changes the struggle from an external one between Starbuck and Ahab to an internal one within Ahab. Starbuck, having abandoned hope of convincing Ahab himself, essentially abandons his attempts to change Ahab in hopes that Ahab will be able to successfully battle between his obsessive quest against Moby Dick and his more rational nature.

Chapter One Hundred and Ten: Queequeg in his Coffin:

Queequeg begins to suffer from a fever and approaches death. He wastes away, but as he does his eyes seem fuller and fuller, a "wondrous testimony to that immortal health in him which would not die." Queequeg shudders at the thought of being buried in a hammock, and desires a canoe like those of Nantucket. The carpenter is commanded to do Queequeg's bidding, and he measures Queequeg for his coffin. Queequeg gets in his coffin with his harpoon, and asks for his little god, Yojo. The delusional Pip wishes to make a game of Queequeg's burial. But just as every preparation for death is made, Queequeg suddenly rallies and returns to health. Queequeg believes that a man could make up his mind to live and sickness could not kill him: nothing but a whale or a violent, ungovernable force could destroy a man in such a condition. Queequeg continues to use his coffin as a sea chest, and carves into the lid the tattoos on his body.

Analysis:

Among the various characters in *Moby Dick*, the one that Melville endows with the most heroic qualities is Queequeg, a nearly idealized figure who faces almost any adversity with bravery and a serene confidence. Despite the onset of a seemingly fatal fever, Queequeg faces his fate stoically and even emerges in stature because of his illness. Ishmael's admission that Queequeg's eyes seem fuller through his illness is another example of his bias as a narrator, considering his idealization of Queequeg definitively founded during the early stages of the voyage. However, even if the perspective of the narrator gives a bias in Queequeg's favor, the plot details of this chapter attest well enough to Queequeg's heroism without any extraneous

detail. Queequeg essentially wills his own life through his extraordinary control. This juxtaposes sharply with Ahab; while Queequeg is so completely in control of himself that he can will himself cured, Ahab is so subject to his obsessions that he cannot make any decisions independent of them.

Interestingly, Melville elicits this comparison between Ahab and Queequeg through the idea that only a whale or an ungovernable force could vanquish Queequeg. Melville thus suggests that there is something particular in the whale that gives him power over Ahab, without fully elucidating the reason behind this. Significantly, Melville states that the only things that could vanquish Queequeg are a whale or a violent, ungovernable force. This seemingly makes the distinction between the physical power of a whale and more general violent threats, and gives additional evidence that the whale is formidable in *Moby Dick* not for its mere power, but for metaphoric implications behind it.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Eleven: The Pacific:

Ishmael is overjoyed to reach the Pacific, which he finds has a "sweet mystery." While Ishmael finds it peaceful and contented, few such thoughts stir Ahab's brain, for Ahab thinks only of *Moby Dick*.

#### Analysis:

This short chapter exists simply to place the voyage of the *Pequod* in perspective: from its departure from Nantucket, the ship has traveled around the world, yet Ahab remains locked in the same psychological state as before and, in contrast with Ishmael, he cannot enjoy the changes or pleasure in the journey.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Twelve: The Blacksmith:

The blacksmith retains Ahab's leg, altering and conforming it to Ahab's design. The blacksmith is an old man who had found ruin. He lost his home and his family, in essence losing his life. However, instead of committing suicide he decided to go out to sea, "another life without the guilt of intermediate death."

#### Analysis:

In this chapter, Melville once again uses the voyage at sea as a metaphor for death through the character of the blacksmith, who goes on the whaling voyages precisely as an escape from his life on land. Compounded with the imagery of Queequeg in this coffin, this elaborates on a persistent theme of the novel, the idea of the ship's voyage as a transitory state between life and death.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Thirteen: The Forge:

Ahab interrogates Perth the blacksmith concerning his talents, and then asks him if he can make a harpoon that "a thousand yoke of fiends could not part . . . something that will stick in a whale like his own fin-bone." Ahab rejects several because of flaws, but the blacksmith vows to remain to work. Finally, he fashions a harpoon for Ahab, who demands that it be tempered with the blood of Tashtego, Queequeg and Daggoo. Ahab howls "Ego non baptizo te in nomine patris, sed in nomine diaboli."

Analysis:

Melville equates the forging of the harpoon against Moby Dick with religious ceremony in this chapter, which is quite explicit with its implications. Ahab's howl in Latin translates directly as "I do not baptize you in the name of the father, but in the name of the devil." Through this incantation, which in its Latin form certainly recalls Catholic religious ceremony, Melville officially breaks Ahab from God and aligns him with the devil. Since Ahab equates the harpoon with a part of Moby Dick himself, this gives additional credence to the interpretation of Moby Dick as a metaphor for Satan. Ahab's use of the blood from Tashtego, Queequeg and Daggoo certainly adds to the Christian relevance of the ceremony; Ahab significantly uses the blood of the three explicitly pagan characters and thus gives an additional rejection of Christianity.

Chapter One Hundred and Fourteen: The Gilder:

The Pequod reached the heart of the Japanese cruising ground, where the crew would spend up to twenty hours at a time in the boats searching for whales. It is at these moments when the rover on a whale boat feels a special regard for the sea. Such pleasant times even have a positive effect on Ahab.

Analysis:

After the violent imagery of the previous chapter, Melville retreats from the hysterical blasphemy to adopt a more calming tone that will be necessarily short-lived. Although this respite is calming for the characters, even Ahab, the constant building of doom renders this momentary calm a futile respite before the eventual tragedy.

Chapter One Hundred and Fifteen: The Pequod Meets the Bachelor:

The Pequod comes upon another ship from Nantucket, the Bachelor, which had met with surprising success in whale fishing. Ahab asks the captain of the Bachelor whether he has seen the White Whale, but the captain says that he has only heard of him, but does not believe that Moby Dick exists. Ahab mutters at the foolishness of the Bachelor.

Analysis:

The skeptics on the Bachelor confirm the status of Moby Dick as a mythic figure. The captain of the Bachelor disbelieves the existence of the whale, considering him in terms of a fairy tale creation. In consideration of the religious parallels that pervade the novel, one may consider the captain of the Bachelor as not only a skeptic but as an atheist, denying the existence of God (and by extension, Satan).

Chapter One Hundred and Sixteen: The Dying Whale:

The day after the Pequod met the Bachelor; the Pequod comes upon four whales and slays them. Even Ahab himself slaughters one. Ahab watches the dying whale intently, but with a deep gloom. Ahab considers the nature of the dying whale, and considers the death of the whale a lesson in mortality.

Analysis:

This chapter makes clear that mortality is becoming an increasing concern of the crew of the Pequod, most particularly Ahab, who philosophizes over death upon killing a whale. This signals an increasing awareness in Ahab of the severity of his situation; he considers the implications of death fully aware of an impending death, whether his own or that of Moby Dick. Melville definitively indicates that a mortal conflict is impending, and foreshadows its nearly imminent arrival.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Seventeen: The Whale Watch:

The waif-pole remains in the slain whale and a lantern hangs from its top, casting a flickering glare on the back of the whale. Ahab awakens that night and tells Fedallah that he has "dreamed it again," of hearses. Ahab pledges that he will slay Moby Dick and survive it, but Fedallah tells him to take up another pledge, for hemp (the gallows) only can kill him. Ahab thus derisively laughs that he is immortal on land and on sea.

#### Analysis:

Additional harbingers of doom fill this chapter; most prominently Fedallah's prophetic dream of hearses, yet from the perspective of both Ahab and Fedallah the only possible conclusion is that Ahab will defeat Moby Dick. Ahab conceives of himself as immortal, yet another example of his grand, godlike hubris. It is this arrogance that Melville suggests will be Ahab's downfall, leading him to attempt a quest against Moby Dick that he cannot possibly achieve. The previous suggestions that Fedallah is a diabolical figure become significant in this chapter; here Fedallah builds Ahab's hubris and suggests that Ahab can assume to be immortal. .

#### Chapter One Hundred and Eighteen: The Quadrant:

Ahab calculates the exact latitude of the Pequod at the moment, and wonders where Moby Dick is. He finally gazes into the quadrant, the device to measure latitude, and calls it a "foolish toy" and a "plaything of haughty admirals." Starbuck watches Ahab and laments that the "old man of oceans" will remain only "one little heap of ashes," but Stubb replies that Ahab will be "sea-coal ashes . . . not your common charcoal."

#### Analysis:

Even among the crew of the Pequod, Ahab's death is imminent; Starbuck and Stubb can make no other conclusion than that Ahab will die during the struggle with Moby Dick. This is a far different conclusion than that of the previous chapter, in which Fedallah and Ahab boasted of Ahab's immortality. Still, Stubb describes Ahab in exalted terms; his death during a conflict with Moby Dick is an unavoidable one, but one that has a heroic grandeur. Melville thus indicates that the mates on the ship, despite their pessimistic attitude to their voyage, do not consider Ahab as an evil or Satanic figure, despite his seeming belief in that very interpretation. Stubb views Ahab better than Ahab actually views himself.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Nineteen: The Candles:

The canvas of the Pequod tears and the ship is left bare-poled to fight a typhoon. During this dangerous time, Stubb remains jovial and singing, but Starbuck asks him to desist. Stubb claims that he sings because he is a coward and he must keep up his spirits. Starbuck notes

that the Pequod has two choices: an easy route past the Cape of Good Hope back to Nantucket, or a difficult route opposing the winds to search for Moby Dick. Ahab believes that he sees a light that leads to the White Whale. There are repeated flashes of lightning that seem to lead Ahab to Moby Dick. Starbuck cries out for Ahab to look at the boat. There are hints of mutiny among the crew, but Ahab says that all of their oaths to hunt the White Whale are as binding as his own.

Analysis:

Ahab faces an explicit choice in this chapter between life and death and, in choosing to pursue Moby Dick, easily makes the obvious choice of death. Melville describes this choice with explicit imagery: by abandoning the quest for Moby Dick, the Pequod will take the route past the Cape of Good Hope, while the journey against the winds has the Pequod traveling through darkness in pursuit of a distant light, thus recalling common imagery of death and the afterlife.

Melville never fully resolves the status of the crew of the Pequod during this chapter; there seems to be little doubt among the crew, in particular Stubb and Starbuck that the quest against Moby Dick is little more than a suicide mission, yet rumblings of mutiny are easily dismissed through Ahab's forceful demeanor. Melville essentially dismisses the crew of the Pequod as irrelevant to Ahab's quest, and assumes that their possible objections to Ahab do not contain enough power to overcome the great will of the captain. While this view of the Pequod's crew is somewhat problematic, it certainly pares down the novel to its essential conflicts between Ahab and Moby Dick and, perhaps just as importantly, Ahab and his obsessions. However unrealistic it may be, the crew of the Pequod is a mere pawn in the greater scheme of these conflicts.

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty: The Deck Towards the End of the First Night Watch:

Ahab stands by the helm and Starbuck approaches him. Ahab dismisses Starbuck's concern over the great winds that they face.

Analysis:

This chapter begins a series of several chapters devoted to a massive storm that the Pequod faces during its journey. Melville breaks these chapters into short, descriptive passages that imbue the storm with a sense of urgency; instead of a slowly building momentum, the tempo of these chapters is choppy and disconcerting, reflecting the progress of the storm itself.

## **Chapters 121-Epilogue**

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-One: Midnight The Forecastle Bulwarks:

Stubb and Flask argue as they remain on the bulwarks, passing lashings over the anchors. They argue over the possibility that the ship may catch fire.

Analysis:

This chapter begins to describe the storm that began in the previous chapter, and makes clear the imminent danger that the Pequod faces.



#### Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-Two: Midnight Aloft Thunder and Lightning:

Tashtego passes lashings around the mainsail. He wonders what the use of thunder is, and says that he wants rum, not thunder.

#### Analysis:

Melville devotes this chapter almost entirely to the imagery of the storm that the Pequod experiences.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-Three: The Musket:

While experiencing this severe storm, the Pequod suffers several shocks causing the needles in its compasses to spin out of control. The typhoon eventually abates several hours after midnight, and after everything calms Starbuck enters Ahab's stateroom to let the captain know the status of the ship. When Starbuck enters the stateroom, he sees loaded muskets on the rack and he immediately thinks that Ahab would have shot him once and thus picks up a musket. Starbuck considers that Ahab would kill his own crew in the quest for Moby Dick, and he may be justified in murdering him. He decides to place the musket so that it will shoot Ahab only if it falls, and thus Starbuck would not have to pull the trigger. However, he sees Ahab asleep and cannot move himself to shoot the old man. Starbuck hears Ahab cry in his sleep "Moby Dick, I clutch thy heart at last." Starbuck places the musket back on the rack and leaves the room.

#### Analysis:

Among the characters in Moby Dick, it is Starbuck who experiences the most vivid and acute internal conflict. As the character closest to Ahab and thus most privy to his madness and obsession, Starbuck allows the reader to get a more personalized but still external view of the captain, who emerges in this chapter as both the driven madman that Melville has described through the last hundred chapters but also as a weak and pitiable old man fully consumed by his personal demons. It is only when Starbuck glimpses this pitiable side of Ahab that he finally decides against murdering him for the sake of the crew.

Nevertheless, even before Starbuck's final realization of pity for the captain he seems unable to take full responsibility for the action he hopes to undertake. When contemplating whether or not to kill Ahab, he essentially argues the merits of murdering the captain by using legal and even mathematical terminology, weighing the thirty persons on the ship against the one captain who would sacrifice them. Starbuck thus attempts to distance himself from the crime he may commit, showing that he does not have the heart to go through with the crime without severe justification. Melville further shows this through Starbuck's decision to lay the musket on the door. Starbuck can only truly consider committing this murder if he does not pull the trigger. He wishes to have a relative level of impunity from the moral consequences of this murder. This is a significant point, for it shows that the conflict between Starbuck and Ahab exists on different moral planes; Starbuck will only do what he can ethically justify, while Ahab will do anything that he believes will help him achieve his final goal.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-Four: The Needle:

On the morning after the typhoon, Ahab stands in an enchanted silence on the deck of the ship. Ahab corrects the ship's steersman when he says that the ship is heading east-southeast, for Ahab judges their direction by the rising sun. Ahab thus learns that the storm turned the compasses, and orders that the ship turn in the opposite direction. Starbuck, Stubb and Flask acquiesce to Ahab's demand, but display a quiet discomfort with Ahab's order. Ahab fashions a new needle for the compass out of a lance, and thus quiets the skeptical crew that had not believed that the compasses were in error.

Analysis:

While Melville has established Ahab as a madman consumed with his own obsession that is only part of the terror that he instills in others. Another vital aspect that makes Ahab so formidable is that he is an extremely capable and knowledgeable sailor. While Ahab generally stands alone among his crew because of his madness, in this situation Ahab finds in opposition with his crew for the simple reason that he is the only one who can accurately determine the problem with the compass. While Ahab is descending into insanity, he nevertheless remains dangerous to the crew simply because even with his obsession he is still extraordinarily capable.

Melville makes this point about Ahab's capabilities explicit in part to create Ahab as a more intimidating character, but also in part to elevate the conflict between Ahab and Moby Dick into a more mythic battle. While Ahab may be mad, he is still an unquestionably superb sailor. This makes the captain's battle with Moby Dick into something more than a mere suicide mission, for Melville gives sufficient indication that Ahab has the sailing capability necessary to defeat the whale. It is not a lack of talent that will doom Ahab to failure, however; it is this very talent, this "fatal pride" that Melville names, that will prove Ahab's undoing.

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-Five: The Log and Line:

After fixing the compass of the Pequod, Ahab turns his attention to the log and line in order to make sure that this long-ignored part of the ship was still functioning. A Tahitian and a Manxman each attempt to raise the log, while the Tahitian makes puns about the Manxman, a "Man from (The Isle of) Man." Ahab watches the idiocy of these two from the deck, and calls for Pip to help them. When Ahab finds that Pip has gone insane and can spout only gibberish, he offers his cabin to Pip and vows that he will not let go of him "unless I should thereby drag thee to worse horrors than are here."

Analysis:

The formidable and mythic Ahab of previous chapters recedes into a shocking display of humanity and pity in this chapter, which finds the redoubtable captain displaying pity and empathy for essentially the first time in the novel. In the incoherent Pip, Ahab finds an idealized and blessed figure deserving of both charity and respect; Ahab even dubs him his "holiness." Also, Ahab notes that he cannot see his reflection in "the vacant pupils of thy eyes," and regrets his distance from the poor Pip. Quite significantly, Melville leaves Ahab's lament open to interpretation; it is unclear whether Ahab worries that Pip has lost his links to humanity or whether it is Ahab, who views man as "a thing for immortal souls to sieve

through," who feels displaced from humanity himself. One could therefore interpret Ahab's offer of his cabin to Pip as an expression of Ahab's attempt to reconcile himself with the humanity he has lost.

The most significant line of this chapter, and perhaps the most startling change in Ahab, concerns Ahab's vow not to drag Pip to "worse horrors." This shows that Ahab has essentially doomed himself in his conflict with Moby Dick, but for the first time he seems to consider whether or not he shall allow the others of the ship to share his fate. Melville at last demonstrates an internal conflict within Ahab between his obsession and his common humanity.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-Six: The Life-Buoy:

The Pequod progresses toward the Equator and reaches a cluster of rocky islets. The Manxman, the oldest mariner on the ship, declares that he hears sounds of "newly drowned men in the sea." The ship also passes seals, which are considered among mariners to be ill omens. Early in the morning, a sailor mounts the mast of the ship but falls from it and drowns. The sailors lose the life-buoy in their futile attempt to save him. Some members of the ship regard it "not as a foreshadowing of evil in the future, but as the fulfillment of an evil already presaged." Queequeg offers his coffin as a replacement for the life-buoy. The ship's carpenter complains about the duty of transforming the coffin into a life-buoy, comparing it to turning an old coat and calling it a "cobbling sort of business." However, he says that his job is not "to ask the why and wherefore in your work" and starts at his work.

#### Analysis:

The first segment of this chapter returns to one of Melville's most common techniques throughout *Moby Dick*, the building of a sense of impending doom. Once again Melville relies on the sight of harbingers of disaster, from the tangibly dangerous (the rocky islets) and the spooky (the supposed voices of nearly drowned men) to the merely superstitious (the seals). A more concrete sign of disaster comes with the death of another crew member and the loss of the life-buoy, which is treated as a more grave loss than the actual human life.

The irony of using Queequeg's coffin as a life-buoy is perhaps too obvious to merit much notice, but still fits with the theme of mortality that runs throughout *Moby Dick*. Deserving of more attention is the carpenter's complaint concerning the coffin. He resigns himself to transforming the coffin into a life-buoy because it is not his job to question the work assigned to him. This fits with a recurring theme of predestination and inevitability that dominates the main conflict of the novel, as the characters, even Ahab, find themselves powerless to escape the inevitable conflict with the great whale.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-Seven: The Deck:

Ahab watches the carpenter work on Queequeg's coffin, and calls him "unprincipled as the gods" and "an arrant, all-grasping intermeddling, monopolizing, heathenish old scamp" for one day making legs and another day, coffin and yet another, making life-buoys out of coffins. Ahab asks the carpenter whether he has ever carried a coffin with a body, and when the carpenter responds with the exclamation "faith," Ahab asks "what's that?" and then asks the carpenter if he is a silkworm who "spins thy own shroud out of thyself." Ahab thinks of

the coffin as a life-buoy in the sense that it is an immortality preserver, but laments that he has gone too far to "the dark side of the earth"

Analysis:

The interaction between the carpenter and Ahab does very little to advance the plot, merely continuing the tone their interaction from previous chapters, but remains rich in symbolism and reiterates many of the themes that are prominent throughout *Moby Dick*. The religious overtones of this chapter are particularly important; Ahab believes that the carpenter commits blasphemy by making false legs and transforming coffins into life-buoys, yet nevertheless questions the idea of faith itself. Melville effects an ironic reversal in this chapter, as Ahab scolds the carpenter for faithlessness and blasphemy while it is Ahab himself who best displays these traits. He views the carpenter's work as unprincipled because it reverses the order of life (turning a coffin, a symbol of death, into a buoy, a symbol of life) and allows the carpenter to be a creator (fashioning a leg for Ahab); in other words, Ahab criticizes the carpenter for behaving in the manner of a god, just as Ahab has done through the previous chapters. Melville bolsters this comparison between the carpenter and god through the metaphor of the silkworm, which fashions its shroud from itself and is thus self-creating. One may even find the carpenter to be a metaphor for Jesus, himself a carpenter who, through resurrection, reversed the order between life and death. Significantly, all of these religious overtones concern mortality, as if Ahab presages an imminent death in his struggle with *Moby Dick*.

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-Eight: The Pequod Meets the Rachel:

The Pequod comes upon another ship, the Rachel. The captain of the Rachel tells the Manxman that he saw the White Whale yesterday, and asks whether the Pequod has seen a whale-boat adrift. Ahab soon recognizes this captain as a man from Nantucket that he once knew. This captain wishes to unite with the Pequod on a search for this whale-boat by sailing several miles apart on parallel lines. Stubb seems skeptical about the request, but they soon learn that the sailor in the lost whale-boat is the captain's son. Gardiner, the captain of the Rachel, refuses to leave the Pequod until Ahab assents to his request, and says that he knows that Ahab has a son himself. Ahab rejects Gardiner's request, claiming that he will lose necessary time in pursuing the white whale, and Gardiner dejectedly leaves the Pequod.

Analysis:

The plight of the Rachel provides a stark contrast to the plight of Pequod. Both of the captains of the respective ships, Gardiner and Ahab, are consumed with a difficult and personal journey and neither can fixate on anything other than that journey. However, while the object of Ahab's pursuit is death and a nearly suicidal fixation on the whale, the object of Gardiner's pursuit is life, in his attempt to save his son. For Ahab, such personal relationships mean little; it is jarring for Gardiner to remind Ahab that he is himself a father, for in his obsession over the whale Ahab has seemingly lost any ability to have a connection with another human being. For Ahab, all personal considerations are secondary when it comes to his pursuit of the white whale.

Chapter One Hundred and Twenty-Nine: The Cabin:

While leaving his cabin, Ahab finds Pip following him up on deck. Ahab stops him and tells Pip not to follow him, for the hour is coming when Ahab "would not scare thee from him, yet would not have thee by him." Ahab claims that his malady becomes his most desired health. Pip weeps at Ahab's attempt to abandon him, but Ahab threatens to murder him, for he too is insane. Ahab leaves, and Pip steps forward, but vows to remain there until "the stern strikes rocks."

Analysis:

Just as the previous chapter established Ahab's inability to show any concern for others that might hinder his quest for Moby Dick, in this chapter Melville gives additional evidence of the hardened and emotionless Ahab through his interaction with Pip, the character to whom Ahab had shown the most pity. Ahab at first attempts to handle Pip gently in order to spare him from what seems to be an inevitable tragedy, yet still resolves to murder the pitiable boy if it is necessary. Perhaps the most interesting facet of Ahab's character in this chapter is his self-awareness of his own insanity. Ahab realizes that he is a madman, but cannot change his behavior. This is yet another example of the novel's recurring theme of predestined fate.

Chapter One Hundred and Thirty: The Hat:

Ahab becomes more purposeful than ever upon learning that he is within range of Moby Dick, and in this foreshadowing interval all humor vanishes from the Pequod. The proximity to the whale awes Ahab, who has an "added, gliding strangeness" that even affects Fedallah. His life becomes a perpetual watch on deck, for Ahab wishes to have the first sight of the whale himself. Ahab selects Starbuck as the person who will help him reach the perch of the ship, a dangerous task that could lead to Ahab's death, despite the fact that Starbuck is the only person to ever voice any opposition to him. While on the perch, Ahab watches the horizon so intently that he barely notices when a hawk swoops down and flies off with his hat. This story recalls how an eagle flew thrice round Tarquin's head, removing his cap to replace it, and thereupon Tanaquil, his wife, declared that Tarquin would be king of Rome. However, it is only by the hat's replacement that this became a good omen.

Analysis:

Once again Herman Melville devotes a chapter of Moby Dick to detailing the ever-increasing feeling of doom and foreshadows the inevitable tragic end to Ahab, whose obsession becomes more public. He no longer remains a shadowy and mysterious figure in his cabin, but instead a consistently prominent symbol and active figure in relation to the crew. Melville also continues to add ill omens to the voyage, including the theft of Ahab's hat, which recalls the harbinger of Tarquin's destiny without the return of the hat that would render it a portent of victory.

This chapter fully realizes the arc of Starbuck's character as he accepts his captain's quest at a moment in which he could effectively stop Ahab. Starbuck could easily harm Ahab while he helps him to the perch, thus saving the crew from the captain's quest against Moby Dick, but Starbuck once again acquiesces. Whatever objections that he may have to his captain, he remains powerless to stop him. Starbuck thus accepts that his fate is irrevocably bound with Ahab's. Also, for Ahab the decision to allow Starbuck to help him is significant. Since

Starbuck is the only person who might be considered untrustworthy to the task, asking Starbuck to help Ahab to the perch is an act of both great hubris and suicidal folly, both traits that Melville has certainly established within Ahab throughout the novel.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Thirty-One: The Pequod Meets the Delight:

The Pequod comes upon the Delight, which has upon its side the shattered planks of a former whale-boat. Ahab asks if the Delight has seen the White Whale, and the captain of the ship points him to the wrecked boat. The captain claims that no harpoon has been forged that could ever kill Moby Dick. Ahab wields Perth's harpoon, and claims that it is tempered in lightning and blood.

#### Analysis:

The eventual clash between the Pequod and Moby Dick comes closer during this chapter, in which the Pequod meets a ship that is itself a victim of the whale. Ahab once again demonstrates his egomaniacal belief that he can defeat the whale; when he wields the harpoon, he fashions himself as a mythic hero with mystical powers, once again demonstrating his own grand delusions.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Thirty-Two: The Symphony:

Starbuck watches Ahab gazing out from the deck, and Ahab reminisces with him about the day when he struck his first whale nearly forty years ago when he was only eighteen. Ahab laments the solitude of these years, only three of which he has spent on dry land. He claims that when he married his wife he immediately left her a widow and says that he has "foamingly" chased his prey as "more a demon than a man." Ahab questions the strife of this chase. Ahab finally says that "toil we how we may, we all sleep at last on the field" and "rust amid greenness."

#### Analysis:

In this chapter, Melville repeats the characterization of Ahab that has been well established throughout the novel as a man possessed by a great obsession who can demonstrate few recognizably human traits. However, the significance of this not altogether shocking character analysis is that it comes from Ahab himself, who freely and explicitly admits to his disturbing nature. The formidable captain even demonstrates a bit of regret concerning his life and its consequences for others. In some sense, Ahab seems to give his last words to Starbuck. Even before the battle with the white whale, Ahab has written his own requiem, presaging his own death at the hands of Moby Dick and hoping for a better afterlife. Ahab's imagery of heaven, in particular his allusion to sleeping on the fields, recall mythic imagery of the Elysian fields. Once again providing a parallel to mythic heroes, Ahab fancies himself not in Christian ideas of paradise but in the afterlife of classical mythology.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Thirty-Three: The Chase First Day:

That night, Ahab suddenly declares that the whale must be near, and he orders the crew to prepare for the chase despite the fact that nobody can actually see Moby Dick. Finally Ahab spies the whale, and Tashtego affirms Ahab's vision. Soon all of the boats except for Starbuck's are in the water, and Ahab's boat leads them. The whale seems to possess a gentle

joyousness, and it surpasses even "the white bull Jupiter swimming away with ravished Europa." A flock of white herons flies around Ahab's boat as it reaches Moby Dick's open mouth and scoured jaw. Ahab struggles with the whale, which seems to predict every move that Ahab will make. When Moby Dick attacks Ahab's boat, causing it to sink, Ahab narrowly escapes to Stubb's boat, where he asks whether or not his harpoon survived before asking if there were any casualties. The boats rush back toward the Pequod, and Ahab remains on deck watching for more glimpses of Moby Dick. Starbuck claims that today's loss of Ahab's boat is an ill omen, but Ahab simply claims that if the gods think of communicating to man, "they will honorably speak outright, not shake their heads and give an old wives' darkling hint." Ahab orders Starbuck to begin the search for Moby Dick again, but not to find him until morning.

Analysis:

After over one hundred chapters, at long last Melville allows the conflict between Ahab and Moby Dick to come to fruition. The thematic implications of this conflict thus recede as the pure action and mechanics of the plot come to the fore. Having established the particular persona of Ahab and the context of his quest, Melville shifts the style of the novel from that of previous chapters, which focused on creating mood and delving into the psyche of Ahab, to a style that better recalls adventure stories, albeit with a darker and more foreboding tone. Melville does continue the pattern of including ill omens and superstitions that foreshadow disaster, but in this case a more concrete threat does come in the form of Moby Dick. In fact, Ahab altogether rejects the idea of these portents, claiming that the gods will communicate directly to him and not through superstitious hints. This may be interpreted in several ways: one can view this passage as Ahab's rejection of religion (and thus another example of his blasphemy), or as greater evidence that Ahab can be cold, calculating and logical.

Melville portrays Moby Dick in nearly human terms, endowing the great whale with a sense of intelligence, strategy and grandeur. The whale is more than a match for Ahab, despite his dogged persistence, and in fact appears altogether invincible. Therefore, despite the fact that the Pequod escaped with relatively little harm from its first encounter with the whale, there is little hope that Ahab and his crew will effectively vanquish Moby Dick.

Chapter One Hundred and Thirty-Four: The Chase Second Day:

The next day the Pequod once again comes upon Moby Dick, and in finding the whale the crew works together strenuously as "one man, not thirty." Ahab and his crew descend into the boats and sail toward Moby Dick, which in turn sails toward them. Once again Moby Dick fends off the attack by Ahab, and even breaks Ahab's ivory leg. Ahab and Stubb soon realize that Fedallah was a victim of Moby Dick; he had become entangled in the line and dragged underwater. Starbuck chastises Ahab, telling him that he will never capture Moby Dick and that it is "impiety and blasphemy" to chase him again. Ahab, however, declares that the chase is "immutably decreed" and that he is simply "Fate's lieutenant." In returning Starbuck's criticism, Ahab rallies the crew behind the cause.

Analysis:

The second day of the chase proceeds in much the same manner as the first, although Melville heightens the tension of the second conflict with Moby Dick through its first casualty. Otherwise, Melville merely makes explicit the character developments that have occurred throughout the novel. He specifically has Starbuck voice the opinion that Ahab's actions are blasphemy and has Ahab counter with the idea that he is merely fulfilling his destiny. At this point in the novel no other characters matter other than Ahab, as Melville indicates: the crew is no longer composed of thirty separate characters, but instead it is guided by the single vision and mind of Ahab. And, as Melville once again makes clear, Ahab's only opposition, Starbuck, is powerless to oppose him.

#### Chapter One Hundred and Thirty-Five: The Chase Third Day:

On the third day, Starbuck begins to feel panic for helping Ahab, wondering if he does "disobey his God" by doing so. The crew remains tense at the suspense until Ahab finally spies the whale's spout again. Before Ahab sets out on a third attempt against the whale, he tells Starbuck that "some ships sail from their ports and ever afterwards are missing" and the two shake hands. As Ahab leaves, Starbuck calls for him to come back, for he sees sharks, but Ahab cannot hear him. When Ahab and the crew reach Moby Dick, the whale seems "combinedly possessed by all the angels that fell from heaven." Ahab can see the corpse of Fedallah still attached to the whale by the line. Ahab is able to stab the whale with his harpoon, but when Moby Dick writhes in pain he tips Ahab's boat over. Ahab orders them to return to the ship as the whale chases them, but the whale smashes the Pequod, which begins to sink. In a possible act of suicide, Ahab throws his harpoon, becomes entangled in its line and goes along with it. As the Pequod goes down, Tashtego attempts to nail a flag to the ship, but a sky-hawk becomes caught in the flag and it goes down with the ship as well. Melville compares the ship to Satan, who "would not sink to hell till she had dragged a living part of heaven along with her."

#### Analysis:

The final day of the chase serves as the culmination of the plot of the novel, if not the crux of the character development and conflict. Ahab does not veer from his quest against Moby Dick, even though he seems to realize that there cannot be a satisfactory end to this course of action; by shaking hands with Starbuck, he wishes him a final farewell in full knowledge that he will not return alive.

While the symbolism of classical mythology has been significant during the recent passages of the book, in this final chapter Melville returns to more specifically Christian symbolism. Moby Dick comes to represent Satan, for as Melville notes, he seems possessed with the strength of all the angels that fell from Heaven. However, this is not a Manichean struggle between good and evil. In the end, when Ahab suffers his tragic end to Moby Dick, he is literally brought down to the whale's level. Ahab's death is a tragic fall caused by his hubris, and with his death he brings down his ship and his crew.

The sinking of the Pequod is a symbolic moment that recalls the omen of the hat found in chapter one hundred and thirty. The very sky-hawk that could have prophesied Ahab's victory becomes a victim brought down with the Pequod. Curiously, in this chapter Melville



compares both Moby Dick and the Pequod itself to Satan, as both return to the abyss after their final battle. The story of Moby Dick thus leaves no sense of catharsis, only a sense of relief as the tainted Pequod and its captain fulfill their inevitable, tragic destiny.

Epilogue:

Ishmael survives the wreck only because, after Fedallah's death, he took his place as Ahab's bowsman. Ishmael is nearly taken down by the vortex of the sinking ship, but he survives and remains for a whole day and night floating, untouched even by the sharks, until the Rachel sails nearby searching for her missing children and finding a different orphan.

Analysis:

The epilogue of the novel serves as a necessary explanatory note, showing how Ishmael could narrate the story even after the final chapter essentially states that none of the crew of the Pequod survived the attack by Moby Dick. Melville begins the epilogue with a scriptural quote from Job, "And I am escaped alone to tell thee," once again returning to a Biblical parallel. However, the journeys of Job and Ishmael in fact contain few essential similarities other than surface details. While Job grappled with the possibility of a vengeful God, Ishmael serves as a simple narrator for the novel. He is simply a witness to the tragedy that unfolded throughout Moby Dick, and in fact is Job's opposite. In the Biblical tale of Job, his suffering was random and unjustified, while in Moby Dick it is Ishmael's good fortune that is mere coincidence, allowing him, like Job, to tell his tale.

## **2. Themes, symbols and Structure of *Moby Dick***

### ***2.1 Structure of the Novel***

Moby Dick's structure is in a sense one of the simplest of all literary structures—the story of a journey. Its 135 chapters and epilogue describe how Ishmael leaves Manhattan for Captain Ahab's whaling ship, the Pequod, how Ahab pilots the Pequod from Nantucket to the Pacific in search of Moby Dick, and how in the end Ishmael alone survives the journey. This simple but powerful structure is what keeps us reading, as we ask ourselves, "Where will Ahab seek out his enemy next? What will happen when he gets there?"

Some critics have divided the book into sections, like acts in a play. The first, from Chapter 1 to Chapter 22, describes Ishmael, portrays his growing friendship with Queequeg, and serves as a kind of dry-land introduction to themes—whaling, brotherhood, and man's relationship with God—explored in greater detail at sea. The next section begins as the Pequod sails and continues to Chapter 46. Here you meet both Captain Ahab and, in description if not yet in the flesh, his great enemy, Moby Dick. A long middle section, from Chapter 47 to Chapter 105, shows the Pequod at work as whales are hunted and killed and other whaling ships met. It also shows Ishmael pondering the meaning of these activities. The plot slows as Melville takes time to gather and display proof of the importance of the Pequod's voyage. Then, from Chapter 106 to the book's end, we're caught up in the excitement as Ahab steers his ship nearer and nearer to Moby Dick and final disaster.

Although Moby Dick's basic structure is simple, the book is anything but simple, in part because Melvill writes in several literary forms. As a whole, Moby Dick is of course a novel, but some of its chapters are written as if they were scenes in a play. The chapters involving Father Mapple and Fleece contain sermons. Other chapters, most notable, Ishmael's discussion of whales and whaling, resemble essays.

## **2.2 Themes**

### **2.2.1 Defiance**

Because of the dominance of Ahab's quest in the novel, the theme of defiance is of paramount importance. Father Mapple prepares us for a consideration of defiance with his sermon about Jonah in Chapter 9. Jonah suffers from the sin of disobedience. When God asks him to submit to God's will, Jonah attempts to flee from god. He thinks that he can find some country where God does not rule. What he learns is that he must set aside his own wishes, his own vanity, if he is to follow God's way. Father Mapple puts it like this: "And if we obey god, we must disobey ourselves; and it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists."

Whether he is fighting against God or the rules of nature or some sort of perverse evil authority, Ahab is a defiant man. After Starbuck suggests that it is "blasphemous" to seek revenge on some poor dumb brute, such as a whale, when it merely followed instinct and took off the captain's leg, Ahab responds that he would "strike the sun if it insulted me" (Chapter 36). Ahab explains that he is not seeking revenge against a mere whale. He sees the White Whale as a mask, a façade, for his real enemy, which is an authority that rules over Ahab and which Ahab refuses to accept. The nature of that authority is debatable. We might infer that it is the order of nature, which Ahab sees as evil because Ahab insists on being placed higher in nature than a mere man can be.

Certainly Ahab is mad; even he knows that his monomaniacal obsession is not "normal." But he strikes us as not being a man who would *want* to be normal. Ahab strikes back against the inscrutable figure behind the mask because Ahab sees no justification for submitting to it. He rebels with anger because he wants to be more than he is. Ahab defies whatever authority there is and stands against it with a soul that can be killed but not defeated. In that sense, he condemns himself to death; but it is a death that he prefers to submission. In his madness and egocentrism, tragically, he takes his ship and most of his crew with him.

### **2.2.2 Friendship**

In contrast to Ahab's self-centered defiance is the theme of friendship, or camaraderie, which is characterized primarily through Ishmael and Queequeg. The two meet under awkward circumstances. As a result of a shortage of beds at the Spouter-Inn, as well as the mischievous nature of the proprietor, Queequeg and Ishmael find themselves in a frightening situation. Ishmael has no idea that his bunkmate is a "heathen" and concludes that the aborigine who

enters the room late is a cannibal. Queequeg doesn't even know he is to share his bed with anyone and does threaten Ishmael's life. It's not an auspicious beginning for a friendship, but things soon get better because both men are open to the positive possibilities of diversity. They are characters who can and do grow and change. Queequeg left his native island of Kokovoko to learn about the rest of the world. Ishmael has similar motives for his ventures. Both understand that people from different cultures can learn from each other, and both value their differences as well as their similarities. An example is their respect for each other's religion. Although Queequeg is no Christian, he does attend services at the Whaleman's Chapel in New Bedford. Later, Ishmael bonds with Queequeg by sharing a pipe of tobacco and later making a burnt offering to Queequeg's little idol, Yojo.

Although it is not investigated in detail, this kind of friendship is also somewhat true of the crew of the *Pequod*, which is a microcosm of life from various cultures. Ishmael alludes to the camaraderie as he describes working whale blubber with the other men. Unfortunately, there are exceptions aboard ship. Stubb is one. His scene with the black cook, Fleece, may have been designed for humor; but it seems more like an illustration of the absence of brotherhood. The gams with other ships do provide positive opportunities for camaraderie. Significantly, Ahab has almost no interest in friendship. He eventually banishes the one person, Pip, who begins to get close to him. Ahab's mission allows for none of the warmth of friendship. Ultimately, and symbolically, Queequeg indirectly saves Ishmael's life. It is Queequeg's coffin that pops to the surface after the *Pequod* sinks, providing the narrator with a life buoy and allowing him to survive until the *Rachel* rescues him. Queequeg could not have planned this, of course, but his loving nature would approve of his part in his friend's good fortune.

### 2.2.3 Duty

Because most of the action of the novel takes place aboard ship, it is not surprising that duty is a major theme in *Moby-Dick*. The problem is how it is to be interpreted. For Father Mapple, the first duty of any shipmate is to God. We can serve our professional obligations only within that larger value system. This is not the case with Ahab. After Ahab's initial disagreement with Starbuck on the quarter-deck (Chapter 36) regarding the ship's mission, the crew sees Ahab as its highest authority. Later in the voyage, Ahab and Starbuck have another confrontation, again concerning duty, in the captain's cabin (Chapter 109). Starbuck is a sincere Quaker with a hierarchy of loyalties: He feels a duty first to God, then to his employer (who supports Starbuck's family), then to his captain. When Starbuck discovers that some of the barrels in the hold of the ship must be leaking oil, he reports the situation to Ahab. The first mate expects the captain to stop the ship and turn all hands to a check of the casks because the ship's official mission is to capture whale oil and bring it home safely. As he says, "What we come twenty thousand miles to get is worth saving, sir." Ahab sardonically responds, "So it is, so it is; if we get it." Starbuck means the oil; Ahab means the White Whale. Starbuck reminds Ahab of the owners' interests, but the captain could not care less about the owners. He points a loaded musket toward the first mate and declares that there is "one Captain that is lord over the *Pequod*." Starbuck returns to the deck, and Ahab soon decides it is more prudent to stop the ship and make repairs.

It is clear, however, that the captain feels only one duty on this mission, and that is not to the owners or even to God but to Ahab. He will pursue his own monomaniacal goal in defiance of whatever gets in his path. The only way to stop Ahab is to kill him. When Starbuck has an opportunity to shoot the old man, with the same musket that Ahab pointed at him, the duties become confused in the first mate's mind. He has a duty to his family. How is that duty best served? He has a duty to the men who may well die with Ahab. But Starbuck feels a higher duty — to himself, to God, perhaps simply to decency. He is unable to pull the trigger, not through weakness but due to his own system of values. Because Starbuck cannot kill his captain, he must serve him.

#### **2.2.4 Death**

Although it does not dominate until the end, the theme of death casts an ominous shadow over the novel. When Ishmael arrives at the Spouter-Inn, he immediately notices a large, obscure oil painting, a "boggy, soggy, squitchy picture" (Chapter 3) with such a confusion of shades and shadows that, for some time, he can make no sense of it. Contributing to the theme of death, and foreshadowing events later in the novel, the subject seems to be a ship foundering in a terrible storm and under attack from a whale. The inn's proprietor is named "Coffin," contributing symmetry to a book that begins and ends with a coffin.

From the first, Ahab appears to be familiar with death. He looks like a man "cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all the limbs without consuming them" (Chapter 28). His mission has only two possible results: death for many of the men or victory over forces that probably cannot be defeated by this mortal. As practical as he is, Starbuck sees this; yet Starbuck cannot intentionally bring on his captain's death.

The *Pequod's* voyage is a voyage to death, and the prophecies in the novel all anticipate it. Elijah, a prophet of doom, cryptically warns of dark endings before the ship sails. The Shaker prophet aboard the *Jeroboam*, who calls himself Gabriel, predicts that Ahab will soon be joining the dead at the bottom of the sea. Fedallah's prophecy is most elaborate as he details events leading up to and including Ahab's death. The Parsee's predictions all come true in unexpected ways.

The novel ends in death for all but the narrator, Ishmael, who lives to tell the tale because his friend Queequeg's coffin has been caulked and pitched to become a life buoy, which emerges from the vortex of the sunken *Pequod* to bring new life and hope to the narrator. In the first British publication, there was no epilogue explaining Ishmael's survival; a criticism of the story was that it was told by a dead man. Melville solved that problem with a poetic conclusion so ideal that it is difficult to imagine the novel without it.

While the themes add cohesion to the novel, it is important not to become lost in them. Above all, Ishmael has told us an excellent "yarn," as Father Mapple would say, and we should enjoy.

#### **2.3 Symbols**

### 2.3.1 Father Mapple's Pulpit

Father Mapple's pulpit in the Whaleman's Chapel effectively represents this former harpooner's approach to his ministry. Everything about the chapel reminds a visitor of life and death at sea. Father Mapple is the captain of the ship, the congregation his crew. The pulpit itself is shaped like the prow of a ship and features a painting of a vessel battling a storm near a rocky coast, an angel of hope watching over it. Without much effort, we can see that the pulpit represents the leadership of the pastor and implies that God himself is the pilot of this ship. Mapple's "shipmates," as he refers to the congregation, often find themselves battling storms on rocky coasts — either literally, in ships, or figuratively in the rest of their lives. They need the hope and consolation of God's grace, as represented by the angel.

Mapple ascends to the pulpit by climbing a rope ladder like one used to mount a ship from a boat at sea. He then pulls the rope up after him, effectively cutting off contact with worldly matters. In similar ways, the captain of a whaling ship assumes the pilot's role as he cuts off contact with land; the ship becomes a floating microcosm at sea. Melville makes effective use of contrast throughout the novel; here, it is between Mapple and Ahab. Mapple is an elderly but vigorous man of God who sees his role as leading his ship through rocky waters by gladly submitting to the will of a higher authority. Ahab is an ungodly man who doesn't mind wielding authority but resents submitting to it. He wears his defiance proudly. In this sense, the pulpit represents the proper position for a ship's captain, performing his duty in leading his congregation toward an understanding of performing God's will.

### 2.3.2 Queequeg's Coffin

The symbolism of Queequeg's coffin changes as the novel progresses. Initially, the coffin represents Queequeg's apparently impending death and his nostalgic link to his home island. The coffin is shaped like a canoe because of the custom on Kokovoko of setting the corpse adrift in such a craft. The belief was that eventually it would float over the ocean to the sky, which connects to the sea, and ultimately to one of the islands (stars) in the sky. Queequeg saw similar canoe coffins in Nantucket and the custom of setting the corpse adrift is widespread among sea-faring people around the world.

The coffin represents ongoing life when it becomes Queequeg's sea chest after he decides not to die. It represents hope for renewal and a practical means of saving life when it is rigged to serve as a life buoy. Finally, the coffin is a symbol of hope and even rebirth when it springs from the vortex of the sunken *Pequod* to provide Ishmael with a means of staying afloat until the *Rachel* rescues him.

### 2.3.3 The White Whale

The White Whale is one of the best known symbols in American literature. What it represents depends entirely on who is noticing. To Starbuck, Moby Dick is just another whale, except that he is more dangerous. Early in the novel, Starbuck challenges Ahab's motives for altering the ship's mission, from accumulating oil to killing the White Whale. On the quarter-deck in

Chapter 36, Starbuck calls it "blasphemous" to seek revenge on a "dumb brute . . . that simply smote thee from blindest instinct!" If Starbuck sees anything beyond that in the whale, it is that Moby Dick represents the captain's madness and a very serious diversion from the ship's proper mission.

The *Samuel Enderby's* captain, who has lost an arm to the White Whale, sees it as representing a great prize in both glory and sperm oil but seems very reasonable in his desire to leave the whale alone. He says to Ahab, "There would be great glory in killing him, I know that; and there is a ship-load of precious sperm in him, but, hark ye, he's best let alone; don't you think so, Captain?" (Chapter 100) Ahab points out that the "accursed thing is not always what least allures."

To some, the White Whale is a myth. To others, he is immortal. But a significant question is, what is the White Whale to Ahab? Ishmael grants that Ahab views the whale as an embodiment of evil. Ishmael himself is not so sure. The narrator often sees both sides of a question, never more so than in Chapter 42, "The Whiteness of the Whale." There he tells us that Moby Dick's whiteness might represent good or evil, glory or damnation, all colors or the "visible absence of color."

For Ahab's interpretation, it is helpful to consider the captain's comments in the pivotal Chapter 36. There, the captain says he sees Moby Dick as a "mask," behind which lies a great power whose dominance Ahab refuses to accept. Ahab sees that inscrutable power as evil. Some scholars argue that it is not the whale, or the force behind the whale, that is evil; the evil is in Ahab. Others see the captain as simply insane. Ahab is out of control as he rants about attacking the force behind the façade of Moby Dick. He wants to kill the whale in order to reach that force. Ahab seems to want to be a god. As great and charismatic a man as he can be in his finest moments, the captain is destructively egocentric and mad for power. To Ahab, we might conclude, the White Whale represents that power which limits and controls man. Ahab sees it as evil incarnate. But perhaps it is just a big, smart fish.

### 3. Character List

#### 3.1 Major Characters

##### **3.1.1 Ishmael**

Despite his centrality to the story, Ishmael doesn't reveal much about himself to the reader. We know that he has gone to sea out of some deep spiritual malaise and that shipping aboard a whaler is his version of committing suicide—he believes that men aboard a whaling ship are lost to the world. It is apparent from Ishmael's frequent digressions on a wide range of subjects—from art, geology, and anatomy to legal codes and literature—that he is intelligent and well educated, yet he claims that a whaling ship has been "[his] Yale College and [his] Harvard." He seems to be a self-taught Renaissance man, good at everything but committed to nothing. Given the mythic, romantic aspects of *Moby-Dick*, it is perhaps fitting that its narrator should be an enigma: not everything in a story so dependent on fate and the seemingly supernatural needs to make perfect sense.

Additionally, Ishmael represents the fundamental contradiction between the story of *Moby-Dick* and its setting. Melville has created a profound and philosophically complicated tale and set it in a world of largely uneducated working-class men; Ishmael, thus, seems less a real character than an instrument of the author. No one else aboard the *Pequod* possesses the proper combination of intellect and experience to tell this story. Indeed, at times even Ishmael fails Melville's purposes, and he disappears from the story for long stretches, replaced by dramatic dialogues and soliloquies from Ahab and other characters.

### **3.1.2 Ahab**

Ahab, the *Pequod*'s obsessed captain, represents both an ancient and a quintessentially modern type of hero. Like the heroes of Greek or Shakespearean tragedy, Ahab suffers from a single fatal flaw, one he shares with such legendary characters as Oedipus and Faust. His tremendous overconfidence, or hubris, leads him to defy common sense and believe that, like a god, he can enact his will and remain immune to the forces of nature. He considers Moby Dick the embodiment of evil in the world, and he pursues the White Whale monomaniacally because he believes it his inescapable fate to destroy this evil. According to the critic M. H. Abrams, such a tragic hero "moves us to pity because, since he is not an evil man, his misfortune is greater than he deserves; but he moves us also to fear, because we recognize similar possibilities of error in our own lesser and fallible selves."

Unlike the heroes of older tragic works, however, Ahab suffers from a fatal flaw that is not necessarily inborn but instead stems from damage, in his case, both psychological and physical, inflicted by life in a harsh world. He is as much a victim as he is an aggressor, and the symbolic opposition that he constructs between himself and Moby Dick propels him toward what he considers a destined end.

### **3.1.3 Moby Dick**

In a sense, Moby Dick is not a character, as the reader has no access to the White Whale's thoughts, feelings, or intentions. Instead, Moby Dick is an impersonal force, one that many critics have interpreted as an allegorical representation of God, an inscrutable and all-powerful being that humankind can neither understand nor defy. Moby Dick thwarts free will and cannot be defeated, only accommodated or avoided. Ishmael tries a plethora of approaches to describe whales in general, but none proves adequate. Indeed, as Ishmael points out, the majority of a whale is hidden from view at all times. In this way, a whale mirrors its environment. Like the whale, only the surface of the ocean is available for human observation and interpretation, while its depths conceal unknown and unknowable truths. Furthermore, even when Ishmael does get his hands on a "whole" whale, he is unable to determine which part—the skeleton, the head, the skin—offers the best understanding of the whole living, breathing creature; he cannot localize the essence of the whale. This conundrum can be read as a metaphor for the human relationship with the Christian God (or any other god, for that matter): God is unknowable and cannot be pinned down.

## **3.2 Minor Characters**

### **3.2.1 Starbuck**

Starbuck is the chief mate of the Pequod, a Nantucket native and a Quaker, with a thin build and a pragmatic manner. In appearance, Starbuck is quite thin and seems condensed into his most essential characteristics, and his streamlined appearance well suits his attitude and behavior. Melville portrays Starbuck as both a strong believer in human fallibility and an idealist who believes that these failings may be contained. Among the characters in *Moby Dick*, it is only Starbuck who openly opposes Captain Ahab, believing his quest against the great whale to be an impulsive and suicidal folly. However, despite his open misgivings about Ahab and the open hostility between these two characters that culminates when Ahab points his musket at Starbuck, the conflicted Starbuck remains loyal to his captain even when he has the possibility of vanquishing Ahab. If Ahab serves as the protagonist of the novel and Ahab the narrator, Ishmael is the character whom Melville intends as the proxy for the reader: the only character given a gamut of emotions ranging from pity and fear to contempt, Starbuck is Melville's surrogate for an emotional response from his audience.

### **3.2.2 Queequeg**

Queequeg is a harpooner from New Zealand, the son of a king who renounces the throne in order to travel the world on whaling ships and learn about Christian society. Ishmael meets Queequeg when the two must share a bed at the Spouter Inn in New Bedford before journeying to Nantucket to undertake the journey on the Pequod. Melville portrays Queequeg as a blend of civilized behavior and savagery. Certainly in his appearance and upbringing he is uncivilized by the standards of the main characters of the novel, yet Melville (through his narrator Ishmael) finds Queequeg to be incredibly noble, courteous and brave. Melville uses Queequeg as a character in perpetual transition: from savagery to civilization, and in the final chapters after he suffers from an illness from which he wills himself recovered, in an uneasy stasis between life and death. The relationship between Queequeg and Ishmael is the most intimate of the novel, as the two become close companions.

### **3.2.3 Stubb**

The second mate on the Pequod, Stubb is a Cape Cod native with a happy-go-lucky, carefree nature that tends to mask his true opinions and beliefs. Stubb remains comical even in the face of the imperious Ahab, and he even dares to make a joke at the captain's expense. Although never serious, Stubb is nevertheless a more than competent whaleman: his easygoing manner allows Stubb to prompt his crew to work without seeming imposing or dictatorial, and it is Stubb who kills the first whale on the Pequod's voyage. Nevertheless, Melville does not portray Stubb as an idealized character; although competent and carefree, Stubb is also the character who suggests that the Pequod robs the Rosebud of its whales to secure their ambergris.

### **3.2.4 Flask**

The third mate on the ship, Flask plays a much less prominent role than either Starbuck or Stubb. He is a native of Martha's Vineyard with a pugnacious attitude concerning whales.



Melville portrays Stubb as a man whose appetites cannot be sated, and in fact in attempting to sate these appetites Flask becomes even hungrier.

### **3.2.5 Pippin**

He is a young black man and a member of the Pequod crew who replaces one of Stubb's oarsman but becomes incredibly frightened while lowering after a whale and jumps from the boat. Although Stubb saves him the first time, he warns him that he will not do so if he tries it again, and when he does Pip only survives when another boat saves him. After realizing that the others would allow his death, Pip becomes nearly insane. However, Ahab takes pity on him for his madness and allows him use of his cabin.

### **3.2.6 Fedallah**

He is one of the "dusky phantoms" that compose Ahab's special whaling crew. The Asiatic and Oriental Fedallah, also called the Parsee, remains a "muffled mystery" to the other characters and represents a sinister figure for the crew of the Pequod; there are even rumors that he is the devil in disguise and wishes to kidnap Ahab. Fedallah has a prophetic dream of hearses twice during the course of the novel, yet both he and Ahab conceive that this means a certain end to Moby Dick. Fedallah dies during the second day of the chase against Moby Dick, when he becomes entangled in the whale line.

### **3.2.7 Peter Coffin**

He is the innkeeper at the Spouter Inn where Ishmael stays on his way to Nantucket.

### **3.2.8 Father Mapple**

He is the famous preacher and a former harpooner who has left sailing for the ministry. Renowned for his sincerity and sanctity, Father Mapple enjoys a considerable reputation. Before leaving for the voyage on the Pequod, Ishmael attends a service in which Father Mapple gives a sermon that considers the tale of Jonah and the Whale.

### **3.2.9 Hosea Hussey**

She is the owner of the Try Pots Inn and the cousin of Peter Coffin. Ishmael and Queequeg stay at the Try Pots while in Nantucket before departing on the Pequod.

### **3.2.10 Peleg**

A retired sailor and former captain of the Pequod, he is a "fighting Quaker" who owns the ship along with Bildad. Peleg is the character who first indicates the dark conflict within Ahab by comparing him to the legendary vile king of the same name.

### **3.2.11 Bildad**

The owner of the Pequod along with Peleg, Bildad is also a "fighting Quaker" who scolds the crew of the Pequod for profanity and regrets having to leave the Pequod on its long voyage.

### **3.2.12 Elijah**

He is a stranger that Ishmael and Queequeg pass while staying in Nantucket who asks if they have met Old Thunder (Captain Ahab), and later asks the two if they have sold their souls to the devil by agreeing to undertake a voyage on the Pequod.

### **3.2.13 Bulkington**

A sailor on the Pequod and a dangerous man just returned from a voyage that lasted four years, he returns to the sea almost immediately because of his affinity for life on the ocean.

### **3.2.14 Tashtego**

He is an Indian from Martha's Vineyard who becomes the harpooner for Stubb.

### **3.2.15 Daggoo**

He is a gigantic African man who becomes the harpooner for Flask.

### **3.2.16 Dough-Boy**

The steward of the Pequod, he serves dinner to the crew of the ship but remains nervous whenever dealing with Queequeg and Tashtego.

### **3.2.17 Perth**

He is the blacksmith on the Pequod who fashions the harpoon for Ahab.

### **3.2.18 Captain Mayhew**

The captain of the Jeroboam, a Nantucket ship, his ship fell prey to a mutiny by a shaker and now suffers from a contagious epidemic.

### **3.2.19 Gabriel**

He is a Shaker on the Jeroboam who had been a great prophet before leaving for Nantucket. While on the Jeroboam, he announces himself as the archangel Gabriel and sparks a mutiny.

### **3.2.20 Macey**

He is a member of the Jeroboam's crew that was killed by Moby Dick.

### **3.2.21 Derick De Deer**

The captain of the German ship Jungfrau, he begs the Pequod for oil and then engages in a competition with the Pequod for a Sperm Whale.

### **3.2.22 Dr. Bunger**

The surgeon on the Samuel Enderby, a British ship, he warns Ahab that Moby Dick would be best left alone and wonders whether Ahab is in fact insane.

### **3.2.23 Captain Gardiner**

The captain of the Rachel, he begs Ahab for assistance finding a lost boat that contains his son and gives Ahab a substantial sighting of Moby Dick. It is his ship that finds Ishmael after the sinking of the Pequod.

## **4. Melville's contribution to American Literature**

As the creator of the novel *Moby-Dick* (1851), the story of Captain Ahab and his obsessive pursuit of a white whale, Herman Melville is one of America's best-known writers. His masterpiece, widely regarded as one of the great works of world literature, has inspired countless responses from both literary scholars and the general public. Furthermore, Melville's prolific and multi-faceted career, which spanned nearly a half-century, produced a number of other classic works of fiction, including the short story *Bartleby the Scrivener* (1856) and the novelette *Billy Budd*, published posthumously in 1924. Like Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen Crane, Melville also mastered the art of verse; it has been suggested, in fact, that

he ranks behind only Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson among American poets of the nineteenth century. In addition to his collection of poems about the American Civil War, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866), and two other books of short poems, he produced one of the longest poems in English, the 150-canto *Clarel* (1876). Like his contemporary Nathaniel Hawthorne, who strongly influenced him, Melville was one of the leading American Romantics. His heavily symbolic works explore a wide range of human experience and psychology, but often focus on faith, the nature of evil, and the tension between the individual and society. In 1846, he published his first novel, *Typee*, a largely autobiographical account of his time in the Marquesas. After the initial successes of *Typee* and *Omoo* (1847), the man known for exciting sea novels gave his readers something different in his next novel, *Mardi* (1849). *Mardi*, however, failed commercially, and Melville returned to adventure stories, publishing *Redburn* in 1849 and *White-Jacket* in 1850. In the latter year, Melville developed a somewhat intimate friendship with one of the most respected authors of the day, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the connection was to exert an enormous influence on him. The friendship with Hawthorne, Barbour explains, inspired Melville, as did his reading of Shakespeare, and he elected to revise and expand his novel, which he published in 1851 under the title of *Moby-Dick; or, the Whale*. As Melville probably had anticipated, the book did not succeed commercially, but it also did not draw universally enthusiastic reviews from critics. Indeed, his next novel, *Pierre* (1852), his protagonist becomes an ambitious novelist struggling in a world that does not appreciate great literature.

Despite the disappointment that obviously followed the publication of *Moby-Dick*, Melville continued to write serious fiction. Over the next decade, he produced two notable novels, *Pierre* and *The Confidence-Man* (1857), as well as a book of short stories called *The Piazza Tales*, which included *Bartleby the Scrivener*. In what might be considered the second phase of his literary career, he published several books of poetry, including *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (1866), *Clarel* (1876), *John Marr and Other Sailors* (1888), and *Timoleon* (1891). Shortly before his death in 1891, he produced another masterpiece of fiction the novelette *Billy Budd, Sailor*, which was discovered and published many years later.

## 5. Questions

1. Discuss the following as symbols: the White Whale, Queequeg's coffin, and Father Mapple's pulpit.
2. Discuss the role of diversity as it affects the theme of friendship in the novel.
3. Why does Ahab want to kill the White Whale?
4. Explain some of the biblical references in *Moby-Dick*. How does Melville use the Bible as a literary model and as a source for thematic material?

## 6. Further Readings of Melville

### Fiction

- *Israel Potter*
- *Mardi: and A Voyage Thither, Vol. 2 (of 2)*
- *Mardi: and A Voyage Thither, Vol. I (of 2)*
- *Moby Dick*
- *Omoo*
- *Redburn: His First Voyage*
- *The Confidence Man*
- *Typee*
- *White Jacket*
- **Poetry Books**
  - *John Marr and Other Poems*
- **Short Stories**
  - *Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street*
  - *I and My Chimney*
  - *The Lightning Rod Man*
  - *The Piazza*
  - *Benito Cereno*
  - *The Encantadas; or, Enchanted Isles*
  - *The Bell-Tower*
- **Poetry**
  - *A Canticle*
  - *A Dirge for McPherson*
  - *A Grave near Petersburg, Virginia*
  - *America*
  - *An Epitaph*
  - *Apathy And Enthusiasm*
  - *At the Cannon's Mouth*
  - *Aurora-Borealis*
  - *Battle of Stone River, Tennessee*
  - *Chattanooga*
  - *Donelson*
  - *Dupont's Round Fight*
  - *Falstaff's Lament Over Prince Hal Become Henry V*
  - *Gettysburg*
  - *Gold in the Mountain*
  - *Immolated*
  - *In The Old Farm-house*
  - *In the Pauper's Turnip-Field*
  - *In the Turret*
  - *Inscription for Graves*
  - *Inscription For Marye's Heights*
  - *Jack Roy*
  - *Lee in the Capitol*
  - *Look-out Mountain*

- *Lyon*
- *Magnanimity Baffled*
- *Malvern Hill*
- *Misgivings*
- *On a Natural Monument*
- *On Sherman's Men*
- *On the Men of Maine*
- *Presentation to the Authorities*
- *Running the Batteries*
- *Sheridan at Cedar Creek*
- *Shiloh*
- *Stonewall Jackson*
- *The Apparition*
- *The Armies of the Wilderness*
- *The Battle for the Bay*
- *The Battle for the Mississippi*
- *The Berg (a Dream)*
- *The Chipmunk*
- *The Coming Storm*
- *The Conflict of Convictions*
- *The Cumberland*
- *The Eagle of the Blue*
- *The Enthusiast*
- *The Fall of Richmond*
- *The Fortitude of the North*
- *The Frenzy in the Wake*
- *The House-Top*
- *The Maldive Shark*
- *The March to the Sea*
- *The Mound by the Lake*
- *The Muster*
- *The Returned Volunteer to his Rifle*
- *The Scout Toward Aldie*
- *The Stone Fleet*
- *The Surrender at Appomattox*
- *The Temeraire*
- *The Victor of Antietam*
- *Verses*

## **Paper- XVII. American Literature-I**

### **Unit 3: Huckleberry Finn- Mark Twain**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Objective

1.2 Biographical Sketch of Mark Twain

1.3 Major works of Mark Twain

1.4 Themes and Outlines of Mark Twain's works

1.5 Styles and Techniques used by Mark Twain

1.6 Chapterwise Summary and Analysis of Huckleberry Finn

#### **2. Themes, Symbols and Structure of Huckleberry Finn**

2.1 Structure of Huckleberry Finn

2.2 Themes

2.4 Symbols

#### **3. Character List**

3.1 Major Characters

3.2 Minor Characters

#### **4. Mark Twain's contribution to American Literature**

#### **5. Questions**

#### **6. Further Readings of Mark Twain**

## **1. Introduction:**

### 1.1 Objective

This unit provides a biographical sketch of Mark Twain first. Then a list of his major works, their themes and outlines. It also includes a detailed discussion about the styles and techniques used by him. The themes, symbols and the structure of *Huckleberry Finn* are discussed next, followed by the list of major as well as minor characters. This unit concludes with a discussion about Twain's contribution to American literature and a set of questions. Lastly there is a list of further readings of Mark Twain to gain knowledge about the critical aspects of the novel.

### 1.2 Biographical Sketch of Mark Twain

On Nov. 30, 1835, the small town of Florida witnessed the birth of its most famous son. Samuel Langhorne Clemens was welcomed into the world as the sixth child of John Marshall and Jane Lampton Clemens. Little did John and Jane know, their son Samuel would one day be known as Mark Twain – one of America's most famous literary icons.

Approximately four years after his birth, in 1839, the Clemens family moved 35 miles east to the town of Hannibal. A growing port city that lay along the banks of the Mississippi, Hannibal was a frequent stop for steam boats arriving by both day and night from St. Louis and New Orleans.

Samuel's father was a judge, and he built a two-story frame house at 206 Hill Street in 1844. As a youngster, Samuel was kept indoors because of poor health. However, by age nine, he seemed to recover from his ailments and joined the rest of the town's children outside. He then attended a private school in Hannibal.

When Samuel was 12, his father died of pneumonia, and at 13, Samuel left school to become a printer's apprentice. After two short years, he joined his brother Orion's newspaper as a printer and editorial assistant. It was here that young Samuel found he enjoyed writing.

At 17, he left Hannibal behind for a printer's job in St. Louis. While in St. Louis, Clemens became a river pilot's apprentice. He became a licensed river pilot in 1858. Clemens' pseudonym, Mark Twain, comes from his days as a river pilot. It is a river term which means

two fathoms or 12-feet when the depth of water for a boat is being sounded. "Mark twain" means- that is safe to navigate.

Because the river trade was brought to a stand still by the Civil War in 1861, Clemens began working as a newspaper reporter for several newspapers all over the United States. In 1870, Clemens married Olivia Langdon, and they had four children, one of whom died in infancy and two who died in their twenties. Their surviving child, Clara, lived to be 88, and had one daughter. Clara's daughter died without having any children, so there are no direct descendants of Samuel Clemens living.

Twain began to gain fame when his story, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" appeared in the New York Saturday Press on November 18, 1865. Twain's first book, *The Innocents Abroad*, was published in 1869. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* in 1876, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1885. He wrote 28 books and numerous short stories, letters and sketches.

Mark Twain passed away on April 21, 1910, but has a following still today. His childhood home is open to the public as a museum in Hannibal, and Calaveras County in California holds the Calaveras County Fair and Jumping Frog Jubilee every third weekend in May. Walking tours are given in New York City, of places, Twain visited near his birthday every year.

### 1.3 Major Works of Mark Twain:

- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
- *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*
- *The Prince and the Pauper*
- *The Innocents Abroad*
- *Life on the Mississippi*
- *Puddn'head Wilson*



- *Roughing It*
- *Letters from the Earth: Uncensored Writings*
- *The Diary of Adam and Eve*
- *Jumping Frog*
- *Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offences*
- *A Tramp Abroad*
- *Joan of Arc*
- *The Mysterious Stranger*

#### 1.4 Themes and Outlines of Twain's Novels:

Throughout his career, Mark Twain would write a dizzying array of works in settings as rustic as the riverboat towns of the Mississippi to the chivalric court of King Arthur. Among these works, he explored a large number of themes, from time travel to morality and ethics.

Twain is one of the most common examples of a realist during his time. The themes of realism can be seen in most of his works including both short stories and novels. *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* demonstrates Twain's realism as he humorously satirizes the eastern view of westerners and romanticism in general.

Most of Twain's works explore different aspects of human nature. He is different from the writers in romanticist movement before him, such as James Fennimore Cooper, because he does not paint humans as heroes who overcome anything. Instead, he more critically views humans as naturally sinful people capable of horrible things as well as good. In works such as *Huck Finn* he prizes innocents and criticizes the deceit that often comes with adulthood. All of these characteristics of Twain's writing contribute to the movement of Realism. Twain produced what people wanted and drifted away from his original impulses toward serious art. Although Twain's humor was satiric early on, such material could not survive in the West, where economic prosperity was based on the system he was criticizing: "His impulse, his desire, we see, was not that of the 'humorist,' it was that of the satirist; but whether in Nevada or in California, he was prohibited from expressing himself directly regarding the life about him. Satire, in short, had become for him as impossible as murder: he was obliged to remain a humorist". Twain's humor struck a chord because, as Howells pointed out, America was a

homogeneous society; readers responded to his humorous accounts of life's irritations because they, too, had experienced these irritations.

### 1.5 Styles and Techniques used by Mark Twain:

Twain has several distinct stylistic traits. One is his excellent and frequent use of dialect. Dialect is the distinctive way that a group of people from a local area speaks. For example, people in Northern Minnesota have a different dialect than people from West Virginia; they have different accents. Twain was an excellent recorder of dialects, and was passionate about recording the way people spoke exactly. He felt so strongly about it that at the beginning of his book "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," he states, "In this book a number of different dialects are used," and then he goes on to explain each and every type of dialect that he uses, so that "readers would [not] suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding." It is a rather funny note to explain the usage of dialects. Another distinctive trait of Twain's was his sense of humor. His writings are almost always humorous and have an element of satire to them. Satire is when you point out the absurdities of something by making fun of it a bit; so, if you notice characters with extreme personality traits or elaborate and exaggerated descriptions of things, then Twain might just be satirizing. For example, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, an older lady is explaining what heaven is to Huck, a 10-12 year old boy, and Twain describes her as saying that it is a place where people just floated on clouds and played harps all day. Huck's reaction to this is, "I didn't think much of it." This is classic Twain. He inserts funny observations and satirical elements in a lot of his writing.

### **Chapterwise Summary and Analysis:**

#### **Notice; Explanatory Summary**

Twain greets readers with a "NOTICE" before he steps aside and allows Huck Finn to narrate the story. The following narrative, Twain warns, should not be analyzed for "motive" or "moral" or "plot" or punishment will follow. In the Explanatory, Twain notifies readers that characters will sound as if they live in the region in which the story takes place.

#### **Analysis**

These statements serve three purposes. First, the warning is a satiric jab at the sentimental literary style, which was in direct contrast to Twain's brand of literary realism. Second, the warning introduces the use of satire, a harsh and biting brand of humor that readers will continue to see in the novel. Finally, the warning is a convenient method by which to ward off literary critics who might be eager to dissect Twain's work. Twain recognizes, no doubt, that his novel will incite controversy.

Before the reader passes judgment on these warnings, perhaps a line or two from another of Twain's works, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, will help put them in perspective: "Adam was but human — this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake; he wanted it only because it was forbidden. The mistake was in not forbidding the serpent; then he would have eaten the serpent." (*Pudd'head Wilson's Calendar*, Chapter II.)

## **Chapter 1 Summary**

The novel begins with Huck Finn introducing himself and referencing *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. "You don't know about me," Huck narrates, "without you have read a book by the name of 'The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,' but that ain't no matter." He tells readers that, for the most part, Twain told the truth in *Tom Sawyer* but that everyone tells some lies, even people like Aunt Polly and the Widow Douglas.

Huck gives a brief summary of how he and Tom got six thousand dollars each at the end of *Tom Sawyer*. Judge Thatcher has taken Huck's money and invested it with a dollar of interest coming in each day, and Huck now lives with the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson. The sisters are, as Huck puts it, trying to "sivilize" him, and his frustration at living in a clean house and minding his manners starts to grow. Miss Watson tells Huck he will go to "the bad place" if he does not behave, and Huck thinks that will be okay as long as Miss Watson is not there.

During the evening, Huck accidentally kills a spider that was on his shoulder and worries that bad luck will follow. When the town clock strikes twelve midnight, Huck hears a noise outside his window and climbs out to find Tom Sawyer waiting for him.

## **Analysis**

The opening sentence of the novel notifies readers that Huck Finn is the narrator and will tell his story in his own words, in his own language and dialect (complete with grammatical errors and misspellings), and from his own point of view. By using the first person narrative point of view, Twain carries on the southwestern humor tradition of vernacular language; that is, Huck sounds as a young, uneducated boy from Missouri should sound.

This first sentence also alludes to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. The allusion reminds the reader of a novel about boys and their adventures, the purpose of which, according to Twain, was to rekindle in adults memories "of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in." Then Huck — and Twain — dismiss the work with "But that ain't no matter." Although the boyish type adventure episodes tend to reappear as a plot motif in *Huck Finn*, especially in the sections including Tom, their primary purpose is more to communicate criticism of Twain's contemporary society than to evoke fond memories. This statement also makes clear that it does not matter whether readers have read Twain's earlier book or not. *Huck Finn* is Huck's story, and he will tell it from his natural, unsophisticated perspective.

This first chapter introduces several major literary elements. Humor is used in various ways in the novel, but Huck's deadpan narration and pragmatic personality juxtaposed to events and beliefs that make no logical or practical sense to him provide much of the novel's humor. Because Huck is young and uncivilized, he describes events and people in a direct manner without any extensive commentary. Huck does not laugh at humorous situations and statements simply because his literal approach does not find them to be funny; he fails to see the irony. He does not project social, religious, cultural, or conceptual nuances into situations because he has never learned them. For example, when Miss Watson tells Huck that "*she* was going to live so as to go to the good place [heaven]," Huck, applying what he knows about Miss Watson and the obvious lifestyle that makes her happy, responds that he "couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going," and makes up his mind to not try to get there. Huck does not intend his comment to be disrespectful or sarcastic; it is simply a statement of fact and is indicative of the literal, practical approach to life that he exhibits throughout the novel.

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

As Huck and Tom sneak off from the Widow Douglas' house, Huck trips, and the noise alerts Miss Watson's slave, Jim. Jim tries to find what made the noise and almost discovers the

boys, but after a while he falls asleep. While Jim is sleeping, Tom takes Jim's hat and hangs it on a tree-limb. Afterwards, Jim tells everyone that witches put a spell on him and took him all over the state. Jim's story grows with each telling until finally slaves come from all over to hear Jim's tale of being bewitched. After this episode, he is considered an authority on witches.

Huck and Tom meet the rest of the town boys, and they all go to a hidden cave two miles down the river. In the cave, Tom declares that the band of robbers will be called "Tom Sawyer's Gang" and "Everybody that wants to join has got to take an oath, and write his name in blood." The boys all swear that, if a gang member tells the gang's secrets, they will cut his throat and then kill that boy's family. One of the boys says the oath is not fair because Huck Finn does not have a family unless you count a father who can never be found. A solution is found when Huck offers Miss Watson as his family and says, "they could kill her."

Using pirate books as a reference, Tom describes the future business of the gang as robbery and murder. The other boys wonder why everything must be so complicated and involve ransoms and guards, and Tom replies that he's "seen it in books; and so of course that's what we've got to do."

## **Analysis**

Chapter 2 introduces Jim, Huck's future companion and friend. In Missouri, most slaves were domestic servants, not workers on plantations that most people today identify with slavery. Jim's initial behaviors as interpreted through Huck are stereotypical traits attributed to blacks at the time: laziness, a tendency toward exaggeration, and conceit. Jim's belief in superstition mirrors that of Huck, and his explanations of what had happened to him that night could be interpreted to reveal either a gullible nature or an opportunist who makes the most of the circumstances that he encounters. Twain not only taps Huck's prejudices in the early portrayal of Jim, but he also taps the prejudices of the reader. Jim gains handsomely from his witch adventure and wisely uses the fictional kidnapping to boost his stature among his peers. Nevertheless, the suggestion that Jim displays negative traits has been partially responsible for the opposition to teaching *Huck Finn* in the classroom.

The character of Jim, however, is much more complex than the sleepy man who has seen the devil and been kidnapped by witches. Moreover, this simplistic interpretation of Jim in the beginning of the novel enhances the prejudicial nature of the stereotype when the true depth

of his character is revealed later in the novel. As readers learn about Huck, they also learn about Jim and the admirable character he is.

Also introduced in Chapter 2 is the character of Tom Sawyer. Tom is a contrasting character (a foil) to Huck, despite their obvious bond and friendship. Tom is a romantic, insensitive representative of the society Huck dislikes. His tendency is to take control, romanticize, and exaggerate all situations. Tom bases his expertise in adventures on the many pirate and robber books he has read. His humorous exaggerations symbolize Twain's dislike of popular and glorified romantic novels. Later, in Chapter 3, Tom mentions *Don Quixote* as a model of the romantic novels. Ironically, Cervantes was satirizing romantic adventure stories in this work much the same as Twain does in this work. Obviously, Tom was unaware of the satiric nature of the novel, but Twain was not.

Unlike the playful humor of Tom Sawyer, the humor of Huck Finn is bitter satire using the hypocrisy, violence, and squalor in the society that Twain observed. For example, when Tom decides that the gang will rob and murder people "except some that you bring to the cave here and keep them till they're ransomed," the boys discover that no one, including Tom, knows the meaning of "ransom." The boys assign a meaning to the word by conjecturing what it means ("keep them until they are dead"). This meaning, of course, is wrong, but, as in the greater society, because the group believes it to be true, it becomes their truth, and the rest of their action is based on this error, a serious subject matter undercut by humor.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

The next day, Huck receives a scolding from Miss Watson because of his dirty clothes, but the Widow Douglas does not reproach him at all. Miss Watson explains to Huck that, through prayer, he can have anything he wants. She makes Huck pray for the next few days, and Huck does not understand why the fishhooks he prays for never arrive.

During this time, Huck is told that his father, Pap Finn, has been found drowned in the river. Because the body was floating on his back, the superstitious Huck does not believe it is Pap and worries that the violent Pap will show up again. The Tom Sawyer Gang disbands because the only adventure they have is attempting to rob a Sunday-school picnic.

### **Analysis**

In Chapter 3, the practical Huck again struggles to understand religion. When Miss Watson tells Huck he can receive anything he wants through prayer, the literal Huck believes he can receive fishing gear. He contemplates the concept of prayer and wonders why, if someone can get anything, he cannot get any fish-hooks, the widow cannot reclaim her stolen silver snuff-box, and Miss Watson cannot "fat up"? The humorous moment is another example of Huck's literal approach to his surroundings. Because Huck takes everything at face value, he cannot understand the concept of prayer or "spiritual gifts." He does not reject religion, but his literal mindset has difficulty with beliefs that, on the surface, appear to be impractical or untrue.

More important, Huck's struggle compares and contrasts the religions of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson as he begins to see that religion is practiced differently by his guardians. Through Huck, Twain is exploring his own reservations about religion and its ties to the institution of slavery. It is not incidental that it is Miss Watson who owns Jim and not the Widow Douglas, and Huck continues to question religion and the rules of his society. Huck eventually decides that there are two kinds of Providence, and he would like to avoid Miss Watson's and go to the one the Widow Douglas describes.

Chapter 3 continues to establish Tom and Huck as contrasting characters. Whereas Huck takes a literal approach to everything he sees and hears, Tom's knowledge comes solely from the books he reads. At the same time Huck questions religion, he begins to see Tom's "magicians and A-rabs" as fabrication. For Huck, Tom's imagination has the same quality as Miss Watson's religion, and he distrusts the superficial nature of both. This approach serves Huck well throughout the novel. Although he does not completely understand prayer, he does understand the widow's explanation that he "must help other people . . . and look out for them all the time, and never think about myself." By applying his own conscience and beliefs, Huck grows as a character and is able to form his own opinions and not blindly accept society's values and the status quo.

#### **Chapter 4 Summary**

Three or four months have passed when Huck finds a suspicious footprint in the snow outside of the widow's house. Because of a cross carved in the heel, the print looks exactly like Pap Finn's boot, and Huck begins to worry that Pap has returned. To protect the reward money from Pap, Huck goes to see Judge Thatcher and tries to persuade Judge Thatcher to take the money for his own.

Because Jim is rumored to have the ability to do magic, Huck asks him if he can predict what Pap will do and where he will stay. When Huck asks Jim about Pap's plans, Jim places a hairball on the ground and listens for Huck's fortune. Jim says that there are two angels hovering over Pap — one white and one black — and he does not know which way Pap will decide to live his life. Jim also says that, just like Pap Finn, Huck has two angels over him, trying to help him decide the right path. When Huck returns to his room that night, he finds Pap waiting for him.

### **Analysis**

When Pap's tracks appear, Huck would rather give his money away than risk confronting Pap. He knows that Pap is inspired only by whisky or greed, and if Huck is poor, perhaps Pap will leave him alone. In the previous chapter, Pap is described as a town vagrant who "used to lay drunk with the hogs in the tanyard" and Huck is not affected by the description. But Huck's indifference to Pap's reputation changes when he realizes Pap is back in town. Huck's fear is understated, but it suggests that his previous life with Pap was violent and dysfunctional. Moreover, the subtle threat of abuse underscores the theme of a chaotic and violent environment after the Civil War, an environment that Huck cannot entirely avoid despite his plans and cunning.

Chapter 4 continues to document that Huck and Jim are superstitious and are products of their society and their circumstances. When Jim uses the hairball to discover Pap's intentions, Jim ends up forecasting Huck's future more than Pap's, and the similarities between the two are obvious. According to Jim, both Pap and Huck have "two angels hoverin'" over them, and the future is uncertain. Jim warns Huck to stay away from the water because it is his fate to be hanged. The darkness in Huck's future, then, relates directly to the Mississippi River, and it is predestined ("down in de bills") that Huck will suffer because of it. The inclusion of predestination reflects Twain's Calvinist background. More important, however, the battle of the two angels foreshadows Huck's future battle with his conscience in terms of Jim's freedom.

### **Chapter 5-6 Summary**

That evening, Huck discovers Pap in his room. After the initial shock, Huck decides Pap is too disheveled to be a threat. Pap's hair is "long and tangled and greasy," his face is extremely pale, and his clothes are in rags. Pap immediately notices how clean Huck is in comparison



and then begins a tirade about Huck attending school and trying to be more of a man than his father.

Over the next few days, Pap tries to get Huck's money from Judge Thatcher and gain custody of Huck. Pap is unable to get any money, except when he takes a dollar or two directly from Huck. Although the widow wants to raise Huck, Pap convinces a new judge that he has changed and will start a life free from alcohol and sin. The new judge decides that "he'd druther not take a child away from its father" and grants custody to Pap. The new judge finally realizes he has been taken for a fool, however, when Pap sneaks out and breaks his arm after getting "drunk as a fiddler."

Instead of avoiding school, Huck attends just to spite Pap. When the widow tells Pap to stop loitering around her house, Pap kidnaps Huck and takes him upriver to the Illinois shore. The widow discovers Huck's location and sends a man to rescue him, but Pap drives the man off with a gun.

After a couple of months, Pap's beatings become too harsh and too frequent, and Huck decides to escape. The same night as Huck's decision, Pap gets extremely drunk and begins to denounce the government for its laws and the positive treatment of African-Americans. Eventually both Pap and Huck fall asleep, and Huck wakes up to find Pap screaming about snakes and calling Huck the "Angel of Death."

### **Analysis**

Upon discovering Pap, Huck's first thoughts are of the beatings that Pap used to give him. When Huck sees Pap's appearance, however, he immediately is put at ease. Pap's disheveled appearance does not frighten Huck; instead, Pap appears as a clown or buffoon with exaggerated features. The appearance is similar to other exaggerated frontier characters in American humor, but Pap is more than a caricature; he is the most evil character in the novel, and he is white, "a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl."

Pap's threats are humorous because of the obvious irony; how could a father not be proud of his son learning to read? But as in Chapter 4, the threats are laced with the realization that Huck has been beaten by Pap before. Huck stays captive for the next couple of months and begins to enjoy his old life, free from manners, education, and religion. Huck's "free" life with Pap, however, comes at the price of physical abuse.

Pap's miserable character represents yet another negative element of society. Pap exudes bigotry and hate. His ludicrous tirade against the government and blacks is pathetically comical because of his obvious arrogance and ignorance and the slapstick humor involved in Huck's description. The irony, however, is more painful than it is humorous because it symbolizes a common racist attitude built on ignorance and insecurity.

When Pap calls Huck the Angel of Death at the end of Chapter 6, the name appears to be one of Pap's hallucinations. The label is important, however, and foreshadows the numerous deaths that Huck encounters as he escapes down the Mississippi.

### **Chapter 7 Summary**

The next day Huck finds a drifting canoe on the rising river. When Pap leaves for the night to go drinking, Huck escapes through a hole he sawed in the cabin wall. He takes all the cabin's supplies and puts them in the canoe; he then shoots a wild hog and uses its blood to make it look as if he were murdered. By staging his own murder, Huck thinks he can escape without the threat of being followed. At dark, he leaves in the canoe and eventually lands downstream at Jackson's Island.

### **Analysis**

Twain gives the readers another literary glimpse of the river that enchanted him throughout his life and career. The quiet Mississippi quickly lulls Huck to sleep. The river becomes symbolic of Huck's more peaceful, natural life. The description is important, because it underscores the serenity of the river and of nature in general as opposed to the harsh and chaotic world on shore. Throughout the novel, Twain continues to outline the difference between the two worlds, and the juxtaposition of the peaceful river and brutal shore has often been described as the "raft/shore dichotomy."

Huck's flight shows his creativity and cleverness, but it also establishes a logical method of escape. Every action Huck performs, from placing blood on an axe to dragging a bag full of meal, is practical and works to help his plan. The escape is efficient, and although Huck wishes Tom were there to "throw in the fancy touches," readers realize that Tom's additions would create more problems than solutions. Huck's practicality is evident not only in his narrative reaction to events but also in his physical actions. The self-reliant characteristic aids Huck well in the future, as he faces decisions that require individual thought and rejection of accepted beliefs.

## **Chapter 8 Summary**

Huck wakes up on Jackson's Island to hear a ferryboat firing a cannon. He knows that this will bring a drowned body to the surface and realizes that they must be searching for him. Huck also remembers that another way to find a body is with a loaf of bread filled with quicksilver. He scouts the shoreline and finds a large loaf, then wonders if prayer really works. Someone, after all, had prayed that the bread find his body, and that prayer had worked.

Confident that he is now safe, Huck explores the island until he stumbles upon fresh campfire ashes. Huck climbs a tree for safety but curiosity sends him back to the site, and he discovers Miss Watson's slave, Jim. After convincing Jim that he is not a ghost, Huck learns that Jim has run away because Miss Watson was going to sell him down the river to New Orleans.

During the evening, Jim impresses Huck with his knowledge of superstition.

### **Analysis**

Huck's contemplation of prayer brims with humor as he tries to fathom the logic of how the quicksilver bread found him. The combination of a superstitious practice (quicksilver bread) and a religious custom (prayer) shows that Huck's beliefs include a portion of both. As reluctant as he is to embrace Miss Watson's religion, he still holds a fearful respect of its power. The same is true for the practice of superstition.

When Huck first stumbles upon Jim, he does not immediately ask why Jim is on the island, nor does he worry that Jim will tell anyone he is alive. Instead, Huck's first reaction is one of joy at the companionship. More important, Jim's reintroduction extends the important theme of freedom and civilization from Huck to Jim, and sets up the circumstances that will lead to their odyssey down the Mississippi.

Huck's continued struggle with society's restrictions and laws now includes the more serious issue of race and slavery. Huck's comment that "people would call me a low-down Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum" shows that his society does not tolerate those who denounce slavery. This is Huck's first important break with society, but a break that would make his return nearly impossible, as he realizes. The stance is similar to Twain's own boyhood experience where slavery was an accepted practice in the South. Although Huck has

shown the tendency to reject society's beliefs, he cannot immediately dismiss its influence and teachings.

This chapter also serves to establish the relationship between Huck and Jim and their roles in contrast to one another. Whereas Huck's initial representation of Jim was stereotypical, in this chapter, Jim quickly reveals himself as an authority on superstition. Huck's literal nature does not allow him to be impressed easily, but his belief in signs and superstition elevates Jim, who "knowed all kinds." In addition, Twain was fond of using a twin image in order to develop his themes. In some works the image is obvious (for example, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *The Prince and the Pauper*). In others, the image is more subtle. In this work, Tom and Huck are twins with differing dominant personality characteristics: Tom, the romantic, and Huck, the realist. Likewise, Jim and Huck are twin-like, each searching for his own kind of freedom, but one black, the other white.

### **Chapter 9-10 Summary**

After exploring Jackson's Island, Jim and Huck find a cavern to hide in high on a steep ridge. They hide the canoe and then haul their traps and supplies up to the cavern. Huck thinks the location is too difficult to reach, but Jim argues that it will help protect them against people and the rain. Just as Jim predicted in Chapter 8, a large storm comes.

The river rises for 10 or 12 days, and the flooding waters give Jim and Huck the opportunity to explore and capture useful debris. One night, they discover a two-story frame house drifting along. Inside the house, Jim sees a dead man and instructs Huck not to look at the dead man's face because ". . . it's too gashly." Avoiding the body, they search the house and find an "old speckled straw hat," among the clothes, bottles, and other household items.

Back at the cavern, Huck tries to get Jim to discuss the dead man, but Jim avoids the subject saying it would bring bad luck and the man could "ha'nt us." They search the odds and ends they took from the floating house and discover eight dollars in an overcoat.

Because of the money and supplies, Huck argues that they are having good luck despite what Jim has told him. Later, Huck tries to play a prank on Jim and places a dead rattlesnake at the foot of Jim's blanket. When Jim lies down to sleep, the snake's mate is there and bites him. Jim is sick for several days and uses Pap's whisky to kill the pain of the snakebite. Eventually, he regains his strength, and Huck realizes the danger of defying superstition and Jim's expertise.

After a few days, Huck and Jim decide to sneak into town to learn of any news. Huck disguises himself as a girl and goes to the shanty of a woman he does not know.

### **Analysis**

Jim's ability to predict the storm is an understated but important moment in the novel. As readers are aware, Pap Finn does not fulfill the role of father or parent except when it is convenient to Pap. In contrast, Jim's protective and caring nature is clear throughout the novel. An example of Jim's parental role is when he does not allow Huck to view the face of the body on the floating house. The motion is subtle, but the protective action is more apparent later in the last chapter of the novel when readers learn that the dead man is Pap.

With the discovery of the dead man, Huck's earlier label as the "Angel of Death" comes into play again in Chapters 9 and 10. Despite the fabrications of death and the superstitions surrounding it, Huck does not confront death until he and Jim discover the body inside the house. Huck's initial reluctance is replaced by a strong curiosity with the man and the events that caused his demise. "I couldn't keep from studying over it wishing I knowed who shot the man, and what they done it for," Huck says.

In contrast to Jim's protective nature, Huck plays the first of three failed pranks directed at Jim. Despite his respect for Jim's knowledge of superstition, Huck still acts in a careless and impractical manner, and the first prank results in Jim's snakebite. Huck's regret at the outcome demonstrates the growth of his character and indicates that Huck does value Jim as a companion and a friend. This value, however, is pitted against Huck's belief that he should turn Jim in to authorities. The result is a constant clash between Huck's feelings of admiration and friendship for Jim and his fear of being judged for helping a runaway slave.

### **Chapter 11 Summary**

Still in disguise, Huck enters the woman's house and introduces himself as "Sarah Williams from Hookerville." Accepting Huck as a girl, the woman talks freely about the town's events and eventually reaches the subject of Huck and Tom, the reward money, and Huck's "murder." Suspicion began with Pap Finn, she says, but after Jim escaped, the town decided that the runaway slave had murdered Huck. With both Pap and Jim still suspects, the town has announced a reward of \$300 for Jim and \$200 for Pap.

The woman tells Huck she thinks she knows where Jim could be hiding, for she is sure she has seen smoke over at Jackson's Island. Huck becomes nervous when he learns that the woman's husband and another man are heading for Jackson's Island to search for Jim. Before Huck can leave, the woman figures out that he is not a girl, and Huck makes up yet another wild tale for explanation.

Huck rushes back to Jackson's Island and wakes Jim with the news that "There ain't a minute to lose. They're after us!" In complete silence, the two runaways pack their camp and head down the river on the raft.

### **Analysis**

Chapter 11 displays yet another facet of *Huck Finn's* humor; that is, the ability of Huck to disguise himself and convince gullible adults to believe his preposterous stories. Huck is, indeed, an imaginative trickster who lies and fibs his way along the Mississippi. (These traits are one reason that authors such as Louisa May Alcott condemned his character as being unsuitable for young readers.) Huck is also prone, however, to forget his early stories, and therefore he is forced to invent new tales in order to continue his deception. The constantly changing fabrication is certainly comical and displays the creative ability of Huck as well as the ignorance of the people he meets.

The fact that the woman fools Huck into revealing his identity as a boy also provides much of the humor in the chapter. Despite his maverick nature, Huck is a product of the environment and thus is subject to the same type of manipulation that he performs on others. The tricks that the woman uses force Huck to reveal his male nature, his "boy" characteristics (the inability to thread a needle, for example). Even though the woman discovers Huck is not a girl, Huck is still able to save his story by donning another disguise as an orphaned and mistreated apprentice. The added story is yet another example of Huck's ability to succeed and adapt in a world of scams and con artists.

The readers should note that Chapter 11 ends with Huck and Jim functioning as a team. When Huck discovers that Jim is in danger, he does not think about society's judgment and simply reacts. In Huck's view, the pursuing men are after both of them, even though the consequences for Huck would be minimal. In other words, Huck unconsciously places Jim's safety above his own, and their separate struggles for freedom become one. As Huck and Jim slip "past the foot of the island dead still, never saying a word," Twain takes another step

away from the childish adventures of *Tom Sawyer* and cements the relationship between the two outcasts.

### **Chapter 12-13 Summary**

Jim and Huck continue down the river between the Missouri mountains and the "heavy timber" of Illinois, hiding the raft during the day and running several hours at night. The fifth night after they pass St. Louis, they come upon a steamboat crippled on a rock. Although Jim does not want to board the wreck and argues that they should ignore it, Huck convinces him that they need to explore.

On board, they overhear voices and see that two men have tied up a third and are discussing his fate. Certain that the wreck will come loose and sink, the two men decide to leave the tied man to a watery death. When Jim tries to untie the men's skiff and trap them on the wreck, he discovers the raft has broken loose and floated away. While the men are inside the cabin, Huck and Jim take the skiff and leave the wreck. Eventually they find the raft and pull the skiff and the men's supplies up on the deck.

When they come upon a village, Huck finds a ferryboat watchman and begins another elaborate story. He tells him that his family is up on the steamboat wreck, which readers learn is named the *Walter Scott*. The man hurries off to sound the alarm with visions of a reward in front of him.

Later that evening, Huck sees the wreck, which has come loose from the rocks and is quietly sinking as it drifts down the river.

### **Analysis**

Twain's decision to name the boat the *Walter Scott* continues his mockery of romantic novels and their authors. The wreck's importance to the novel, however, is found in the contrasting images of peace and brutality and Huck's inevitable deliberations on death.

Chapter 12 signals a separation from Huck and Jim's familiar surroundings as the two begin their journey down the Mississippi. The peaceful images of the river are similar to those that readers have seen in the many film adaptations of *Huck Finn*: Huck and Jim on a large and comfortable raft, free from outside interference and enjoying the serenity of their new life. Although the river is seen as a safe haven for Huck and Jim, the viciousness of the shore

arrives in the form of the *Walter Scott* wreck. In this manner, Twain is able to interrupt the peaceful environment of the river by combining it with the brutality of men. The pattern is one that will recur when the duke and the king board the raft in Chapter 19.

Despite their savageness and unfeeling attitude, Huck cannot help but "worry about the men" as he leaves them to die. Huck's compassion is evident, and he does attempt to save the men by alerting the ferryboat watchman. The "Angel of Death," however, claims more victims as the *Walter Scott* breaks apart and sinks.

### **Chapter 14 Summary**

The next day, Jim and Huck go through the spoils they got from the gang on the *Walter Scott*. Huck's excitement about their new treasure is tempered by Jim's fear that they might have been caught or drowned. After listening to Jim, Huck realizes that, as usual, Jim is right.

Among the blankets, clothes, and cigars, Huck finds a few books and reads to Jim about romantic figures like kings, dukes, and earls. When the discussion turns to royalty and King Solomon, Huck and Jim debate Solomon's logic and refuse to agree on his wisdom.

### **Analysis**

Chapter 14 continues to define Huck and Jim's roles, with Jim constantly proving himself as the more practical and mature person despite Huck's ability to read. Initially, Huck accepts Jim's rationale when he describes why the *Walter Scott* presented so much danger. Huck's admission that ". . . he [Jim] was most always right" is undercut, however, by his statement that Jim ". . . had an uncommon level head, for a nigger." The vulgar label — which, of course, Huck does not recognize as vulgar — shows that Huck still has not accepted Jim as an intellectual or human equal, in spite of the fact that Jim continues to show superior logic, and Huck continues to grow fonder of him.

When the two discuss King Solomon, Jim's practical but single-minded approach cannot convince Huck that Solomon "*warn't* no wise man nuther." Readers, however, are able to see that it is Huck, and not Jim, who misses the point. The real point, as Jim says, "is down funder — it's down deeper." The statement foreshadows the debate of conscience that Huck undergoes later in the novel.



## Chapter 15-16 Summary

Jim and Huck believe that three more nights will bring them to Cairo, Illinois, and, from that point, they can take a steamboat up the Ohio River to the free states. On the second night, however, a dense fog rolls in, and the strong current separates Huck and Jim. After calling in vain for Jim, Huck decides to take "one little cat-nap" and wakes up several hours later under a clear sky.

He eventually finds Jim, who is in tears over seeing Huck again. Instead of celebrating their reunion, Huck decides to act as if Jim has been dreaming and Huck has been on the raft the entire night. Jim's concern turns to confusion, but he finally realizes Huck is lying. He admonishes Huck for the prank and says that only "trash" would treat a friend like that. After a few minutes, Huck feels so ashamed that he apologizes to Jim.

Jim and Huck decide that Huck must go ashore to check their progress. Jim's excitement is obvious, and Huck struggles with his shame of helping a slave escape. When Jim says he will steal his children out of slavery if necessary, Huck decides he must go ashore and turn Jim in to the authorities. Instead of rushing ashore at dawn to free his conscience, however, Huck covers for Jim when he runs into townspeople.

Shortly after, Huck and Jim see the clear water of the Ohio River and realize they have passed Cairo in the fog. They decide to buy another canoe to head upriver, but a steamboat wrecks the raft and the two are once again separated.

## Analysis

Before 1991, critics largely believed that Twain stopped writing after Chapter 16 and set the manuscript aside. The assertion appears logical, for Cairo is, indeed, the original destination of Jim and Huck. If Huck and Jim make it to Cairo, they can head north up the Ohio River, and the story heads toward its conclusion. It is obvious that Twain was struggling with the novel's direction, but the 1991 discovery of the first half of the *Huck Finn* manuscript revealed that Twain had continued through Chapter 18 and then set aside the manuscript for two years.

Although Huck is distraught at the thought of losing Jim, he does play the horrible prank, which contrasts sharply with Jim's parental demeanor. Tom, no doubt, would have been proud of Huck's creativity and imagination, but Huck realizes that he has done more than

embarrass Jim; he has taken advantage of his trust and friendship. The elaborate joke wounds Jim, and Huck is not prepared for Jim's confession that his "heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no' mo' what become er me en de raf'." Jim's somber comment serves, in a sense, to break the heart of Huck, and readers realize, just as Huck does, that Jim would give his life for the young boy who has always been on the opposite side of societal laws.

Huck's comment that it took him 15 minutes to apologize is overshadowed only by the fact that he actually does. In Jim and Huck's squalid world, an apology from a white person to a slave is not only unnecessary, it is scandalous. Huck, however, does not regret his decision to apologize and learns another lesson about Jim's loyalty. He does not play another prank on Jim, but he continues to feel guilt over helping a slave. The irony of the situation is painful, as Huck condemns himself for protecting Jim instead of recognizing the heroics involved.

By passing Cairo, Twain is able to navigate the familiar setting of the Mississippi River and the South. The passage down-river also allows Huck to continue his battle between his instincts and what society dictates he should do. Despite his shame from the prank, Huck still struggles with his conscience. His decision to turn Jim in details the twisted logic of slavery that condemns a man for wanting to rescue his children from captivity. The biting satire is obvious, as is the realization that Huck cannot defy society's moral code of racism without a struggle. He is, after all, resisting all the social and cultural reasoning that made slavery possible.

When the two men searching for runaway slaves surprise Huck, he develops an elaborate story that saves Jim. Once again Huck's actions mirror his natural conscience. Huck is constantly pulled between what he is supposed to think and feel (that is, what he has been taught either by lessons or social example) and what he actually feels and thinks (that is, what he has developed through his personal and natural experiences). He finds himself aiding Jim, who grows more certain of Huck's loyalty and friendship.

### **Chapter 17-18 Summary**

Once on shore, Huck finds himself at an impressive log house owned by the Grangerford family. After they are convinced that Huck is not a member of the Shepherdson family, the Grangerfords take Huck in, give him warm clothes, and feed him. Huck tells everyone that his name is George Jackson and that he fell off a passing steamboat.

The Grangerfords have a son named Buck, who is about Huck's age, and the two become close friends over the next few days. Huck admires the stately house with its large fireplaces, ornate door locks, and elaborate decor. The morbid paintings and poetry of Emmeline, a deceased daughter of the Grangerfords, also fascinate him.

Huck soon learns that the Grangerfords share a steamboat landing with another aristocratic family named Shepherdson. When Huck and Buck go hunting, Buck takes a shot at young Harney Shepherdson and misses. While the boys run away, Huck notices that Harney has a chance to shoot Buck but rides away instead. Huck wonders about Harney but finally decides he was going after his hat. In response to Huck's questions, Buck explains that the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons have been feuding for so long that no one remembers why it began in the first place.

After Huck delivers a message for Sophia Grangerford, he is taken over to the swamp by one of the family's many slaves. Among the trees, Huck finds Jim, who says that he has found the raft. The next day, Miss Sophia elopes with Harney Shepherdson. The bizarre feud escalates, and several men on both sides of the family are killed, including Buck. Huck regrets ever coming ashore and cannot tell us "all that happened" because it would make him sick to do so. He rejoins Jim, and the two decide a raft is the best home.

### **Analysis**

The introduction of the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons adds a new element of humor to Twain's novel. Whereas earlier Twain satirizes the actions of "common" townspeople, the stately families provide a perfect opportunity for Twain to burlesque the Southern code of chivalry and aristocracy of the antebellum South. The Grangerford's house represents a gaudy and tasteless display of wealth, and Huck's appreciation of the decor only adds to the humor. The decor that exemplifies the Grangerford's taste is the artistic work of Emmeline, the deceased daughter who pined away after failing to discover a rhyme for "Whistler." In contrast to Huck's practical fascination with death, Emmeline's work displays a romantic and sentimental obsession that even gives Huck the "fantods."

Twain also uses the families to underscore his subtle satire on religion, as the two families attend the same church, leaning their guns against the walls during the sermon about "brotherly love." The mixture of theology and gunplay is ironic, as is the family's subsequent reaction that the sermon was filled with positive messages about "faith and good work and

free grace and preforeordination." Twain's Calvinist background resurfaces in his combination of predestination and foreordination.

The feud between the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons is one of the more memorable chapters in *Huck Finn* because of its extreme violence. The fact that the two noble families do not know why they continue to fight is ironic, but the irony deepens when the families actually draw blood. Huck's casual observance turns into participation, and when he witnesses the death of his young friend, Buck, he is unable to recount the story to readers. The hated calls of "Kill them, kill them!" prompt Huck to wish that he had never gone ashore, despite his affection for the Grangerfords. The theme of death and brutality, then, is present in all facets of society, including the wealthy, and the peace of the river is never more apparent to Huck.

When Huck returns to the raft and he and Jim are safe, Huck wearily observes that ". . . there warn't no home like a raft, after all . . . . You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft." The unaffected statement solidifies the raft/shore dichotomy and reinforces the idea that society, despite its sophistication, is cruel and unjust.

### **Chapter 19-20 Summary**

After two or three peaceful days on the raft, Huck is searching for some berries in a creek when he comes upon two desperate men. The men are obviously being chased, and Huck tells them how to lose the dogs, and they escape. The men, one around 70 and the other around 30 years old, join Huck and Jim on the raft.

Each man quickly discovers that they both are con artists, and they decide to work together. Shortly after their agreement, the youngest breaks into tears and claims that he is the Duke of Bridgewater and must be treated with respect. After a thoughtful moment, the oldest uses the same tactic and claims to be the Dauphin, the rightful heir to the French throne. Huck believes the men are simple con men but decides not to challenge them in order to keep the peace.

The duke and the king begin scheming, and with new plans, they land the raft below the one-horse town of Pokeville, which is practically deserted because of a nearby camp meeting. When the duke heads off to find a printing shop, the king decides to attend the meeting. At the meeting, the townspeople sing hymns and go up to the pulpit for forgiveness. The king joins the festivities and professes to be an old pirate who has reformed and seen the errors of

his past. He burst into tears and passes around his hat and collects \$87 dollars and a jug of whisky.

When they return to the raft, Huck and Jim find that the duke has printed a handbill that describes Jim as a runaway slave from New Orleans. The handbill, the duke argues, will allow them to run the raft during the day without intrusion. The next morning, Jim says he can abide one or two kings but no more than that.

### **Analysis**

Chapter 19 continues to outline the carefree and unaffected environment aboard the raft. The days pass "smooth and lovely," and Twain uses the opportunity to portray the beauty of the Mississippi and its natural surroundings. During this time, Huck's narrative is filled with calm images of approaching dawn, small breezes, hot breakfasts, and a sky "speckled with stars."

The peaceful environment of the raft is shattered by the arrival of the duke and the king. At this point, the raft, which has been a kind of sanctuary, is invaded by society. The two men symbolize the stark contrast of the river to the shore and once again outline the raft/shore dichotomy. In a larger sense, the duke and the king represent the confidence men that roamed both the urban and rural landscape of nineteenth-century America, always attempting to prey on the gullible and naive. The confidence man of early frontier literature used not only society's vices but also its convictions and trust to employ his schemes, and the duke and the king exemplify the trickster who takes advantage of an ignorant society.

At first, the men appear harmless, and Huck quietly rejects their preposterous claims of royalty. Huck's gesture of kindness is similar to his compassion for the doomed men aboard the *Walter Scott*, but he quickly realizes the danger that the frauds present. His recognition of their true character is important, for he understands that the two pose a particular threat to Jim. Huck's insight, however, is not surprising, for the men are simply exaggerations of the characters that Huck and Jim have already encountered during their journey. Huck has learned that society is not to be trusted, and the duke and the king quickly show that his concern is legitimate.

The inclusion of the camp meeting is a perfect example of the confidence man. Along with its playful burlesque of religion, the camp meeting shows a gullible audience that is swindled because of its faith. The ensuing scene is reminiscent of George Washington Harris' "Sut

Lovingood's Lizards" and Johnson J. Hooper's "Simon Suggs Attends a Camp Meeting." Both authors were influential for Twain and reflect a society that is scammed because of its misplaced faith or hypocrisy.

### **Chapter 21-23 Summary**

The next day, the duke paints Jim's face solid blue so they can navigate the river during the day. To complete the disguise, the duke posts a sign on the raft reading "Sick Arab — but harmless when not out of his head."

The two con men decide to scout the surrounding towns, and while the king and Huck are heading to the steamboat, they pick up a young boy in their canoe. The king questions the talkative boy thoroughly about the town and discovers a local man, Peter Wilks, has just died and left all his fortune to his English brothers.

After learning the details of the Wilks family and its friends, the king sends Huck to fetch the duke, and the con men pose as Peter Wilks' English brothers, Harvey and William. They enter the town and begin to cry and moan when they hear of their "brothers" death. The cruel approach of the scam surprises even Huck, and he comments that "it was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race."

### **Analysis**

The events of Chapter 24 reveal that the duke and the king have taken complete control of the raft and its travelers. The fact that the duke unties Jim and uses a disguise to give him freedom during the day is overshadowed by the latest ploy to inherit a dead man's fortune.

Similar to their earlier methods that played off of faith and conviction, the duke and the king plot to earn the confidence of an entire town. The task becomes ludicrous when readers realize that the duke and king must convince everyone of their English heritage and that William (the duke) is "deef and dumb." The humor of the con men's upcoming scam is apparent, as is the realization that this plot is more callous than their previous pranks. Twain's burlesque on the ignorance of humankind is evident, for to succeed, the con men need a community of fools.

Huck's somber observation that "it was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race" alerts readers that he has again been forced to evaluate his society. Whereas earlier events

took place with little judgment, the Wilks scam, coupled with the death of Buck Grangerford, forces Huck to condemn the entire race. The statement underscores Huck's constant struggle.

### **Chapter 24 Summary**

The king and the duke put on a dramatic display and convince the family and most of the town that they are, indeed, Wilks' brothers. Sobbing, they greet Peter Wilks' daughters as their nieces and cry over the coffin. The king gives a speech that, according to Huck, is "all full of tears and flapdoodle."

Peter Wilks' will gives all of his possessions to his brothers and divides \$6,000 in gold among the daughters and Harvey and William. In order to cement the confidence of the town, the duke and the king offer their portion of gold to the daughters, and the king invites everyone to Peter's funeral "orgies." The misuse of "obsequies" confirms the suspicions of the local doctor, who laughs as he realizes the two are frauds. When the doctor tries to convince the daughters to reject the duke and the king, the daughters give the money back to prove their faith in their "uncles."

The next morning, Joanna quizzes Huck about England, the king, and church. Similar to his disguise as "Sarah Mary Williams," Huck becomes confused trying to keep up with his lies, and the trust and kindness of the daughters makes him realize that he has to act. Later that evening, Huck discovers where the duke and the king hid the gold. He takes the \$6,000 and waits for the opportunity to restore it to the rightful owners.

### **Analysis**

The king's "tears and flapdoodle" speech is a hilarious example of a con man at work, preying on the faith and the perceptions of conventional grief of his victims. Despite the obvious fraud recognized by readers, the family and the town easily accept the king and the duke as English. Huck is appalled by the act, but he also recognizes the persuasive power of "soul-butter" (flattery) and its effect on the ignorant townspeople. The humor increases when the king confuses "orgies" with funeral "obsequies," and his explanation of the Greek and Hebrew origins of the word only adds to the ridiculousness of the scene. In a sense, Twain is commenting on humankind's capacity for ignorance, for everyone except the doctor falls victim to the scam.

After viewing the king's speech, Huck realizes how clever, and thus how dangerous, the duke and the king actually are. To act against them clearly jeopardizes his own well being, but, more important, it also jeopardizes the chances of freedom for Jim. Despite the danger, Huck concludes he must return the gold to the daughters.

### **Chapter 25-26 Summary**

The same evening, Huck sneaks downstairs to try and hide the bag of gold. The front door is locked, however, and when Huck hears Mary Jane coming, he is forced to hide the gold in Peter Wilks' coffin. Because so many people are in the house, Huck does not have the opportunity to retrieve the money.

The funeral proceeds, and Huck realizes he does not know whether the gold is still in the coffin or if someone else has discovered it. After the funeral, the king announces that the estate will be sold in two days. The daughters appear to accept the sale until the king breaks up a slave family and sells them to different traders.

Mary Jane cannot bear to think of the separated family and the mother and the children never seeing one another again. Because he wants to comfort her, Huck blurts out that the slave family will see each other in the next two weeks. When Mary Jane promises to leave the house if Huck will tell her how he knows this, Huck tells the entire story of the king and the duke and how they have fooled everyone.

Mary Jane wants to tar and feather the con men immediately, but Huck reminds her of her promise and explains that "I'd be all right; but there'd be another person that you don't know about who'd be in big trouble." She honors her promise, and Huck gives her a note that explains where the missing gold can be found. The other daughters are confused about Mary Jane's absence, and the confusion grows when two more men arrive claiming to be Harvey and William.

### **Analysis**

In Chapter 27, Twain extends his satire to the pomp and circumstance surrounding the funeral service of Peter Wilks. The dark humor of the funeral scene is evident with the actions of the undertaker and the comical interlude of the dog and the rat. When the service is interrupted by the noise of the dog, the undertaker solves the disturbance and then proceeds to tell the



mourners that "*He had a rat!*" Huck's following comment that "there warn't no more popular man in town than what that undertaker was" is yet another satiric barb directed at the subject of death.

In contrast to the burlesque humor of the funeral and its concerned mourners, Chapter 28 serves to establish Mary Jane's sense of compassion, an important example for Huck to follow. In witnessing her reaction to the plight of the slave family, Huck learns another valuable lesson about the humanity of slaves and their close familial bonds. The scene provokes memories of Jim's own claim that he will steal his children out of slavery in order to preserve his family. More important, the scene forces Huck to act based on both his instincts and his conscience. Not only will he tell the daughters where to find the gold, he will also tell them of the entire scam so that the slave family will not be separated.

Huck's decision to help the daughters should not be overlooked. To this point, Huck has generally aligned himself with tricksters and con men; he displays, after all, all of the huckster qualities that the duke and the king use. When the duke and king dupe the people of Bricksville, Huck feels no remorse because the town is morally void and generally squalid. When the duke and the king con the Wilks daughters, however, Huck is outraged and realizes he must intervene, regardless of the consequences.

One of the more powerful human statements is the act of sacrifice, and Huck's resolve to help the daughters illustrates the change that has come over his character. His decision to act foreshadows the novel's climatic moment in Chapter 31.

### **Chapters 27-28 Summary**

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### **Chapter 29-30 Summary**

Even Huck recognizes that the new claimants to Peter Wilks' fortune appear to be English compared to the duke and the king. The older gentleman introduces himself as Harvey and says they can prove their identity when they retrieve their baggage. In response, the king laughs and tells the crowd it is not surprising that the new "brothers" cannot immediately prove their claim. At this point, the crowd still believes the duke and the king are the true brothers, but the doctor convinces everyone that they must investigate further. After questioning Huck about his English heritage, the town lawyer, Levi Bell, tells Huck that he obviously is not used to lying.

The older gentleman says he can prove who he is because he knows what is tattooed on Peter Wilks' chest. The king says it is a small blue arrow, and the older gentleman says it is a dim "P" and "B." The lawyer decides the only one way to be positive is to exhume Peter Wilks and have a look at his chest.

When they open the coffin, they discover the bag of gold on the body's chest. The crowd becomes so excited that Huck is able to slip away, and he and Jim escape on the raft. Before they can get very far, however, they see the king and duke have also escaped. Jim and Huck realize they are not free from the con men. The duke and the king blame one another for stealing the bag of gold, but after getting drunk, they again become comrades and start working their schemes on new villages.

### **Analysis**

The introduction of the new Harvey and William adds another element of hilarity to the con men's inheritance scam. The contrast between the two sets of "brothers" is obvious, and the ensuing investigation underscores both the ignorance of the town and the eagerness of the

townspeople to witness a dispute. Instead of reacting with anger, the town enjoys the added confusion and as the questions continue, the humor and suspense build.

Huck's role as a servant is called into question, and unlike previous escapades, Huck is unable to convince the doctor and lawyer of his English ancestry. Instead of accepting Huck's story, the lawyer tells Huck, "I wouldn't strain myself if I was you. I reckon you ain't used to lying . . . You do it pretty awkward." Although Huck's entire journey has been based on lies and deception, he is unable to fool intelligent men for even a moment. The irony is apparent, as is Huck's reluctance to try and adapt his story. Instead of attempting to lie his way out of another predicament, Huck chooses to remain quiet and observe the comical investigation.

The con men's unwillingness to leave without selling all of the family's possessions represents the greed of the two men. Ironically, it is this same type of greed that allows Huck and the duke and the king to escape. When the townsmen see the gold in Peter Wilks' coffin, they are unable to resist and the ensuing melee is reminiscent of Bricksville. Twain's commentary on the greed and ignorance of the mob mentality is solidified with the duke and the king's escape.

### **Chapter 31 Summary**

With the temperature rising and the landscape scattered with Spanish moss, Huck realizes that they are a long way from home. The new schemes of the duke and the king barely bring in enough money for liquor, so the two men begin to plot and whisper about their next scam. Huck and Jim are concerned about the clandestine behavior of the con men, and when Huck finally sees a chance to escape, he discovers that the duke and the king have made a fake handbill and turned in Jim for a \$40 reward.

Huck is furious with the con men because "after all we'd done for them scoundrels . . . they could have the heart to serve Jim and make him a slave again all his life." As Huck ponders his choices, his conscience begins to trouble him again. He cannot help but feel guilty for assisting Jim, despite the fact that his instincts constantly force him into that role. After trying to pray for resolution, Huck writes a letter to Miss Watson detailing where Jim is and signs it "Huck Finn." After he finishes the letter, he feels momentary relief and is confident that he has saved himself from going to hell for helping a slave.

Instead of being satisfied with his decision, however, Huck begins to replay their trip down the river. He reminisces about the two of them "a-floating along, talking and singing and laughing" and cannot force himself to see Jim as someone disgraceful. Huck trembles as he again picks up Miss Watson's letter and realizes that the struggle must stop: He must decide forever between two things: heaven and hell. He pauses for a minute, then declares "All right, then, I'll go to hell" and tears the letter to pieces. Once Huck makes his decision to betray society for Jim, he immediately plots to steal Jim back out of slavery.

### **Analysis**

If Chapter 18 is the end of the first segment of the novel, Chapter 31 is the end of the second segment and one of the most important chapters in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Up until this point, the novel has wavered back and forth between the river and the shore, with humorous and cruel events constantly bombarding the reader. The conflicts of individual versus society, freedom versus civilization, and sentimentalism versus realism, as well as Huck's struggle between right and wrong, are all revealed in Huck and Jim's journey. And all come to a head in Huck's eventual decision. In the midst of these events rests Huck's inner struggle to ignore his conscience and transcend his environment.

The catalyst for Huck's action is the sale of Jim back into slavery. Ironically, Huck believes he will be shunned by his community and doom himself to literal hell if he aids Jim. Despite this realization, Huck's proclamation "All right, then, I'll *go* to hell," ends his struggle in a concise and powerful moment, which is the climax of the novel.

In light of his climatic decision, Huck's entire narrative symbolizes a search for his own conscience and identity, and this identity is shaped by his attempt to make moral evaluations despite the pressures of surrounding theological and societal codes. That Huck has not been able to reconcile his struggle should not come as a surprise to readers, for Huck's sacrifice is lost on the racist society that pervaded nineteenth-century America. The statement becomes even more powerful when readers realize that Huck's decision to recognize Jim's humanity is not shared by the rest of society.

Above all, it is important to note that Huck's declaration, despite the surrounding satire and bitter irony, elevates him to a heroic character. Twain, however, cannot help but infuse more subtle irony even after Huck's decision, and Huck's reasoning that "as long as I was in [hell],

and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog" notifies readers that the novel will take yet another turn in its last segment.

### **Chapters 32-33 Summary**

After learning of Jim's location, Huck arrives at the Phelps farm. He surmises the Phelps' "little one-horse cotton plantation," but before he can reach the door, he is surrounded by all sorts of barking dogs. After a slave woman runs them off, another woman comes out of the house and says, "It's *you*, at last! — *ain't* it?" as if she is expecting Huck. Before Huck realizes what he is doing, he answers 'yes' and the woman grabs him and hugs him like she has known him all of her life.

The woman, who Huck learns is named "Aunt Sally," asks him about his trip and then asks him about the family. Huck realizes he is in a bind, but just before Huck confesses, the husband arrives and Aunt Sally introduces Huck as none other than Tom Sawyer. Huck is stunned momentarily and then realizes that he has somehow managed to stumble upon Tom's relatives. After answering several questions about the Sawyer family, Huck heads back to the river in hopes of finding the real Tom who must be on his way.

When Huck gets halfway to town, he finds Tom Sawyer. At first, Tom thinks Huck is a ghost. After Huck explains the situation with Jim, Tom declares that he will "*help* you steal him" out of slavery.

When they arrive at the Phelps farm, Tom makes up an elaborate story and introduces himself as Tom's brother, Sid Sawyer. Huck and Tom learn that the king and the duke are in town to perform and that Jim has warned the townspeople that the upcoming show is a fraud. Huck and Tom sneak out to try and tell the duke and the king, but they soon come upon the chaotic mob that has already tarred and feathered the con men.

### **Analysis**

Chapter 32 begins what could be called the last segment of the novel. Huck's solemn narration is evident at the beginning of the chapter, when he describes the breeze that occasionally washes over the farm. For Huck, the breeze comes across as a whisper of spirits long dead, and readers are reminded of those that have already died earlier in the novel. The entire journey appears to weigh heavily on Huck, and at one point he "wished I was dead"

after hearing the lonesome hum of a spinning wheel. In a sense, the Phelps farm is symbolic of Huck's return back to civilization. Although he and Jim have traveled hundreds of miles down the Mississippi River, they find themselves in a situation very similar to the life they left with Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas.

Huck's climatic decision to free Jim has brought about an unconscious epiphany or revelation in Huck's character, and when he nears the farmhouse, he does not pause, but looks to "Providence to put the right words in my mouth." Although Huck has always been prone to improvisation, he now credits his ability to Providence. The statement reveals that Huck, despite his own belief that he is now damned, places his fate (and Jim's) in the hands of another. Ironically, the person who arrives is the real Tom Sawyer, the nephew of Silas and Sally Phelps.

Literary critics have argued that the coincidence of Huck arriving at the Phelps farm is implausible in a "realistic" novel. It is important to remember, however, that Twain's original intentions for the novel included Tom as a main character. The first edition was entitled *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade)*, and therefore it is not surprising that Tom reenters the novel before its conclusion. Tom's arrival on the Phelps farm signals that a new leader will control the future of Huck and Jim. Whereas Huck and Jim shared responsibility for their fate, Tom now dictates their plans of "adventure" and escape. By allowing Tom to control the conclusion of the novel, *Huckleberry Finn* turns away from Huck's constant struggle with his conscience and reverts back to a story intended for boys and girls. The dramatic tonal shift can be attributed to several factors, including the fact that *Huckleberry Finn* was written in three stages. But it also reflects Twain's indecision over the conclusion of the novel and how to reconcile his scathing social commentary on American, and especially Southern, society.

Tom's reintroduction signals that playful and harmless pranks are soon to follow. The reunion of the two boys, however, does not completely overshadow the violent setting that Twain has carefully constructed. Huck still observes the squalid nature of "civilization" and tries to compensate through kindness, a trait reminiscent of the Widow Douglas. The tarring and feathering of the duke and the king reveals Huck's sympathetic view toward everyone, even those who have been cruel to him. Instead of standing by and watching the two con men receive their punishment; Huck tries to save the duke and the king from the town and a fate that could include death. When he fails to save the duke and the king, he comments that

"Human beings can be awful cruel to one another." The statement could be applied to the entire novel, as Huck has witnessed countless incidents that were void of humanity.

### **Chapters 34-35 Summary**

Tom discovers that Jim is being held in a small farm cabin, and the two boys discuss plans to free Jim from captivity. Huck's logical plan is to steal the keys from Uncle Silas, quickly unlock Jim, and immediately leave on the raft. Tom argues that the plan is too simple and as "mild as goosemilk." After they examine the cabin where Jim is being held, Huck suggests that they tear off one board for Jim to escape. Tom again argues that the plan is not complicated enough and then decides that they should dig Jim out because doing so will take a couple of weeks. When a slave brings food to Jim, the boys go along and whisper to Jim that they are going to set him free.

Tom and Huck begin making plans for an elaborate escape, and each step becomes more complicated and time-consuming. Tom argues that Jim will need a rope ladder and other items such as case-knives and a journal, because the escape must be done just like the prison novels he has read.

### **Analysis**

The opportunity to burlesque Tom's romanticism and infuse humor back into the novel comes at the price of Jim's perceived freedom. In actuality, Jim has already been set free by the late Miss Watson's will, and readers will learn this startling fact at the end of the novel. However, because both Huck and Jim are unaware of Jim's freedom, they agree to follow Tom's extravagant plans for a dramatic escape.

The elaborate escape plan provides Tom the opportunity to call upon several of the prison stories and adventure novels he has read. By combining unnecessary tactics such as a tunnel and devices such as a rope ladder, the entire plan becomes a comical romantic farce. The incongruity of Huck's logic in the face of Tom's imagination creates several humorous exchanges, and the farce is reminiscent of Twain's earlier work with *Tom Sawyer*. For example, when Tom says that Jim needs to keep a journal, Huck replies, "Journal your granny — *Jim* can't write."



Huck's practical response is both humorous and revealing at the same time. On the surface, it is obvious that Jim does not need to keep a journal, but the fact that Jim is captive during this time is an overriding shadow on the slapstick humor. The ability to read and write was not common among anyone in the mid-1800s, and because Jim is a slave, his being able to write is much more unlikely. More important, however, is the realization that Huck cannot stop the nonsensical plans because he and Jim are trapped within the confines of a racist society.

Neither Huck nor Jim is able to dissuade or alter Tom's plans except in minor ways, and their failed attempts symbolize their ill-fated efforts to truly escape civilization's conventions. The biting satire is obvious when Huck wonders about the logic of digging a tunnel with ordinary case-knives. When he questions Tom, Tom replies that "It don't make no difference how foolish it is, it's the *right* way . . . . And there ain't no *other* way, that ever *I* heard of, and I've read all the books that gives any information about these things." As a representative of proper society, Tom summarizes civilization's reliance on tradition and existing laws that have been recorded, despite their lack of humanity and compassion.

### **Chapters 36-38 Summary**

The next evening, Tom and Huck try to use the case-knives to dig a tunnel under the cabin, but after a few hours, they realize they need better tools. Tom decides they will use pick-axes and shovels and pretend that they are case-knives. The next night, Tom and Huck easily dig into Jim's cabin and wake him. Jim listens to Tom's plans and agrees to go along with them even though he thinks they do not make sense. Tom assures Jim that they will change the plans immediately if something goes wrong.

The boys begin smuggling "escape" tools into the cabin, and Aunt Sally notices that items are missing from the house. To confuse her, Tom and Huck continually take and replace sheets and spoons until Aunt Sally does not know how many she had to start with. Finally they tear up one of the sheets and smuggle it into Jim's cabin along with some tin plates. Following Tom's instructions on how to write mysterious messages, Jim marks on the tin plates and then throws them out the window.

The next day, Tom continues to find new distractions for Jim's escape. Tom writes down some inscriptions for Jim to carve into the wall but then realizes the walls are wooden. To be done properly and according to the books, Tom says they must have stone. The boys try to roll a large grindstone into the cabin but are not strong enough. Jim climbs out of the cabin

and helps them roll the stone the rest of the way. Despite Jim's protests, Tom decides that the cabin needs other residents, including spiders and snakes, in order to make it a proper dungeon and Jim a proper prisoner

### **Analysis**

In Chapters 36 through 38, the novel slips further into the farce as neither Huck nor Jim understand why they must perform all of these ludicrous acts before Jim can escape. Ironically, Huck and Jim view Tom as a representative of society and education, and because of this, they feel that Tom must know the best way for them to escape.

Jim's continued enslavement is both absurd and grotesque and is a harsh comment on the racial condition of post-Civil War America. As mentioned earlier, Miss Watson has already set Jim free in her will, but the ability to transcend and change society's perception is not as easily accomplished. Jim, therefore, remains captive to others despite the fact that he has, indeed, been freed.

It is important to remember that *Huck Finn* was written in the 20 years following the Civil War, and the entire novel reflects Twain's own post-Civil War observations. Although the Union made some attempt at Southern reconstruction, the South quickly fell into a squalid and segregated ruin. Conditions for newly freed slaves were no doubt improved, but the longed-for freedom had not come with changed perceptions, acceptance, or equality.

### **Chapters 39-40 Summary**

Tom and Huck capture several rats to put in Jim's cabin, but one of the Phelps boys finds the box and lets all of the rats free into the house. After several creatures are accidentally freed in the Phelps' house, Tom and Huck finally capture enough rats, spiders, and snakes, and put them in Jim's cabin. Jim complains that there is not enough room for him, and if he ever becomes free he "wouldn't ever be a prisoner again, not for a salary."

After three weeks, everything is finally ready for the grand escape. To finish off the scheme, Tom writes an anonymous letter to the Phelps saying that a "desperate gang of cutthroats" will attempt to steal Jim out of the cabin.

Huck returns to the house to pick up some butter and finds that the Phelps have gathered 15 men to battle the gang of cutthroats. Alarmed, Huck sneaks out the window and warns Tom

that the men are here, and they must all escape immediately. When the men come to the cabin, Jim and the boys slip out of the hole and head for the river amidst shouts and gunshots. They make it to the raft but then discover that Tom has been shot in the calf. Tom tells them to shove off, but Jim will not leave until a doctor has looked at Tom.

### **Analysis**

The entire Phelps' household is in complete disarray when the escape actually begins. In this manner, the novel has moved even further from the peaceful tranquility of the raft and the river to the chaos of society and the shore. Symbolizing the clash between Romanticism and Realism, Huck and Tom continue to display juxtaposing approaches to the escape and the situation. The arrival of a town posse frightens Huck, but Tom is delighted. When Huck tells Tom that the house is full of men with guns, Tom replies, "*Ain't* it bully!" as if the entire escape is a dramatic work of fiction.

Although readers have already recognized Jim as compassionate and caring, Chapter 40 reinforces Jim's qualities of bravery and loyalty. When they discover that Tom has been shot, Jim adamantly refuses to leave and says, "I doan' budge a step out'n dis place 'dout a *doctor*; not if it's forty year!" The statement reinforces Jim as a heroic figure capable of sacrifice.

### **Chapters 41-42 Summary**

Huck quickly locates a doctor and tells him that his brother "had a dream . . . and it shot him." The doctor heads for the raft but will not let Huck come along because the canoe is too small. Exhausted, Huck falls asleep until the next morning. When he wakes up, he runs into Uncle Silas, and the two of them go back to the Phelps farm, which is full of local men discussing the strange cabin and its contents. The farmers decide that Jim must have been helped by several slaves and the writing is some sort of "secret African" language.

The next day, Tom and Jim arrive at the Phelps' with the doctor and several of the farmers. Tom is on a mattress and Jim has his hands tied. The men argue whether or not to hang Jim, and the doctor explains how Jim helped with Tom instead of running away.

The next morning Tom wakes up and begins to tell Aunt Sally how he and "Tom" (Huck) orchestrated the entire escape. Tom relishes the retelling until he hears that Jim is still in captivity. Tom rises up in bed and demands that they free Jim because he has known all along that Miss Watson had died and set Jim free in her will. At that moment, Aunt Polly arrives, and Tom and Huck are forced to reveal their true identities.

## **Analysis**

With Tom unable to direct the plans, Huck again takes control of the story and makes decisions based on his common sense and logic. Instead of listening to Tom's intricate plan to fetch a doctor, Huck trusts his own ability to tell lies and control the situation. Although the doctor is somewhat suspicious of Huck's story, when Huck returns to the farm, he finds that the entire community has been drawn into Tom's fanciful escape. The ignorance and gullibility of the farmers is easily seen as they try to reconstruct and understand the escape.

Jim's refusal to leave Tom in Chapter 40 becomes more significant in Chapter 42 when he allows himself to be recaptured. As with Huck's earlier decision to sacrifice his soul to free Jim, Jim sacrifices his freedom and, quite possibly, his life by staying with Tom. Because Jim is thought to be a runaway slave, the local men "was very huffy, and some of them wanted to hang Jim as an example." Jim is, no doubt, fully aware that if he is recaptured he might be lynched, and this realization gives more credence to his role as a heroic figure at the end of the novel. The doctor who saves Tom also lauds Jim's character, and this praise further establishes his position.

As mentioned earlier, one of the most controversial elements of the novel is the fact that Jim is already free during the escape. When Tom realizes that Jim has been recaptured, he sits up in bed and declares- "They hain't no *right* to shut him up! *Shove!* — And don't you lose a minute. Turn him loose! he ain't no slave; he's as free as any cretur that walks this earth!" The realization stuns both the characters of the novel and the readers, as it becomes clear that the entire escape was unnecessary.

The turn of events serves two purposes. On the surface, the realization finalizes the separate attitudes and beliefs of Tom and Huck. Tom's Romanticism is now viewed as harmful instead of playful, and his connection with society illustrates its overarching lack of compassion toward the plight of slaves in nineteenth-century America. Beneath the surface, however, is the subtle message that no one, regardless of race or social standing or location, is free from civilization and its misconceptions. Tom's statement, then, is one of "Twain's harshest and most ironic comments on the American condition.

## **Chapter the Last Summary**

Huck asks Tom what they would have done if the escape had worked, and Tom says they would have continued having adventures down to the end of the Mississippi. After they finished, they could ride back home on a steamship, in style, and they would all be heroes.

In conclusion, Huck tells readers that Tom is well now and wears his bullet around his neck on a watch-guard. He says that, if he had known how much trouble it was to write a book, he would not have tried it. Now that he is finished, he must "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" in order to stay one step ahead of civilization and live in true freedom. Aunt Sally now wants to adopt Huck officially and "sivilize" him, but Huck says he ". . . can't stand it. I been there before."

## **Analysis**

Although Huck and Jim have both undergone changes in character, the novel returns to its beginnings at the conclusion with the Widow Douglas trying to "sivilize" Huck. The last chapter allows Twain to comment on the process of writing and the difficulty of completing *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Twain's difficulty was due, in large part, to his struggle to decide between a social commentary and a children's adventure novel. Although Huck declares that if "I'd 'a' knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't 'a' tackled it," the suggestion is that there will be yet another adventure for Huck, and yet another novel for Twain. Always the maverick, Huck announces that he will continue to try and avoid the trappings of civilization and seek his own freedom.

## **2. Themes, Symbols and Structure of *Huckleberry Finn***

### 2.1 Structure of *Huckleberry Finn*

### 2.2 *Themes*

#### 2.2.1 Race

Race is one of the most prominent themes in this novel. Throughout the course of the story, the main character, Huck Finn, is confronted with a major emotional and ethical dilemma; on the one hand, he is concerned with saving his friend, the black slave Jim, and on the other, he

is confronted with the views of those around him that often express disdain, prejudice and hatred for his friend. This theme runs throughout the book.

### **2.2.2 Rules and Order**

Rules and order are a constant throughout the book, and it is yet another source of confusion for the main character Huck Finn. Rules come on many different fronts in the story, from the rules of religion and the law of the country to the relativistic rules of conmen and his own moral rules, just to name a few. This constant conflict between these various rules and its effects on a young boy's development are the focus of much of the novel's action, as the reader will find themselves asking, just what is the right thing to do.

### **2.2.3 Deception**

Lies and deception—when are they justified, or at least allowable and harmless? Throughout the book, deception is used by various characters, from the protagonist Huck Finn to the conmen Duke and King. Just when is it acceptable to lie and to deceive? Does the outcome justify the use of a lie? The message of this book seems to be that selfish deception and manipulation for personal gain is a moral evil and will be punished, while the benevolent lies of Huck Finn whose aims are good are portrayed as harmless.

### **2.2.4 Religion**

Religion was long a source of satire and scorn for Twain, at least organized religion was, and in this novel, that is no exception. Religious characters in this novel do not fare well, whether in being deceived more easily because of their faith or in supporting slavery of blacks in the south, Twain explored the vices of the church during the pre-Civil era, particularly the south. This was a reflection of Twain's skepticism of organized religion, the antebellum belief in the south that God had made blacks inferior and thus supported slavery in the natural order, and that the church has often been an easy target for satire in literature.

### **2.2.5 Friendship**

Friendship is the source of many of Twain's novels, but none more than this one. The driving force behind Huck's decision to help Jim and to persist in that aid in the face of increasingly immense odds is his deep-founded friendship with Jim. And this friendship is

not the only one of importance in the novel. His friend Tom, the protagonist of another novel, plays a large role. The main question to ask by the end of this novel is whether ideal friendship triumphs by the end. The answer is not so clear cut.

### **2.2.6 Man and the Natural World**

Throughout much of the novel, Huck is torn between the choice of freedom found in solitude in nature (or being in nature with Jim) and the obvious benefits and attraction of family and cultural norms of society. While Huck at times claims to value his freedom more, saying he is happiest when he is in nature, an obvious longing and almost envy is apparent in his views of those who have chosen to follow the social and cultural norms around him, in particular those of a family life. The theme of nature is a prevalent theme in several other novels and stories by Twain.

### **2.2.7 Family**

This theme deserves mention by itself as a major source of exploration, not just in this novel, but in several other stories by Twain. In this novel, the main character Huck comes from a broken family with an abusive father, and on his travels, Huck encounters many different types of families and family situations. He is often inventing his own pseudo-families to fit the story. As the novel progress, however, it becomes obvious that the bond between Huck and his two close friends, Jim and Tom, is what makes up his true family, whether or not it is acknowledged in the novel. It is this, these friendships forged over the course of the novel, that define what a family is and should be.

### **2.2.8 Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

While not a major theme in as many of Twain's writings as the other themes already mentioned, in this novel, it is a large and fairly prevalent one. Indeed, excessive abuse of alcohol is portrayed as an evil that always leads to horrible results, whether that is seen in the abusive father of Huck or the selling of Huck's friend Jim into slavery to pay for whiskey. The results and drive of alcohol abuse in the novel is a source of major contention in the novel.

## *2.3 Symbols:*

### 2.3.1 The Mississippi River

The Mississippi River, on and around which so much of the action of Huckleberry Finn takes place, is a muscular, sublime, and dangerous body of water and a symbol for absolute freedom. It is literally the place where Huck feels most comfortable and at ease, and also the means by which Huck and Jim hope to access the free states. The river is physically fluid, flexible, and progressive, just as Huck and Jim are in their imaginatively free acts of empathy with other characters and in their pragmatic adaptability to any circumstances that come their way. However, in being absolutely free, the river is also unpredictable and dangerous, best exemplified during the storms that again and again threaten the lives of Huck and Jim. When he is alone, free from any immediately external influence, Huck begins to feel very lonesome and as destructive as the river itself, or, rather, self-destructive. The river, then, embodies the blessing and dangers of freedom, which must be carefully navigated if one is to live a good, happy life.

The Mississippi River appears in: Chapter 3, Chapter 7, Chapter 8, Chapter 12, Chapter 13, Chapter 15, Chapter 16, Chapter 18, Chapter 29, Chapter 32, Chapter 40

### 2.3.2 The Raft

If the river is a symbol for absolute freedom, then the raft, host primarily to Huck and Jim but also to the duke and king, is a symbol for a limitation one must necessarily impose on one's freedom if one is not to be overwhelmed: peaceful coexistence. Unlike the sometimes ridiculous and hateful rules of society, the rules of the raft are simple: respect differences and support one another. The raft is a kind of model society in which one can enjoy freedom unlike in society on shore, but at the same time not drown in one's freedom. Huck says that his happiest days are spent on the raft with Jim. It is significant that the literal destruction of the raft immediately precedes Huck's fit of conscience as to whether or not he should turn Jim in. Such a consideration, a betrayal, even, threatens to break Huck's friendship with Jim just as the raft is broken. Significant also is the fact that it is after Huck learns about the insane destructiveness of human conflict from the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud that Jim pops back into Huck's life, the raft of their peaceful coexistence repaired. This is all of course symbolic for the making, breaking, and repairing of trust and good faith in people despite



their differences, and speaks to the fact that it is never too late to try to mend severed relations.

The Raft appears in: Chapter 7, Chapter 11, Chapter 12, Chapter 13, Chapter 15, Chapter 16, Chapter 18, Chapter 19, Chapter 20, Chapter 23, Chapter 24, Chapter 29, Chapter 30, Chapter 31, Chapter 34, Chapter 40, Chapter 41

### 3. Character List:

#### 3.1 Major Characters

##### **3.1.1 Huckleberry Finn**

When determining who should narrate the novel, Twain first considered the popular character, Tom Sawyer. Tom, after all, had garnered an enormous following from his own tale, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. But Twain felt that Tom's romantic personality would not be right for the novel, and so he chose Tom's counterpart, Huckleberry Finn. Huck is the most important figure in *Huck Finn*. It is his literal, pragmatic approach to his surroundings and his inner struggle with his conscience that make him one of the most important and recognizable figures in American literature.

As a coming of age character in the late nineteenth century, Huck views his surroundings with a practical and logical lens. His observations are not filled with judgments; instead, Huck observes his environment and gives realistic descriptions of the Mississippi River and the culture that dominates the towns that dot its shoreline from Missouri south.

Huck's practical and often socially naive views and perceptions provide much of the satirical humor of the novel. It is important to note, however, that Huck himself never laughs at the incongruities he describes. For example, Huck simply accepts, at face value, the abstract social and religious tenets pressed upon him by Miss Watson until his experiences cause him to make decisions in which his learned values and his natural feelings come in conflict. When Huck is unable to conform to the rules, he accepts that it is his own deficiency, not the rule, that is bad. Abstractly, he does not recognize the contradiction of "loving thy neighbor" and enforcing slavery at the same time. He observes the racist and anti-government rants of his ignorant father but does not condemn him because it is the "accepted" view in his world. Huck simply reports what he sees, and the deadpan narration allows Twain to depict a realistic view of common ignorance, slavery, and the inhumanity that follows.

As with several of the frontier literary characters that came before him, Huck possesses the ability to adapt to almost any situation through deceit. He is playful but practical, inventive but logical, compassionate but realistic, and these traits allow him to survive the abuse of Pap, the violence of a feud, and the wiles of river con men. To persevere in these situations, Huck lies, cheats, steals, and defrauds his way down the river. These traits are part of the reason that *Huck Finn* was viewed as a book not acceptable for children, yet they are also traits that allow Huck to survive his surroundings and, in the conclusion, make the right decision.

Because Huck believes that the laws of society are just, he condemns himself as a traitor and a villain for acting against them and aiding Jim. More important, Huck believes that he will lose his chance at Providence by helping a slave. When Huck declares, "All right, then, I'll go to hell," he refuses his place in society and heaven, and the magnitude of his decision is what solidifies his role as a heroic figure.

### **3.1.2 Jim**

Along with Huck, Jim is the other major character in the novel and one of the most controversial figures in American literature. There are several possibilities in terms of the inspiration for Jim. Twain's autobiography speaks of Uncle Daniel, who was a slave at his Uncle John Quarles farm. Twain described Uncle Daniel as a man who was well known for his sympathy toward others and his honest heart. Another possible inspiration for Jim came from Twain's relationship with John Lewis, a tenant farmer at Quarry farm. In a letter to William Dean Howells, Twain recalled how Lewis had once saved his entire family when a horse-drawn carriage broke away on the farm. Lewis had corralled the horse and forever earned the respect of Twain, who also praised Lewis' work ethic and attitude. Several critics have also suggested that Jim was modeled after Twain's butler, George Griffin, who was a part of Twain's staff during the years that he was writing *Huck Finn*.

In the beginning of the novel, Jim is depicted as simple and trusting, to the point of gullibility. These qualities are not altered during the course of the novel; instead, they are fleshed out and prove to be positives instead of negatives. Jim's simple nature becomes common sense, and he constantly chooses the right path for him and Huck to follow. For example, when Huck and Jim are on Jackson's Island, Jim observes the nervous actions of birds and predicts that it will rain. Jim's prediction comes true as a huge storm comes upon the island. The moment is an important one, for it establishes Jim as an authority figure and readers recognize his experience and intelligence. Jim's insight is also revealed when he recognizes the duke and the king to be frauds. Like Huck, Jim realizes he cannot stop the con

men from controlling the raft, but he tells Huck that "I doan' hanker for no mo' un um, Huck. Dese is all I kin stan'."

Jim's most important quality, however, is his "gullible" nature. As the novel progresses, this nature reveals itself as complete faith and trust in his friends, especially Huck. The one trait that does not fluctuate throughout the novel is Jim's belief in Huck. After Huck makes up a story to preserve Jim's freedom in Chapter 16, Jim remarks that he will never forget Huck's kindness. Jim's love for Huck, however, extends past their friendship to the relationship of parent and child. When Huck and Jim come upon the dead man on the floating house, Jim warns Huck not to look at the man's face. The gesture is kind, but when readers learn later that the man was Pap Finn, they realize the affection Jim has for Huck. Jim does not want Huck to suffer through the pain of seeing his dead father, and this moment establishes Jim as a father figure to Huck.

Jim's actions, no doubt, are partly a result of his inability to distance himself from the society in which he has been conditioned. His existence has been permeated by social and legal laws that require him to place another race above his own, regardless of the consequences. But as with Huck, Jim is willing to sacrifice his life for his friends. There are countless opportunities for Jim to leave Huck during the tale, yet he remains by Huck's side so the two of them can escape together. When Huck and Jim become separated in the fog, Jim tells Huck that his "heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no mo' what bcome er me en de raf'." Jim's freedom, then, is not worth the price of Huck's life, and readers are constantly reminded that Jim would readily risk his own life to aid Huck. When Huck is taken in by the Shepherdsons, Jim waits in the swamp and devises a plan where both of them can continue down the river. Moreover, when Jim has the chance to be free at the end of the novel, he stays by Tom Sawyer's side, another example of his loyalty. Jim's logic, compassion, intelligence, and above all, his loyalty toward Huck, Tom, and his own family, establish him as a heroic figure.

### **3.1.3 Tom Sawyer**

If Huck is the consummate realist of the novel, Tom Sawyer is the representative romantic. When readers are first introduced to Tom, they immediately recognize his role as a leader, or controlling agent, of the situation. The gang is labeled "Tom Sawyer's Gang" because he is the one that controls the activities and pursuits. These activities, however, are always based

upon Tom's exaggerated notions of adventure. Basing his experience on the fanciful books he has read, Tom tries to adapt his life and the life of others to that which he has read. The end result is a burlesque of sensibility and emotion, two literary agents that Twain despised.

Tom's role as a romantic is extremely important because of its juxtaposition with Huck's literal approach. Although Tom declares that his gang will pursue the exploits of piracy and murder, in reality the gang succeeds in "charging down on hog-drovers and women in carts taking garden stuff to the market." The vision of the young boys disrupting women bound for the market provides much of the harmless humor during the early pages of *Huck Finn*, and Tom is largely responsible for the slapstick approach. Tom's constant barrage of exaggeration, however, contrasts with Huck's deadpan narration, and Huck can "see no profit" in Tom's methods. Where Huck is practical, Tom is emotional; where Huck is logical, Tom is extravagant. Despite the fact that readers easily recognize Tom's ideas as folly, Huck does not question Tom's authority. On the contrary, Huck believes that Tom's knowledge is above his own, and this includes Tom's attitude toward slavery.

In a sense, Tom represents the civilized society that Huck and Jim leave behind on their flight down the river. When Tom reappears with his fancied notions of escape from the Phelps farm, Jim again becomes a gullible slave and Huck becomes a simple agent to Tom. There is no doubt that Tom is intelligent, and he does state that they will free Jim immediately if there is trouble, but the ensuing ruse suggests that Tom is unable to shake society and the Romantic idealism he possesses, even when Jim's freedom is at stake.

## **3.2 Minor Characters**

### **3.2.1 The duke and king**

The kind of people Huck and Tom might turn into were they to only act out of self-interest, the duke and king are a couple of con men that Huck and Jim travel with. The two are selfish, greedy, deceptive, and debauched, but sometimes their actions expose and exploit societal hypocrisy in a way that is somewhat attractive and also rather revealing. Though the exploits of the duke and king can be farcical and fun to watch, the two demonstrate an absolute, hideous lack of respect for human life and dignity.

### **3.2.2 The Widow Douglas and Miss Watson**

Two elderly sisters, the Widow and Miss Watson are **Huck**'s guardians at the beginning of the novel until **Pap** arrives on the scene. The two women demand that Huck conform to societal norms, which Huck resents. Miss Watson is hypocritical in holding Christian values yet cruelly keeping slaves, even separating **Jim** from his family. However, it would seem that she sees the light just before her death: she frees Jim in her will.

### 3.2.3 Pap

**Huck**'s father, **Pap** is a vicious drunk and racist, demonstrably beyond reform, who wants to have Huck's fortune for himself. He resents Huck's social mobility and, when not drunk or in jail, he can usually be found harassing Huck. Infuriated by the **Widow** at one point, Pap kidnaps Huck and imprisons him in a cabin, where he beats Huck mercilessly, such that Huck is compelled to escape from him once and for all. Pap seems to be free from the Widow and Miss Watson's idea of society, but he is enslaved to his own wretched viciousness and alcoholism, as much a prisoner as anyone in the novel..

### 3.2.4 Judge Thatcher

A kind of guardian to Huck at the beginning of the novel. Judge Thatcher nobly helps the **Widow** in her bid for custody of Huck over Pap, and, at the end of the novel, he dutifully restores to Huck his fortune.

### 3.2.5 Judith Loftus

A shrewd, gentle woman whom Huck approaches disguised as a girl. Mrs. Loftus exposes that Huck is lying to her, but is kind to him nonetheless. Her husband is a slave-hunter pursuing Jim.

### 3.2.6 Colonel Sherburn

A cold-blooded killer, Sherburn guns down the vocal but harmless drunkard Boggs for almost no reason at all, all of which **Huck**witnesses in horror. When a lynch mob sets out to avenge Boggs' death, Sherburn calmly scorns the mob as being full of cowards and absolutely impotent. He is right: the mob, humiliated, disperses.

### 3.2.7 The Grangerfords and Shepherdsons

Two noble, pious and aristocratic families that absurdly, bloodily feud with one another despite mutual respect. Huck stays with the Grangerfords after becoming separated from Jim, but becomes embroiled in their feud after he accidentally enables a Grangerford girl to elope

with a Shepherdson boy. Huck is confused by how such good, brave people could be involved in such devastating madness.

### **3.2.8 Jack**

A Grangerford slave who tends to Huck and kindly shows him to where Jim is hiding nearby the Grangerford estate.

### **3.2.9 Mary Jane Wilks**

The beautiful daughter of Peter Wilks, Huck is so moved by her goodness that he resolves to expose the duke and king as the con men they are.

### **3.2.10 Joanna Wilks**

A daughter of Peter Wilks with a harelip, Joanna shrewdly catches Huck in many lies as he plays along with the duke and king's impersonation of the Wilks brothers.

### **3.2.11 Doctor Robinson and Levi Bell**

The intelligent but somewhat condescending friends of Peter Wilks who suspect all along that the duke and king are frauds.

### **3.2.12 Harvey and William Wilks**

Brothers of Peter Wilks who have traveled from England to the U.S. for Peter's funeral. William is a deaf mute. The duke and king impersonate them during one of their more disgusting scams.

### **3.2.13 Peter Wilks**

Brother of Harvey and William Wilks, father of Mary Jane Wilks and her sisters; deceased.

### **3.2.14 Sally and Silas Phelps**

Tom Sawyer's aunt and uncle, respectively, who are both good people and parents, upstanding members of their community, and yet who troublingly support the institution of slavery, exemplified by their detainment of Jim. Huck and Tom trick the Phelpses when preparing for Jim's escape, much to Aunt Sally's fury and Uncle Silas's innocent befuddlement. Aunt Sally offers to adopt Huck at the end of the novel, but he refuses to be "civilized" by anyone.

### **3.2.15 Nat**

A Phelps slave whose superstitions Tom exploits in executing his ridiculous plan to free Jim.

### 3.2.16 Aunt Polly

Tom Sawyer's aunt and guardian, sister of Sally Phelps.

## 4. Mark Twain's contribution to American Literature:

Although he was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens, he'll be forever known as the quintessential American writer Mark Twain. Raised in Hannibal, Missouri, Twain began his literary aspirations as a modest young journalist for his local newspaper. But it was his quick wit and brilliantly ambitious use of a pen that would catapult him into literary American royalty.

Twain's childhood and adolescence in Missouri served as the inspiration for his legendary novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and its better half, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Published first in 1876 in the wake of the violently turbulent American Civil War, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* chronicles the mischievous adventures of a clever boy living on the bank of the Mississippi River. Tom Sawyer's streak of harmless trickery leads him to humorous scenarios and shapes this coming of age tale. Alongside his best friend, Huck Finn, Tom's adventurous and playful summer shenanigans of carefree youth takes a dark turn when the boys witness the murder of Dr. Robinson by the town outsider 'Injun Joe' who then accuses a harmless town drunk, Muff Potter, of the bloody murder. And so a summer of treasure hunting quickly unravels during a tense and unlawful trial with a mysterious conclusion.

Both *Tom Sawyer* and its sequel in *Huckleberry Finn* are landmark texts not only in the canon of Twain's work, but also in that of American literature. Twain's explicit sense of place is articulated in the rugged aesthetic of the American Midwest. The untouched labyrinth of underground caves, the secrets hidden in the planks of abandoned houses, and the natural landscape of the American Midwest in the aftermath of a bloody Civil War, explicitly defines Twain's work as stories of place. His texts also have an undeniable sense of place rooted in the speech of his characters. The dialect, speech patterns, slang and syntax of the dialogue create a palpable experience for the reader. Descriptions of natural sights, smells and sounds of Missouri, display Twain's true craftsmanship as a novelist.

Twain's works aren't just written texts, but tangible artifacts of both American literary and cultural history. Twain's critical eye, and ear, of social observation and political injustices of an often bigoted America, along with a clever tongue, much like that of his young heroes, has

solidified his role as what no less a luminary than William Faulkner called 'the father of American literature'.

### **5. Questions:**

1. Compare and contrast the characters of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer.
2. Discuss the characteristics of Jim and how or if he qualifies as a heroic figure.
3. Discuss Huck's struggle with his conscience and how or if he qualifies as a heroic figure.
4. Compare and contrast the environment on shore and the environment on the raft.
5. Discuss Huck's statement, "All right, then, I'll *go* to hell."
6. Discuss the use of satire in the novel and how Twain uses different types of humor for social commentary.
7. Discuss Huck's view of religion, especially his idea of two types of Providence and the characters that represent each type.
8. Discuss the novel as a realistic portrayal of American racism before *and* after the Civil War.

### **6. Further Readings of Mark Twain:**

#### **Short Stories-**

*-The \$30,000 Bequest and  
Other Stories*

*-Advice to Little Girls*

*-Cannibalism in the Cars*

*-Captain Stormfield's Visit to  
Heaven*

*-The Celebrated Jumping Frog  
of Calaveras County*

*-A Dog's Tale*

*-Eve's Diary*

*-A Literary Nightmare*



- Luck (short story)*
- The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg*
- The Million Pound Bank Note*
- A Murder, a Mystery, and a Marriage*
- My Platonic Sweetheart*
- The Private History of a Campaign That Failed*
- The Stolen White Elephant*
- The War Prayer*

**Essays-**

- Advice to Youth*
- The Awful German Language*
- Christian Science (book)*
- Concerning the Jews*
- A Defence of General Funston*
- Edmund Burke on Croker and Tammany*
- How to Tell a Story and Other Essays*
- On the Decay of the Art of Lying*
- Some Thoughts on the Science of Onanism*
- To the Person Sitting in Darkness*
- The United States of Lyncherdom*
- What Is Man?*

## **Paper- XVII. American Literature**

### **Unit 4: Walden- Henry David Thoreau**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Objective

1.2 Biographical sketch of Thoreau

1.3 Major works of Thoreau

1.4 Themes and Outlines of Thoreau's works

1.5 Styles and Techniques used by Thoreau

1.6 Chapterwise summary and analysis of Walden

#### **2. Themes, Symbols and Structure of Walden**

2.1 Structure of Walden

2.2 Themes

2.3 Symbols

#### **3. Character List**

#### **4. Thoreau's contribution to American Literature**

#### **5. Questions**

#### **6. Further Readings of Thoreau**

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Objective**

This unit provides a biographical sketch of Thoreau first. Then a list of his major works, their themes and outlines. It also includes a detailed discussion about the styles and techniques used by him. The themes, symbols and the structure of *Walden* are discussed next, followed by the list of major as well as minor characters. This unit concludes with a discussion about Thoreau's contribution to American literature and a set of questions. Lastly there is a list of further readings of his works to gain knowledge about the critical aspects of the novel.

### **1.2 Biographical sketch of Thoreau**

Henry David Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817, in Concord, Massachusetts. He began writing nature poetry in the 1840s, with poet Ralph Waldo Emerson as a mentor and friend. In 1845 he began his famous two-year stay on Walden Pond, which he wrote about in his master work, *Walden*. He also became known for his beliefs in Transcendentalism and civil disobedience, and was a dedicated abolitionist.

**Early Life:** One of America's most famous writers, Henry David Thoreau is remembered for his philosophical and naturalist writings. He was born and raised in Concord, Massachusetts, along with his older siblings John and Helen and younger sister Sophia. His father operated a local pencil factory, and his mother rented out parts of the family's home to boarders.

A bright student, Thoreau eventually went to Harvard College (now Harvard University). There he studied Greek and Latin as well as German. According to some reports, Thoreau had to take a break from his schooling for a time because of illness. He graduated from college in 1837 and struggled with what to do next. At the time, an educated man like Thoreau might pursue a career in law or medicine or in the church. Other college graduates went into education, a path he briefly followed. With his brother John, he set up a school in 1838. The venture collapsed a few years later after John became ill. Thoreau then went to work for his father for a time.

After college, Thoreau befriended writer and fellow Concord resident Ralph Waldo Emerson. Through Emerson, he became exposed to Transcendentalism, a school of thought that emphasized the importance of empirical thinking and of spiritual matters over the physical world. It encouraged scientific inquiry and observation. Thoreau came to know many of the movement's leading figures, including Bronson Alcott and Margaret Fuller.

Emerson acted as a mentor to Thoreau and supported him in many ways. For a time, Thoreau lived with Emerson as a caretaker for his home. Emerson also used his influence to promote Thoreau's literary efforts. Some of Thoreau's first works were published in *The Dial*, a

transcendentalist magazine. And Emerson gave Thoreau access to the lands that would inspire one of his greatest works.

Walden Pond: In 1845, Thoreau built a small home for himself on Walden Pond, on property owned by Emerson. He spent more than two years there. Seeking a simpler type of life, Thoreau flipped the standard routine of the times. He experimented with working as little as possible rather than engage in the pattern of six days on with one day off. Sometimes Thoreau worked as a land surveyor or in the pencil factory. He felt that this new approach helped him avoid the misery he saw around him. "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," Thoreau once wrote.

His schedule gave him plenty of time to devote to his philosophical and literary interests. Thoreau worked on *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849). The book drew from a boating trip he took with his brother John in 1839. Thoreau eventually started writing about his Walden Pond experiment as well. Many were curious about his revolutionary lifestyle, and this interest provided the creative spark for a collection of essays. Published in 1854, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* espoused living a life close to nature. The book was a modest success, but it wasn't until much later that the book reached a larger audience. Over the years, *Walden* has inspired and informed the work of naturalists, environmentalists and writers.

While living at Walden Pond, Thoreau also had an encounter with the law. He spent a night in jail after refusing to pay a poll tax. This experience led him to write one of his best-known and most influential essays, "Civil Disobedience" (also known as "Resistance to Civil Government"). Thoreau held deeply felt political views, opposing slavery and the Mexican-American War. He made a strong case for acting on one's individual conscience and not blindly following laws and government policy. "The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right," he wrote.

Since its publication in 1849, "Civil Disobedience" has inspired many leaders of protest movements around the world. This non-violent approach to political and social resistance has influenced American civil rights movement activist Martin Luther King Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi, who helped India win independence from Great Britain, among many others.

Later Years: After leaving Walden Pond, Thoreau spent some time looking after Emerson's house while he was on tour in England. He soon took to lecturing himself. Still fascinated with nature, Thoreau wrote down his observations on plant and wildlife in his native Concord and on his journeys. He visited the woods of Maine and the shoreline of Cape Cod several times.

Thoreau also remained a devoted abolitionist until the end of his life. To support his cause, he wrote several works, including the 1854 essay "Slavery in Massachusetts." Thoreau also took a brave stand for Captain John Brown, a radical abolitionist who led an uprising against slavery in Virginia. He and his supporters raided a federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry to arm themselves in October 1859, but their plan was thwarted. An injured Brown was later convicted of treason and put to death for his crime. Thoreau rose to defend him with the

speech "A Plea for Capt. John Brown," calling him "an angel of light" and "the bravest and humanest man in all the country."

In his later years, Thoreau battled an illness that had plagued him for decades. He had tuberculosis, which he had contracted decades earlier. To restore his health, Thoreau went to Minnesota in 1861, but the trip didn't improve his condition. He finally succumbed to the disease on May 6, 1862. Thoreau was heralded as "an original thinker" and "a man of simple tastes, hardy habits, and of preternatural powers of observation" in some of his obituaries.

While other writers from his time have faded into obscurity, Thoreau has endured because so much of what he wrote about is still relevant today. His writings on government were revolutionary, with some calling him an early anarchist. Thoreau's studies of nature were equally radical in their own way, earning him the moniker of "father of environmentalism." And his major work, *Walden*, has offered up an interesting antidote to living in the modern rat race.

### **1.3 Major works of Thoreau**

-*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849)*

-*Civil Disobedience (1849)*

-*Slavery in Massachusetts (1854)*

-*Walden (1854)*

-*A Plea for Captain John Brown (1859)*

-*Walking (1861)*

-*The Maine Woods (1864)*

-*Cape Cod (1865)*

### **1.4 Themes and Outlines of Thoreau's works**

. Though not a professional philosopher, Henry David Thoreau is recognized as an important contributor to the American literary and philosophical movement known as New England Transcendentalism. His essays, books, and poems weave together two central themes over the course of his intellectual career: nature and the conduct of life. His naturalistic writing integrated straightforward observation and cataloguing with Transcendentalist interpretations of nature and the wilderness. In many of his works Thoreau brought these interpretations of nature to bear on how people live or ought to live. His work appeals at least as much to such a reader today as it did in the nineteenth century. The lasting appeal of his work is due, too, to the breadth and timelessness of the major themes developed throughout his writings.

Thoreau put millions of words to paper over the course of his lifetime. He vacillated in the way he viewed and presented some of his themes in this massive body of his work. The reader of Thoreau must simply accept some degree of intellectual contradiction as evidence that the author was a complex man, constantly thinking and weighing ideas, open to a variety of interpretations, capable of accepting inconsistency. If Thoreau's thoughts on a subject did

not always remain constant, at least there is coherence in his repeated exploration of certain basic themes throughout his writings.

The most central of Thoreau's themes is the idea that beyond reality — beyond nature and human existence — there is a higher truth operating in the universe. Reality — nature, in particular — symbolizes this higher truth, and, from its particulars, universal law may, to some degree, be comprehended. This idealism is consistent with the Transcendental concept of the ultimate connectedness of God, man, and nature in the great oneness of the Oversoul, and with the optimistic Transcendental sense that the absolutes and the workings of the universe can be grasped by the human mind. Intuitive understanding rather than reason provides the means to such cosmic comprehension.

Thoreau expressed a clear vision of the unity of man, nature, and heaven. A leap from the particular to the universal, from the mundane to the divine, is found throughout Thoreau's work. Nature — its meaning and value — comprises one of the most pervasive themes in Thoreau's writings, expressed through both painstaking detail and broad generalization. Like Emerson, Thoreau saw an intimate and specific familiarity with the reality of nature as vital to understanding higher truth. Thoreau's transcendental quest toward the universal drew him to immerse himself in nature at Walden Pond from 1845 to 1847. It led him to observe the natural world closely in order ultimately to "look through and beyond" nature, as he wrote in his journal on March 23, 1853. Thoreau's attraction to nature went far beyond emotional appreciation of its beauty; he embraced its harshness as well. Nature was, as he wrote in his essay "Walking," "a personality so vast and universal that we have never seen one of her features." There could be no "great awakening light" of understanding without knowledge of the manifestations of the universal in the observable world.

Thoreau was aware, however, that there was a fine line between inspiration through concrete knowledge of nature and fruitless preoccupation with masses of scientific detail. He saw that there was a danger of becoming "dissipated by so many observations" (journal entry, March 23, 1853), and recognized his own tendency to lose sight of the ultimate goal of higher understanding. He perceived a world of difference between the natural philosopher and the more limited man of science. Approached with a sense of wonder and of high purpose, nature provided Thoreau with a means of transcending the distractions of everyday life and of focusing on what was important. Thoreau's excursions in Concord and beyond were made through nature, toward loftier revelations. Nature, he felt, was a particular tonic to the human spirit in an age devoted to commerce, to politics, to the spread of dehumanizing industrialization and urbanization, to unfulfilling social interactions, and to the perpetuation of human institutions at best in need of change, at worst immoral. His essay "Walking" is a coherent expression of the power of nature — of "wildness," in which he found the "preservation of the world. Admiration for the primitive or simple man — a common theme in Romantic literature — is corollary to the significance of the natural world in Thoreau's work. He saw in the relics of Indian culture, which he found wherever he walked, evidence of the "eternity behind me as well as the eternity before." Although he could not fail to notice that the remaining local Indians of his time had been degraded, Thoreau was able to visualize

through the Native an earlier connection between man and nature that had been lost in the evolution of civilization. In *Walden* ("Higher Laws"), he wrote of the following:

“Fishermen, hunters, woodchoppers, and others, spending their lives in the fields and woods, in a peculiar sense a part of Nature themselves, [who] are often in a more favorable mood for observing her . . . than philosophers or poets even, who approach her with expectation.”

Such men knew important things "practically or instinctively," through direct, intuitive means. And the old Wellfleet oysterman in *Cape Cod*, whose only learning is what he had "got by natur [sic]," is presented as an archaic, bardic type.

The importance of simplicity is another of Thoreau's recurrent themes. By keeping his needs and wants few, the individual may realize spiritual aims instead of devoting his energies to the material. Thoreau urged economy and self-reliance, the stripping away of luxuries and comforts down to the bare essentials. He wrote in "Economy," the first chapter of *Walden*, "Most of the luxuries, and many of the so called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind." Thoreau deplored the "waste of life" through the brutalizing manual labor that was required to lay railroad tracks, operate mills, and accomplish the manufacture of items of questionable necessity. If a man spends all day in mind-numbing work, he has no life left for the pursuit of higher understanding. By doing for himself, the individual maintains his freedom to live deliberately, to cultivate himself, and to explore nature and divinity. Just as Thoreau understood that living simply in nature allowed a man to live fully, he also recognized that society impeded both simplicity and the inner life.

The theme of travel is an important one in Thoreau's writings, operating on both literal and metaphorical levels, closely bound to the author's powerful sense of place. Thoreau took pains to emphasize that seeking exotic locations in pilgrimage toward higher understanding was unnecessary. He repeatedly focused attention on the inward rather than the outward nature of the journey that was most important in the life of a thinking man. Thoreau saw Concord as the place where he could best visualize and communicate the universals that transcend place precisely because it was the place he knew best.

Thoreau also wrote of the tendency of travel away from the familiar to distract and dissipate the traveler. But Concord was for Thoreau representative as well as concrete, and his sense of place in relation to Concord was generic as well as specific. The critical fact about place is how the individual internalizes and interprets the reality around him, no matter where he is.

And yet, seemingly inconsistently, Thoreau did travel some actual distances at various times in his life — up the Concord and Merrimack Rivers with his brother John, to New York, Maine, Cape Cod, Quebec, Mount Monadnock, the White Mountains, and Minnesota. Moreover, in keeping with the Romantic impulse to write about travel to faraway places, Thoreau incorporated into his work what he observed on his journeys. He traveled partly "to give our intellects an airing," partly to seek out locations possessing greater wildness than could be found in Concord. Moreover, he was interested in examining the particular relationship between a man and his environment, the affinity between man and place. In his travel narratives, Thoreau delineated certain individuals who seemed to have been organically

shaped by landscape and occupation. Thoreau embraced the subjectivity of perception that followed from man's central position. He accepted that the individual's vantage point in some sense defined the universe. Thoreau wrote harshly of reform and reformers. However much he may have agreed with the principles behind particular movements, he believed that moral responsibility lay ultimately with the individual. Reform movements, like political affiliations, reduced the individual to membership in the group and restricted his freedom to make independent judgments. Thoreau felt that the reform of society would best be accomplished through the individual. Thoreau's writing presents a synthesis of optimistic idealism and earthy enjoyment of the here and now. He focused on ultimate meaning, but at the same time reveled in the sensuous details of nature and life as he lived it. Thoreau has sometimes been viewed as an ascetic who denied himself the pleasures of life, but his work does not bear out this judgment. Certainly, Thoreau was selective about the pleasures he chose to enjoy and to celebrate in words. But his writings reveal a healthy capacity to live joyfully in the moment. The endurance and increasing popularity of his work over time is due, in large part, to this ability to unify reality and idealism.

### **1.5 Styles and Techniques used by Thoreau in his works**

Though Thoreau considered his profession to be that of writer, he published only two books in his short lifetime of 44 years. The first, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) is the record of a two-week river excursion by rowboat taken by Thoreau and his brother, John, in the fall of 1839, condensed in the book to one week, and embellished by Thoreau's reflections on a variety of subjects for the most part suggested to him by his wide reading in world literature. For many readers, the book is a collection of remarkable essays that lack cohesion and relatedness. It is, however, the second book, *Walden* (1854), that has elevated Thoreau into the first rank of American authors, and distinguished him throughout the world as an artist and philosopher of unique perceptiveness and vision. *Walden* breaks out of the structure of Emersonian Transcendentalism current at the time (though influenced by it), lifting the perceptive reader to a rare and exhilarating self-knowledge, as Thoreau's romantic contemporary John Keats observed that poetry should do, "surprising by a fine excess." That is to say, by employing many of the devices of poetry—allusion, figures of speech, imagery—and through a disciplined process of refinement and constriction of his text that took portions of the book through seven versions, Thoreau achieved a work of such subtlety and suggestiveness that repeated readings do not exhaust its meanings or dim the brilliance of its insights. . He was a versatile writer, capable of expressing stark reality in strong language and of conveying delicate detail and subtle nuance. His work is characterized both by directness of style and by the suggestion of far more than appears on the surface. He effectively employed a variety of techniques — paradox, exaggeration, and irony, for example — to create a penetrating prose. He brought considerable abilities and resources to his art — breadth of vision, closely examined personal experience, wide and deep reading, imagination, originality, a strong vocabulary and a facility for manipulating words (and even sometimes for minting new words to suit his purposes), an alertness to symbolic correspondences, and an aptitude for the figurative (simile, metaphor, allegory). He applied himself to translating what he observed of nature and humanity into words ("As you *see*, so at



length will you *say*," he wrote in his journal on November 1, 1851). His writing, consequently, possesses immediacy.

Thoreau admired direct, vigorous, succinct, economical prose. For him, the importance of content far outweighed that of style. He avoided overemphasis on form at the expense of content. Romantic writer that he was, he cared little for observing the formalities of established literary genre. He wanted every word to be useful, to convey meaning, and he had no interest in the purely decorative. "As all things are significant," he wrote, "so all words should be significant." Thoreau felt that the very act of genuine expression elevated the written word: "A fact truly and absolutely stated is taken out of the region of common sense and acquires a mythologic or universal significance." Although Thoreau avoided obvious artifice, his highly crafted writing is anything but artless. Thoreau's writing is full of mythological references and of illustrative passages from earlier authors with whom modern readers may not be familiar. Nevertheless, despite the obscurity of such allusions, it is hard even for those reading his work for the first time not to experience flashes of inspired understanding of his message. This is a tribute to Thoreau's effective use of language. He wrote carefully for an intelligent and thoughtful reader.

## **1.6 Chapterwise summary and Analysis of *Walden***

### **Chapters 1-3**

#### Chapter One "Economy"

Summary:

Thoreau opens his book by stating that it was written while he lived alone in the woods, in a house he built himself, on the shore of Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. The book is a response to questions his townsmen have asked about his life at Walden, and as such, will focus on Thoreau himself and his experiences. Having seen other young men who have inherited farms enslaved and made a machine by the obligations of property, Thoreau sought to escape their plight through his life at Walden. He wanted to discover "what, to use the words of the catechism, is the chief end of man, and what are the true necessities and means of life."

The narrator disputes the wisdom of old people, most of whom have not truly "tried life," and the value of tradition. A life lived doing what most consider "good" would in his eyes be wasted. Living "primitive or frontier life" will allow him to discover what he calls "necessary of life" for humans, food, shelter, clothing, and fuel, the latter three which he argues are not fundamental necessities, because the sun can provide warmth enough in some climates. Riches and possessions are responsible for the degeneration of the human spirit, and Thoreau addresses his words about their destructive power specifically to the discontented "mass of men" who complain of their lots in life.

Thoreau then recounts the cherished enterprises of his life, focusing on his joy in anticipating "Nature herself!" while working in various odd jobs out of doors. He compares his experience, realizing that the town would not vote him an allowance for his contributions to that of an Indian, who offered baskets he had woven for sale to a local lawyer and found that

he had not made it worth the man's while to buy from him. Therefore, Thoreau decided to go immediately to Walden Pond, without saving money first, to reflect privately without outside distraction. In order to do so, he found his strict business habits, which require personal oversight of every detail no matter what the business, to be indispensable.

Eschewing public preoccupation with fashionable clothing, which he considers to be "false skin," Thoreau expresses his surprise that something as noble as patched clothing should be so publicly abhorred and notes his tailoress's surprise when he asked for a suit of plain and simple clothing. He finds this ridiculous when he considers fickle public propensity's to laugh at old fashions and devotedly seek new fashions, and expresses his belief that the factory system is only a way to make corporations rich and not to "well and honestly" clothe people.

Shelter has become a "necessary of life," though it has not always been; Thoreau reflects on examples of seemingly instinctual seeking of shelter, as by children entering caves and Indians building wigwams. In considering building a house that would not become an elaborate trap for him, Thoreau took inspiration from a six foot by three foot box he saw by the railroad, in which a man could sleep comfortably and compares it to an \$800 house in town for which an unmarried laborer would have to save for ten to fifteen years to purchase. Most farmers in his town have inherited their farms and mortgages that go with them and are thus trapped in their slaving to pay for their houses. Others are "needlessly poor" because they compare their homes to those of rich people rather than to what is necessary. Comparing the rich to pharaohs who spent their lives building their tombs, Thoreau wishes people could live with the simplicity of the Indians in their wigwams or the early American settlers who built dugouts in hillsides.

In March 1845, Thoreau himself bought an axe and went to the woods near Walden Pond to cut down pines for timber. In these "pleasant spring days," as the ice of the pond melted and birds sang, he continued cutting wood for the house he would build. He compares a half-frozen snake he saw to men who remain in their "primitive and low condition" because they haven't been aroused by spring to rise to a "higher and more ethereal life." He becomes a friend of the pines, eating his bread-and-butter lunch in pitch-coated hands, while reading the newspaper at noon. By mid-April, he has framed his house. For \$4.25, he has also purchased the shanty of James Collins, an Irish laborer, for boards which he transports to his hillside, in which he digs a cellar. In early May, a few friends help him raise his house, and after that, he boarded and roofed it. He moved in on the fourth of July, built the chimney in the fall, baking his bread on an open fire outside before then.

Thoreau suggests that if men built their own homes, as birds build their own nests, "the poetic faculty would be universally developed." The profession of architect he finds to be an unnecessary division of labor, for it is natural for a man to build his own house and allows him to think for himself. The appearance of a man's house would mean something if he made it himself and put his spirit in it; without his spirit, it is only a coffin.

By winter, Thoreau had a "tightly shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide by fifteen long, and eight-foot posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trap doors, one door at the end, and a brick fire-place opposite," all for a cost that totals \$28.12 -- a lifelong dwelling, Thoreau boasts, in an era when a man would pay \$25 to \$100 for rent and

less than the cost of a student's room at Cambridge College (\$30 a year). Students would have more real wisdom if they built their own houses and tried the experiment of living rather than studying it from afar. Thoreau remarks on his own surprise at realizing he had studied navigation in college when he would have learned more if he had gone out once in the harbor. Likewise, students in college are taught political economy rather than the economy of living and thus put their fathers in debt.

"Modern improvements," Thoreau says, are illusions. A telegraph across the Atlantic would only aid in the transmission of gossip. A railroad around the world "is equivalent to grading the surface of the planet." These improvements are only comparatively good; it would have been better to dig in the dirt.

Before finishing his house, Thoreau planted two and half acres with beans, potatoes, corn, peas, and turnips. From the eleven acres he had purchased, Thoreau used deadwood from the woods, driftwood from the pond, and stumps from his vegetable patch for fuel. After paying for a team and a man to help plow the field, Thoreau ended up making \$8.71 \_ by selling those vegetables he didn't eat himself. The next year, he spaded only a third of an acre and realized if he grew only what he would eat, he could get by spending odd hours on it without needing oxen. Farmers, he believes, are less free than oxen. It is the oxen who have the biggest building in town, and Thoreau wishes there were as many halls for free worship or free speech.

From doing odd jobs as a surveyor, carpenter, and day-laborer in Concord, Thoreau made \$13.34 during the year, spent \$8.74 on food over eight months to supplement what he grew, and with the costs of clothing, his house, farmland, and oil, spent \$61.9 \_. From day labor and selling his produce over two years, he made \$36.78 total, leaving him with a balance of \$25.21 \_, which is about what he had to begin with.

Through his experience of two years at Walden, Thoreau realized how simply and easily he could eat sometimes just boiling a wild herb called purslane for his dinner or some ears of corn. Even yeast for his bread, which he made of his own grain, and salt for seasoning he ultimately found to be unnecessary luxuries. Therefore, he could avoid "all trade and barter" except to get clothing and fuel. He offers his "experiment" eating only vegetables to those who believed it wouldn't be possible to survive that way.

Thoreau made some of his own furniture and got the rest for free from people's attics all together he had a bed, a table, a desk, three chairs, a looking glass three inches in diameter, a pair of tongs and andirons, a kettle, a skillet, and a frying-pan, a dipper, a wash-bowl, two knives and forks, three plates, one cup, one spoon, a jug for oil, a jug for molasses, and a japanned lamp. Excessive amounts of furniture, Thoreau also sees as a sort of trap, which should be burned as the Mucclasse Indians do annually with their possessions, instead of an opportunity for increasing possessions, as when a dead man's furniture is auctioned off to his neighbors.

Thoreau worked for five years supporting himself by his own labor and found that he could survive working only six weeks a year, giving himself plenty of time for study and thought. Previously, he had tried schoolteaching and trade but was unsuccessful. He values freedom

above all else and found being a day laborer was the most independent occupation. He urges everyone to pursue his own particular way of living and not his parents' or neighbors'. Furthermore, he expresses his preference for the solitary life and his belief that most cooperation is superficial and only possible if a man has faith and does not depend on the ways of his community.

In response to his townsmen who have criticized his solitary way of life for excluding philanthropy, Thoreau says he cannot forsake his calling to do "good" for society even if it meant he could save the universe from annihilation and says that he is suspicious of those who attempt to do "good" for him, for it is unnatural and often hypocritical. As for the poor, he believes their problem is not necessarily a lack of possessions since he has shown he can live without them but a lack of "taste," in deciding how to spend the money they have.

In conclusion, Thoreau wishes for some straightforward praise of the gift of life, rather than overblown praise and cursing of God and urges people not to endeavor be "overseers of the poor" but instead "worthies of the world." He ends by referencing the Gulistan, or Flower Garden, of Sheik Sadi of Shiraz, who compares the cypress, the only tree called azad, or free, because it bears no fruit, to religious independents, who are always flourishing "if it affords nothing to give away, be an azad, or free man, like the cypress."

Analysis:

Thoreau's classical education is very much in evidence in the first chapter of Walden. He uses a multitude of classical allusions to mythological figures, comparing his neighbors' endless work to the labors of Hercules or personifying the dawn in the form of goddess Aurora. From the breadth of his references -- from Sir Walter Raleigh to Indian folktales to Eastern philosophy -- it is evident that Thoreau is an intellectually well-rounded man. This is somewhat ironic because of Thoreau's critical attitude towards education. He criticizes universities for teaching students about life when they would learn more by living life and says that young men often run their fathers into debt by reading Adams Smith's economy. Nonetheless, despite his criticism of Harvard for having considered him a student of navigation when he had never even taken a boat out on the harbor, Thoreau makes extensive use of his education through the literary, historical, and philosophical references which abound in this chapter.

One noteworthy thing that sets Thoreau's system of referents apart from other American writers that preceded him is his reliance on Eastern philosophy as a means of considering the divine. As an inhabitant of Puritan-influence Massachusetts and a graduate of Harvard, where men trained for both the Congregational and Unitarian ministry, Thoreau was quite familiar with conventional Western religious tradition. By the mid-nineteenth century, Puritan Congregational dogma and its adherence to Calvinist doctrine had ceased to hold a monopoly on religious life in Massachusetts. The more recently formed Unitarian Church, in contrast to the Puritans, held that God could only be understood rationally and apprehended through the five senses.

Thoreau's friend and townsman Ralph Waldo Emerson, in creating the Transcendalist movement, sought to bring a more immediate and personal connection with the divine back

into spiritual life. In shaping his own particular form of Transcendentalism, Thoreau went beyond Emerson -- who saw nature as a symbol of the divine -- and claimed that the divine could be found and experienced directly through nature. Thus, his references to "Hindoo," Arab, and Chinese texts provide Thoreau with an alternate system of meaning, very different from the Christian tradition, in which man is a part of nature and in which man can connect with the divine through nature. The story to which Thoreau refers to in the last paragraph of the chapter from an Arab text, the *Gulistan* of Sheik Sadi of Shiraz, emphasizes this link between man and nature in its comparison of a cypress tree, seen as free because it bears no fruit, to the "azad," or free man. Additionally, Thoreau's use of a foreign language provides a symbolic means of breaking with tradition. He is creating new meanings and realities by using new language.

One recurring theme and image throughout this chapter is that of the slave. Repeatedly, Thoreau makes reference to men trapped and enslaved by their employment or possessions. Images like that of the poor man carrying all his possessions on his back or the wagonloads of furniture which look poor even when they belong to a rich man repeat throughout the chapter and illustrate Thoreau's emphasis on economy through simplicity. The image of the slave was particularly powerful in Thoreau's time, when the debate about slavery in the South was continually escalating and during which the abolitionist movement was powerful in Massachusetts. Thoreau's suggestion that people stop arguing about Southern slavery and consider how a Northern man enslaves himself is primarily a rhetorical move, meant to emphasize the spiritual enslavement all people face and not to de-emphasize the horrors of slavery. Thoreau, in fact, would go on to write an abolitionist tract and to speak out in defense of John Brown.

The dawning of the Industrial Revolution influenced Thoreau's opinions regarding society and civilization. Another theme that recurs throughout this chapter is that of the contrast between simple, "primitive" ways of life and the modern day-to-day life of Concord. Indians, Egyptians, Sandwich Islanders, and at times, even the Irish all at times appear as representations of a new version of the noble savage. On a pragmatic level, Thoreau uses them as examples of those able to live only with the "necessaries of life" and uses the ability to go without clothing, or furniture, or elaborate shelter as an example for those of his townsmen who are enslaved by theirs and feel them to be a necessity. Thus, Thoreau attempts to combat the negative influences of the Industrial revolution -- such as factory-produced clothing or houses built and designed by architects, neither of which have a meaningful connection to an owner who did not engage in their creation -- by absenting himself from society and thus discovering apart from influences and values that are not his own.

Some detect a thread of egotism in Thoreau's work, especially in this chapter, because of his constant references to himself and his observations. In reading it, we must remember that Thoreau's books began primarily as a series of journals he kept for himself. What's more, he addresses this narrow focus at the start of the chapter by noting that it is necessitated by the narrowness of his experience. It is also important to remember that Thoreau attempts life at Walden as an experiment and does not promote it as an example to necessarily be mimicked by others. Rather, he urges others to follow the example of his aims, to seek to know themselves, not to simply follow his behavior. At the start of the book, he makes it known

that he is publishing it in response his townsmen have asked about his life in the woods. Though his book is well-known today, his thoughts and behavior were quite radical for his time, directly confronting and questioning the cherished traditions of New England and American life and seeking answers on a wholly different plane of meaning.

## Chapter Two "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

### Summary:

Thoreau speaks of how he has often imagined any spot he sees as the site of a house and imagined purchasing all the farms in his area, about which he knew so much his friends considered him to be a real estate agent. He has gone so far as to imagine where he would place orchards and pastures, what trees to keep and to cut, and what different seasons would be like in each house. Once, he almost bought the Hollowell place but the owner's wife convinced him not to sell it at the last minute. The owner offered Thoreau ten dollars to make up for it, but he did not accept it, reasoning he was freer with the ten cents he had and no farm.

Most farmers fail to understand what poet's get from farms. Thoreau was attracted to the Hollowell farm because of its seclusion, its proximity to a river, its dilapidated condition, and fields of hollow apple trees. He wanted to buy it before the owner fixed it up and ruined it -- "for I knew all the while that it would yield the most abundant crop of the kind I wanted, if I could only afford to let it alone." Though he's always grown a garden and had seeds ready for a farm, he thinks being tied down to a farm is tantamount to being in jail. He is more pleased to consider the place than to own it.

In describing his experience at Walden, Thoreau says he will condense two years into one for convenience. He reminds the reader he is not writing "an ode to dejection" but is "brag[ging] as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up."

By coincidence, Thoreau moved into his house on July 4, 1845, and found it fit to entertain a god or goddess. Before that, the only "house" he had owned was a boat, now gone, and a tent, rolled up in his garret. He has the outdoors air in his house and birds as neighbors. The house is above a pond a mile and a half south of Concord village, in woods between Concord and Lincoln. The house is so low, he can only see the opposite shore of the pond from it, but from up on a hill over the lake, where some trees have been cut down, he can see green hills nearby, further ones tinged with blue, and blue mountains distant in the northwest. From his door, Thoreau can only see a pasture, but it is enough for his imagination, which allows him to live in all different places in history and the universe.

A "worshipper of Aurora," Thoreau rises at dawn and swims in the pond. The morning reminds him of heroic ages and encourages him to truly awaken. He attributes men's lack of intellectual exertion and poetic or divine life to "drowsiness" that few can shake. "To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake." Thoreau believes we should endeavor to be awake because in doing so, we can create the "atmosphere ... through which we look" and make life beautiful.

Thoreau says, "I went to the woods to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." He wants to know life's true meanness or true sublimeness and give a true account of it, not be like men who live in uncertainty about the meaning of life. Here, he urges "Simplicity! Simplicity! Simplicity!," telling people to simplify their affairs and arguing that so-called "improvements" like railroads, which make life too fast and superficial. Here, with a play on words, he compares the "sleepers" on the railroad to the men who work on it, who are "sleepers" because they are not awake enough to appreciate life.

Thoreau wonders why people need to live with such hurry. He thinks that if he rang the bell for a fire in town, people would come rushing from miles around, not to save the burning property but really to watch the fire. Thoreau also sees no point in reading the newspaper, in which the same stories are told time and again with new details, and considers it gossip. He says he has never gotten anything worth the postage from the post office either.

Men should observe only reality, which is far more fabulous than the illusions they think are truth. Instead of perceiving unhurried, men give in to the illusion of routine and habit. New Englanders lead "mean lives" because their "vision does not penetrate the surface of things." If they were to truly describe any building in the town, no one would recognize it. Rather than thinking the truth is somewhere far away and distant in time, recognize that "God himself culminates in the present moment."

Thoreau urges everyone to "spend one day deliberately as Nature" and to push through all outer appearance and poetry and philosophy and religion all the way down to the hard ground of reality, to find out if it is life or death and really feel it. Considering the shortness of time in the course of eternity, he regrets the way his intellect has separated him from reality and hopes his instinct will lead him to it.

Analysis:

Thoreau reaches deep into the Transcendentalist philosophy in this chapter. In making such bold pronouncements, he is wise to shy from being deadly serious. In a sentence which in some editions appears as an epigraph before the text of the book, he emphasizes he is not writing "an ode to dejection" but instead crowing like a rooster to wake his neighbors up. In doing so, and in criticizing their accepted and unquestioned ways of living, he employs a dry humor, characterized by understatement, as when he says, "nothing new ever does happen in foreign parts, a French revolution not excepted."

The juxtaposition presented in the title of the chapter, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," provides an excellent clue as to Thoreau's philosophy. For him, the physical circumstances of life are intrinsically and inescapably tied to a person's spiritual life. The appearance of his cabin, its size and furniture, even its placement on the shore of the pond all contribute to his spiritual awakening. Because of this connection between one's physical and spiritual life, Thoreau's retreat to the shore of Walden Pond is necessary; and it is because of this that he urges his townsmen to likewise reconsider their physical circumstances.

Thoreau's emphasis on the dawn in this chapter continues the theme of rebirth established in the first chapter. In that chapter, he described a snake, left "torpid" by the cold of the winter

and only gradually awakening as the weather thawed. That snake was a symbol for the "sleeping" men who are likewise unaware of their surroundings and immobile in combating the chains of routine and tradition. It is noteworthy that Thoreau begins building his house, the physical counterpart to his spiritual awakening, in the winter, and does not move into until summer, when nature and his spiritual self are in full life. Both here and in the first chapter, Thoreau appeals to Aurora, goddess of the dawn. The dawning of the day comes to be a metaphor for the dawning of spiritual enlightenment and self-knowledge.

Sight is also another theme in this chapter. Thoreau compares the views from the lakeside hill and from the front of his cabin. From the hill, he can see all the way to the mountains in the northwest. From his cabin, his only physical vista is a pasture but with his imagination, he can see to the furthest reaches of history and the universe. Thus, it is important to emphasize that Thoreau's "reality" is not a historical or factual concept. The illusions of which he speaks are not creations of his imagination. Rather, he considers things like religion and philosophy to be illusory because they limit and distort a person's immediate experience of himself in the world.

The theme of sleep plays an important role here. Thoreau elevates the word sleeper to a symbol, comparing men who labor without thinking to the pieces of iron that gird a railroad. This use of sleep and awakesness as a spiritual metaphor has a long history, especially in the writings of New England. The Great Awakening, of course, was the name given to the Puritan religious resurgence of the late seventeenth century. Thoreau here attempts to rewrite and undo that awakening, to free New Englanders from the shackles of thought forged by traditional religion and to awaken them to a more spiritually fulfilling reality.

### Chapter Three "Reading"

#### Summary:

Thoreau believes that if men were more deliberate in choosing their pursuits, they would all become students and observers, because that is in their nature. When he reads an ancient philosopher, it is as if no time has passed, because truth is immortal.

He finds Walden a better place to read than a university. During his first summer, he didn't have much time to read because he was busy planting his bean crop, but he kept the Iliad on the table and sometimes flipped through it. The thought of having time to read it in the future sustained him. He also read a few shallow travel books but afterwards felt ashamed of having done so.

Even with the many translations of heroic and ancient epics, modern man is still placed at a great distance from the language of ancient times. Thoreau believes it is worth learning even a few words of an ancient language as a means of inspiration to transcend everyday life. The classics, "the noblest recorded thoughts of man," must be read deliberately.

There is a difference between spoken language, "the mother tongue," which is brutish and unconsciously learned, and written language, which Thoreau calls "the father tongue," which must be learned with maturity. Even at the time in which the classics were written, many of the common men who spoke the language in which they were written would not have truly



understood them. Now only a few scholars do. Just as the orator speaks to the few people in the mob who truly understand him, the writer speaks to the few people across time who do.

Thoreau finds it fitting that Alexander the Great carried the Iliad with him in a "precious casket" because books are more universal than all other works of art. They can continually be translated and "breathed from all human lips" and are therefore "the work of art nearest to life itself." That is why they are kept in every cottage and are read by rich men striving for the "inaccessible circles of intellect and genius" when they retire.

Only the great poets and not the majority of mankind can truly read and understand the works of the great poets. Most great books "have only been read as the multitude read the stars, at most astrologically, not astronomically." Most people learn to read only for convenience. They feel satisfied with one great book, the Bible, and then waste their minds with "easy reading" mindless reading of novels and other unoriginal tales that Thoreau compares to a four-year-old with a copy of Cinderella.

Most of the so-called educated men in Concord don't even read the classics of English literature. They are like a French-Canadian woodchopper Thoreau knows who reads a French paper to keep up his knowledge of French only these college-educated people read English papers to keep up their English. Most men don't even know that sacred scriptures of other traditions than the Judeo-Christian exist and so forego great insight and knowledge. Thoreau wishes to know more educated men than these and compares having a copy of Plato's Dialogues on the shelf but not reading it to having a neighbor he never sees or hears him speak. "We are under-bred and low-bread and illiterate," he concludes.

There are probably books that would speak directly to these people's condition and explain and reveal miracles to them if they would read them. The village of Concord provides well for the education of children but except for a Lyceum that is open in the winter, does nothing for the education of adults. Thoreau wishes to see the village become a university, with the elder inhabitants as the fellows. He wishes to see the village take up the role nobility did as patron of the arts in Europe but people see spending money on something far more important as farmers and trade as utopian.

The town has spend seventeen thousand dollars on a townhouse, but Thoreau thinks that the hundred and twenty-five dollars spend on the Lyceum each winter to be its best investment. Nineteenth century New England has the ability to choose not to be provincial to skip the building of one bridge and force people to walk further to get around and have the ability to "throw one arch at least over the darker gulf of ignorance which surrounds us."

Analysis:

In this chapter, Thoreau introduces the theme of immortality through literature. At first, he suggests the immortality of ideas and ideals of truth through literature. However, his invocation of individual writers, particularly Homer, author of the Iliad, immortalizes the human being in print. Thus, Thoreau implies the possibility of immortality for himself. If Homer can be made to live again when his words are read aloud, perhaps Thoreau can gain a degree immortality through his published words. In the nineteenth-century, traditional Christian beliefs regarding the afterlife had begun to crumble especially for people like

Thoreau, who had sought alternate paths to spirituality. Faced with the death of his brother, Thoreau would have had to evaluate his own mortality and beliefs regarding life after death. Therefore, *Walden* is in part an attempt to immortalize himself through writing.

The final lines of Thoreau's reflections on reading have a counterpart in "Dover Beach," a poem by English poet Matthew Arnold, published in 1851, three years before *Walden*. Arnold too references classical writers particularly Sophocles in his lamentation of the loneliness born of a loss of faith, concluding, "And we are here as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night." For writers in the Victorian age, the loss of (Christian) faith provoked severe questioning of the individual's place in the universe. Both Arnold and Thoreau seek to align themselves with classical writers as a means of reestablishing stable roles for themselves in a changing, and seemingly chaotic, society. Whereas Arnold simply laments the growing darkness and confusion brought about by ignorance, Thoreau is more optimistic in proposing a solution to it reading.

Metaphors of stars and astronomy are prevalent in this chapter. Stars, in antiquity, were symbols of the unknown and of divinity. They are also eternal and unreachable. Thus, they provide an apt symbol for classic literature, which Thoreau perceives as elevated above the common world and possessing a meaning unattainable by the masses. Twice, Thoreau suggests the "great poets" who can really understand the meaning of this literature are astronomers, with the ability to accurately interpret the stars, while the common people are astrologers, who recognize some meaning in the stars but project false meanings onto them.

In making this assertion about great literature and the common reader, Thoreau risks charges of elitism. Without stating it, he implies that he understands great literature and therefore by his logic must be a "great poet" when his townsmen do not. According to later developments in literary criticism, such as Deconstructionism, which suggests there is no single stable meaning in a text, the "astrologers" who find their own meanings in the classics may be making as valuable readings of the classics as the "astronomers" who understand their "true" meaning. (Of course, it is quite possible that Thoreau would perceive these developments in literary criticism as evidence of growing ignorance in so-called intellectual circles.) However, it is very important to remember that Thoreau ultimately suggests that increased education of adults and more "deliberate and reserved" reading would allow all people to connect with the classics and thus become enlightened.

Another metaphor Thoreau employs in this chapter is that of "the veil." "The oldest Egyptian or Hindoo philosopher raised a corner of the veil from the statue of the divinity," Thoreau says, "and still the trembling robe remains raised, and I gaze upon a fresh a glory as he did." The idea of a veil of ignorance that exists between human perceptions of the world and between divine truth have their origins in St. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 13: "For now we see as through a glass darkly but then face to face." For Paul, as an early Christian theologian, true and clear sight would only come when the resurrected soul came into contact with God after death. Thoreau, coming from Puritan New England, would of course be familiar with Paul's words. However, in the Unitarian belief system, human beings could only perceive the divine through their senses. Thoreau, as a Transcendentalist, suggests a more spiritual,

immediate ability to recognize and connect with the divine, not intellectually but emotionally, through reading the classics.

## **Chapters 4-6**

### Chapter Four "Sounds"

Summary:

Thoreau reminds the reader that focusing only on books neglects a more universal language. It is important to always be alert and to see all of life. That first summer at Walden, Thoreau didn't read books and he was not always occupied hoeing his beans. Some days, he would sit on his doorstep from dawn till noon, amid the trees and the birds, always smiling and answering their trills with chuckles. This taught him about contemplation, valued by Eastern philosophers. He lived in the moment and though his townsmen would have thought him idle, he was living as naturally as the birds and flowers.

He found every aspect of his life to be a "pleasant pastime" and promises that if people pay close enough attention to what they are doing, they will never be bored. On days when he cleaned his house, Thoreau enjoyed getting up early, putting all his furniture outside, and scrubbing the floor with sand from the beach, finishing by the time the townspeople woke up in the morning. He was happy to see his furniture outside among plants and animals, like a part of nature.

Thoreau now describes the location of his house, on the side of a hill overlooking the pond at the edge of the woods, and the plants which surround it -- sand-cherry, whose "scarcely palatable" berries he tasted in May and sumach, whose berries grew so heavy in August that they broke the plant's limbs. On one afternoon, he sits at his window, watching a hawk, pigeons, and a mink in the woods. He can also hear the train on the Fitchburg Railroad, located a hundred yards south of his cabin, next to the pond. He uses its tracks to walk to the village.

Summer and winter, Thoreau can hear the locomotive whistle and he imagines it making merchants' announcements about their goods. He compares the train to a comet and suggests that men have so harnessed nature in making it they are almost a "new race" worthy of inhabiting the earth. In an extended metaphor, he talks about the "iron horse," awakened early in the morning and flying about the country even until midnight. Its actions are amazing and unwearied but not at all heroic. The railroad has so influenced life in the towns that people measure time by the train's coming and going, and life goes on at a faster speed than before, "railroad-fashion." Thoreau describes man's creation of the railroad as "a fate, an Atropos, that never turns aside."

There is bravery and enterprise to be found in commerce. Writing on the morning of a snowstorm, Thoreau says he is more affected by the men who work despite the weather and long hours than by men in battle at Buena Vista. Smelling the goods from distant parts on the freight train as it goes past, Thoreau is made to feel like a citizen of the world. He smells and sees sails, who rips tell stories of storms at sea, that will be made into paper; rags of all

different types of cloth that will become paper of one color on which "true" stories will be advertised; salt fish, "the strong New England and commercial scent;" Spanish cowhides, with tails still intact, to be made into glue; and molasses and brandy on its way to Vermont. From the opposite direction, coming down from the Green Mountains, are carloads of cattle and sheep, which make Thoreau, imagine sheepdogs barking back in the mountains, looking for them.

When the train passes, he is once again alone. On some Sundays, he hears church bells from surrounding towns, depending on which way the wind is blowing, made magical by their passage through the woods. In the evenings, he sometimes hears cows or once, boys whose singing sounded like a cow, which Thoreau liked because it connected them to nature. At almost exactly seven thirty every evening in the summer, the whippoorwills would sing for half an hour. Later in the night, the screech owls, which Thoreau likens to ghosts of humans lamenting their deaths, cry, as do the hooting owls, whose melancholy "hoo" reminds Thoreau of ghouls but nonetheless is pleasant to his ears. Owls, he says, should do the "idiotic and maniacal hooting for men."

Late at night, he hears distant wagons going over bridges, baying dogs, perhaps another cow, and along Walden's "Stygian lake," bullfrogs, whom he imagines passing a cup in a medieval banquet under the surface of the lake, bellowing "troonk." Though he never heard a cock's crow from his cabin, he suggests that the rooster (whom he calls "cockerel") be naturalized, so that his call would call everyone to awakeness. But in his cabin, Thoreau had no "domestic sounds," no roosters, cats, dogs, or even rats in the walls. Instead, his sounds are squirrels, whippoorwills, owls, loons, and foxes. Instead, nature reaches right up to his door. He doesn't have to worry about digging a path through the front yard in a snowstorm because he has "no front yard,--and no path to the civilized world!"

Analysis:

In his first chapter, Thoreau proposed to explore his connection to nature and to portray human beings as part of a continuum of nature, rather than a separate, dominating force they were thought to be during the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. In this chapter, Thoreau contrasts two disparate views of humankind through his description of the sounds he hears in the forest. While the passing of the locomotive is just as regular as the sunrise in Thoreau's world at Walden, the juxtaposition of these two daily occurrences illustrates the inescapable effects of the Industrial Revolution on the natural world.

Thoreau uses hyperbole in his descriptions of the locomotive, likening it to a mythological dragon or winged horse, and calling it heroic. His effusive and overblown descriptions of the locomotive are deliberately excessive. They serve to parody his nineteenth-century contemporaries who worship technological progress, like those people he says profess to do everything "railroad-fashion." In saying that these people have created fate in the form of the railroad, Thoreau is not praising them. Rather, he is illustrating the irony in their actions -- in creating the railroad as a way to make their lives easier, people have created something which ultimately controls them.

In contrast with the railroad, Thoreau depicts the sounds which emanate from nature. That he is "more alone than ever" after the railroad passes by is not a bad thing. Thoreau, in his recorded observations of nature, proves the proposition he makes at the beginning of the chapter -- that intelligent people can avoid boredom by close attention to their environment and actions. Just by listening closely to the changing wrought on them by the woods through which they pass, Thoreau can turn the echo of church bells into magic. He uses simile -- "as the sparrow had its trill, sitting on the hickory before my door, so had I my chuckle or suppressed warble which he might hear out of my nest" -- and personification -- "the natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove his indolence" -- to emphasize the strength of the link between himself, as a human being, and nature.

Thoreau's embrace of nature and criticism of the influences of human technology must not be read as a whole-sale dismissal of human culture and civilization. One of his most creative original moves in these two chapters, as in *Walden* as a whole, is to link literature and nature as natural, noble phenomena. Though Thoreau spends much of the summer sitting on his doorstep, watching and listening to nature, rather than reading, he is not rejecting literature in doing so. Rather, keeping his eyes open to nature is the natural progression of the deliberate attention he pays to books. He makes allusions to classical mythology -- calling *Walden* Stygian, or like the river Styx, and naming the locomotive *Atropos*, the name of one of the three Fates -- and to English literature -- describing the screech owl's scream "Ben Jonsonian," a reference to seventeenth century poet Ben Jonson.

#### Chapter Five "Solitude"

##### Summary:

On one "delicious" evening, Thoreau walks along the shore of the pond. It is dark but in nature, "repose is never complete." Waves continue to dash against the shore and animals seek their prey. He returns home to find that a visitor has been there. He can usually tell a visitor has called by things left behind purposefully -- a bunch of flowers, for example -- or accidentally -- footprints or the scent of a pipe on the train tracks. From these things, he can often figure out their age, gender, or quality.

Since people usually have enough space around them, Thoreau asks, why does he have such a great deal of privacy -- several square miles of forest? His closest neighbor is a mile away; no house is visible from his. He finds it as solitary as the prairies and supposes he could be on another continent even, since he has a "little world" all to himself. No visitors ever stop by at night, except for some men who came in the spring to fish but left quickly. Thoreau supposes people are still a little afraid of the dark.

No one who lives in the midst of nature can be unhappy because there is companionship to be found in any natural object. Thoreau believes nothing nature does can make life a burden because he is a part of nature. If the rain makes him stay indoors, it is still good for his bean crops. If it rains so much his bean seeds rot, it is still good for the upland grass and thus good for him. He feels "favored by the gods" because he is never lonely. Only once, a few weeks after he moved to the woods, did he worry that being near to other people might be necessary

for a happy life, but rain drops on his roof and all the other sounds of nature suddenly began to seem friendly and kindred. He realized "no place could ever be strange to me again."

Thoreau has spent pleasant hours in his house during long rain storms in the spring or fall. While in the village, maids stand at the door with mops to keep the rain out, he feels safe and dry in his little cabin. Eight years ago, a tall pine across the lake was struck with lightning, which made a spiral groove in it from top to bottom; Thoreau passed it the other day and looked at it with awe. Though some people say they think he would be lonely, especially on rainy or snowy days, Thoreau wants to remind them that the earth is just a point in space, an immeasurable distance from the inhabitants of any other star. Besides, "no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another." The wise man will not want to build his house near any store or building or fashionable location but in nature, "the perennial source of our life."

One night, Thoreau ran into a man he knew, who owned some "handsome property" driving his cattle to market. When the man asked how he could give up life's comforts, Thoreau told him honestly he liked it passably well. Material circumstances are just distractions in the process of "awakening." In nature, one is closest to divinity. Thoreau says he can choose whether or not to be effected by external events. He compares life to a play in which he plays a double role, as actor and as spectator, making friendships difficult in life.

Thoreau loves to be alone and often finds company tiring. Solitude has nothing to do with distance. A student while studying or farmer while chopping wood won't feel lonely; likewise, Thoreau is employed in his observations at Walden and is not alone. He thinks that people come into contact with each other too much and therefore lose respect for each other. They could see each other less frequently and maintain important communications. A man dying in the forest of famine and exhaustion collapsed at the foot of the tree and hallucinated people around him. In recognizing that nature can provide society, Thoreau can likewise have companionship. He is not any lonelier than the lake or the loon in it or a plant or insect.

Sometimes in the winter, Thoreau says, an old settler who some say dug Walden Pond and others believe to be dead, visits him and tells him stories. He loves this friend even though he keeps himself a secret. Likewise an old woman "invisible to most persons" has an herb garden which he visits, where she tells him fairy tales and the origins of every fable. Nature, to Thoreau, is innocent and beneficent, with sympathy to humankind. There is no good reason he shouldn't talk with the earth since he is part of it himself.

The medicine that will keep people well isn't the "quack vials" sold out of wagons but "our great-grandmother Nature's." Morning air should be bottled and sold in shops but it would go bad before noon. Thoreau doesn't worship Hygeia (the goddess of health) but Hebe, cup-bearer to Jupiter, "who had the power of restoring gods and men to the vigor of youth."

Analysis:

Once more, Thoreau's use of mythological allusions reveals the extent to which he was influenced by a classical education. For him, Aurora, Hygeia, and Hebe are useful as symbols for the properties they, as divinities, oversee. Thoreau's use of mythological figures is more creative than most because of his juxtaposition of them not with intellectual matters but with

everyday, nineteenth-century life. Of Hebe, he says, "She was probably the only thoroughly sound-conditioned, healthy and robust young lady that ever walked the globe, and wherever she came it was spring." Thus, Thoreau's choice of Hebe over Hygeia provides a way for Thoreau to reformulate notions of health and nature with symbols familiar to a nineteenth-century educated audience.

Thoreau's use of nature metaphors in his descriptions of society and his use of social metaphors in his descriptions of nature deliberately blur the line between society and nature. For example, Thoreau writes, "The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert." In attempting how to explain how a person in the physical midst of civilized society might be more alone than he is, without human companionship, in the woods, Thoreau uses two images of nature -- the metaphor of the beehive, to represent the teeming social scene at the university, and the desert, as an image of physical solitude. Similarly, by giving human form to aspects of nature -- as with the old man and old women who tell him stories, really personifications of the nature which inspires him -- Thoreau destroys the notion that nature cannot provide companionship for a person.

Here, Thoreau is not rejecting society per se. It is important not to read him as a misanthrope. Rather, he seeks first to explain why he is not lonely while living "alone" in the woods, and second to argue for more meaningful connections between human beings. Instead of simply practicing artificial etiquette in our relations with others, we ought to abandon this pretence and only engage with others for "all important and hearty communications." Quality, not quantity, indeed.

Thus, this chapter is not about "solitude," at all, as the term is normally understood. Rather, it is about Thoreau's townsmen's misapprehensions regarding his solitude. Thoreau has shunned their company for what he calls a "more normal and natural society." He takes care to emphasize that all parts of nature -- the lake, bumble bees, the North Star -- are companionship for him and that he is not lonesome. In refuting his neighbor's notion that he must be especially lonesome on rainy or snowy nights, Thoreau creates a hierarchy in which the intellect is higher than social contact. That, for him, it is an adequate replacement is evinced in his personifications of elements of nature -- the founder of Walden Pond or the elderly dame in the herb field -- through his imagination.

Thoreau's personification of nature marks his significant contribution to the Transcendentalist philosophy. For him, nature was not just a symbol of divinity; nature embodied divinity. (For this, some accused him of being an Animist.) Thoreau's invocation of the divine -- "the workman whose work we are" -- in this chapter refutes Unitarian notions of the divine as perceivable by the five senses. Thoreau quotes passages that instead describe God as all around but unperceived -- "identified with the substance of things, they cannot be separated from them"; "everywhere, above us, on our left, on our right, they environ us on all sides." Thus, Thoreau finds not only companionship but divine companionship from nature. At Walden, because he is with nature, he is not alone but is with God.

Within this personified portrayal of nature, Thoreau makes the noticeable move of gendering the figure of Nature as feminine. In part, this is a rejection of strict, patriarchal values. "Our

great-grandmother" Nature is an alternative to "my or thy great-grandfather." Nature is a maternal figure, and in relation to her, Thoreau is alternately portrayed as a child and as a feminized figure. "I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself," he says. This strange liberty erases the strict boundaries of gender, time, and society.

## Chapter Six "Visitors"

### Summary:

Thoreau thinks he likes society as much as most people. At his cabin, he has three chairs: "one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society." As many as thirty people have been in his house at one time, and then they've all stood up. Most houses are so big that it makes Thoreau imagine their inhabitants as "vermin which infest them." The small size of his house only bothers him when he wants to talk with a friend about big ideas, which take a great deal of space to speak about. Often, they will find themselves with chairs pushed up against opposite corners, speaking their big thoughts. Sometimes to communicate most intimately with other people, we need to be so far apart we can't hear each other speaking.

On nice summer days, Thoreau takes his guests outside to his "best' room," the pine woods behind his house. If he has one guest, they share his "frugal meal." If twenty people come, out of politeness no one speaks of eating. Thoreau says he is deterred from visiting people who make a big show of feeding him. He recounts a story of Winslow, a Pilgrim leader at Plymouth, who went to visit Massasoit at his lodge. The Indians did not mention eating when the Pilgrims arrived, and in two nights, they only had one meal, some fish shared with the Indian villagers. Winslow complained in his written account of the journey about the lack of food, but Thoreau believes that the Indians, who had no other food to give them, could have done nothing else, since apologizing would have been worse.

Thoreau had more visitors while living in the woods than at any other time in his life, but fewer of these visitors came on trivial business, because of his distance from town. One morning, a twenty-eight year old French-Canadian woodchopper, who has been living in the US for twelve years, hoping to save money to buy a farm in Canada, visits him. This man, who was taught to pronounce Greek by a Catholic priest, reads Homer with Thoreau, who translates for him, but he has no real intellectual appreciation of it.

This man brings his lunch, often a woodchuck his dog has caught, with him into the woods, where he works. He enjoys his work, smiling as he chops trees, and sometimes amuses himself by firing salutes into the air with his pistol. He is a prime example of the "animal man" but the intellectual and spiritual components of his being are "slumbering." Thoreau attributes this to his education by priests who never awakened his consciousness but only educated him to the degree of trust and reverence found in a child. This man is "simple and naturally humble" and reverences the writer and the preacher. Thoreau sometimes finds his name written in the snow and asks if he thinks of writing down his thoughts, but the man says it would be too hard to decide what to put first and to worry about spelling at the same time.

Thoreau heard that a reformer asked him if the world wanted to be changed, but he said he liked it well enough. He doesn't know if the man is wise or ignorant. He likes to ask him about various reforms of the day to get his opinion. For example, when Thoreau asks if he



could do without money, he describes how difficult it would be for him to buy needles and thread by mortgaging part of an ox. He can defend institutions better than a philosopher because his practical contact with them leads him to give the real reason they are necessary. He says he loves to talk, but when after not seeing him all summer, Thoreau asks if he's gotten any new ideas, he says if a man has work to do, it's all he can do to hold on to the ideas he already has. No matter what questions he asks, Thoreau cannot get the man to look at things spiritually. He only thinks of expediency, like an animal or like most men. However, Thoreau is interested in asking his opinion. Though little comes of it, he suggests that there are men of genius in the lower grades of life, who are as bottomless as Walden Pond.

Many travelers who come wanting to see inside Thoreau's house ask for a drink of water as an excuse. He gives them a dipper and sends them to the pond, out of which he drinks. At the beginning of April especially he has many visitors, including half-witted men from the almshouse. He engages them in intellectual conversations and finds them to be wiser than the overseers of the poor. One "simple-minded pauper" who visits tells Thoreau truthfully and simply that the Lord made him "deficient in intellect" and that it was "the Lord's will." He finds this man a "metaphysical puzzle" because his humility and sincerity seem to promise valuable intercourse. Other poor people come to visit, and Thoreau only requires his visitors "not actually be starving," because "objects of charity are not guests." One runaway slave comes and Thoreau helps send him north.

Thoreau notices that girls and boys and young women seemed happy in the woods. Men of business, including farmers, were all concerned about solitude and employment and distance. They and some women and young men were nosy and critical. Old people mostly worried about the danger his distance from the doctor put him in if he were sick or injured. Of them, Thoreau says that we're always in danger of dying but since we're all going to die, we have to run that risk. The most boring are the "self-styled reformers." However, most of his guests make him happy. They came to the woods from the village looking for a little freedom and he is eager to greet them.

Analysis:

Since his death at an early age, Thoreau has developed an unwarranted reputation as a hermit. From this chapter, "Visitors," it is clear that Thoreau did not retreat from Concord village life because of any misanthropic impulses. He emphasizes, first at the beginning and again at the end, of this chapter that he likes society as much as other people and that the majority of his visitors made him happy. However, the character and social position of the particular unwanted visitors businessmen and farmers who question his mode of living, ministers who act as if they had a monopoly on the subject of God, and reformers who criticize his lack of "charity" illustrate the reason such a negative reputation developed.

Thoreau is criticizing the patriarchal structure of nineteenth-century New England society. The guests who make him happy and to whom he give a voice are those who viewpoints were excluded from public life a "halfwit," a Catholic immigrant, a runaway slave, women, and children. Thoreau's writing, like his actions in refusing to pay taxes which would support slavery (which would become the essay "Civil Disobedience"), were deliberately subversive a means of revealing the fallacy of conventions accepted as natural and right in his world.

The halfwit whom Thoreau engages in a conversation about wit itself is a foil for the supposedly intellectual Concord citizens whom he seeks to criticize. "With respect to wit," he says, "I learned that there was not much difference between the half and the whole." The values Thoreau appears to value most in men are humbleness, sincerity, and truthfulness. The halfwit contrasts markedly with the supposedly intelligent and upstanding men of business who "said that they loved a ramble in the woods occasionally, [though] it was obvious they did not." They are the men who can talk "cheek by jowel," without really hearing each other. Thoreau, in contrast, needs space to talk with anyone because he really endeavors to communicate with them.

The Canadian woodsman provides an ambivalent symbol in Thoreau's lexicon. On the one hand, he represents the absence of intellectual and spiritual life and thus is a symbol for the majority of men Thoreau knows. Thoreau's difficulty in awakening this man's spirituality even through direct attention represents his (failed) attempts to do the same with the majority of his townsmen and readers of the book. On the other hand, the woodchopper represents the pure "animal spirit" of man and therefore proves Thoreau's arguments about man as part of nature. Thoreau admires the man's unselfconscious and honest response to life because, despite his difficulty in awakening his spirituality, it undoes accepted notions about the real location of genius. The genius slumbering in the Canadian gives Thoreau hope about the possibility of wakening genius in everyone and thus undercuts the monopoly "upstanding" townsmen have on thoughts and ideas.

## **Chapters 7-9**

### Chapter Seven "The Beanfield"

#### Summary:

The length of all of Thoreau's beans added together was seven miles and had to be hoed frequently. They attach him to the earth and growing them is his days work. He is aided by the dews, rain, and soil. His enemies are worms, cool days, and woodchucks, which have nibbled a quarter of an acre. On one night, as he plays his flute, he recalls visiting Walden at age four, when his family lived in Boston. The pine trees are still older than him and the johnswort which he saw then still grows. But the bean, corn, and potatoes now growing there are the result of his influence.

Thoreau has planted two and a half acres of beans in some land that was cleared fifteen years ago. He dug up some stumps but didn't use any fertilizer. But during his hoeing, he dug up arrow heads and realized that Indians had grown corn and beans there once and had somewhat exhausted the soil. Even though farmers say not to, Thoreau would get up early, while the dew was still on the leaves, and begin to weed and hoe his crops, working barefoot in the morning before the sun was too hot for his feet.

Because he didn't hire any people or animals to help him, he took longer than most people in his labor and thus got to know his crop better. Sometimes, travelers would drive by and see him constantly at work, and he might hear their gossip about him, planting beans and peas much later than most people, or be questioned by farmers about his lack of manure in the

furrows. Thoreau sees his as "the connecting link between wild and cultivated fields" and his beans "returning to their wild and primitive state."

While he plants seeds, Thoreau listens to a brown thrasher sing "Drop it, drop it,--cover it up, cover it up,--pull it up, pull it up, pull it up." As he hoes, he digs up not just beans but the soil of ancient civilizations stones burned in Indian fires and pottery and glass from more recent farmers. He notices the "kindredship of Nature" in the birds which fly above a night-hawk which is the "aerial brother of the wave," hen-hawks soaring and descending like the embodiment of his thoughts, and a spotted salamander, a contemporary trace of Egypt.

The guns which the town shoots off on "gala days" sound like a burst puff-ball to Thoreau. The hum of the people sounds to Thoreau like bees and he is relieved when they finally quiet down and return to "the Middlesex hive," now able to continue his hoeing in confidence that the liberties of Massachusetts are in safekeeping. The whole village sounds like "a vast bellows" when there are several bands playing, but sometimes a "noble and inspiring strain" reaches Thoreau inspire him to think about Palestine and marching crusaders. Though this was supposedly a "great" day, the sky looked the same to Thoreau.

From planting, hoeing, harvesting, threshing, picking over, selling, and eating them, Thoreau attempted to know beans. He hoed them from 5 AM till noon and became well acquainted with different species of weeds in his war against them. While some of his peers spend their summer days to fine arts, contemplation, or trade in distant locales, Thoreau was engaged in husbandry, which he found "a rare amusement," though it might have bored him if it had continued much longer. Though he didn't give them manure and didn't hoe them all at once, he was ultimately rewarded for his work. All in all, he spent \$14.72 \_ on supplies and made \$23.44 selling his crops, leaving him with a profit of \$8.71 \_.

As a result of his experience, Thoreau advises planting the white bush bean about June 1 in rows 3' X 18" apart, watching out for worms, filling vacancies with new seeds, watching out for woodchucks which will eat the leaves, and above all, harvest as early as possible to avoid frost. Another summer, he says he will not plant beans and corn with so much industry but instead will see if these seeds of sincerity, truth, simplicit, faith, and innocene will grow with even less work in the same soil. However, several summers have gone by and the seeds which he compares to the seeds of virtues did not come up. Men generally are only as brave as their fathers have been.

In New England, men continue to plant and tend corn and beans just as the Indians taught them centuries ago. One day, he saw an old man digging holes for possibly the seventieth time in his life. Thoreau wonders why people worry so much about beans for seed and not about a new generation of men. We would be happy to see a man possessing those virtues he mentioned, but instead of cultivating them in people, we expect them to appear out of thin air.

Unlike the ancient civilizations, we have no festivals or ceremonies, other than cattle shows and Thanksgiving, that honor husbandry as a sacred art. People regard the soil as property now and work it for profit, regarding nature as a robber and degrading the character of the farmer. We forget that the sun shines down the same on cultivated fields and uncultivated nature the same. "In his view the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden." The beans

aren't just for him but for the woodchucks too; the seeds of the weeds are for the birds. The true husbandman will stop worrying, "relinquishing all claim to the produce of his fields, and sacrificing in his mind not only his first but his last fruits also."

Analysis:

Once again, Thoreau references mythology and ancient civilization in his efforts to rethink and reform conventional New England thought about farming. Though Thoreau is associated with the transcendental school, he differs from Transcendentalists like Emerson because his worldview was heavily influenced by a number of different religious and cultural traditions particularly classical Greek history and mythology, Eastern religions, and the Native American way of life. Thoreau's rejection of the Industrial Revolution is not a Luddite anti-technology stance; rather, it is a rejection of the intellectual effects of new technology. Therefore, Thoreau does not simply embrace farming as a way of life because he rejects trade and the railroad. He in fact rejects the sort of farming that most Concord farmers practice through which "the landscape is deformed, husbandry is degraded with us, and the farmer leads the meanest of lives."

Again, Thoreau's goal is to establish the strength of the link between nature and human beings. Therefore, he anthropomorphizes the brown thrush, giving English words to its song. Likewise, he explores humankind's false anthropomorphization of Nature as a robber. Thoreau contrasts this view of Nature with his own personification of Nature as God. By alluding to mythological representations of Nature in divine form as the "earth Mother" or "Ceres" Thoreau argues for the historical precedents to his own particular Transcendentalist belief that nature is divine.

Thoreau likewise supports this notion of nature as divine with an example of metonymy. Thoreau writes, "The sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinctions. In his view the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden." The sun, a part included in and associated with nature, represents nature in Thoreau's statements. Everything on the earth is included in the eyes of nature. "Only Heaven knows," Thoreau writes when speaking of raising his beans earlier in the chapter. Thus, Nature looks down on the earth and sees all just the traditionally understood God does.

In discussing his attempts to rescue his bean plants from weeds, Thoreau employs an extended metaphor of warfare. In doing so, he alludes one again to classical mythology, likening the weeds to "Trojans who had sun and rain and dews on their side." The trenches between the rows of beans are the trenches of war, and the beans themselves are rescued by Thoreau, who wields a hoe like a sword. This metaphor of war in nature contrasts with the village's demonstrations of bellicosity, shooting off cannons and guns on days of celebration. While a weed may seem to Thoreau to be "a lusty crest-waving Hector," the real guns of the town remind him only of "puff-balls." Repeatedly, Thoreau employs this metaphorical chiasmas, comparing an aspect nature to something in culture and a related aspect of culture to something in nature. In doing so, he continually emphasizes the unbreakable links between nature and culture arguing that humans, despite their "civilization," are as much a part of nature as a weed or other plant.

In eliding the material and philosophical aspects of the world, Thoreau offers nature as a model for human life. Rather than attempt to incorporate aspects of nature into human commerce looking at land as property for example people should look at themselves as they do bean seeds, cultivating virtues in themselves with as much care as they grow their crops. Humankind's real fault, Thoreau suggests, is in seeing themselves as separate from the workings of nature, when in reality they would benefit from treating themselves as they do the earth the live on.

## Chapter Eight "The Village"

### Summary:

After hoeing or reading and writing in the morning, Thoreau would usually swim in the lake to wash either dirt or intellectual wrinkles from his person. Every day or two, he went to the village, to hear gossip, which "taken in homeopathic doses" was refreshing. He watched people in the village the way he watched birds and squirrels in the woods, observing their habits. The village was like "a great news room." Redding and Co.'s on State Street sold the essential food items and the necessary news and gossip to satisfy people's appetites. He frequently saw people sitting in the sun or leaning against a barn who were the first to hear and digest whatever gossip is in the wind.

The "vitals" of the town are the grocery, bar-room, post-office, and bank. The houses and streets are arranged such that a traveler has to run a gauntlet through all the inhabitants. The most expensive houses are closest to the center, so that their inhabitants can see and be seen the most. Travelers are tempted by signs hung out by the tavern, dry-good's store, jeweller's, barber's, shoemaker's, or tailors, or by the open invitation to call at the houses. Thoreau mostly escapes these dangers by proceeding deliberately to his goal. Sometimes, he visits houses, entering suddenly, without lingering, and after learning the news, leaving by the back gate to return to the woods.

He enjoyed leaving town late at night, leaving a bright room full "crew" of thoughts, "sailing" back through the dark woods. Often he had to look up at the openings between trees, feel the path with his feet, or feel between trees with his hands to get home. Sometimes he found himself at home not remembering or knowing how he found the way. When a visitor stayed till the evening, Thoreau would have to show him to a cart-path behind the house and remind him to be led by feet rather than eyes. He did so with two men who had been fishing one night but found out later they'd wandered around half the night during rain showers. He's heard of people getting lost in town streets in the dark and people from the outskirts of town staying in town over night.

It's a valuable experience, Thoreau says, to be lost in the woods at night. It's similar to but infinitely greater than when a person cannot tell his way on a well-known road during a snowstorm, because it looks just as unfamiliar to him as Siberia. Usually, we steer like pilots by well-known beacons. All you need is to be turned around once with your eyes shut to get lost to appreciate "the vastness and strangeness of nature." "Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations."

One afternoon near the end of the summer, Thoreau went to town to get a shoe from the cobbler's and was thrown in jail. He had not paid a tax to the state "which buys and sells men, women, and children, like cattle at the door of its senate-house." Wherever a man goes, others will pursue him and try to force him to belong to their dirty institutions. He could have resisted and run "amok" against society but preferred that society run "amok" against him. The next day, he was released, got his shoe, and went back to the woods.

He was never bothered by any person but those who represented the state. He didn't have a lock on his door or windows, only on the desk which held his papers, even when he went to Maine for two weeks. But his house was respected. Travelers could rest by his fire, readers could read his few books, and the curious could even look in his closet and see what food he had. Though many people of every class came by, he never lost anything but a volume of Homer. He's certain that robbery would cease if people lived as he does. It only happens now because some people have more than they need and others don't have enough.

Analysis:

Thoreau's actions while living at Walden illustrate his concern with purification and rebirth. He has already stated that he swam early every morning in the pond. These actions function as a sort of ritual baptism, representing a new beginning and connecting Thoreau physically with nature. Here, he speaks about the swims he took after working or reading in the morning. That refers to these swims as "bathing" illustrates that this action serves to symbolically clean and revive him. Thoreau himself seems to realize the symbolic nature of these baths, for he swims not only on days when he is covered in dust from his bean patch but also to "smooth out the last wrinkle which study had made." Thus, the afternoon is "absolutely free" not only from occupation but from worry or concern.

Once again, we see that Thoreau's cabin at Walden and the woods themselves function as a refuge, though an imperfect one. He is always happy to "return home" at night, whether from a friend's parlor, a lecture, or from jail. It is clear that "home" to Thoreau is not just his cabin. It is the woods, too a place where Thoreau, unlike the villagers who will stay overnight in a friend's house in the center of town rather than venture to their own on the outskirts in the dark, is comfortable and able to function almost instinctually. He has symbolically become a part of the woods, knowing it so well that he need not think about it to find his way through the trees in the dark to his door.

Thoreau uses an extended metaphor of sailing to describe his progress through the woods and does so in a way that upsets expectations. For him, this sailing is not dangerous but "smooth sailing." Unlike Odysseus of his beloved Homer, Thoreau is never "cast away nor distressed in any weather." He finds Sirens to tempt him into danger not on these voyages through the woods but in the village. Like Odysseus, he is able to escape them and ultimately return home.

The village, then, is not home but rather is implicitly likened to the underworld. Thoreau alludes to the myth of Orpheus, who entered the underworld to reclaim his wife, and who combatted its dangers by playing his lute and keeping his mind on other things. The comparison such an allusion yields is not favorable for the village, which becomes

tantamount to a hell-on-earth. Though it is not spoken directly, Thoreau's allusion to Orpheus, who ultimately lost his wife when he gave into temptation and looked back at her just as they were out of the underworld, suggests that Thoreau will not be able to fully and successfully escape village life.

Thoreau indeed makes such an explicit statement at the end of his chapter, when he talks of being imprisoned for not paying his taxes to a state that supports slavery. (Though Massachusetts was a free state, it was required by federal law to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law and also benefited economically from the raw materials provided by the slave labor of the South, such as cotton used in Northern cloth factories.) That experience, of course, became the subject matter for the essay we now know as *Civil Disobedience*. Walden Pond may be an intellectual refuge for Thoreau but only two miles from Concord, he cannot truly escape the demands of society.

There is a degree of sarcasm in Thoreau's opening statements about the village. He calls it refreshing and says he went every day or two but his actions in and opinions about actual visits to the village show that he does not really enjoy it. Rather, he feels as if he is running a gauntlet of gossipers as he walks down the town streets and generally leaves his friends' homes by the back door, rushing off to the woods so as not to be seen. However, Thoreau's ambivalence about civilized life is evident. He sees even the most basic aspects of village life—the barber, the dry goods store, the shoemaker—as temptation. Though he is able to ignore and eschew them, he must do so because the comforts of civilization provide easy alternatives for himself and especially for his reader to the deliberate, contemplative life he attempts to live.

This is one of Thoreau's most explicitly political chapters. He writes, though obliquely, about his opposition to slavery and to the night in jail that was earned by his civil disobedience. His preference that "society should run amok" against me, it being the desperate party" is his way of condemning the existing system, suggesting it does not follow the greater values which Thoreau recognizes and follows. Additionally, Thoreau is suggesting radical change, some of which seems by today's standards to coincide with socialist thought, in his argument that redistribution of property, so that everyone had what he needed, not too little or too much, would reduce crime. However, Thoreau is not suggesting a new system of government but rather suggesting that his readers integrate the example provided by his experiment in living into their own lives.

## Chapter Nine "The Ponds"

### Summary:

When he's had enough of people, Thoreau ventures westward to unfrequented parts of town and ate huckleberries and blueberries on Fair-Haven Hill. The only way to really taste huckleberries is by picking and eating them; those that are sold in Boston have lost their true taste. Sometimes, after finishing hoeing for the day, he joins a companion who has been fishing on the pond. One older man often uses Thoreau's doorstep to wind his lines. Thoreau sometimes sits at the opposite end of his boat in the pond, and since the man has lost his hearing, they don't talk. Sometimes the man hums a psalm, which pleases Thoreau more than

a conversation. When he is alone in his boat, sometimes Thoreau hits the side of the boat with a paddle until the woods echo with the sound.

In warm evenings, he sits in his boat and plays the flute, as the perch swim nearby and the moon shines overhead. In the past, he had come to the pond with the friend and built a fire on the bank to attract pout. Sometimes, he returns from visiting in the village and fishes at midnight, listening to owls and foxes, anchored in the middle of the lake as perches and shiners swim around. His philosophizing would be suddenly interrupted by a pull on his line, connecting him again with nature, and he would draw up a horned pout.

The scenery of Walden is beautiful but humble. The pond is very clear, half a mile long and one and three-quarters of a mile around, in the middle of pine and oak woods and surrounded by hills 40-80 feet high in the southeast and 100-150 feet high in the east. All waters in Concord have two colors, one which depends on the weather when seen from a distance and the other, looking directly down from a boat. Walden, when one does so, looks blue and green at the same time, combining the sky and earth, though the green might be a combination of the blue sky and yellow sand. In the spring, when the ice has begun to melt, the water reflects even bluer than the sky.

The Concord River, looked down upon, looks black and gives a swimmer a yellow tint, but the water of Walden is so pure that it gives the swimmer's body an alabaster glow. The water is so clear that you can see to the bottom at 25-30 feet and watch schools of perch and shiners. One winter in the past, when he was cutting fishing holes in the ice, Thoreau tossed his axe at the ice and it fell in a hole. He could look down through the hole and see the axe swaying on the bottom. He ended up fishing it out using a long birch branch tied with a slip knot.

The pond is surrounded by flat white stones and except for a couple beaches is so steep that you could jump right into water over your head. There's no mud or weeds, except where nearby meadows have flooded. Where the stones leave off, there is sand on the bottom, and a little sediment from leaves that blow into the lake at the center. White Pond, two-and-a-half miles away in Nine Acre Corner, is similar, but no other ponds Thoreau knows have as "pure and well-like character" as Walden, which he supposes was already in existence when Adam and Eve were banished from Eden, to be admired by unremembered civilizations.

Thoreau was surprised to notice a path which surrounds the pond, sometimes straying from the shore, sometimes close, going up and down over hills. It's "as old probably as the race of man here," and is most noticeable when one stands in the middle of the frozen pond in the winter and sees the band of snow around the lake.

The pond rises and falls, though not regularly. Thoreau recounts his memories of the different levels it has been at during his life. As he writes in the summer of 1852, it is five feet higher than when he lived there, the same height it was thirty years ago. Flint's Pond, a mile to the east, rises and falls at the same rate Walden does. When the water is high, many of the shrubs and trees which have grown around the edges are killed, clearing the shore, which is the property not of the trees but of the lake. The trees try to stand by sending out roots from their



stems up to four feet high, and blueberry bushes by the shore which don't usually bear fruit produce a crop when flooded.

People wonder how the stones have been placed so regularly around the pond, and some tell a story about Indians holding a pow-wow on a hill where the lake now is, during which they used so much profanity (which Thoreau says they never did) that the hill shook and sunk. Only one old squaw, named Walden, escaped. This doesn't conflict with the other story he heard about the ancient traveler who came with his diving rod and dug a well that became the pond. Some people think the stones are there because of the waves hitting the hill, but Thoreau has noticed such stones throughout the hill and that the steepest parts have the most stones. If the pond wasn't named after an English locale, perhaps it was first called "Walled-in Pond."

The pond is Thoreau's well. It has the best and coldest water in town. There is also spring water which tastes wonderful even when left for a long time. If a camper were to bury a bucket of water in the ground, he wouldn't need ice to keep it cold. Thoreau also lists the fish which have been caught in the pond, primarily pickerel, and their sizes. Frogs, tortises, muskrats, minks, and mud-turtles live there, as well as ducks, geese, whitebellied swallows, and peetweets. There are round piles of stones sunk in the pond but Thoreau can't guess their origin. The shore is irregular and beautiful with few signs that people have been there.

You can look at the reflection of the landscape in the lake and literally see the wind in the ripples it creates. The fish jumping to catch bugs also create ripples, as do the water-bugs which skim over the surface on calm days. In September or October, Walden is a perfect mirror. By November, the bugs are gone, and the surface is completely calm, reflecting somber colors of the weather, with some schools of perch still swimming around, and once, on December 5, the jumping of some perch made him think it was raining. An old man who used to visit the lake sixty years ago told Thoreau how he used to fish in a canoe made out of two hollowed-out white pine logs and look for a chest that a potter who'd lived during the Revolution had told him was sunk there, but as soon as he got sight of it, it would always disappear into deeper water. Thoreau likes the idea of the log canoe, much like an Indian one, once a tree on the lakeside and now sunk at the bottom. Thoreau himself has spent many pleasant afternoons since he was young floating in a boat on the lake.

Walden preserves its purity better than any men Thoreau has known. Even though trees have been cut down and the railroad runs nearby, the water is the same as Thoreau saw when young. He has changed while the pond remains perennially young. It is the creation of a brave, good man, who bequeathed it to Concord. Thoreau then writes some lines that call Walden the closest he can come to God and Heaven. He hopes that its serenity do some good for the engineer who passes it in the train.

Flint's Pond in Lincoln is a mile east of Walden and much larger, with more fish and not as pure. Walking there, Thoreau came across a mouldering boat, through which plants have pushed up, and he has also seen strange balls of weeds near the shore. He scoffs at the name of the pond, after some farmer, who never loved it, thought only of its money value, and never thanked God for making the pond. If we are going to name features of the landscape after men, it should at least be after noble men.

Finally, Goose Pond rounds out Thoreau's pond country. With the effect of the woodcutters and railroad on Walden, the most attractive pond in the area is White Pond, with the same pure water and stony shores as Walden. Thoreau, who used to gather sand there, used to see pitch pines growing in the midst of the lake, and recounts a description, from 1792, of a tall tree which grows in the middle of that lake. In the spring of 1849, Thoreau met a man who had pulled the tree out of the lake; it turned out the tree was in upside down, with its roots sticking up. Walden and White Ponds are far purer than humans. Nature has no human inhabitants who appreciate her.

Analysis:

In this chapter, Thoreau uses minute descriptions of nature which would comprise the bulk of his later writing to reveal his understanding of human spirituality and its connection to nature. Despite his difficulties elsewhere, in this chapter, Thoreau seems successful in integrating the dialectic he has established between spirit and nature. In describing his night-time fishing expeditions, he talks of fishing both in the physical lake and the air of philosophy at the same time. Through his connection with Walden, he is able to integrate, at least for a time, the spiritual and natural within himself.

One recurring motif throughout this chapter is the idea of purity. Walden, Thoreau believes, is superior to other ponds primarily because of the purity of its water reflected in the water's color as well as in the sand under its surface. This emphasis on Walden's purity reveals Thoreau's fear of contamination physical contamination, as with the railroad's proximity to the pond, as well as intellectual contamination, as when society attempts to entrap him into its injustices. Interestingly, this emphasis on the pond's purity, which reminds us of Thoreau's attempts to purify his spirit and rid himself of his animal nature, come at a time when he has begun to synthesize the spiritual world with the natural world.

Thoreau also emphasizes the divine nature of Walden, calling it, among other things, "God's drop," and speculating on its existence in Paradise. Thoreau has already established the pond as a mirror for himself. Therefore, transitively the divinity of the pond also reflects the divinity of the person. This is a particularly Transcendentalist move for Thoreau and one which extended Transcendentalist beliefs divinity for him existed in nature, for there, far more than in people, true perfection and purity could be found.

Finally, Thoreau uses the metaphor of the eye to describe Walden referring, for example to the color of its "iris." Such a move anthropomorphizes Walden, thus extending its power in Thoreau's life. Walden, dynamic and influential, has a profound impact upon Thoreau's ever changing consciousness. Aware that it can "see" or reflect him, Thoreau becomes profoundly aware of himself and thus effects a transformation of his own spiritual interior.

## **Chapters 10-12**

Chapter Ten "Baker Farm"

Summary:

Instead of paying a visit to a scholar, Thoreau visits particular groves of trees pines, beeches, black- and yellow-birches, elms, and hemlocks. He visits these "shrines" in summer and winter. One time, he stood surrounded by rainbow light in a rainbow's arch. Sometimes, when he walks, he sees a halo around his shadow, which makes him fancy he is a member of the elect. Benvenuto Cellini once wrote about seeing his shadow like this, and in minds like his, such a natural phenomenon is the basis for superstition.

One afternoon, on his way to go fishing in Fair-Haven, Thoreau passes through Pleasant Meadow, which is part of Baker Farm. It begins to rain, and he is forced to stand under a pine tree. When he finally wades into the water and casts out his line, the thunder and rain start once again, and he is forced to take refuge in a nearby hut, where he finds an Irishman named John Field living with his wife and many children, including an older son who works in the fields with him and a baby who seems unaware of its destitute circumstances. Thoreau crouches in the least leaky corner of the house with the family.

Field tells Thoreau how hard he works "bogging," turning up a farmer's meadow with a bog hoe, and Thoreau tries to explain that he lives in a "tight, light, and clean house" for far less money. Because he doesn't spend money on rent or on buying coffee, tea, milk, or meat, he can work far less than Field, who must work hard to buy the meat he needs to sustain such hard work. Field came to America so he could have access to such things, but the only free America is one where a man can decide to go without them.

Thoreau talks to Field "as if he were a philosopher," trying to tell him that his work wears out his boots and clothing and requires that he continue to work to buy new, while Thoreau wears simple, light clothing and by spending a few hours fishing and a few working, can afford anything he needs. So could the Fields if they lived simply. Field and his wife seem to be considering it, but "without arithmetic," they fail to see how it's possible. Field fishes sometimes, but he uses worms to catch shiners and uses the shiners to catch fish.

With the rain over and a rainbow in the sky, Thoreau begins to leave, first asking for a dish as an excuse to look at the well. It takes a long time to select a dish, go to the well, which has shallows, quicksands, a broken rope, and a lost bucket, and when the water comes, it has motes floating in it. Still, Thoreau drinks it in a show of hospitality. As he's leaving, Thoreau's rush to catch fish "seemed trivial to me who had been sent to school and college," but suddenly he seems to hear his "Good Genius" speaking to him, telling him to hunt and fish, rest by brooks and hearthsides, rise before dawn, visit lakes and be found at home at night basically live his life as he has been living it at Walden for "There are no larger fields than these, no worthier games than may here be played."

Men are living like serfs through want of enterprise. Thoreau writes some lines of poetry exulting Baker Farm and observes that most men come home at night and live the same day over and over when they should come home every day with adventures and new experiences. John Field, who has decided not to go bogging that afternoon after all, decides to fish with Thoreau but he only catches a few fish while Thoreau, in the same boat, catches many. He's trying to live by old country ways catching perch with shiners in this new country, as if he was born to be poor. He and his offspring will always be until they consciously change their lives.

## Analysis:

In this chapter, Thoreau draws upon the powerful and oft-used image of the rainbow. In traditional Christian literature, the rainbow (which appears to Noah in the Genesis after the flood) is a sign of God's covenant with mankind. Though Thoreau eschews Christian dogma, he draws upon the power of this association as a means of expressing his own spiritual fulfillment. As he stands in its arch, Thoreau describes the rainbow as "dazzling me as if I looked through colored crystal." This is a spiritual experience which transforms Thoreau's very perception of the nature which surrounds him. In its light he lives "like a dolphin" a symbol of immortality and in describing his experience this way, offers an alternate path to spiritual fulfillment to the traditional Christian beliefs of his fellow New Englanders. Rather, Thoreau achieves spiritual enlightenment and immortality through the direct experience of nature.

Additionally, Thoreau draws on secular myths in his description of his encounter of the rainbow. "It chanced that [he] stood in the very abutment of a rainbow's arch." This spot, according to Irish folktales where the leprechaun's pot of gold is hidden, is found by Thoreau almost by accident. In this way, he expresses nature's sympathy for him in its allowing him to inhabit such a space.

In a more humorous and mocking manner, Thoreau references spiritual matters when he describes seeing an inexplicable glow around his shadow, which makes him "fancy" he is one of the elect, or God's chosen. His off-handed and joking reference makes it clear that he is not serious and likewise makes apparent that he does not believe in the Puritan doctrine of the elect a doctrine which formed the character of the American people and the very work ethic which Thoreau himself eschews.

Thoreau's joke that someone told him that Irishmen don't have a halo around their shadows displays the prejudices which existed in a nineteenth-century New England where the majority was of English descent. This comment also foreshadows Thoreau's perceptions of John Field, an Irishman who is unable to achieve the spiritual enlightenment that Thoreau cherishes. Additionally, Thoreau comments on Benvenuto Cellini's belief that the glow surrounding his shadow demonstrated God's favor, and opines that this is simply an example of "superstition" proceeding from an "excitable imagination." In this comment Thoreau's general suspicion of organized religion is mingled with a nineteenth-century prejudice against Roman Catholicism as based on superstition and spectacle.

John Field, the Irish "bogger," is likely a composite of many poor workers whom Thoreau met. His name, of course, is a symbol for his occupation. He works endlessly digging up fields for farmers. Being Irish, he is at the bottom of the social stratum and is therefore a more likely target for Thoreau's beliefs about simplifying life. Unlike a rich man, Field would have little to lose and much to gain by following Thoreau's example. Ultimately, he is "bogged" down by his limited conception of how to live his life. Unable to conceive of living differently than he does, he does things the hard and unproductive way as Thoreau exemplifies metaphorically in Field's lengthy process of catching shiners with worms in order to use worms to catch fish. Such men are the motivation behind the publication of Thoreau's book.

Representations of the divine recur in this chapter when Thoreau's "Good Genius" seems to speak to him, quelling his worries that his way of life is trivial and urging him to live in nature as he has been doing. This voice is at once Thoreau's own and the imagined voice of God. In representing it so, Thoreau communicates his belief that the divine can be found by looking within and also illustrates the spiritual dimension to his choice of a life.

#### Chapter Eleven "Higher Laws"

##### Summary:

Walking home, Thoreau sees a woodchuck and has the urge to devour him raw. He finds dual instincts toward spiritual life and toward primitive life in himself. He attributes his occasional desire to live like an animal to the hunting he did as a child. Hunters and fishers get to know nature in a way travellers don't. Those who say Americans have fewer amusements than the English, because they don't play as many games are wrong, for all the boys his age hunted between ages 10 and 14.

Sometimes, he fishes, through necessity, at the pond and feels no real sympathy for the fish. He used to hunt, saying it was an interest in ornithology that inspired him, but he sold his gun before going to the woods, where he got to know the birds in a better way. He tells his friends to make their sons hunters, if possible "mighty" enough hunters that there ceases to be game big enough to please them. A boy who has never fired a gun has had his education neglected but is no more humane than others. In Thoreau's opinion, "no humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature which holds its life by the same tenure that he does." Young men go forth into the forest as hunters and fishers and find themselves to be poets and naturalists instead. Parsons who hunt are paradoxes to Thoreau.

The only reason men and their sons seem to spend half a day at Walden is to fish but they are disappointed if they don't go home with a whole string of fish. Mostly the legislature ignores this practice and all men therefore pass through "the hunter stage of development." Recently, Thoreau has a loss of self-respect when fishing. It's a base instinct which he has lost but which would be reawakened if he were to go back to live in the woods. Mostly this is because fish make an unclean diet, with all the cleaning they need. There is an instinct against animal food, and any man who wants to preserve his poetic faculties should give up eating it. Larvae eat gluttonously; butterflies can survive on drops of honey.

Most men, if they had to prepare it themselves, would give up eating rich cooking. Man's carnivorous instincts are accomplished in a "miserable way" through the slaughter of animals. Thoreau is certain that it is the destiny of the human race to stop eating animals; just tribes gave up cannibalism when they became civilized. Men should follow their inner genius, even if it means feeling bodily weak, to conform to higher principles, and they will be rewarded by life becoming "more elastic, more starry, more immortal."

Nonetheless, Thoreau could eat a fried rat if he had to. He drinks only water because he desires to be always sober, eschewing wine, coffee, and tea, even though they tempt him. He has objected to coarse labors because they led him to eat and drink coarsely. He has become less particular recently though, and this chapter represents his opinions rather than his practice. When a person "distinguishes the true savor of his food" and gets satisfaction from

that has more to do with his mind than appetite, he can't be a glutton. The appetite, not the food, defiles the person.

Everything in life has a moral aspect, and "goodness is the only investment that never fails." We know there is an animal that exists inside of him which we can never truly escape. The other day Thoreau picked up the jaws of a hog and saw in its tusks an animal vigor that led to its success in life different from spiritual vigor. The spirit can control the body and turn everything into purity and devotion. Purity the loss of the animal inside brings the person closer to the divine. All sensuality overeating, drinking, promiscuity are different forms of the same thing. People call themselves Christian when they are no purer than "the heathen," even when they could learn to be purer through "heathen" religion.

Thoreau knows he risks speaking obscenely but finds it strange that there are matters of human nature considered improper to discuss and finds this to be a symptom of human degradation. "Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body, to the god he worships." John Farmer sits in his door one September evening and hears a flute. He thinks of work but the flute awakens parts of his mind that are slumbering, asking him why he leads such a mean life when a glorious one is possible? He decides to practice austerity, to let his mind redeem his body and to treat himself with more respect.

Analysis:

Thoreau struggles throughout this chapter with the dialectic between man's animal and spiritual nature. In some ways, this understanding of the human being is reminiscent of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinkers' separation of human reason from animal instinct. For them, human beings differed from animals through their capacity for rational thought and action. Unlike these philosophers, however, Thoreau's struggle is further complicated by his understanding of the human as a part of nature. He cannot deny that human beings have primitive animalistic desires as exemplified by his desire to consume a woodchuck raw. Therefore, his attempts to purify himself, through the denial of the animal parts of his nature, can never be completely successful. This dialectic is ultimately irresolvable.

The metaphor of the body as a temple, which Thoreau offers as man's true work near the end of the chapter, has Biblical origins. In 1 Corinthians 6:19, St. Paul wrote, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own." Paul, like Thoreau, urged his readers to eschew bodily desires and needs in order to become purely spiritual beings. Thoreau takes Paul's words, which say the body is not man's but God's, to argue the opposite that man's body is his own, a work created by him just as a sculptor creates a work of art. "We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones."

Thoreau's metaphor of the body as material for the artist juxtaposes strangely with his primarily symbolic perspective. In likening the sculptor's creation of art from clay to man's creation of art from his body, he denigrates the symbolic nature of the sculptor's work. This is odd, primarily because Thoreau himself is so heavily concerned with symbols. For example, his refusal to eat meat, coffee or tea, or salt and spices is primarily a symbolic statement. Vegetarianism, for him, is not an end in itself. A Puritan eating brown bread can be a glutton

if he gives in to his base physical desire for it. Additionally, because Thoreau allies himself with animals as coexistent parts of nature, to eat them would be tantamount to cannibalism.

In his assertion that the human race is progressing to a state in which it will cease to eat animals, just as the progress of civilization previously led to the end of cannibalism, Thoreau imparts a theme of progress and evolution to this chapter. The human race represents the macrocosmic level. On the microcosmic level, an individual man will proceed from the stage of the "thoughtless boy," who through hunting and fishing becomes acquainted with nature; to the man who would not deign to kill an animal whose life is as tenuous as his; to a man who replaces his fishing and hunting with poetry and naturalism; to finally, the man who ceases to eat animal products in order to preserve his poetic faculties.

John Farmer, who like John Field, is a symbolic representation of all men of a certain class and occupation, provides the example of a man awakened in spirit. In "Economy," Thoreau has spoken about how most men's spiritual lives slumber. Here, he suggests that the animal life should slumber while the spiritual life revives. Farmer's realization, through overhearing flute music, that there is more to his life than his work illustrates Thoreau's belief that he can, through writing *Walden*, show his townsmen the possibility of exchanging their "mean" lives for "glorious" ones. The flute, of course, is the instrument that Thoreau plays at the pond, and this artistic creation, flute music, represents Thoreau's other artistic creation the book *Walden*.

## Chapter Twelve "Brute Neighbors"

### Summary:

Thoreau opens the chapter with an imagined dialogue between Hermit and Poet. Hermit wonders what "the world" is doing and speculates on the sounds he hears, including the horn of the farmer calling the hands in to dinner and the rustle of a dog or lost pig running through the brush. Poet, meanwhile, stares at the clouds and asks Hermit to come fish with him. Hermit tells him to go dig worms while he finishes meditating, for in this wood, it is as hard to catch worms as fish. Alone, he loses track of his thoughts, having been close to "resolv[ing] into the essence of things." Poet comes back with thirteen worms as well as several undersized ones which do for small fry, and Hermit agrees to go off fishing with him, proposing the Concord River.

Why, Thoreau asks, do particular species fill the spaces in our lives they do? All animals are beasts of burden, carrying our thoughts. Mice of a different species which are found in the village live in Thoreau's house. One had its nest built under the house and as it gradually became accustomed to Thoreau, would run around his clothes, the sides of the wall, and around his dinner. He fed it a piece of cheese from his hand and watched it clean its face and paws before it walked away.

A phoebe (bird) lived in his shed and a robin in a nearby pine. In June, the partridge led her chicks by his house. When he approached, she gave the chicks a signal and they dispersed like a whirlwind, while she spun around to distract him. The chicks stay so still through instinct that Thoreau once picked one up and it remained crouching without trembling. Once, when he put a chick down on the leaves and it fell over, it stayed that way for ten minutes.

The eyes of the partridges reflect an age-old intelligence, which no traveler or hunter can see. They are Thoreau's hens and chickens.

So many animals live secretly in woods near the town and only the hunter suspects them. There is a four-foot-long otter near Walden and raccoons behind Thoreau's house. At a brook near Brister Hill, which he would visit on summer afternoons to sit in the shade and get cold water from a well he'd dug in its spring, Thoreau saw a wood-cock and her brood. When she saw him, she signaled the young, who began dutifully marching away in a line, and pretended her wing was broken to distract him. If you sit still long enough in an attractive spot in the woods, all its inhabitants will gradually exhibit themselves.

One day, near his woodpile, he observes a battle between red ants and black ants twice their size. The ants struggle, one-on-one and sometimes two red ants to one black ant, in silent deadly combat over the wood chips. He watches as a red ant continue to gnaw at the root of a black ant's feeler while dashed from side to side and as another red ant approaches the battle and leaps onto a black warrior already struggling with another red ant. This battle excites Thoreau more than if they were men, for it displays more heroism and greater numbers than any American battle. At the Battle of Concord, only two men, Davis and Hosmer, died, but all these ants are like Colonel Buttrick, "Fire! For God's sake fire!" Unlike the colonists who fought over a three cent tax on tea, Thoreau has no doubt the ants fight over an issue of principle. Taking a chip where two ants struggle into his house, he puts a tumbler over it and watches as they struggle for half an hour until the black ant has severed the other two ants' heads. Unfortunately, all his feelers and all but one leg are gone. Thoreau lets him out the window, and is excited all day, though he never learns who won the battle or the cause. He mentions examples from writing listing ant battles, and notes that this one took place "in the Presidency of Polk, five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive Slave Bill."

Once, Thoreau saw a house cat walking by the pond and was surprised to see how natural it looked in the woods. Another time, while berrying, he met a white cat and her kittens, all of whom arched their backs and spit at him. Before he came to the woods, he visited a farm who owned a "winged cat," which grew large wings of fur on her sides during the winter and shed them in the spring. Her owners gave him a pair of her wings to keep and he suggests that a winged cat would be an appropriate pet for a poet.

In the fall, the loons come, and ten hunters to every one loon arrive at the mill-dam to shoot them. Early in the morning, Thoreau would see them from afar in his boat and try to get close but they dived under the water. One October afternoon, he follows one around the pond but it dives so deep and stays under for so long, he can't predict where it will reemerge. Always, though, the bird laughs and howls when it surfaces, thus drawing attention to itself. One series of hollows is followed by rain and thinking the god of the loons is angry with him, Thoreau leaves the loon alone in the pond.

For hours in the fall, he watches ducks in the center of the pond, far from hunters. Sometimes they fly so high above the pond they must be able to see other lakes and rivers. Often when he thinks they have flown off, they land on a distant part of the pond. He can't imagine what safety from hunters they gain in the middle of Walden Pond, unless they love its water for the same reason he does.



## Analysis:

The dialogue between Hermit and Poet that opens the chapter continues the dialectical internal conflict which consumes Thoreau. Hermit and Poet represent different parts of Thoreau, struggling to coexist. Hermit, Thoreau's spiritual side, desires only to philosophize but his thoughts, just when they are reaching their pinnacle, are disturbed by the Poet's desire to go fishing. Poet, in his desire to go fishing, represents the instinctual animal part of Thoreau which he attempts to shed. Nonetheless, Hermit cannot live without Poet. He has only a little brown bread left and must agree to fish if he is to survive. Nevertheless, these two elements of Thoreau's inner self coexist uneasily, each blocking the other from achieving its ultimate goals.

All of the animals in this chapter combine animal nature with a spiritual component. In his representations of them, we can see that Thoreau has not completely dismissed animals, despite his sentiments in the last chapter. Rather, he is entranced and inspired by nature, and his struggle to reconcile the spirituality he perceives to exist effortlessly within nature with the animal nature in human beings is ongoing.

The ants, for example, exemplify the untroubled coexistence of animal and spiritual. Clearly, their animal natures are at play as they gnaw and rip at each other. Yet, in their "battle," Thoreau perceives more nobility and valor than in the battles of the American Revolution. While human beings fight for materialistic reasons, animals, lacking material possessions or the understanding of them, can in Thoreau's logic only fight over principle. Thoreau's reference to the Fugitive Slave Act in his dating of the ant battle further connects the example of the ants' valor to human conflict. Writing in the 1850s, Thoreau had come to believe that armed conflict was an appropriate means of resisting the injustice of slavery. Thus, for Thoreau, John Brown's conflict at Harper's Ferry was a human counterpart to the valiant ants.

Similarly, instinct to Thoreau is not necessarily a negative thing. In the partridge and woodcock chicks, which without fear follow their mothers' signal when an intruder approaches, Thoreau sees a kind of bravery in instinctual behavior. Additionally, the intelligence as old as the woods themselves which he sees reflected in the partridges' eyes and the unselfconscious behavior of the mouse suggest a spiritual dimension in animals.

The winged cat is yet another example of a hybrid, which Thoreau seeks to be in reconciling the dialectic between animal and spiritual natures. Referencing Greek mythology, he says she would be a fitting pet for a poet, who already has a winged horse, Pegasus. He speculates she might be the product of a union between a flying squirrel and cat, making her a physical hybrid as well as a hybrid of dual natures.

Nonetheless, Thoreau fails to ultimately reconcile within himself animal and spiritual natures. The loon, with its eerily human capacity for laughter and trickery and its animal's abilities to transcend even the boundaries between bird and fish, easily achieves this position of liminality. But Thoreau in failing to capture the loon symbolically fails to capture this ability to cross boundaries and maintain internal contradictions in himself.

## Chapters 13-15

## Chapter Thirteen "House-Warming"

### Summary:

In October, Thoreau picks grapes in the river meadows and there sees the cranberries that will be thoughtlessly cultivated and sent as jams to Boston and New York. He also collected wild apples and chestnuts, which he finds in the chestnut woods in Lincoln, sometimes stealing opened nuts from squirrels and sometimes climbing and shaking trees, using it as a substitute for bread. He also discovers the ground nut, like a potato, once eaten by the Indians and now almost forgotten. If nature were to reign again in New England, the corn would go extinct and the ground nut would thrive.

By September 1, he sees a few maples across the pond turn red and watches the change of their color reflected in the pond from week to week. In October, wasps settle on the windows and walls of his house, never bothering him but frightening visitors. In November, he sits sometimes in the sun on the northeast side of the pond for warmth during the day.

In preparation for building his chimney, Thoreau "studies masonry" by chipping the mortar of the used bricks he has bought. He makes his mortar with white sand from the beach and gradually builds his chimney, even using the bricks as a pillow at night when he has a poet visiting him. The chimney, an independent structure that could survive even a fire, is finished at the end of the summer.

By November, the pond had begun to cool. Thoreau watches the shadows made by the fire reflecting shadows on the knotty unplastered walls but ultimately plaster them for warmth. "All attractions of a house were concentrated in one room," and he enjoys it all. Sometimes, he dreams of an enormous one-room house, with unplastered beams and an enormous fire, where all possessions and inhabitants are visible to any who enter or pass through. A place where you can see the fire that cooks your dinner and oven that bakes your bread would be better than most houses, where parlors and kitchens and workshops are so removed from each other that all life becomes metaphor; "dinner even is only the parable of a dinner, commonly." Only two guests ever stayed in his small one-room house for a hasty pudding but many such puddings were made there.

He plastered the walls when the freezing weather began, bringing whiter sand from the opposite beach in a boat. He learned to admire the "economy and convenience" of plastering, creating a nice finish, and to see how "thirsty" his bricks were. At the same time, a small coat of ice had formed over the pond. Thoreau liked to lie stretched out over clear ice one inch thick and look down into the still water of the pond straight to the bottom. On mornings after it freezes, you can see a large number of bubbles pressed against the lower surface of the ice, reflecting your face. After a few warm days, the ice became discolored and the bubbles shifted. Thoreau cut out a block of ice to study and found that the ice had formed around the bubble, and realizes that the bubbles beneath the ice melt and rot it, making it "crack and whoop."

Once he finishes plastering, the winter begins and the wind starts howling. Geese come every night, bound for Mexico. In 1845, the pond freezes over completely on December 22, and the snow had covered the ground since November 25. All Thoreau does outside now is collect

dead wood, of which the forest is full, and driftwood for his fire. He also hauls wooden raft, made by some Irish railroad workers and sunk in the earth for several years, across the ice of the pond and finds it burns beautifully. He grieves when any part of the forest is burned or cut down and thinks of the Romans who made an expiatory offering when cutting trees in a sacred grove.

Wood seems to have a value "more permanent and universal than gold." The cost of fuel wood in NY or Philadelphia is the same as the best wood in Paris, and the cost continues to rise in America. Everyone, Thoreau included, needs wood to heat them and cook food. He looks at his woodpile with affection, "warmed twice" but chopping stumps from his bean field, when chopping and when burning them. In previous years, he has gone "prospecting" for pine roots in the forest. He uses dried leaves from the forest, saved in his shed, for kindling and sometimes green hickory like wood-choppers use. Like the people in the village who light their fires, he announces he is awake to the Walden inhabitants from the smoke coming out of his chimney, a sentiment he echoes in lines of verse.

Sometimes, Thoreau left his fire burning when he took a walk but one day when splitting wood, he looked in to see that a spark had jumped onto the bed, burning a hole the size of his hand in the cover before he put it out. He sometimes lets it go out during the day because his low roof and the sun keep it warm. Moles nest in his cellar, like all animals who use their body heat to warm themselves after finding a "bed." Humans heat the air, making a perpetual summer, with light from windows and lamps, thus saving time for the fine arts. Still, when out in the "rudest blasts" for too long, Thoreau grows "torpid" and needs the warmth of his house to revive himself. The human race could easily be destroyed if the Great Snows were greater or Cold Fridays colder.

The next winter, he uses a cooking stove, which makes cooking cease to be poetic. It takes up room, scents the house, and conceals the fire, which always seemed to Thoreau to have a face. He recalls the words of a poet, addressing the flame, wondering why it is gone.

Analysis:

Until this chapter, we have watched Thoreau experience the summer, a season of new life, at Walden. Now, as he endeavors to live out a harsh New England winter in a one-room cabin, he begins to face the real test of nature. As the months proceed, we can see nature's sympathies gradually waning. At first, during the fall harvest, Thoreau can readily find food to store up for the winter. In these activities, in which he encounters birds and squirrels doing the same, he is coming to embrace his animal nature through necessity.

Plastering is the first test of his ideals that nature puts to him. Thoreau prefers the look of his house before plastering its walls but is forced to do so by the cold winds. He admits that the house is more comfortable after he does so, but in plastering the walls, he has sacrificed the natural aspect of his wooden walls for the plaster of artificial Concord houses. It is no wonder then that Thoreau's fantasy of an enormous, unplastered one-room house occurs immediately after this. This fantasy house, in which all people and possessions share one big space, is a representation of Thoreau's ideal, in which all aspects of life can be integrated in a natural

setting. Houses in town physically divide spiritual aspects of life with artificial barriers, separating rooms and people from each other.

The chimney that Thoreau builds a structure that reaches toward the sky and which will outlast the house itself represents his attempt to control his future and gain a degree of immortality. In building the chimney, he is metaphorically preparing himself for a long struggle. Just as the chimney, made with the very sand of nature's beach, will protect against nature's cold blasts, Thoreau seeks to build in himself a spiritual temple that can withstand the tests of his animal nature.

Winter imparts psychological as well as physical changes to Thoreau at Walden Pond. The pond, which until this chapter, has been the centerpiece of Thoreau's thoughts and his reason for building his cabin in that location now, is frozen and can provide him little. No longer does he commune with and maintain a relationship with nature, as he has in the preceding chapters, but instead only ventures outside to obtain fuel this despite the fact that in "Economy," he compared wood to rich food.

Now, with the reality of physical cold a factor in his way of life, Thoreau comes to see the value of a wood pile, which he looks on "with affection," and to find comfort in the universality of this need for wood weather in lighting his fire at the same time as the inhabitants of Concord and realizing that the price of wood results from necessity. Thoreau compares wood to gold, and in doing so, he does more than emphasize the greater value of this product of nature, which is a necessity rather than a luxury. Rather, he admits and accepts that wood an economic tool as well as a physical need must play a part in his life, a fact further driven home by his reluctant purchase and use of a stove the following winter.

#### Chapter Fourteen "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors"

##### Summary:

Thoreau weathers "merry snowstorms" and spends "cheerful evenings" by his fire. But even the owl is hushed, and the only people he sees are those who come to chop wood and sled it to the village. Nature helps him make a path through deep snow, when oak leaves blow into his tracks, leaving a dry and visible path. To occupy himself, he must think about the former inhabitants of the woods, in a time when laughter filled the woods, though it was much more overgrown and the road was so narrow, trees scraped carriages passing and frightened women and children running through.

One inhabitant was Cato Ingraham, a former slave, whose master Duncan Ingraham, Esq. built him a house and let him live in the woods. He let a patch of walnuts grow for his old age but "a young and whiter speculator got them at last. His cellar-hole remains, hidden by pine trees. Another inhabitant was a black woman named Zilpha, who spun linen for townsfolk while singing shrilly, until her house was burned by British prisoners on parole during the War of 1812, killing her dog, cat, and chickens. Thoreau has seen the bricks that are all that remain of the house. Thirdly, Brister Freeman, "a handy Negro," slave of Squire Cummings once" lived with his wife Fenda, a pleasant fortune-teller. Thoreau has seen his gravestone in the old Lincoln graveyard, placed by the unmarked graves of the British who died in the Battle of Concord. The apple trees he planted and tended now grow wild on Brister's Hill.

The Stratten family, whose homestead was once farther down the hill, had an orchard that covered an entire slope that has not been taken over by pitch-pines.

Closer to town is the ground known for the pranks of a "demon" that has destroyed many families. This unnamed "mythological character" is New England rum. According to tradition, a tavern stood there, and water for men and their horses came from the same well. Breed's hut also stood there unoccupied for many years until some village boys burned it down on one election night. Thoreau had fallen asleep reading Davenant's *Gondibert*, for, his family has a tendency to lethargy, including an uncle that once fell asleep while shaving. He was roused by the bells ringing and rushed with the other men and boys, wagons, the Insurance Company agent, the fire engine, and finally the same boys who had both set the fire and given the alarm, to see where it was. Ultimately, they decided to let it burn rather than throw the water of a nearby frog pond on it and stood around watching. The next night, Thoreau past the spot and heard a moaning. He found the only living memory of the farmer, who had been off working in the river meadow and had come to see his childhood home. Finding it burned, he lay on his stomach and looked at the burning embers in the cellar, feeling comforted by Thoreau's presence.

Further in the woods is the place where Wyman the potter and his descendants squatted. The sheriff was always unsuccessful in trying to collect taxes from them. One day when he was hoeing, a man stopped and asked Thoreau if he knew where Wyman the younger was, saying he had once bought a potter's wheel from him. Thoreau was pleased to hear that this art, which he had only read about in Scripture, was once practiced in his neighborhood. A final inhabitant was an Irishman, Hugh Quoil, who lived in Wyman's tenement, a ditcher by occupation, capable of manners and civil speech but afflicted with a trembling delirium, with a face "the color of carmine." He died in the road near Brister's hill shortly after Thoreau came to the woods. Until his house was pulled down, people avoided it as unlucky, but Thoreau visited it and saw his clothes curled up on his bed, his pipe broken on the hearth, soiled cards on the floor, a black chicken still living next door, and an overgrown garden. Now, only a dent in the earth is visible where his house was, all overgrown with bushes, and the well is sadly covered up. But the lilac still grows where the door was, outliving the children that had planted it. Thoreau wonders why this small village in the woods failed when Concord remains. Maybe his house, built on a spot on which no one else has ever built, will be the first in a new hamlet.

Thoreau has few visitors, often none for a week or two at a time when the snow is deep, but he lives snug in his house, like animals which survive buried in snowdrifts or like story he has heard about a man whose house was completely buried by snow in 1717 when he was away from home. An Indian saw the chimney smoke from a hole in the drift and dug out the family. In the Great Snow, men in the village are forced to cut down the shade trees in their yards because they cannot get to the woods for firewood. In the deepest snow, the half-mile path between Thoreau's house and the road is like "a meandering dotted line" of footprints, for he walks in his tracks for weeks. In all weather, he walks outside, sometimes walking 8-10 miles to see a tree, sometimes creeping on hands and knees, once watching a barred owl that could hear but not see him, as it perched half-asleep in broad daylight. He walks to town over the railroad tracks, where the wind is the most blustery, even in weather when drifts pile

up over his footprints in half an hour. Even in winter, he finds swamps where grass and skunk cabbage are green.

Sometimes, in the winter, he returns home to see the tracks of a wood-chopper leading to his door and his house filled with the odor of his pipe. On Sunday afternoons, a "long-headed farmer" visits, and they talk "of rude and simple times" and eat nuts the squirrels have abandoned as too tough. A poet comes through deepest snows and furthest distances, to visit, and together they make the house "ring with boisterous mirth and resound with the murmur of much sober talk." During his last winter at the pond, a peddler from Connecticut who is "one of the last of the philosophers" visits, and they, with the old settler, have amazing discourses. A friend from the village also visits occasionally, and that is the last of his society.

Analysis:

As the winter continues so too does Thoreau's psychological test. No more does he get external stimuli from nature. Even the owl is hushed, in stark contrast to the many calls of birds he described during summer nights. For weeks at a time, he does not see another person and must therefore look inward for inspiration. When pressed to find his own diversions, it is notable that Thoreau's thoughts turn to other people. Human company, which he pledges to do fine without, able to live snugly in his house like a hibernating animal, has clearly become a tantamount concern to him as we can see through the detailed descriptions of all his visitors in this chapter.

It is notable that the first four "former inhabitants" that Thoreau chooses to reflect upon are all former slaves. Thoreau was an active abolitionist though not a member of any abolitionist society because he opposed societies and in his descriptions of these four peoples' lives, we can see his implicit criticism of Northern involvement in slavery and treatment of former slaves. For example, the burning of Zilpha's house by British war prisoners seems to have been implicitly condoned by an establishment more concerned with making war for economic reasons than with the humanity of all people's lives. In fact, the location of these former slaves' houses, hidden in the woods and now all but erased from memory and visibility, is a physical metaphor for their invisibility in public life and consciousness. Thus, Thoreau's invocation of these long-dead people and his noting of the physical reminders of their homes is a political act in addition to being a psychological means of providing himself with society while alone in the woods.

For Thoreau, history does not provide an adequate substitute for human society; in fact, it turns out to be depressing. All the people he describes have been all but forgotten, their existence and homes erased. Though Thoreau posits that his house might be the first in a thriving new village, from his many previous examples, it is clear that he knows it is more likely that what happened to the other inhabitants of the woods might happen to him. He too might be forgotten and ignored by society. The repeated image of the covered up well symbolizes the obstacles to Thoreau's imagination.

Similarly, the other inhabitants of the woods whom Thoreau describes are all disenfranchised members of society, made invisible by their existence at its edges squatter Wyman,

physically disabled Quoil. Quoil, said to be a soldier at Waterloo, does not warrant any respect or notice from the townspeople until his death leads them to deem his house unlucky. Only Thoreau is willing to visit it and ponder the man who lived there through the artifacts clothing, chicken, woodchuck skin he had left. The villagers instead, seek to actively erase Quoil's existence by pulling down his house, just as the village boys who burn Breed's hut are unaware of the building's emotional meaning for the only remaining Breed descendant and only see it as a means of diversion for themselves.

Thoreau criticizes these villagers who cannot conceive of society beyond themselves but instead endeavor to force their meanings onto those at its edges, containing their possibly transgressive examples. For example, Brister Freeman's grave, marginalized by its placement with the unmarked graves of British soldiers, calls him "Sippio Brister," when Thoreau compares him instead to Scipio Africanus, a Roman general of great acclaim, and labels him "a man of color,' as if he were discolored." Whether by erasing, as in the case of the British soldiers, or by renaming, as in the case of Brister, dominant society seeks to control anyone who diverges from their example.

Finally, Thoreau's reactions to and descriptions of his living visitors diverges greatly from his previous chapter on "Visitors," in which he displayed his distaste for society. Here, the harsh weather acts as a deterrent from any undesirable guests. In this case, nature remains a friend to Thoreau; for it keeps all but the most determined guests from visiting him. With all the farmer, the poet, the peddler philosopher Thoreau's greatest joy comes from conversation. Though he continues to seek out inspiration from nature, visiting trees and owls in the snow, he depends upon these people for intellectual stimulation. The winter, in effect, draws a line between nature and culture, physically separating Thoreau from the village and thus forcing him to appreciate the offerings of culture in his decreased contact with it.

## Chapter Fifteen "Winter Animals"

### Summary:

When the ponds freeze, Thoreau uses them as shorter routes and finds new views from their surfaces. Standing in the middle of Flint's Pond, he is reminded of Baffin's Bay, surrounded by snowy hills and hunters with their dogs who remind him of Eskimo. He walks over the pond to get to Lincoln, where he lectures, passing no houses and only a muskrat colony on his way. Walden has very little snow on its surface, and he slides and skates on it. In winter nights, he hears the hooting of the owl, which sometimes sounds like "how der do." One night, honking geese fly by and the owl begins howling at them for interrupting his time of night. The ice of the pond also whoops, like restless sleeper with flatulence, and the ground itself cracks with frost.

Sometimes, he hears the foxes barking like dogs and supposes that perhaps animals are gradually becoming civilized. The red squirrel wakes him at dawn, running over his house, and he throws out ears of unripe sweet corn. The squirrels come and go, maneuvering stealthily as if they're being watched, finally grasping an ear and eating it on top of the woodpile for hours, selecting new ears, and running off with one to the top of a tree at last. The screaming jays arrive, thieves who steal the kernels the squirrels, who worked for their

meal, have dropped and swallowing whole kernels too big for their throats, almost choking. Chickadees also pick up kernels and peck at them until they are small enough to swallow. Titmice pick dinners from the woodpile or crumb at the door and gradually become so familiar that one sits on and pecks at an armful of wood Thoreau is carrying. The squirrels also become familiar and run over Thoreau's foot if it is in their path.

Before the snow covers the ground and once it begins to thaw, the partridges fly out of the woods at morning and evening to feed. They eat the buds of the wild apple trees, where hunters sometimes wait for them, but is "Nature's own bird" because it "lives on buds and diet drink." Sometimes in the winter, Thoreau hears packs of hounds and a hunting horn and sometimes sees men in the evening returning with a single fox tale. The fox could get away if he were to run straight but instead he circles around or waits till the hounds are close. He does know to go through water to make the hounds lose the scent, and one hunter said he saw a fox run through puddles on the frozen pond. Sometimes, the hounds run around Thoreau's house as if crazed until they find the scent of the fox. One man whose dog had been hunting on its own for a week inquired about it at Thoreau's house but was so interested in knowing what Thoreau was doing living there; he didn't listen to Thoreau's response about the hound.

One old hunter who visits the pond in the summer saw an old hound and her three pups following a fox by themselves in the morning. In the afternoon, he could hear still them at a distance, and suddenly the fox appeared near him and sat on a rock with its back to him. He watched for a moment but then shot it. The hounds approached and were silenced by the mystery of the dead fox until they saw the man. Their owner, a man from Weston, inquired about his hounds at a Concord hunter's cottage, saying they had been off hunting for a week. The next day he learned they had crossed the river and had stayed the night at a farmhouse before leaving in the morning. This hunter told Thoreau about Sam Nutting, who hunted bears with his fox-hound Burgoyne, on Fair-Haven Ledges. In an old trader's book, Thoreau has found notes of John Melven, who killed a gray fox, and Hezekiah Stratton, "a sergeant in the old French war," who killed a wild-cat, as well as men who got credit for deer skins and horns. He remembers the hunters used to be a "merry crew" in the woods, including "one gaunt Nimrod" who played music from a flute made of a rolled-up leaf.

Sometimes at night, hounds in the woods cross Thoreau's path and skulk away. He competes with squirrels and wild mice for nuts. The previous winter, mice gnawed "girdles" around pitch pines, using the bark for food, and after another winter, the pines died. Thoreau finds it remarkable that mice can in effect consume an entire tree for dinner but supposes it is necessary to thin the forest. There is also a hare that lives under Thoreau's house and bumps her head jumping out every morning when she hears him stir. The hares nibble potato-parings he leaves at his door at night and can barely be distinguished from the ground. Close by, the incite pity, like one bony, ragged-eared hare who sits two paces from Thoreau's door one night before leaping away gracefully when he takes a step, "asserting its vigor and the dignity of Nature." Rabbits and partridges are basic to nature, sure to thrive even if the forest is cut down, becoming numerous in the sprouts and bushes.

Analysis:



Thoreau's melancholy remains apparent at the start of this chapter. Though nature has ceased its silence, the sounds it reflects are not those of happiness and life as in the summer. Thoreau seems to desire companionship in the owl, imagining its "hoo hoo hoo" sounds like "how der do," but the owl, who hoots away the gregarious geese, does not seem to comply. The misanthropic owl is a projection of Thoreau's fears over having rejected society's companionship.

Similarly, Thoreau projects his melancholy onto the lake itself. Previously, he has described the lake as a mirror. Now the frozen lake groans as if it is sleeping poorly, having bad dreams. Unlike the animals, neither the lake nor Thoreau himself can quietly and comfortably sleep the winter months away.

In the conflict between the hounds and the fox, Thoreau further depicts the conflict between society and nature. The domesticated hounds do their owner's bidding in hunting the fox even when he is not with them. Though this is in part a result of instinct, the instance in which the hounds work tracking the fox leads the hunter visiting Walden to shoot the fox for himself demonstrates the extent to which the hounds are an extension of society. In contrast, the fox is both helped and bound by his wild nature, able to escape the hounds by instinctually crossing water but put in danger by its propensity to circle about its home and sit until the hounds are close. In this, the fox represents Thoreau's fear that he cannot escape his nature and will ultimately be destroyed by it.

We can see further evidence of Thoreau's winter-induced melancholy in the manner in which he describes the animals. In contrast to previous instances in which he found spiritual inspiration in nature, here his descriptions are relatively straight-forward descriptions of the his observations of the animals' behavior. Here, his cynicism seems to emerge, in his depiction of the jays as "thieves" who take the corn the squirrels have worked for. He seems to see the same faults he has observed in the villagers paralleled in the animals kingdom, which has ceased to represent the ideal. The foxes' inability to save himself and the squirrel's roundabout path to the corn frustrates Thoreau, for in some ways these animals seem to waste time and their live the way people do.

There is evidence of hope offered through the final image of the rabbit. At first, looking closely at the rabbit, Thoreau's depression colors what he sees. The rabbit seems gaunt, ragged, "its eyes young and unhealthy, almost dropsical." However, Thoreau is surprised from his pity for the rabbit, when it hops away, showing itself to be free, vigorous, and slender because of its nature. Far from being ill or dropsical, the rabbit thrives in nature. Thoreau's final sentiments in the chapter, asserting that the rabbit and partridge can thrive even if the forest is cut down, demonstrates his own reawakening from winter torpor. Nature, in fact, has been revealed to continue to thrive, the metaphor of the leaping rabbit illustrating a leap in Thoreau's spirits and understanding.

## **Chapters 16-18**

Chapter Sixteen "The Pond in Winter"

Summary:

One morning, Thoreau wakes up feeling as if he'd been trying to answer some question in his sleep, but when he looked out at nature, which "puts no questions and answers none which we mortals ask," he felt content. He went out in search of water, taking an axe to cut a hole in the foot of snow and foot and a half of ice over the pond. The pond, like the marmots in the hills, hibernates for three months. Looking down into the serene water, he realizes that "heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads."

Early in the morning, men come with lunches packed to ice fish. These men, who don't follow the authority of books or townsmen, are themselves a subject for the naturalist. With grub worms cut out of logs, they catch perch to use for bait to catch pickerel, and they know nature better than any naturalist. Thoreau admires how one fisherman ties his line around a stick so it won't fall through the ice and leaves it slack, tied to a leaf, so he can see when he has a bite, when the leaf is pulled in. When Thoreau sees the pickerel of Walden, their rare colors like pearls, he sees them as "small Waldens of the animal kingdom" which are never sold in any market.

"Desirous to recover the long-lost bottom of Walden Pond," Thoreau sets out to disprove the many stories about Walden being bottomless, which he has also heard about other nearby ponds. In the winter of 1846, using a cod-line tied to a stone through a hole in the ice, Thoreau finds it to be 102 feet at the deepest (107 when he writes, the water having risen 5 feet) a remarkable but not unbelievable depth for so small an area. A factory owner told Thoreau that would make the sides too steep, but Thoreau thinks that if Walden were drained it would appear similar to many meadows. He supposes the depth of the ocean, when discovered, will not seem very great compared to its size.

By measuring in a variety of spots, Thoreau finds that the bottom is relatively flat, varying by only three or four inches, and follows the contours of the shore. The greatest depth occurs where the diameter of the greatest length and width of the pond intersect. Thoreau attempts to see if this is a general rule by testing it on White Pond and is only slightly off. If we knew all the laws of nature, we would only need to know one fact and could infer the rest, but we do not comprehend the world in its entirety. The law of averages holds true for the pond but for ethics as well. We can infer the "depth and concealed bottom" of a man through his surrounding features. Just as bars separate harbors from the sea, we become trapped by bars as well.

Thoreau has not discovered any outlets or inlets of Walden, which gets its water from rain, snow, and evaporation, but supposes the place where the water is warmest in the winter and coldest in the summer is where the spring which feeds it is located. Some ice-men at the pond rejected some thinner cakes of ice from one spot in the pond, where the water must have been warmer, and also show Thoreau a "leach hole" where the water may leak out into a nearby meadow. The ice undulates under the wind, as Thoreau has detected with a level. He supposes with sensitive enough instruments we could detect the undulation of the earth. When he cut holes in the ice, water ran into them, cutting rivulets into the ice, which freeze in icy rosettes.

In January, the "prudent landlord" cuts ice to prepare for cold drinks in July but makes no such preparations for heaven. In the winter of 1846-47, a hundred Irishmen come from

Cambridge to cut ice for a rich man, who already has half-a-million dollars, getting a thousand tons on a good day. They pile ten thousand tons of the ice in a pile thirty five feet high, covering it in straw, so that it looks like "a vast blue fort of Valhalla," and estimate only twenty-five percent will make it in good condition to its destination. For some reason, perhaps because the ice contains more air than expected the majority of it is left behind, uncovered the following July and taking over a year to melt.

Walden ice seen up close has a green tint but from a distance looks blue. Water that looks green often freezes to look blue from the same perspective, perhaps because of the quantity of air contained in it. Told by the men that some five-year-old ice in the Fresh Pond ice-houses is good as ever, Thoreau wonders why ice remains sweet when water will go putrid soon, and compares it to the difference between the intellect and affections. For sixteen days, he watches the men working, as if farming, but in thirty days, he will look at the same green Walden as always. It pleases Thoreau that the "sweltering inhabitants of Charlestown and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta drink at [his] well," thus connecting Thoreau with the servants of Brahmin and mingling Walden water with "the sacred water of the Ganges."

Analysis:

With the opening paragraph of this chapter, it is apparent that Thoreau's depression and lethargy has ended. He represents this psychological struggle through the metaphor of sleep. He has been asking questions in his sleep looking only inward and only when he looks outward, at nature, does he cease questioning. He takes nature's example, asking and answering no questions but living serenely. In describing this realization as occurring when he awakens in the morning, Thoreau draws upon the metaphor of awakening to describe his increased spiritual awareness.

The pond has long been a symbol for Thoreau's self, reflecting him in its depths. Now, as he awakens, shaking off the sleep which encased and surrounded him, he represents this process in the act of cutting into the ice which surrounds the pond. He compares the pond the hibernating marmot; it too "closes its eyelids and becomes dormant for three months." However, rather than accept this delaying of life, Thoreau struggles against it, metaphorically opening the pond's eyes his own perceptions by cutting into the ice.

Therefore, Thoreau's attempts to study and understand the pond in a way no other townsmen have done before him, represents his ability to look into himself by simultaneously looking into nature. His findings about the pond's depth would surprise and contradict the assumptions of most people, just as his realizations in living at Walden about his own life run counter to common beliefs. The unexplored depths of the pond are also the unexplored depths of his own life that Thoreau went to Walden to study.

The ice fishers, who instinctively know nature and who themselves could be a subject of study for naturalists, demonstrate the melding of society and nature for which Thoreau had been struggling. His favorable opinion towards them and description of them as a part of nature demonstrate his newly found optimism.

In contrast, the ice men, who Thoreau describes as taking the "skin" off of the lake, are a part of culture on which he does not look fondly. Their actions are accomplished only for monetary gain, to fill the pockets of an already-rich man. In describing their effects upon the pond as he does, in the metaphor of skinning the pond as if it were a living creature, Thoreau demonstrates the violent conflict which inevitably arises between economic gain and natural life.

Ultimately, Thoreau's outlook becomes yet again naturalistic. Nature seems to have the capacity to resist the encroachers of society. The ice blocks are left behind, melting back into Walden. Even before that happens, Thoreau is content knowing that the spring will come and with it unchanging appearance of his beloved pond.

## Chapter Seventeen "Spring"

### Summary:

Usually, open tracks of water caused by the ice-cutters caused the ice to break up early but that year, Walden completely froze over again. Walden opens very regularly every year, about the first of April, about a week later than Flint's Pond or Fair-Haven, which are shallower. In the summer, the sun warms the shallowest water the most during the day and cools it the most at night. In this sense, the day replicates the year on a smaller scale. In the spring, the sun reflects from the bottom of shallow water, which had been the first to freeze in the fall, warming the ice from both sides, creating a honeycomb effect, in which air bubbles help to melt the ice. On February 24, 1850, Thoreau struck his axe on Flint's Pond and heard it respond like a gong. All day long, except at noon, it began to boom, being sensitive to atmospheric change.

"One attraction," Thoreau writes, "in coming to the woods to live was that I should have the leisure and opportunity to see the spring come in." He feels the ice melting and listens for birds, and by March 13, when he has heard a bluebird, song-sparrow, and red-wing, the ice was a foot thick. The edges and middle began melting, and in 1845, it completely opened up on April 1, and in '46, on March 25, and within a two week span in the following years. Living in a climate of extremes makes this process of ice breaking up especially interesting. One old man who thought he knew nature well rowed his boat down the river from Sudbury to Fair-Haven Pond, which he found frozen. He waited with his gun for ducks to alight in hole in the ice, then heard a loud rumbling he took for fowl but found that the ice had shifted against the bank, breaking off in huge pieces.

Little delights Thoreau more than watching rivulets of sand and clay break through the snow in banks, such as those at the side of the railroad, looking like "grotesque vegetation" in numerous colors. This "sand foliage" makes him feel as if he "stood in the laboratory of the Artist who made the world and me," and he sees this formation replicated in tree leaves, in blood vessels, and in ice crystals. He compares man to a "mass of thawing clay," with fingers and toes leaves and the ear as a lichen. As such, one "hill side illustrate[s] the principle of all the operations of Nature." The earth is a living thing and all animals and plants on it "merely parasitic." Nothing excites Thoreau like the "forms which this molten earth flows into."

When the ground is only partially bare of snow, Thoreau sees wildflowers, grasses, cattails, and other weeds which survived the winter, which feed the early birds. The red squirrels move under Thoreau's house and make noise chirping away, even when he stamps on the floor. He is ecstatic seeing the first sparrow of spring and hears its and other birds' songs again. Walden continues melting, opening up "canals" on the north, west, and east sides. A piece of ice has broken off and a song-sparrow sings to aid its breaking. A ribbon of water sparkles in the sun. In all of this, Thoreau sees "the contrast between winter and spring"; "Walden was dead and is alive again." The change seems instantaneous, filling Thoreau's house with light, and he hears a robin sing as if he has not for a thousand years.

Honking geese and ducks fly over head on their way north, with stragglers following days later, and pigeons fly in small flocks in April. To Thoreau "the coming in of spring is like the creation of Cosmos out of Chaos and the realization of the Golden Age." The grass is greener from a single rain and men's sins are all forgiven in a spring morning, though jailers, judges, and preachers seem not to hear God's hint and the pardon he offers freely.

On April 29, while fishing in the river, Thoreau hears a rattling and looks up to see a hawk soaring overhead, looking like it had never set foot on land and must have its nest in the clouds. He catches silver and gold fishes which are like jewels. He has jumped through meadows in mornings in such pure and bright light as wood wake the dead. All of this is proof enough of immortality for Thoreau. Unexplored nature is necessary as a tonic to village life, leaving something unfathomable, witnessing limits transgressed. Seeing a vulture devour a carrion reminds us of our health and strength. Thoreau used to pass by a road where a dead horse lay to remind himself that nature is so rife with life that it can afford to sacrifice myriads.

Early in May, the budding trees impart a brightness to the landscape. On May 3 or 4, he sees a loon in the pond; in the first week of May, hears the whippoorwill, brown thrasher, veery, wood-pewee, chewink, and other birds. The phoebe had already looked in his house, and soon the yellow pollen of the pitch-pine covers the pond and shore. The seasons go rolling into summer. "Thus," Thoreau concludes, "was my first year's life in the woods completed; and the second year was similar to it. I finally left Walden September 6, 1847."

Analysis:

The overriding theme of this chapter is rebirth. "Walden was dead and is alive again," Thoreau writes. Here, spring the time during which the book began has come once more, and the cycle of another year has been completed. Thoreau's coalescing of two years' experience into one, which he notes once more at the end of the chapter, emphasizes this unending cycle. The rebirth of the pond symbolizes the rebirth of Thoreau's spirit. With the emergence of spring, he is reborn too and his exultation in describing nature illustrates his positive perspective.

Throughout this chapter, Thoreau draws upon and reshapes Christian mythology to create and express his own understanding of the divine. "Walden was dead and is alive again" echoes Luke 15:24, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again." In Thoreau's reframing of the

resurrection motif, nature rather than Jesus alone has the capacity to be man's spiritual savior.

Similarly, Thoreau's resounding, "O Death, where was thy sting? O Grave, where was thy victory, then?" is taken from I Corinthians 15:55. In the theology of St. Paul, Christ's redemptive power undoes the finality of death through the promise of life everlasting. For Thoreau, the beauty and power of nature convince him of the immortality of man. The earth itself is living and immortal, and the coming of the spring emphasizes to him a sort of everlasting life. Such a realization is especially relevant given the recent death of Thoreau's brother, which effected him profoundly. The quote itself was part of the funeral service. His ability and desire to encounter death as represented by the dead horse he repeatedly passes on the road shows his acceptance of death's inevitability and demonstrates he has found an understanding of life's continuity.

In this chapter, Thoreau refers to God as "the Artist who made the world and me," a Transcendalist understanding of the divine drawn from Emerson, who drew a connection between art and divinity. Thoreau also calls mankind "a mass of thawing clay," echoing the molding of Adam from clay in Genesis and "clay in the potter's hand" in Jeremiah. In linking God to artistry, Thoreau simultaneously exalts his own work of creation as a poet.

The description of "sand foliage" is one of Thoreau's most original contributions and one of the most critically praised passages in the book. It is an organic creation of Thoreau's imagination, and its linkage of diverse products of nature (plants, humans, ice, sand) through their shared form illustrates his sentiments regarding the organic linkage between artistry and nature.

Thoreau returns to his motif of the microcosm in his description of the day as a lesser version of the year the ice melting and freezing in spring and fall, warming and cooling at morning and evening displays his propensity to perceive and organize the forms of nature. Living in a time of great social and religious change, Thoreau seeks to find comfort in the predictable form and repetition of nature hence his lists of dates, as with the freezing and melting dates of the lake, for series of years.

This chapter is the climax of the book. Thoreau and spring awaken at Walden and come to an understanding of the divine, immortality, and man's place in nature. However, Thoreau's decision to ultimately leave Walden suggests two opposing possibilities that either his experiment at Walden is ultimately found lacking or that it is so successful that he no longer needs to live in the woods to live deliberately.

## Chapter Eighteen "Conclusion"

### Summary:

Doctors wisely recommend a change of scenery to the sick. New England isn't "all the world." Migrating geese and grazing bison travel farther than us. "The universe is wider than our views of it." But in our voyage through life, we should look at what is going on around us. People who travel to Africa to hunt giraffes are really looking for something inside themselves. Be an explorer of the worlds which exist in yourself through thought. Some people are patriotic without having self-respect, loving the soil but not their own spirit. It is

easier to sail thousands of miles than to "explore the private sea." But explore the world until you can find a way inward to explore yourself.

Mirabeau, who said he took to highway robbery to achieve honor by opposing society's most sacred laws, was desperate. A saner man would oppose society's most sacred laws through obedience to even more sacred laws. A man should obey the laws of his being and in doing so will never find himself in opposition to a just government if such a thing exists.

Thoreau "left the woods for as good a reason as [he] went there." It is easy to fall into a routine, and having within a week of his life at Walden beaten a path between his door and the lake, he decided he had more lives to live and no more time for that particular one. Through his experiment, he learned that if a man confidently follows his dreams, he will find unexpected success and discover new laws. As he simplifies his life, universal laws will become less complex. Build castles in the air and then put foundations under them.

The demand that one speak so that he can be understood is ridiculous, for nature supports a multiple order of understandings. He fears he does not speak extravagantly enough and wants to "speak somewhere without bounds." The truth of our words, which is instantly translated, betrays the inadequacy of our statements. Common sense, which society praises, is the dullest sense, of sleeping men. Those who are "once-and-a-half-witted" are classified with half-wits because society can only recognize a third of their wit. Hindu philosophy expresses four different senses, but here people complain if writing has more than one interpretation. The English work to cure potato-rot but none work to cure brain-rot.

Thoreau would be proud if no more faults were found with his writing than is found with Walden ice, which Southerners object to because of its blue color, which is in fact evidence of its purity. To those who say that Americans are intellectual dwarfs compared to the ancients or even the Elizabethans, he says, "Shall a man go and hang himself because he belongs to the race of pygmies, and not be the biggest pygmy that he can be?" If a man lives his life differently than others, maybe he hears a different drummer; he should follow the music he hears. Our conceptions of reality are limiting and artificial.

An artist in Kouroo, striving after perfection, knew that in perfect work time does not enter. He worked intently, never aging, as he chose the perfect stick and peeled it into the perfect staff, as generations died, cities fell, and dynasties ended. He made a new system, a "world with full and fair proportions," and realized that "the former lapse of time had been an illusion, and that no more time had elapsed than is required for a single scintillation from the brain of Brahma to fall on and inflame the tinder of a mortal brain." Nothing lasts as long as the truth; "any truth is better than make-believe." A tinker whose last words on the gallows were to remind the tailors to tie a knot in the thread before taking the first stitch are remembered.

Love your life and live it no matter how poor it is. A quiet mind can live contently in an almshouse better than a palace. The town's poor seem to lead the most independent lives. Don't bother getting new clothes or friends, for God will provide society. If he were to live the rest of his life in a garret, Thoreau would still have his thoughts and the world would be just as large to him. If you can't afford to buy books and newspapers, then you are compelled

to seek the most vital experiences, to live "life near the bone where it is sweetest" Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul."

Thoreau lives next to a leaden wall, poured from bell metal, which rings at midday when his contemporaries talk about famous people they have met, but none of this talk about costumes or manners interests Thoreau, anymore than does the content of the newspapers. Rather than play about at the surface of society without discovering the true foundation, Thoreau would prefer to do a work he can think about with satisfaction, a part of the universe. More than love, money, or fame, he wants truth. At a rich meal, he went away hungry for a lack of truth. He would have preferred to call upon a man he knew who lived in a tree than a king who made him wait in the hall.

People waste their time practicing virtues which real work would make irrelevant. Mankind is complacent, congratulating itself for its philosophy when none of Thoreau's readers has lived a full human life. Asleep half the time, we don't even know where we are but tell ourselves we are deep thinkers. Watching an insect on the forest floor, as it tries to hide from him, not knowing he might be its benefactor, he is reminded of "the greater Benefactor and Intelligence" looking over the race of human insects. We are content with the dull and ordinary, while the sermons of other countries speak of sorrow and joy.

Thoreau compares life to water in the river, capable of rising higher than it ever has this year. Everyone in New England has heard the story of a bug which emerged from a sixty-year old wood table. This strengthens Thoreau's faith in resurrection and his belief that from under the many dead layers of society, something unexpected may finally emerge. While all men may not realize that, this is the way things are. The only dawn is the one we are awake to witness.

Analysis:

In Thoreau's conclusion to his experience at Walden Pond, a great deal of contrast to "Economy," the first chapter and introduction, is evident. Whereas "Economy" was a relatively straightforward, factual account of Thoreau's decision to build a cabin and live at Walden Pond complete with dates and figures detailing his costs for building materials "Conclusion" is almost entirely composed of metaphor. Both are directed at an audience, seemingly composed primarily of New England readers, but whereas "Economy" offered a blueprint and inspirational message for living one's life outside the confines of society, "Conclusion" offers a less optimistic, more spiritual view. Here, Thoreau urges his readers to withdraw from society and turn inward. In proposing such a radical alternative to traditional life, Thoreau is comparatively less certain his example will be followed.

For a good part of this chapter, Thoreau employs the extended metaphor of sailing and exploration as a means of comparing the artificial, unthinking life in the material world with the true, introspective life he urges. Nineteenth-century adventurers concern themselves with sailing to exotic places like Africa or recounting trips to India, England, or even just New York, when a more extreme "change of scenery" is needed to cure the human ills. Thus Thoreau counters this colonialist impulse to travel and possess as through giraffe hunting another culture physically with an extended description of the "voyage" into one's own self, which can be far more difficult and more rewarding. In linking the inward journey with the



ultimate discovery of universal truths, Thoreau offers his own take on the Transcendentalist philosophy, in which man has the capacity to discover the divine within himself.

Nonetheless, an exultant tone pervades much of this chapter. Perhaps because his task has become comparatively difficult, Thoreau is more passionate in his appeals to his readers' offering them far more than an alternative scenery but an alternate way of understanding their lives. Whereas in "Economy," he appealed to the well-to-do to recognize the way their possessions trap them and free themselves from such a burden, here he appeals to the poor, offering them a means of seeing their life as in fact elevated and more rewarding than their wealthy contemporaries. By substituting a system of spiritual meaning and fulfillment for the capitalist system, Thoreau offers an alternate means of evaluating life's worth.

With the metaphor of the drummer the nonconformist who marches to the beat of a different drum Thoreau explores and defends his own choices in life from the conformist attitudes of society. In some ways, his defense of the nonconformist, who must be free to explore his own truths, and the "once-and-a-half-wit" whose insights society fails to recognize are defenses of his own writing. "Conclusion" was not included in the first draft of *Walden*; when Thoreau included it in the published version; he had already seen the failure of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and had experienced the decrease in calls for him to lecture. His commentary in "Conclusion," therefore, in part is a challenge issued to those who might dismiss his book to open their minds and recognize his insights.

The final, oft-quoted paragraph of *Walden* draws profusely on Emersonian Transcendentalism, particularly on sentiments expressed in Emerson's "Experience." Whereas Emerson, however, had professed an expectation of an irrepressible Transcendentalist impulse. For Thoreau, such an impulse remains slumbering now perhaps to awake one day but even then not completely. "I do not say that John or Jonathan will realize all this," Thoreau says, uncertain his readers in the end have understood him. For him, the demand he write to be understood, with only one meaning, is impossible and unfair. In the end, *Walden* has become an expression of truth, accomplished more of his own need to speak it, than for its readers.

## **2. Themes, Symbols and Structure of *Walden***

### **2.1 Structure of *Walden***

#### **2.2 Themes**

##### **2.2.1 The slumbering of mankind and need for spiritual awakening**

To Thoreau, the trappings of nineteenth century existence the cycle of tiring work to support property ownership forced the common man to live as if he were sleep-walking. Thoreau uses the idea of slumbering as a metaphor for mankind's propensity to live by routine, without considering the greater questions and meaning of existence. Therefore, Thoreau urges his readers to seek a spiritual awakening. He emphasizes the perspective he gains by awakening early and experiencing nature while others in the village are still sleeping and

using the metaphor of awakening in the morning to demonstrate the difference between himself and his Concord townsmen. The spiritual awakening of Thoreau and his readers is reflected both in the times of day and in the seasons of the year, with the greatest self-awareness and spiritual discoveries occurring in the morning and spring.

### **2.2.2 Man as part of nature**

Living in a society in which man in the form of railroads, factories, and other technical innovations had begun to tame and control nature, Thoreau counters the separation of man from society by conceiving of man as a part of nature. Through his life in the woods, living for the most part off the fruits of the land and deriving intellectual stimulation from plants and animals, Thoreau demonstrates that man can live successfully in the midst of nature. The animals give him companionship and accept him as a familiar part of their environment. Even nature itself is empathetic to him, for example waiting to blow its coldest winds after Thoreau builds his chimney and plasters his walls. The assertion that man is part of nature promotes Thoreau's suggestion that most people who be more intellectually fulfilled and spiritually aware away from the smothering cocoons of city and village life.

### **2.2.3 The destructive force of industrial progress**

Thoreau began his life at Walden, when the Industrial Revolution was in full force. Its impact upon life is best illustrated in Walden by the locomotive which passes daily by the pond, its whistles and rumbling contrasting with the natural sounds of the birds. Village life now runs at a faster pace, "railroad time," leaving even less time for the contemplation of self and nature which Thoreau desires. Such "progress" has a negative impact upon people's lives and upon the environment, the purity of which it pollutes and destroys.

### **2.2.4 The animal/spiritual dialectical struggle within man**

Within himself and all men, Thoreau perceives two struggling natures one a wild, animal nature and the other a spiritual nature. It is this animal nature which occasions the impulse to catch and deliver a woodchuck raw and which he detects in its fullest form in the French-Canadian woodcutter. However, he seeks in himself and urges in his reader the perfection of the spiritual nature, through avoidance of meat and animalistic desires, and represents the struggle in himself through the imagined conversation between the Hermit (spiritual) and Poet (animal). Only within a few examples from the animal kingdom noble battling ants, the winged cat, and the loon can Thoreau see the animal and spiritual coexist peacefully.

### **2.2.5 Nature as reflection of human emotions**

More than once, Thoreau describes Walden Pond as a mirror. Throughout the novel, the weather continually reflects his emotional state. His period of melancholy and doubt occurs during the winter when the pond is frozen and nature is silenced, and his joy and exultation is reflected in the thawing of the lake and growth of new life in the spring. The daily and seasonal variations in the pond and surrounding environment parallel the variety of and changes in Thoreau's intellectual musings. The idea of nature reflecting human emotion supports Thoreau's belief in man as a part of, rather than separate from or above, nature.

### **2.2.6 Spiritual rebirth reflected in nature and the seasons**

Thoreau employs the repeated metaphor of rebirth throughout his book, as a means of convincing his readers to seek new perspective on themselves and the world. The cycle of the

seasons, with the rebirth of the winter-dormant pond, animals, and plants in the spring, functions as the promise of an eventual spiritual rebirth in humans. Likewise, Thoreau's description of the hunter boy who grows to be a naturalist as a man and his metaphor of awakening from the slumber of life evince his hope and belief in the progress of human beings to a newer, greater understanding of themselves. He ends the book with a final metaphor of rebirth, describing the bug which hatched out of a wooden table after decades, in the hope that some day, even if not immediately such a rebirth will occur within human society.

### **2.2.7 Discovery of the essential through a life of simplicity**

In his first chapter, "Economy," Thoreau says that he went to the woods to describe what is truly necessary in life. Later, he says that he "went to the woods to live deliberately" so that when he died he would not find that he had never really lived. By ridding himself of the luxuries of society a big house, coffee, meat, even salt and yeast Thoreau discovers through his own "economy" what is really necessary to live a fulfilled life. His discovery of the relatively small amount of work needed to live in relative comfort leads him to attempt to convince his reader as well as John Field to similarly simplify their own lives and thus live more happily. For Thoreau, this is a happy discovery, for he comes to believe that one could be as happy in almshouse, with the same afternoon sun coming in the window as does in a rich person's house, as he would anywhere else. To his reader, Thoreau insists, "Simplicity! Simplicity! Simplicity!"

### **2.2.8 Exploring the interior of oneself**

Thoreau omitted the subtitle of *Walden, or Life in the Woods* in its subsequent publications because he feared his readers would take it too literally. Though he was enthralled by the nature around him, Thoreau also went to the woods to consider himself. In his final chapter, he urges his reader, who may not be able to voyage to Africa or India, to instead explore within himself. He believes that there are uncharted depths within such as will continue to surprise and occupy anyone who explores within, but he perceives that such self-exploration is rare. He uses his own experience at Walden as an example for his reader and urges not social change but change on the level of the individual.

### **2.2.9 The Transcendentalist conception of nature as the embodiment of the divine**

A follower of the Concord school of Transcendentalism and a good friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau expressed and clarified his own personal understanding of Transcendentalism in *Walden*. For him, the divine is most sublimely expressed in nature. He draws upon various Christian conceptions of the divine, as well as those from Eastern religions with which he is familiar, and recontextualizes them to create new meaning. For him, the role of God as creator of all of nature is most inspirational, and through this understanding, he expresses the Transcendentalist belief in existence of a spark of divinity in all men.

### **2.2.10 The state as unjust and corrupt controller of men's thoughts and actions**

In sentiments that would be more fully expressed in his essay "Civil Disobedience," Thoreau recounts in *Walden* the story of his imprisonment in jail for not paying taxes to a government that supports slavery. Elsewhere in the book, as when aids a fugitive slave on his journey to

Canada, Thoreau demonstrates his opposition to slavery and disgust with the Fugitive Slave Law. He sees the state and its institutions as corrupt and insidious controllers of men, even when they try to escape it, as he does by living in the woods. On a more basic level, he sees the gossip of townspeople and the constant, artificial interactions demanded by village life as distracting from concentration on the true essentials of life.

## **2.3 Symbols**

### **2.3.1 Walden Pond**

The meanings of Walden Pond are various, and by the end of the work this small body of water comes to symbolize almost everything Thoreau holds dear spiritually, philosophically, and personally. Certainly it symbolizes the alternative to, and withdrawal from, social conventions and obligations. But it also symbolizes the vitality and tranquility of nature. A clue to the symbolic meaning of the pond lies in two of its aspects that fascinate Thoreau: its depth, rumored to be infinite, and its pure and reflective quality. Thoreau is so intrigued by the question of how deep Walden Pond is that he devises a new method of plumbing depths to measure it himself, finding it no more than a hundred feet deep. Wondering why people rumor that the pond is bottomless, Thoreau offers a spiritual explanation: humans need to believe in infinity. He suggests that the pond is not just a natural phenomenon, but also a metaphor for spiritual belief. When he later describes the pond reflecting heaven and making the swimmer's body pure white, we feel that Thoreau too is turning the water (as in the Christian sacrament of baptism by holy water) into a symbol of heavenly purity available to humankind on earth. When Thoreau concludes his chapter on "The Ponds" with the memorable line, "Talk of heaven! ye disgrace earth," we see him unwilling to subordinate earth to heaven. Thoreau finds heaven within himself, and it is symbolized by the pond, "looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature." By the end of the "Ponds" chapter, the water hardly seems like a physical part of the external landscape at all anymore; it has become one with the heavenly soul of humankind.

### **2.3.2 Animals**

As Thoreau's chief companions after he moves to Walden Pond, animals inevitably symbolize his retreat from human society and closer intimacy with the natural world. Thoreau devotes much attention in his narrative to the behavior patterns of woodchucks, partridges, loons, and mice, among others. Yet his animal writing does not sound like the notes of a naturalist; there is nothing truly scientific or zoological in *Walden*, for Thoreau personalizes nature too much. He does not record animals neutrally, but instead emphasizes their human characteristics, turning them into short vignettes of human behavior somewhat in the fashion of Aesop's fables. For example, Thoreau's observation of the partridge and its young walking along his windowsill elicits a meditation on motherhood and the maternal urge to protect one's offspring. Similarly, when Thoreau watches two armies of ants wage war with all the "ferocity and carnage of a human battle," Thoreau's attention is not that of an entomologist describing their behavior objectively, but rather that of a philosopher thinking about the universal urge to destroy.

The resemblance between animals and humans also works in the other direction, as when Thoreau describes the townsmen he sees on a trip to Concord as resembling prairie dogs. Ironically, the humans Thoreau describes often seem more “brutish” (like the authorities who imprison him in Concord) than the actual brutes in the woods do. Furthermore, Thoreau’s intimacy with animals in *Walden* shows that solitude for him is not really and not meant to be, total isolation. His very personal relationship with animals demonstrates that in his solitary stay at the pond, he is making more connections, not fewer, with other beings around him.

### **2.3.3 Ice**

Since ice is the only product of Walden Pond that is useful, it becomes a symbol of the social use and social importance of nature, and of the exploitation of natural resources. Thoreau’s fascination with the ice industry is acute. He describes in great detail the Irish icemen who arrive from Cambridge in the winter of 1846 to cut, block, and haul away 10,000 tons of ice for use in city homes and fancy hotels. The ice-cutters are the only group of people ever said to arrive at Walden Pond en masse, and so they inevitably represent society in miniature, with all the calculating exploitations and injustices that Thoreau sees in the world at large. Consequently, the labor of the icemen on Walden becomes a symbolic microcosm of the confrontation of society and nature. At first glance it would appear that society gets the upper hand, as the frozen pond is chopped up, disfigured, and robbed of ten thousand tons of its contents. But nature triumphs in the end, since less than twenty-five percent of the ice ever reaches its destination, the rest melting and evaporating en route—and making its way back to Walden Pond. With this analysis, Thoreau suggests that humankind’s efforts to exploit nature are in vain, since nature regenerates itself on a far grander scale than humans could ever hope to affect, much less threaten. The icemen’s exploitation of Walden contrasts sharply with Thoreau’s less economic, more poetical use of it. In describing the rare mystical blue of Walden’s water when frozen, he makes ice into a lyrical subject rather than a commodity, and makes us reflect on the question of the value, both market and spiritual, of nature in general.

## **3. Character List**

### **3.1 Henry David Thoreau**

The author of *Walden*, Thoreau is the book's narrator and its only main character. In 1845, at the age of twenty-eight, he built a cabin at Walden Pond in the woods of Concord, Massachusetts, and lived there for two years in an attempt to "live deliberately" and discover the essentials of life away from the distraction of village life. Educated at Harvard, he is an admirer of great literature, especially Homer, and has a wide knowledge of Eastern religions. A true nonconformist, he sees society and the "progress" of industrialization as destructive forces which keep people slumbering and unable to see and appreciate the true beauty of life. He finds companionship and inspiration in nature, exploring the relationship between humans, nature, and divinity. Though winter tests his spirits, the coming of spring rejuvenates his belief that he is a part of the ongoing life of nature. After two years, he leaves the pond,

seeking new experiences and urging his readers to voyage into themselves to discover the truth.

### **3.2 James Collins**

An Irishman who works for the Fitchburg Railroad. Thoreau buys his shanty from him and uses the boards to build his cabin at Walden. As he passes on the way to the house, he watches the Collins family with their possessions passing him on the road.

### **3.3 Mrs. C.**

James Collins' wife, who shows Thoreau the shanty and assures him that the boards are good.

### **3.4 Seeley**

An Irishman who, as someone later informs Thoreau, removed the staples, nails, and spikes from the Collins shanty to his own pocket, while Thoreau carts the wood to Walden, and stands by greeting him innocently.

### **3.5 Owner of the Hollowell place**

A man who is about to sell his farm to Thoreau, who has already given him ten dollars, when his wife changes her mind. Thoreau lets him keep the ten dollars, deciding both of them are better off.

### **3.6 John Smith**

A trader from Cuttingsville, Vermont, who is actually the product of Thoreau's imagination as he envisions where the hogsheads of molasses or brandy on the passing railroad are headed.

### **3.7 An old settler**

The original proprietor of Walden Pond, believed to be dead, who stoned around the pond and fringed it with pine woods. Thoreau says he visits him in long winter evenings, implying he imagines encounters with this man, who may symbolize God as creator of the pond. They have long talks about old times and eternity. He is a beloved, though secret, friend to Thoreau.

### **3.8 An old dame**

Another imagined inhabitant of Thoreau's neighborhood, she is invisible to most people. Thoreau strolls in her herb garden and listens to her fables, going back to the origins of mythology. She is hardy and will outlast all of her children, and seems to be metaphorically linked to nature.

### **3.9 A woodchopper**

A French Canadian man, about twenty-eight years old, who has been working in the United States for a dozen years, hoping to save up money to buy his own home in Canada. He works chopping wood near Concord, bringing a stone bottle of coffee and the cold meat of a woodchuck, caught by his dog to eat for lunch. He has a "stout but sluggish body," dark bushy hair, and dull blue eyes. He can pronounce Greek and will read Homer with Thoreau, when he visits his cabin, but has no real intellectual curiosity. Instead he is a prime example of man's animal nature.

### **3.10 One older man**

An excellent fisherman, skilled at woodcraft, who sometimes winds his fishing lines on Thoreau's doorstep. The two sometimes fish together, and as the old man has lost his hearing, they do not converse. Instead, he hums psalms, which Thoreau finds harmonizes well with his silent philosophizing.

### **3.11 John Field**

An Irishman who lives with his wife and several children in a hut near Baker's Farm. He is an honest, hardworking, but shiftless man who works as a "bogger," digging up meadows and bogs for farmers. He came to America to have access to luxuries like milk, coffee, tea, and meat everyday, and Thoreau is unable to convince him that if he were to do without them and work less, he would need to spend less money on food and clothing and live more simply and comfortably. Thoreau shelters in his house during a rain storm, after which Field leaves off bogging for the afternoon and fishes, albeit unsuccessfully, with him. He is Thoreau's nearest neighbor. His name, which relates to his work, suggests he is an amalgamation of many poor working men whom Thoreau knew.

### **3.12 Mrs. Field**

John Field's wife who hopes to improve her condition someday. Thoreau finds her brave to cook so many successive dinners in that same stove. She seems to be compelled by the possibility of a simpler, easier life which Thoreau suggests but ultimately unable to make the arithmetic work out and the idea become a reality.

### **3.13 Field's son**

One of John Field's several children, his oldest son is a broad-faced boy who assists his father at his work as a bogger.

### **3.14 Field's infant**

John Field's baby, a wrinkled, sybil-like cone-headed infant who seems unaware that he is "John Field's poor starveling brat" and not the last of a long line of nobility.

### **3.15 John Farmer**

Another product of Thoreau's imagination or an amalgamation of many farmers, he sits in his door one September evening, thinking about work, until he hears the sound of a flute (Thoreau's), which awakens him and suggests the possibility of a glorious existence rather than a mean condition. The entire encounter is a metaphor for the effect Thoreau hopes his book will have on his reader.

### **3.16 Hermit**

A projection of part of Thoreau's self in an imagined dialogue between Hermit and Poet. Hermit wants to sit and philosophize. He has nearly been resolved into the essence of things as he has ever been in his life when Poet interrupts him to go fishing. This represents the dialectical conflict between spiritual and animal natures.

### **3.17 Poet**

In the dialogue with Hermit, Poet simply wants to look at the sky and go fishing. He represents the animal nature in man, in his interest in the material aspects of life, and perhaps disappointingly to Thoreau, it is he who overcomes Hermit in their conflict.

### **3.18 Mr. Gilian Baker**

The owner of a "winged cat," who lives near the pond in Lincoln. The cat's wings are really long matted furs which grow during the winter.

### **3.19 Mrs. Baker**

When Thoreau drops by to see the winged cat, the mistress of the house describes to him how she grows "wings" every winter and even gives him a pair of her old wings to keep. The cat, however, is out hunting, and he does not see her.

### **3.20 A poet**

A friend who boards with Thoreau for a week during the time he is building his chimney, which leads him to sleep with his head upon the bricks for want of room. The two men work together building the chimney and cooking.

### **3.21 Cato Ingraham**

A former inhabitant of the woods near Walden, who Thoreau thinks about during the winter months. Cato had been the slave of Duncan Ingraham, Esq. of Concord. Duncan built his slave a house, east of Thoreau's beanfield, and gave him permission to live in the woods. Cato, who was said to be a Guinea Negro, let a patch of walnuts grow up near his house to be used in his old age but a younger, whiter speculator got them. The cellar-hole of Cato's house still remains, though it is hidden by weeds.

### **3.22 Zilpha**

A black woman who had a house where the corner of Thoreau's field is located. She spun linen for the townspeople and sang shrilly while doing it. British war prisoners on parole during the War of 1812 burned down her house, with her dog, cat, and chickens inside. Thoreau has seen bricks amid the oaks where her house was.

### **3.23 Brister Freeman**

The former slave of Squire Cummings, whose house was on Brister's Hill, where his apple trees still grow. His gravestone, in the Lincoln cemetery, where he is buried near the unmarked graves of British soldiers from the Revolution, reads Sippio Brister, though Thoreau compares him to Roman general Scipio Africanus, and "a man of color."

### **3.24 Fenda Freeman**

Wife of Brister Freeman, she was a hospitable woman who "told fortunes, yet pleasantly." Thoreau describes her as "large, round, and black, blacker than any of the children of night, such a dusky orb never rose on Concord before or since."

### **3.25 Stratten**

A family whose homestead was near Brister's Hill. Their orchard covered the hill but was overgrown by pitch pines.

### **3.26 Breed**

The name of a family whose house and tavern stood at the edge of the woods. The house stood empty for a dozen years until some boys from the village lit it on fire on an election night. Thoreau was one of the crowds who ran to fight the fire but it was decided to let the house burn. The next day, Thoreau encountered the only remaining member of the Breed family, who had come to look at the old house and found it burned.



### **3.27 Wyman**

A potter who squatted with his family in the woods near the pond, never paying any taxes when the sheriff tried to collect. When a man who bought the potter's wheel from Wyman's son inquired of his whereabouts, Thoreau was glad to hear that such an ancient art had been practiced in his neighborhood.

### **3.28 Hugh Quoil**

An Irishman, called Colonel Quoil, rumored to have been at Waterloo, who lived in Wyman's house and worked as a ditcher. A man of manners, afflicted with a trembling delirium, he wore a coat in the summer and had a carmine-colored face. He was found dead in the road soon after Thoreau moved to Walden and so he did not know him well, though he did visit the man's house when others worried it was unlucky.

### **3.29 A long-headed farmer**

One of Thoreau's winter visitors, who walks through the snowy woods to his house to "have a social crack" with whom Thoreau talks of simpler times.

### **3.30 A poet (2)**

One of Thoreau's few winter visitors; he came the farthest and through the worst weather to Thoreau's house, at all hours. They spoke at length both in mirth and sober talk, making theories of life.

### **3.31 A philosopher**

A visitor during Thoreau's last winter the pond. He is originally from Connecticut, he came through the village in snow and darkness and sees Thoreau's lamp through the trees. They have long philosophical talks during the winter evenings.

### **3.32 An old hunter**

A man who swims in Walden in the summer and then visits Thoreau. He tells Thoreau of seeing a fox, pursued by distant hounds, stop and wait near Walden many years ago. He shot it and the hounds, curious, were surprised to find it dead.

### **3.33 Sam Nutting**

The old hunter tells Thoreau about Nutting, who hunted bears on Fair-Haven Ledges and sold their skins for rum.

### **3.34 Ice-cutters**

Men who come in January to cut the ice of Walden Pond and cart it away. They are Irish laborers with Yankee overseers, working for a man who already has \$500,000. Walden freezes over again and when the ice blocks left behind melt they return to the water of the pond.

## **4. Thoreau's contribution to American Literature**

Thoreau is one of the most read and most influential of American authors, with a readership and a following around the world. His writings have been reprinted countless times, both in English and in translation into many foreign languages. His *Walden* is required reading in American literature courses at the college level. Much has been published about Thoreau's life and his work, both of which have been closely studied by scholars. The author himself

has been idolized, and his image and quotations from his writings have been employed for a variety of purposes, including commercial use. In sharp contrast to his current popularity, during his lifetime there was only limited appreciation of Thoreau as a man and as a writer. Thoreau prepared and revised his manuscript material up until his death. In the last months of his life, he was preparing "Walking," "Autumnal Tints," and "Wild Apples" for publication, but died before they appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*.

By the late nineteenth century, the work of naturalists John Burroughs and John Muir — both influenced by Thoreau — drew attention to Thoreau as a nature writer. Beginning in 1899, photographer and environmentalist Herbert Wendell Gleason worked to popularize Thoreau by capturing images of the places that Thoreau had known and about which he had written. Gleason's photographs of Thoreau's world were used to illustrate the 1906 editions of Thoreau's collected writings; some of them appeared in *National Geographic*. Gleason also presented slide lectures on Thoreau for general audiences. From the late 1960s, the rise of environmentalism focused interest not only on Thoreau's writings but also on the work of Burroughs, Muir, and Gleason. Naturalist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Edwin Way Teale helped to popularize Thoreau in the twentieth century.

In the twentieth century, Thoreau's reputation — popular and academic — burgeoned. Interest in his work rose during the Great Depression of the 1930s, economic hardship made the philosophy of the simple life attractive, during the rebellion of the nonconformist "beat generation" in the 1950s, and during the social turmoil and Vietnam War protest of the late 1960s and early 1970s. During the 1930s, Thoreau also started to take on importance as a topic of academic study. The work of Raymond Adams from the 1930s and Walter Harding from the 1940s did much to enhance Thoreau's place in the study of American literature. In 1941, Harding played a key role in establishing the Thoreau Society, now affiliated with the Walden Woods Project (founded in 1990 to prevent development of the area near Walden Pond), both centered at the Thoreau Institute in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

In *Civil Disobedience*, Thoreau presented his ideas about the individual's responsibilities in relation to government. In the twentieth century, this work powerfully affected Mohandas Gandhi, who applied the principle of nonviolent resistance in the struggle for independence in India, and Dr. Martin Luther King, in his leadership of the American civil rights movement. If Thoreau could have foreseen the importance that his work would take on after his death, he probably would have been amazed at the size and range of his future audience. He might not have thought much of intensive scholarly dissection of his life and his writings. But he would likely have taken satisfaction in the translation of his ideals and ideas into constructive individual action.

## 5. Questions

1. Thoreau occasionally forces a long series of tedious details upon us, as for example when in "House-Warming" he tells us a precise history of the freezing of Walden Pond over the past several years. Similarly detailed passages refer to his farming endeavors, his home

construction, and other topics. Why does Thoreau repeatedly display these irrelevant details? How do they fit in to his overall plan for *Walden*?

2. Thoreau is a practical man and a close observer of nature, but he is also a fantasist who makes a lot of references to mythology. In "Economy" he mentions the Greek myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha who created men by throwing stones over their shoulders; in "The Pond in Winter" he compares a pile of ice to Valhalla, palace of the Scandinavian gods. In "Sounds" he describes the Fitchburg Railway train as a great mythical beast invading the calm of Walden. What is the effect of all these mythological references? Do they change the overall message of the work in any important way?

3. Describe how the narrator's financial "economy" is expanded to a philosophy of life.

4. Why did Thoreau retreat to Walden Pond on July 4th, 1845?

or

Why did Thoreau undertake the experiment at Walden Pond? Consider all the reasons he gives for his move to the pond in the first two chapters. Are they consistent? Can they all be true? Which of them seems most important in the light of the book as a whole?

5. Discuss the themes in Thoreau's *Walden*.

## **6. Further Readings of Thoreau**

### ***Books published during Thoreau's Lifetime***

-*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*

-*Walden; or, Life in the Woods*

### ***Posthumously Published Books***

-*Excursions*

-*The Maine Woods*

-*Cape Cod*

-*A Yankee in Canada, with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers*

### ***Essays and Works in Progress Published during Thoreau's Lifetime***

-*Aulus Persius Flaccus*

-*Natural History of Massachusetts*

-*Homer, Ossian, Chaucer*

-*A Walk to Wachusett*

-*Dark Ages*

-*A Winter Walk*

-*The Landlord*

-*Herald of Freedom*

- Thomas Carlyle and His Works*
- Ktaadn and the Maine Woods*
- Resistance to Civil Government*
- The Iron Horse*
- A Poet Buying a Farm*
- An Excursion to Canada*
- A Massachusetts Hermit*
- Slavery in Massachusetts*
- Cape Cod*
- Chesuncook*
- The Last Days of John Brown*
- A Plea for Captain John Brown*
- Martyrdom of John Brown*
- An Address on the Succession of Forest Trees*

***Posthumously Published Essays***

- Walking*
- Autumnal Tints*
- Wild Apples*
- Life Without Principle*
- Night and Moonlight*
- The Wellfleet Oysterman*
- The Highland Light*
- The Service*

***Miscellaneous Writings***

- DIED...Miss Anna Jones*
- Paradise (To Be) Regained.*
- Wendell Phillips before the Concord Lyceum*

## **Paper- XVII. American Literature- I**

### **Unit 5: The Old Man and the Sea- Ernest Hemingway**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Objective

1.2 Biographical Sketch of Earnest Hemingway

1.3 Major works of Hemingway

1.4 Themes and Outlines of Hemingway's novels

1.5 Styles and Techniques used by Hemingway

1.6 Chapterwise summary and Analysis of *The Old Man and the Sea*

#### **2. Themes, Symbols and Structure of *The Old Man and the Sea***

2.1 Structure of The Old man and the Sea

2.2 Themes

2.3 Symbols

#### **3. Character List**

3.1 Major Characters

3.2 Minor Characters

#### **4. Ernest Hemingway's contribution to American Literature**

#### **5. Questions**

#### **6. Further readings of Ernest Hemingway**

## **1. Introduction:**

### 1.1 Objective

This unit provides a biographical sketch of Ernest Hemingway first. Then a list of his major works, their themes and outlines. It also includes a detailed discussion about the styles and techniques used by him. The themes, symbols and the structure of *The Old Man and the Sea* are discussed next, followed by the list of major as well as minor characters. This unit concludes with a discussion about Hemingway's contribution to American literature and a set of questions. Lastly there is a list of further readings of Ernest Hemingway to gain knowledge about the critical aspects of the novel.

### **1.2 Biographical Sketch of Ernest Hemingway**

Ernest Miller Hemingway was born the second of six children in Oak Park, Illinois, on July 21, 1899. His mother, Grace, was a religious woman with musical talent, while his father, Clarence Edmonds ("Ed") Hemingway, was an outdoorsman who loved hunting and fishing in the northern Michigan woods. From an early age, Ernest shared his father's interests. He also vacationed with his mother on Nantucket Island and heard tales of his seafaring great-grandfather, Alexander Hancock. Much of what Hemingway learned in the early years about the outdoors and nature's lessons became the basis of many of his stories, such as some of the Nick Adams stories and *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Hemingway attended Oak Park and River Forest high schools, where he wrote for the newspaper and the literary magazine and participated in sports such as boxing, swimming, and football. He didn't attend college but instead began working as a reporter for the *Kansas City Star*. Later, he also wrote for the *Toronto Star* and *Star Weekly*. His early journalistic career profoundly impacted his literary writing style, which was always honed and spare. Hemingway was rejected for regular military service in World War I because of a weak left eye, so he drove a Red Cross ambulance in Italy, distributing chocolate to Italian troops. While recuperating from serious wounds in a Red Cross hospital in Milan, Hemingway fell in love with nurse Agnes von Kurowsky, who later rejected him as too young. These World War I experiences eventually became invaluable fodder for his most famous war novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. The experiences contributed to many of his war novels' recurring themes: the cruelty and stupidity of war, the greedy materialism and quest for power that cause war,

the platitudes and abstractions that glorify war, and the value of enduring whatever must be endured.

As a foreign correspondent for the *Toronto Star Weekly*, Hemingway moved to Paris. Armed with a letter of introduction from Sherwood Anderson to Gertrude Stein, Hemingway established friendships with a number of famous expatriate writers who helped him develop his craft. Hemingway published *In Our Time*, a collection of short stories, some of them the Nick Adams stories set in Michigan. In 1923, Hemingway made the first of five consecutive yearly trips to Pamplona, Spain, for the bullfights — an experience that eventually served as a basis for *The Sun Also Rises*, which is about the expatriate life in Paris and Pamplona. In the epigraph of that book, Hemingway quotes a line that Gertrude Stein previously recounted: "You are all a lost generation." The phrase "lost generation" quickly became a mantra of the post World War I generation's attitude about the war's effect on their lives and the futility and meaninglessness of life.

In 1928, Hemingway moved to Key West, Florida, and began deep-sea fishing. That same year, his father committed suicide. In 1932, Hemingway went on a two-month fishing expedition to Havana and began marlin fishing, which eventually provided material for *The Old Man and the Sea*. In 1933, he continued fishing off the coast of Cuba, sailed to Paris, and then went on to Africa for a safari in Kenya and Tanganyika. The safari provided a setting for *Green Hills of Africa*.

As a foreign correspondent in Paris, Hemingway began to raise funds for the Loyalist cause in Spain. In 1937, he went to Spain as a war correspondent covering the Spanish Civil War, which gave him material for *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, his best-selling novel about an American volunteer and a band of Spanish Loyalist guerillas. Hemingway's goals in the book included a clear depiction of the indifference of the world's democracies to encroaching fascism and the desperate need to fight against it.

In 1939, Hemingway moved to *Finca Vigia* (Lookout Farm), a house near Havana, Cuba. When World War II began, he volunteered to serve as a spotter for the U.S. Navy, outfitting his own fishing boat, the *Pilar*, to hunt for German submarines off the Cuban coast. In 1944, he became a war correspondent for *Collier's* and covered the war, including the liberation of Paris, with the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division. "Papa" Hemingway, as he was dubbed, purportedly liberated the Ritz hotel in Paris, particularly the bar, just prior to the arrival of Allied troops.

After the war, Hemingway married his fourth wife, Mary Welsh, a *Time* magazine correspondent. Drawing on his World War II experiences, he published *Across the River and*

*Into the Trees*, about a May-December romance. A subtle consideration of war in modern times, this book was less realistic and more symbolic than his previous work and was roundly attacked by critics. However, his 1952 publication of *The Old Man and the Sea* restored his reputation and earned Hemingway the Pulitzer Prize in 1953. In 1954, Hemingway won the Nobel Prize for Literature. The prize committee cited the power of his style, his mastery of narration, and his admiration for the individual who "fights the good fight" in a "world of reality overshadowed by violence and death."

In 1959, Hemingway bought a home in Ketchum, Idaho. In declining health from diabetes, high blood pressure, and mental depression (possibly caused by a genetic illness unrecognized at the time), he attended the Spanish bullfights in 1960 and later celebrated his 60th birthday. At the Mayo Clinic, he twice underwent electric shock treatments, which didn't help him. So great was Hemingway's stature as both a writer and legendary figure, the world mourned after his suicide by shotgun at his home in Ketchum on July 2, 1961.

A number of Hemingway's works were published posthumously. *A Moveable Feast*, published in 1964, contains striking and sometimes abusive representations of the famous literary figures Hemingway had known in Paris. *Islands in the Stream*, published in 1970, is a semi-autobiographical novel, set in the Caribbean, about a painter, his relationships with his family, his loneliness, and his violent death. *The Dangerous Summer*, published in 1985, is based on a bullfight "duel" Hemingway witnessed in Spain in 1960. *The Garden of Eden*, published in 1986, recounts the love affairs of two women and one man, explores complex gender issues, and has prompted many critics to reconsider earlier assessments of Hemingway's machismo.

While Hemingway the dedicated writer and careful editor may seem somewhat at odds with Hemingway the legendary man of action, both sides contributed to a lasting literary legacy. As the dominant concerns of successive generations have changed, readers from each generation have found new understanding and appreciation of Hemingway's works. For example, the generation of Baby Boomers profoundly affected by the Vietnam War found much to identify with in the lost generation's alienation in *The Sun Also Rises*. Subsequent generations, increasingly concerned with international economics and threats to the global environment, may well find the multicultural aspects of Hemingway's literature irresistible and appreciate more fully the environmental foresight of works like *The Old Man and the Sea*. And as the World War II generation (like the World War I generation before it) passes



away, Hemingway's works will remain an invaluable contribution to twentieth-century literature and to the historical perspective of future generations.

### **1.3 Major Works of Ernest Hemingway:**

#### **Novels/Novella**

- *The Torrents of Spring (1925)*
- *The Sun Also Rises (1926)*
- *A Farewell to Arms (1929)*
- *To Have and Have Not (1937)*
- *For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940)*
- *Across the River and Into the Trees (1950)*
- *The Old Man and the Sea (1952)*
- *Adventures of a Young Man (1962)*
- *Islands in the Stream (1970)*
- *The Garden of Eden (1986)*

### **1.4. Themes and Outlines of Hemingway's novels:**

We find, in the works of Hemingway, a metaphysical concern about the nature of an individual's existence in relation to the world. This made him conceive his protagonists as alienated individuals fighting a losing battle against the odds of life with courage, endurance and will as their only weapons. The Hemingway hero is a lonely individual, wounded either physically or emotionally. He exemplifies a code of courageous behavior in a world of irrational destruction. He offers up and exemplifies certain principles of honor, courage and endurance in a life of tension and pain which make a man a man. Violence, struggle, suffering and hardships do not make him in any way pessimistic. Though the 'vague unknown' continues to lure him and frustrate his hopes and purposes, he does not admit defeat. Death rather than humiliation, stoical endurance rather than servile submission are the cardinal virtues of the Hemingway hero.

A close examination of Hemingway's fiction reveals that in his major novels he enacts the general drama of human pain, and that he has used the novel form in order to pose symbolic questions about life. The trials and tribulations undergone by his protagonists are symbolic of man's predicament in this world. He views life as a perpetual struggle in which the individual

has to assert the supremacy of his free will over forces other than himself. In order to assert the dignity of his existence, the individual has to wage a relentless battle against a world which refuses him any identity or fulfillment.

To sum up, Hemingway, in his novels and short stories, presents human life as a perpetual struggle which ends only in death. It is of no avail to fight this battle, where man is reduced to a pathetic figure by forces both within and without. However, what matters is the way man faces the crisis and endures the pain inflicted upon him by the hostile powers that be, be it his own physical limitation or the hostility of society or the indifference of unfeeling nature. The ultimate victory depends on the way one faces the struggle. In a world of pain and failure, the individual also has his own weapon to assert the dignity of his existence. He has the freedom of will to create his own values and ideals. In order to achieve this end, he has to carry on an incessant battle against three oppressive forces, namely, the biological, the social and the environmental barriers of this world. According to Hemingway, the struggle between the individual and the hostile deterministic forces takes place at these three different levels. Commenting on this aspect of the existential struggle found in Hemingway's fiction, Charles Child Walcott has observed that, 'the conflict between the individual needs and social demands is matched by the contest between feeling man and unfeeling universe, and between the spirit of the individual and his biological limitations'. This observation is probably the right key to understand Hemingway, the man and the novelist.

### **1.5 Style and Technique used by Ernest Hemingway:**

Past tense is used. Hemingway's writing style owes much to his career as a journalist. Short words, straightforward sentence structures, vivid descriptions and factual details, repeated images, allusions, and themes; repeated sounds, rhythms, words, and sentence structures. The language also resonates with complex emotions and larger and larger meanings. Hemingway himself claimed that he wrote on the "principle of the iceberg," meaning that "seven-eighths" of the story lay below the surface parts that show Hemingway's efforts to pare down language and convey as much as possible in as few words as possible, the novella's meanings resonate on a larger and larger scale. Simple plot and distance from much of this period's political affairs.

Historical and factual references: Baseball references enabled critics to determine the exact dates in September when the story takes place; to infer a great deal about Cuba's cultural, economic, and social circumstances at the time; and to establish Manolin's exact age.

Despite the narrator's journalistic, matter-of-fact tone, his reverence for Santiago and his struggle is apparent. The text affirms its hero to a degree unusual even for Hemingway. The point of view is rather self-explanatory. Some disembodied voice tells us what's up and heads hops from the old man's thoughts to the thoughts of the boy with ease.

## 1.6 Chapterwise Summary and Analysis

### Pages 1-18

#### Summary

There is an old fisherman in Cuba called Santiago, who has gone eighty-four days without a catch. He is "thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck...and his hands had deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh. They were as old as erosions in a fishless desert" (10). Santiago's lack of success, though, does not destroy his spirit, and he has "cheerful and undefeated" eyes (10).

He has a single friend, a boy named Manolin, who helped him during the first forty days of his dryspell. After forty days, though, Manolin's parents decide the old man was unlucky and ordered their son to join another boat. Despite this, the boy helps the old man to bring in his empty boat every day.

After earning money on the other boat, Manolin asks Santiago if he can return to the old man's service. Santiago refuses the boy, telling him to mind his parents and to stay with the successful boat. Santiago tells Manolin that tomorrow he will go out far in the Gulf to fish. Manolin says that he will try to convince his new employer, who is nearly blind, to fish near Santiago the next day. That way, if Santiago catches a big fish, Manolin and his new employer can help Santiago manage it.

Manolin offers to fetch sardines for the old man, an offer which Santiago first refuses and then accepts. Hemingway tells us that "[Santiago] was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride" (14).

The two gather Santiago's things from his boat and go to the old man's house. His house is a very simple shack with a bed, table, and chair on a dirt floor. There are also religious pictures and a tinted photograph on the wall, relics of his wife. The picture that used to hang on the wall of Santiago's wife had been taken down, since it made him too lonely to look at it.

At the house, the two rehearse a nightly ritual of speaking about fictitious rice and fish and a cast net. They sold the cast net long ago, but they still insist on speaking of it as if it is there. The boy decides to go out to get the sardines for them to eat.

Santiago then pulls out a paper and the two discuss baseball, speaking with great enthusiasm of Joe DiMaggio. Santiago tells Manolin not to fear the Cleveland Indians, but to have faith in the Yankees and trust in DiMaggio. He tells Manolin that eighty-five is a lucky number, and since tomorrow is "the eighty-fifth day" that he will have gone without a catch, maybe they should buy a lottery ticket with that number. Manolin leaves the house and Santiago falls asleep.

### **Analysis**

The first sentence of the book announces itself as Hemingway's: "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish" (9). The words are plain, and the structure, two tightly-worded independent clauses conjoined by a simple conjunction, is ordinary, traits which characterize Hemingway's literary style. While in other works this economy of language is used to convey the immediacy of experience, Hemingway's terseness is heightened here to the point of rendering much of the prose empty on one level and pregnant with meaning on the other; that is, the sentences tend to lose their particular connection to reality but at the same time attain a more general, symbolic character, much like the effect of poetry. Hemingway's style, then, helps explain why so many commentators view his novella more as a fable than as fiction.

The use of the number forty in the next sentence is the first of many religious allusions in the novella. We are told that after forty days (the length of time it took Christ to subdue Satan in the desert), Manolin's parents decided that "the old man was now and definitely *salao*, which is the worst form of unlucky" (9). This sentence proclaims one of the novel's themes, the heroic struggle against unchangeable fate. Indeed, the entire first paragraph emphasizes Santiago's apparent lack of success. For example, "It made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty." And most powerfully, "The sail was patched with flour sacks and, furred, it looked like the flag of permanent defeat" (9).

This type of descriptive degradation of Santiago continues with details of his old, worn body. Even his scars, legacies of past successes, are "old as erosions in a fishless desert" (10). All this changes suddenly, though, when Hemingway says masterfully, "Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and

undefeated" (10). This draws attention to a dichotomy between two different types of success: outer, material success and inner, spiritual success. While Santiago clearly lacks the former, the import of this lack is eclipsed by his possession of the latter. This triumph of indefatigable spirit over exhaustible material resources is another important theme of the novel. Also, Santiago's eye color foreshadows Hemingway's increasingly explicit likening of Santiago to the sea, suggesting an analogy between Santiago's indomitable spirit and the sea's boundless strength.

The relationship between Santiago and Manolin can be summed up in one sentence: "The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him" (10). Manolin is Santiago's apprentice, but their relationship is not restricted to business alone. Manolin idolizes Santiago but the object of this idolization is not only the once great though presently failed fisherman; it is an idolization of ideals. This helps explain Manolin's unique, almost religious devotion to the old man, underscored when Manolin begs Santiago's pardon for his not fishing with the old man anymore. Manolin says, "It was Papa made me leave. I am a boy and I must obey him," to which Santiago replies, "I know... It is quite normal. He hasn't much faith" (10).

Despite the clear hierarchy of this teacher/student relationship, Santiago does stress his equality with the boy. When Manolin asks to buy the old man a beer, Santiago replies, "Why not?... Between fisherman" (11). And when Manolin asks to help Santiago with his fishing, Santiago replies, "You are already a man" (12). By demonstrating that Santiago has little more to teach the boy, this equality foreshadows the impending separation of the two friends, and also indicates that this will not be a story about a young boy learning from an old man, but a story of an old man learning the unique lessons of the autumn of life.

A similar type of unexpected equality comes out when Hemingway describes the various ways marlins and sharks are treated on shore. While this foreshadows the struggle between Santiago's marlin and the sharks, it also equalizes the participants. Despite the battles at sea, the marlins and sharks are both butchered and used by humans on land; their antagonisms mean nothing on shore. Like the case of Santiago and Manolin, this equalization demonstrates the novella's thematic concern with the unity of nature - including humanity - a unity which ultimately helps succor the heroic victim of great tragedy.

Hemingway also peppers the novella with numerous references to sight. We are told, for instance, that Santiago has uncannily good eyesight for a man of his age and experience, while Manolin's new employer is nearly blind. When Manolin notices this, Santiago replies

simply, "I am a strange old man" (14). Given the previously mentioned analogy between Santiago's eyes and the sea, one suspects that his strangeness in this regard has something to do with his relationship to the sea. This connection, though, is somewhat problematic as it might suggest that Santiago would have success as a fisherman. Santiago's exact relation to the sea, though, will be taken up in later chapters.

The simplicity of Santiago's house further develops our view of Santiago as materially unsuccessful. It is interesting that Hemingway draws attention to the relics of Santiago's wife in his house, presenting an aspect of Santiago which is otherwise absent throughout the novel. This is significant because it suggests a certain completeness to Santiago's character which makes him more of an Everyman - appropriate for an allegory - but mentioning it simply to remove it from the stage makes its absence even more noteworthy, and one might question whether the character of Santiago is too roughly drawn to allow the reader to fully identify with his story.

## **Pages 19-37**

### **Summary**

When Manolin returns, he wakes Santiago. The two eat the food the boy has brought. During the course of the meal, the boy realizes the squalor in which the old man lives and reminds himself to bring the old man a shirt, shoes, a jacket, and a blanket for the coming winter. The two talk baseball again, focusing as usual on Joe DiMaggio. Speaking about great baseball stars, the boy calls the old man the greatest fisherman. Santiago accepts the compliment but denies the truth of Manolin's statement, remarking that he knew better fisherman than himself. The boy then leaves to be woken in the morning by the old man. Santiago sleeps.

Santiago dreams of Africa, where he traveled as a shipmate in his youth. "He lived along that coast now every night and in his dreams he heard the surf roar and saw the native boats come riding through it... He dreamed of places now and lions on the beach" (24). The old man wakes and retrieves the boy from his house. The two take the old man's supplies from his shack to his boat and enjoy coffee at an early morning place that serves fishermen. The boy leaves to fetch the sardines for the old man. When he returns, he wishes the old man luck, and Santiago goes out to sea.

Santiago leaves shore early in the morning, before sunrise. "He knew he was going far out and he left the smell of the land behind and rowed out into the clean early morning smell of the ocean" (28). Soon, Santiago rows over a sudden drop of seven hundred fathoms where

shrimp, bait fish, and squid congregate. Moving along, Santiago spots flying fish and birds, expressing great sympathy for the latter. He wonders, "Why did they make birds so delicate and fine as those sea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel? She is kind and very beautiful. But she can be so cruel..." (29).

We are told that while other fishermen, those who used buoys and motorboats, thought of the sea as a masculine competitor or enemy, Santiago "always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favors, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them" (30). Santiago keeps pressing out, past the great well where he has been recently unsuccessful. He travels out where schools of bonito and albacore are, hoping there might be a big fish with them.

Before light, Santiago casts his bait fish out but does not let them drift with the current. He wants to know exactly where his hooks are. Santiago says of this, "I keep them with precision. Only I have no luck anymore. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready" (32).

Santiago sees a man-of-war bird overhead and notices that the bird has spied something in the water. The old man follows near the bird, and drops his own lines into the area, hoping to capture the fish the bird has seen. There is a large school of dolphin traveling fast, too fast for either the bird or Santiago to capture. Santiago moves on, hoping to catch a stray or perhaps even discover a marlin tracking the school.

A Portuguese man-of-war approaches the boat. The old man recalls being stung by the man-of-war before and happily recalls watching their destruction. As he says, "The iridescent bubbles were beautiful. But they were the falsest things in the sea and the old man loved to see the big sea turtles eating them" (36). Having worked on a turtle boat for years, Santiago expresses his empathy for turtles. He says "most people are heartless about turtles because a turtle's heart will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered... I have such a heart too and my hands and feet are like theirs" (37).

### **Analysis**

There is an interesting irony in the inversion of roles between the paternal tutor Santiago and the pupil Manolin. While Santiago took care of Manolin on the water by teaching him how to fish, Manolin takes care of Santiago on land by, for example, making sure the old man eats. When Santiago wants to fish without eating, Santiago assumes a parental tone and declares,

"You'll not fish without eating while I'm alive." To which Santiago replies half-jokingly, "Then live a long time and take care of yourself" (19). This inversion sets up the ensuing narrative by making the old Santiago a youth again, ready to receive the wisdom of his quest. Santiago's almost childlike dream of playful lions, symbols of male strength and virility, is also a gesture of Santiago's second youth.

Besides this, though, the dream of lions on the coast of Africa draws attention to Santiago's personal history as a Spaniard from the Canary Islands. Santiago is the Spanish name for James, the patron saint of Spain. Like Santiago, St. James was a fisherman before he heeded Christ's call to be a fisher of men, and it was he who first brought Christianity to Spain. This parallel further casts a religious air around Santiago and his ensuing struggle.

The nature of these values is not so clear, especially at this point in the book, but Hemingway does offer some clues. There is, as there always is with Hemingway, a premium placed on masculinity and the obligations of manhood. When Santiago wakes Manolin up to help him off, the tired boy says simply, "Que va...It is what a man must do" (26). The acceptance of obligation, then, appear to be marks of manhood, a concept Hemingway will flesh out through the course of the novella.

Santiago's start into the sea is an excellent demonstration of Hemingway's descriptive art in its successive engagement of various senses. First, there is smell: "The old man knew he was going far out and he left the smell of the land behind and rowed out into the clean early morning smell of the ocean" (28). Next, there is sight: "He saw the phosphorescence of the Gulf weed in the water" (29). And lastly, there is hearing: "...[H]e heard the trembling sound as the flying fish left the water" (30). This use of different sensory imagery helps create a powerful description of the sea. As the novella's title might indicate, the sea is to play a very important role in the narrative, and Hemingway's exquisite introduction of the sea, recalling his descriptions of Santiago at the novella's opening in their sustained beauty, signals that importance.

The gendered view of the sea suggests an alternative conception of unity, unity between the masculine and the feminine. As the descriptions of those who view the sea as a man are cast in a negative light, one might argue that the story is repudiation of a homosocial world of competitive masculinity. Man and man will always yield strife; man and woman, Santiago and the sea, complement each other and create a peaceable unity. The representation of the feminine, though, in so abstract a context problematizes this judgment, especially when the



only flesh and blood woman we see in the story, the tourist at the very end, is supposed to upset us.

Santiago's statement that his eyes adjust to the sun during different parts of the day furnishes another example of the importance of sight and visual imagery in the novella. Santiago says, "All my life the early sun has hurt my eyes, he thought. Yet they are still good. In the evening I can look straight into it without getting the blackness. It has more force in the evening too. But in the morning it is just painful" (33). Given the likening of natural time cycles to human age, e.g. September as the autumn of life, it is plausible to read this passage as a statement of the edifying power of age. While it is difficult to find one's way in the morning of youth, this task becomes easier when done by those who have lived through the day into the evening of life.

## **Pages 38-54**

### **Summary**

Santiago notices the bird again, and suspects that he has found fish. Soon after, the old man sees a tuna leap from the water and the bird dives to catch the bait fish stirred up by the tuna's jump. Santiago gently moves toward the school and soon feels a bite. He pulls the albacore in the boat and clubs him to death.

The old man soon realizes that he is talking to himself. "It was considered a virtue not to talk unnecessarily at sea and the old man had always considered it so and respected it. But now he said his thoughts aloud many times since there was no one that they could annoy" (39). Santiago recalls himself from such thinking, saying "Now is the time to think of only one thing. That which I was born for" (40). Soon, there, is a strong bite on one of the lines Santiago cast out earlier.

Santiago notices a bite on his hundred-fathom-deep line. The first bite is hard, and the stick to which the line is connected drops sharply. The next tug is more tentative, but Santiago knows exactly what it is. "One hundred fathoms down a marlin was eating the sardines that covered the point and the shank of the hook where the hand-forged hook projected from the head of the small tuna" (41). Encouraged by a bite that the fish takes so deep, so far out in the Gulf, Santiago reasons that the fish must be very large.

The marlin nibbles around the hook for some time, refusing to take the bait fully. Santiago speaks aloud, as if to cajole the fish into accepting the bait. He says, "Come on... Make another turn. Just smell them. Aren't they lovely? Eat them good now and then there is the

tuna. Hard and cold and lovely. Don't be shy fish. Eat them" (42). After many false bites, the marlin finally takes the tuna and pulls out a great length of line.

Santiago waits a bit for the marlin to swallow the hook and then pulls hard on the line to bring the marlin up to the surface. The fish is strong, though, and does not come up. Instead, he swims away, dragging the old man and his skiff along behind. Santiago wishes he had Manolin with him to help. Alone, though, he must let the fish take the line it wants or risk losing it. Eventually, the fish will tire itself out and die. "But four hours later the fish was still swimming steadily out to sea, towing the skiff, and the old man was still braced solidly with the line across his back" (45).

As the sun goes down, the marlin continues on in the same direction, and Santiago loses sight of land altogether. The result is a curious stalemate. As Santiago says, "I can do nothing with him and he can do nothing with me....Not as long as he keeps this up" (47). He wishes for the boy again and muses that "no one should be alone in their old age....But it is unavoidable" (48). As if in response to this expression of loneliness, two porpoises come to the surface. Seeing the frolicking couple, Santiago remarks, "They are good....They play and make jokes and love one another. They are our brothers like the flying fish" (48). Santiago then remembers a female marlin he and Manolin caught. The male marlin had stayed beside the boat in despair, leaping in the air to see his mate in the boat before he disappeared into the deep ocean. It was the saddest thing Santiago had ever seen.

Something then takes one of the baits behind Santiago, but he cuts the line order to avoid distraction from the marlin, wishing Manolin was there to watch the other lines. Expressing his resolve, Santiago says, "Fish... I'll stay with you until I am dead" (52). He expresses ambivalence over whether he wants the fish to jump, wanting to end the struggle as quickly as possible but worrying that the hook might slip out of the fish's mouth. Echoing his former resolve though with less certainty, Santiago says, "Fish... I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends" (54).

### **Analysis**

That the fishermen call all the fish tuna and only differentiate between them when they sell them is at once a statement of the theme of unity and a repudiation of the market. It is not ignorance that underlies this practice, but rather a simplifying appreciation of the unity of the sea. There are fish and there are fisherman; those who are caught and those who catch. This distillation of parts heightens the allegorical quality of the novel. The market forces the

fisherman to forget this symbolic binary relationship and focus on differentiation, requiring a multiplication of the terms of difference. As the novella stakes out a position of privileging unity, this market-driven divisionism comes across negatively. This makes sense in light of Hemingway's previously mentioned anger at the unappreciative literary audience for his previous effort.

Hemingway's description of the marlin's initial nibbling on the bait utilizes the same phrases again and again, e.g. "delicate pulling." While this may express the actual event perfectly, the repetition creates a distancing effect, pushing the prose more toward poetry and less towards realistic objectivity. This heightens the allegorical quality of the narrative, which, at least explicitly, Hemingway denied.

The response with which Santiago's thoughts of loneliness are met is another expression of the theme of unity in the novella. Santiago thinks to himself, "No one should be alone in their old age....But it is unavoidable" (48). As if in response to this, Hemingway introduces a pair of friendly dolphins in the very next paragraph. "They are good," says Santiago. "They make jokes and love on another. They are our brothers like the flying fish" (48).

Santiago begins to feel sorry for the marlin he has hooked. This pity for the great fish is intensified when Santiago recalls seeing the misery of a male marlin after he had caught its mate. Suddenly, Santiago is speaking of his actions as "treachery," an odd word for a fisherman to use in describing his trade. The more he identifies with the sea and its creatures, the more despicable his actions become. Soon, though, Santiago's treachery is transformed from his act of killing to his having gone out further than most fishermen go.

The image of a struggle between two figures alone in the great "beyond" certainly conjures an air of monumental conflict. This heroic angle is played up even more when Santiago ends these reflections by thinking, "Perhaps I should not have been a fisherman....But that was the thing I was born for" (50). Again, this emphasis on fate is typical of heroic stories, especially tragedies.

Santiago's identification with and affection for the marlin increases the longer he is with the fish. In order to convince the fish to be caught and to steel himself for his difficult task, Santiago says, "Fish... I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you before this day ends" (54). Soon after, Santiago tells the bird that has landed on his boat that he cannot help because he is "with a friend" (55). And later, Santiago goes as far as to wish that he could feed the marlin, calling it his brother.

## Pages 55-72

### Summary

A small bird lands on the boat and Santiago speaks to it. He asks the bird how old it is, and worries that it will encounter dangerous hawks. While Santiago is speaking to the bird, the marlin lurches forward and pulls the old man down, cutting his hand. Lowering his hand to water to clean it, Santiago notices that the marlin has slowed down.

He decides to eat a tuna he has caught in order to give him strength for his ordeal. As he is cutting the fish, though, his left hand cramps. "What kind of hand is that," Santiago says, "Cramp then if you want. Make yourself into a claw. It will do you no good" (58). The old man eats the tuna, hoping it will renew his strength and help release the cramp in his hand.

Santiago considers his lonely condition. He is surrounded by a seemingly endless expanse of deep, dark water. Staring at the clouds, though, he sees a "flight of wild ducks etching themselves against the sky over water, then blurring, then etching again and he knew no man was ever alone on the sea" (61). Santiago soon focuses on his hand, though, and contemplates the humiliation of a cramp, an insurrection of one's own body against oneself.

Just then, the marlin comes out of the water quickly and descends into the water again. Santiago is amazed by its size, two feet longer than the skiff. He realizes that the marlin could destroy the boat if it wanted to and says, "...Thank God, they are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and more able" (63). Santiago says prayers to assuage his worried heart and settles into the chase once again.

Not knowing how much longer it will take to subdue the marlin, Santiago throws another line out to catch a fish for food. His cramped hand begins to relax, and in his exhaustion, Santiago thinks about Joe DiMaggio and his bone spur. Comparing a bone spur to the spurs of fighting cocks, Santiago concludes that "man is not much beside the great birds and beast" (68).

As the sun sets, Santiago thinks back to triumphs of his past in order to give himself more confidence in the present. He remembers a great arm-wrestling match he had at a tavern in Casablanca. It had lasted a full day and a night, but Santiago, El Campeon (The Champion) as he was known then, eventually won. "He decided that he could beat anyone if he wanted to badly enough and he decided that it was bad for his right hand for fishing" (70). He tried to wrestle with his left hand but it was a traitor then as it had been now.

Santiago then catches a dolphin (the fish, not the mammal) for food. He is able to catch it just before dark, because it starts jumping in the air out of fear. He then throws the line out again in case he needs more sustenance later.

### **Analysis**

The cramping of Santiago's left hand creates tension first by debilitating the protagonist even more, making failure more likely and his triumph sweeter. Second, if we accept an autobiographical reading of the novella, it can be a symbol for writer's block. This is importantly different from Hemingway's previous attempts to blame the readers for his recent lack of success. Now, suddenly, the fault is his. Not wholly though. The hand reacts in spite of its possessor's intention, and Santiago speaks to his hand as if it operated independently of himself. This certainly makes the question of who is responsible for Hemingway's failures more complicated.

In addition, Santiago's response to the cramp also affords us an opportunity to investigate Hemingway's conception of manhood. As Hemingway writes, "It is humiliating before others to have a diarrhea from ptomaine poisoning or to vomit from it. But a cramp, he thought of it as a calambre, humiliates oneself especially when one is alone" (62). A man's sense of humiliation does not depend exclusively on the presence (or imagined presence) of others who would look upon him with disgust or disdain. It rests on an internal standard of dignity, one which privileges above all control over one's self. It is not only inconvenient or frustrating that Santiago's hand cramped, it is, as Santiago says, "unworthy of it to be cramped" (64). This concern with worthiness is a important to the novel.

Santiago's concerns about his own worthiness come to a head when he finally beholds the fish he is tracking. When Santiago finally catches a glimpse of the great marlin, he imagines he is in some sort of aristocratic feud, with each participant needing to demonstrate his prowess to the other before the fight. Not, though, to intimidate the opponent, but rather to demonstrate his own status, to show the other that he is a worthy antagonist. "I wonder why he jumped, the old man thought. He jumped almost as though to show me how big he was. I know now, anyway, he thought. I wish I could show him what sort of man I am. But then he would see the cramped hand" (64). This necessity to be seen as worthy in the eyes of a perceived equal or superior complicates the internal standard of manhood which Hemingway seems to elucidate elsewhere.

From the time Santiago sees the fish to the end of the book, he seems obsessed with the idea of proving himself a worthy slayer of such a noble beast. This obsession, more often than not, is couched in self-ascriptions of inferiority. Santiago thanks God that marlins "are not as intelligent as we who kill them; although they are more noble and able" (63). And he thinks to himself, "I wish I was the fish... with everything he has against only my will and my intelligence" (64). The dissociation between intelligence on the one hand and nobility and ability on the other is very interesting, as it amounts to an exaltation of the natural and animalistic over the human, if we accept intelligence as the mark of humanity. This heightens the stakes of the struggle between the marlin and Santiago, and almost necessitates the long battle that ensues, for Santiago's eventual victory can only be seen as deserved if he has proved his worthiness and nobility through suffering. In the end, though, we might still ask, according to the novella's own terms, whether Santiago's victory over the fish amounted to a triumph for humanity or a miscarriage of justice, in which an ignoble human brute defeats the sea's paragon of nobility.

Santiago's need to prove his worthiness is unique to each instance: "the thousand times he had proved it mean nothing. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it" (66). This can be read as a broad statement about nobility, one which holds that nobility is not a really a quality of character but of actions. Given the novella's aforementioned emphasis on allegorical generality, it seems safe to accept the latter reading. As with the necessity of having one's worthiness recognized by others, this alienation of nobility from the person to his deeds complicates Hemingway's internal standard of manhood.

In the course of these considerations, Santiago recalls the figure of Joe DiMaggio, identified at the beginning of the novella as a heroic paragon. "I must have confidence," thought Santiago, "and I must be worthy of the great DiMaggio who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur in his heel" (68). It is strange, though, that immediately after valorizing DiMaggio, Santiago immediately diminishes the baseball player's greatness by thinking that the pain of a bone spur could not be as bad as the pain of the spur of a fighting cock. He even concludes that "man is not much beside the great birds and beasts. Still I would rather be that beast down there in the darkness of the sea" (68). Again, Nature, and the marlin especially, is privileged above even the greatest exemplars of human greatness.

The theme of sight and the use of visual imagery appear many times in this section. In wondering how the world looks in the darkness of the deep of ocean, Santiago remarks,

"Once I could see quite well in the dark. Not in the absolute dark. But almost as a cat sees" (67). Also, when Santiago sees a plane flying overhead, he considers what the fish look like from such a height, in particular how their rich colors change. This emphasis on sight and the visual field seems both to be an attempt by Hemingway to convey realistic experience and to follow the age-old association between the sense of sight and the perception of a deeper reality. Santiago's uncanny vision tells the reader to give credence to the wisdom he uncovers through his adventure.

## **Pages 73-90**

### **Summary**

As the sun sets again, Santiago ties together two oars across the stern to create more drag. Looking up into the night sky, Santiago calls the stars his friends and says, "The fish is my friend too... I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him. I am glad we do not have to try to kill the stars" (75). After considering this, Santiago begins to feel sorry for the fish again and concludes that the people who will buy his meat at the market will not be worthy to eat of such a noble beast.

Recalling his exhaustion, Santiago decides that he must sleep some if he is to kill the marlin. He cuts up the dolphin he has caught to prevent spoiling, and eats some of it before contriving a way to sleep. Santiago wraps the line around him and leans against the bow to anchor himself, leaving his left hand on the rope to wake him if the marlin lurches.

Soon, the old man is asleep. He dreams of a school of porpoises, much like the two porpoises that arrived to comfort him in his loneliness. He also dreams of his village house, and that his right arm is asleep; though in reality, this is the part of him that is still awake, waiting to be tugged by the line. Finally he dreams of the lions of his youth on the African beach and feels happy.

Santiago is awoken by the line rushing furiously through his right hand. The marlin leaps out of the water and it is all the old man can do to hold onto the line, now cutting his hand badly and dragging him down to the bottom of the skiff. His left hand is asleep, so it is difficult to stop the line from running out with only his right hand.

Santiago finds his balance, though, and realizes that the marlin has filled the air sacks on his back and cannot go deep to die. The marlin will circle and then the endgame will begin. He cannot see the marlin but he can hear him leaping out of the water. Santiago cleans crushed

dolphin meat off his face because he is afraid it will nauseate him and, vomiting, he will lose the strength he needs to fight the marlin.

At sunrise, the marlin begins a large circle. Santiago holds the line strongly, pulling it in slowly as the marlin goes round. As Santiago says, "the strain will shorten his circle each time. Perhaps in an hour I will see him. Now I must convince him and then I must kill him" (87). Santiago feels faint and worries that he will fail after this long fight. But he prays to God that he will say prayers later if only he can have the strength to defeat the fish.

Santiago continues pulling him in until the marlin catches the wire lead of the line with his spear and regains some of the line. Eventually, the marlin clears the lead and Santiago pulls back the line he lost. At the third turn, Santiago sees the fish and is amazed by its size. He readies the harpoon and pulls the line in more.

### **Analysis**

During this section, instead of concerning himself solely with his own worthiness to kill the marlin, he now concerns himself with whether the people who will buy and eat the meat of the marlin will be worthy to do so. "Are they worthy to eat him? No, of course not. There is no one worthy of eating him from the manner of his behavior and his great dignity" (75). This extension of unworthiness from the killer to consumer underscores how truly inferior Santiago thinks people are with respect to great beasts such as the marlin. He may prove his own worth by enduring his struggle, but there is no way for the people in the fish markets to prove themselves.

The theme of unity comes out in this section as well. Whereas this theme had previously taken the form of Santiago's identification with the sea and its creatures, Santiago expands the scope of his identification by including the celestial bodies as brothers. He claims fraternity with the stars on several occasions and justifies his need to sleep by considering the behavior of the moon and sun and ocean. He says, "I am as clear as the stars that are my brothers. Still I must sleep. They sleep and the moon and the sun sleep and even the ocean sleeps sometimes on certain days when there is no current and a flat calm" (77). This broader identification underscores the unity of human life with all of nature.

When he finally does fall asleep, Santiago dreams of "a vast school of porpoises that stretched for eight or ten miles and it was in the time of their mating and they would leap high into the air and return into the same hole they had made in the water when they leaped" (81). The imagery here is obviously sexual, emphasizing the feminine character of the sea



which Santiago spoke about in the first section. It is mating season and the porpoises, phallic symbols par excellence, go in and out of the same hole, yonic symbol par excellence, in the ocean, already known to us as feminine.

Santiago's religion is emphasized when he prays to God to help him catch the fish; however, he prioritizes the battle with the marlin over the necessity of praying right that moment, concluding, "I'll say a hundred Our Fathers and a hundred Hail Marys. But I cannot say them now." These types of rote prayers are usually said by Catholics for penance after sinning; this commitment to say them later reflects Santiago's view of himself as sinning against the fish.

Just as Christ resisted the temptation of the devil, Santiago resists the temptation of giving in to his exhaustion as he battles the marlin. "It was a great temptation to rest in the bow and let the fish make one circle by himself without recovering any line." But he is committed to beating the fish, to proving his strength is more steadfast, thinking, "He'll be up soon and I can last. You have to last. Don't even speak of it."

## **Pages 91-108**

### **Summary**

The marlin tries desperately to pull away. Santiago, no longer able to speak because he has become dehydrated, thinks, "You are killing me, fish... But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who" (92). This marlin continues to circle, coming closer and pulling out. At last it is next to the skiff, and Santiago drives his harpoon into the marlin's chest.

"Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty" (94). It crashes into the sea, blinding Santiago with a shower of sea spray. With the glimpse of vision he had, Santiago saw the slain beast laying on its back, crimson blood disseminating into the azure water. Seeing his prize, Santiago says, "I am a tired old man. But I have killed this fish which is my brother and now I must do the slave work" (95).

Having killed the Marlin, Santiago lashes its body alongside his skiff. The fish is too heavy to put in the boat itself, so he must tow it back to shore alongside the boat. He pulls a line through the marlin's gills and out its mouth, keeping its head near the bow. "I want to see him, he thought, and to touch and to feel him. He is my fortune, he thought" (95). Having

secured the marlin to the skiff, Santiago draws the sail and lets the trade wind push him toward the southwest.

An hour after Santiago killed the marlin, a mako shark appears. It had followed the trail of blood the slain marlin left in its wake. As the shark approaches the boat, Santiago prepares his harpoon, hoping to kill the shark before it tears apart the marlin. "The shark's head was out of water and his back was coming out and the old man could hear the noise of skin and flesh ripping on the big fish when he rammed the harpoon down onto the shark's head" (102). The dead shark slowly sinks into the deep ocean water.

The shark took forty pounds of flesh from the marlin and mutilated its perfect side. Santiago no longer likes to look at the fish; "when the fish had been hit it was as though he himself were hit" (103). He began to regret having caught the marlin at all, wishing that his adventure had been but a dream. Despite the challenges before him, though, Santiago concludes that "man is not made for defeat... A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (103).

Soon Santiago considers whether his killing the fish was a sin. He first says that he killed the marlin to feed himself and others, and if this is a sin, then everything is a sin. But he had not only killed the marlin for food, "you, [Santiago], killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman. You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more?" (105). Santiago soon ceases this line of thought to concentrate on getting back to shore.

He eats a bit of the fish from where the mako shark tore its flesh. He notes that it is delicious, quality meat, but knows that other sharks will smell it in the water. Two hours later, two shovel-nosed sharks arrive at the skiff. Since he has his harpoon to the mako, Santiago fastens his knife to the end of the oar and now wields this against the sharks. He kills the first shark easily by stabbing it in the eyes.

### **Analysis**

Santiago's final confrontation with the fish after he wakes further develops Santiago's equality with the fish and the operative conception of manhood which Santiago works to uphold. Pulling in the circling fish exhausts Santiago, and the exasperated old fisherman exclaims, "You are killing me, fish... But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who" (92). As before, the marlin is Santiago's exemplar of nobility. This,

like so much of Santiago's relation to the fish, seems to recall an aristocratic code of honor in which dying by the hand of a noble opponent is as noble an end as defeating him.

Santiago's obsession with valorizing his opponent seems to be a far cry from our common idea that one must devalue or dehumanize that which we kill. To view a victim as an equal is supposed to render killing it a sin, and make oneself susceptible to death: the golden rule, if you don't want to die (and who does?), is to not kill others. Santiago defies this reasoning, though he accepts the consequences of its logic of equality. Instead of trying to degrade his object, he elevates it, accepting with it the equalizing proposition that his death is as worthy an outcome of the struggle as his opponent's death. He is only worthy to kill the opponent if he is worthy to be killed by him: two sides of the same coin.

Hemingway accentuates Santiago's personal destruction by reiterating his connection with the marlin he has caught. Soon after he has secured the marlin to the boat and hoisted his sail, he becomes somewhat delirious, questioning if it is he who is bringing in the marlin or vice versa. His language is very telling. "...[I]f the fish were in the skiff, with all dignity gone, there would be no question... But they were sailing together lashed side by side" (99). Even in death, then, the fish has not lost his dignity. This identification is highlighted after the first shark attack when Hemingway tells us that Santiago "did not like to look at the fish anymore since he had been mutilated. When the fish had been hit it was as though he himself were hit" (103).

The sharks are widely read as representations of literary critics, tearing apart the Santiago's (Hemingway's) catch (book). They can also be read as representations of the negative, destructive aspect of the sea and, more generally, human existence. As we have seen, the theme of unity is very important in the novel, but this unity does not only encompass friendly or innocuous aspects of the whole. While he battles against them, the sharks are no less creatures of the sea than the friendly porpoises Santiago encounters earlier in his expedition. This is brought out most strongly in the descriptions of the mako, the first shark Santiago encounters. "He was a very big Mako shark built to swim as fast as the fastest fish in the sea and everything about him was beautiful except his jaws. His back was as blue as the sword fish's and his belly was silver and his hide was smooth and handsome" (100). Indeed, "he was built as a sword fish except for his huge jaws" (100). The mako is not a nasty or brutish beast, but noble in its own way, a predatory marlin. Reflecting on his victory over the mako, Santiago says the shark is "cruel and able and strong and intelligent. But I was more intelligent than he was. Perhaps not... Perhaps I was only better armed" (103).

Santiago's discussion of sin is very significant in a novella about man's resistance against fate. He wonders if it was a sin for him to kill the marlin. "I suppose it was even though I did it to keep alive and feed many people. But then everything is a sin" (105). Santiago attempts to assuage this doubt by recalling that he was "born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish" (106). According to this reasoning, Santiago is fated to sin and, presumably, to suffer for it. This seems to express Hemingway's belief that human existence is characterized by constant suffering, not because of some avoidable transgression, but because that's just the way it is.

Thinking more, Santiago reasons that he did not only kill the marlin for food. Speaking to himself, he says, "You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman. You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after. If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more?" (105). Adding to his guilt about killing the marlin, Santiago then recalls his enjoyment of killing the mako. As noted earlier, the mako is not a unconditionally wicked creature. As Santiago says to himself, "He lives on the live fish as you do. He is not a scavenger nor just a moving appetite as some sharks are. He is beautiful and noble and knows no fear of anything." Why then could he enjoy this killing and not the marlin's? Santiago offers two short responses, though neither one really answers the question: "I killed him in self-defense... And I killed him well" (107). The second response seems to more significant, but this would mean that killing the marlin was not a sin since he killed it well too. This suggests Santiago's sin, if it exists, must be interpreted differently.

## **Pages 109-127**

### **Summary**

While he easily killed the first shark, Santiago has no such luck with the second one, which shakes the skiff as it devours the marlin from beneath. Santiago apologizes to the fish for the mutilation it has suffered by the sharks. He admits, "I shouldn't have gone out so far, fish... Neither for you nor for me. I am sorry, fish" (110). Tired and losing hope, Santiago sits and waits for the next attacker, a single shovel-nosed shark. The old man succeeds in killing the fish but breaks his knife blade in the process.

More sharks appear at sunset and Santiago only has a club with which to beat them away. He does not kill the sharks, but damages them enough to prevent their return. Santiago then looks forward to nightfall as he will be able to see the lights of Havana, guiding him back to land. He regrets not having cleaved off the marlin's sword to use as a weapon when he had the

knife and apologizes again to the fish. At around ten o'clock, he sees the light of Havana and steers toward it.

In the night, the sharks return. "By midnight he fought and this time he knew the fight was useless. They came in a pack and he could only see the lines in the water their fins made and their phosphorescence as they threw themselves on the fish" (118). He clubs desperately at the fish, but the club is soon taken away by a shark. Santiago grabs the tiller and attacks the sharks until the tiller breaks. "That was the last shark of the pack that came. There was nothing more for them to eat" (119).

Santiago "sailed lightly now and he had no thoughts nor any feelings of any kind" (119). He concentrates purely on steering homewards and ignores the sharks that come to gnaw on the marlin's bones. He tastes blood in his mouth and spits it into the water, cursing the sharks. When he arrives at the harbor, everyone is asleep.

Santiago steps out of the boat, carrying the mast back to his shack. "He started to climb again and at the top he fell and lay for some time with the mast across his shoulder. He tried to get up. But it was too difficult and he sat there with the mast on his shoulder and looked at the road" (121). When he finally rises, he has to sit five times before reaching home. Arriving at his shack, Santiago collapses on his bed and falls asleep.

Manolin arrives at the shack while Santiago is still asleep. The boy leaves quickly to get some coffee for Santiago, crying on his way to the Terrace. Manolin sees fisherman gathered around the skiff, measuring the marlin at eighteen feet long. When Manolin returns to the shack, Santiago is awake. The two speak for a while, and Manolin says, "Now we will fish together again," To which Santiago replies, "No. I am not lucky. I am not lucky anymore" (125). Manolin objects, "The hell with luck....I'll bring the luck with me" (125). Santiago acquiesces and Manolin leaves to fetch food and a shirt.

That afternoon there are tourists on the Terrace. A female tourist sees the skeleton of the marlin moving in the tide. Not recognizing the skeleton, she asks the waiter what it is. He responds in broken English "eshark," thinking she wants to know what happened. She comments to her partner that she didn't know sharks had such beautiful tails. Meanwhile, back in Santiago's shack, the old man "was still sleeping on his face and the boy was sitting by him watching him. The old man was dreaming about lions" (127).

## **Analysis**

Throughout this final section, Santiago repeatedly apologizes to the marlin in a way that provides another way to read Santiago's sin. He says, "Half fish... Fish that you were. I am sorry that I went out so far. I ruined us both" (115). Santiago's transgression is no longer his killing of the fish, but going out too far in the ocean, "beyond all people in the world" (50). While the former sin helped account for the inescapable misery of the human condition, the latter focuses instead on avoidable misery brought about by intentional action. Santiago chose to go out so far; he did not need to do so, but in doing so he must surrender his prize, the marlin, to the jealous sea.

This understanding of Santiago's sin is strange because it seems to separate man from nature in a way which contradicts the rest of the novella. Going out too far is an affront against nature similar to the hubristic folly of Greek tragedy; he has courted disaster through his own pride. Nowhere previously in the novel was this apparent, though. The sea seemed to welcome him, providing him company and food for his expedition. There was no resistance from nature to his activities, except perhaps the sharks, but these were never made to be nature's avengers. This reading of Santiago's sin thus seems very problematic.

After Santiago sees the two sand sharks approaching, he says "Ay," a word which Hemingway describes as "just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the woods" (107). This is an explicit identification of Santiago with Christ. Later, Santiago carries the mast back to his shack, much as Christ carried the cross on his shoulders, falling several times (as Christ did on the Stations of the Cross) only to collapse on his bed to sleep "face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up," recalling the crucifixion (122).

Santiago's discussion of luck after the second shovel-nosed shark attack is interesting dramatically, as it at once foreshadows Santiago's misfortune and offers the slightest illusion of hope for the reader as the novella approaches its end. He wonders to himself, "Maybe I'll have the luck to bring the forward half in. I should have some luck. No... You violated your luck when you went too far outside" (116). This clearly foreshadows the loss of the entire marlin. Later, though, Santiago remarks that "Luck is a thing that comes in many forms and who can recognize her?" (117). This statement certainly suggests that luck may be with Santiago even if it is not apparent to him or to the reader. Of course, there is no luck for Santiago, but suggesting there might be makes Santiago's eventual misfortune more powerful.

That Santiago completes the novel undefeated and still in possession of his dignity is demonstrated by his conversation with Manolin. His first words to the boy are "They beat me. They truly beat me," referring to the sharks (124). Immediately, though, he moves to mundane matters such as what to do with the head of the marlin and what Manolin has caught in his absence. When Santiago refuses to fish with Manolin because of his own lack of luck, the boy says he will bring the luck. Soon, Santiago is talking about how to make a new killing lance in preparation of their next voyage. Finally, in the last sentence of the novel, we are told that "the old man was dreaming of lions," the same symbols of strength and youth which he enjoyed before his voyage (127). True to Hemingway's formula for heroism, Santiago, for all this trials and tribulations, remains the same unsuccessful but undefeated soul as before.

The female tourist at the end of the book represents the feminine incapacity to appreciate Santiago's masculine quest. For her, the marlin skeleton, a phallic symbol, is just "garbage waiting to go out with the tide" (127). She does not speak the waiter and Santiago's language, and so is ignorant of the old man's great deeds. Her misunderstanding is simple enough, but the fact that she is the only actual female character in the novel and that this episode appears on the last page gives it added significance.

## **2. Themes, Symbols and Structure of *The Old Man and the Sea*:**

### **2.1 Structure of *The Old Man and the Sea*:**

The novel tells a simple story of a simple fisherman who is luckless enough not to catch a single fish for eighty-four days; he refuses, however, to be discouraged. On the eighty-fifth day, he decides to venture far out to sea, hoping to change his bad luck. He is even optimistic enough to believe that he may catch a big fish. In tune with the natural world about him, he spies birds and plankton that lead him to a good fishing spot. He carefully baits his hooks and patiently waits.

Santiago's patience pays off. Something big takes his bait, and because of his skill, the old man is able to hook it, beginning the adventure of the story. For three days and nights, he does battle with this giant creature from the sea. For most of the journey he does not even know what he is fighting, though he assumes it is a giant marlin. When the magnificent fish finally surfaces, Santiago is tremendously impressed with its size, its beauty, and its nobility. He begins to identify with the fish, almost regretting that he feels compelled to kill it. He tries to justify his actions by saying that he is not fishing for sport, but to feed himself and others.

Hemingway carefully develops the old man's battle with the fish in three stages: the time before Santiago knows his adversary; the time when he realizes just what a powerful creature he must master; and the time when the fish starts circling and the old man successfully brings it in for the kill. As Hemingway stresses the stages of this outward journey of the fish that pulls the old man further and further from the security of the shore to the unknown reaches of the sea, he also develops the inward journey of Santiago. The old man must reach inside himself and come up with all his reserve of strength, intelligence, and logic to win his battle against the mighty fish; it is truly a display of grace under pressure on the part of Santiago.

In contrast to the first half of the book, characterized by a calm sea and Santiago's feeling of oneness with nature and the big fish, the second half of the book shows the evil side of the natural world, symbolized by the sharks. Santiago hates them because they are sly thieves and the deadliest creatures of the deep. In contrast to his regret over killing the giant marlin, the old man delights in stabbing or clubbing each shark. Santiago's battle with the sharks is also developed in three stages, helping to unify the plot.

Throughout the novel, the reader is made aware of the old man's noble suffering, his practicality, his love for living and non-living things, and his extraordinary grit, courage, and determination. These characteristics, that he repeatedly displays in the midst of his struggles, bind the story together. Charles Darwin, the eminent biologist, speaks of struggle as an intrinsic part of the life of a human being, which results in the survival of the fittest. In the old man's saga of suffering, he proves that he is a fit man, not only in physical terms but also in psychological terms. He survives where the normal man would have crumbled. At the end of the book, he is truly a hero who has gone beyond normal human endeavor; and yet not marred by pride or greed, he humbly sees himself as one who has been defeated by the sharks.

## **2.2 Themes:**

### **2.2.1 Resistance to Defeat**

As a fisherman who has caught nothing for the last 84 days, Santiago is a man fighting against defeat. Yet Santiago never gives in to defeat: he sails further into the ocean than he ever has before in hopes of landing a fish, struggles with the marlin for three days and nights despite immense physical pain and exhaustion, and, after catching the marlin, fights off the



sharks even when it's clear that the battle against them is hopeless. Whenever the situation gets particularly difficult and despair threatens to overwhelm Santiago, he turns to a number of tactics to fuel his resistance to defeat: he recalls memories of his youthful strength; he relies on his pride by demanding that he prove himself a worthy role model for Manolin or by comparing himself to his hero Joe DiMaggio; and he prays to God, even though his prayers do nothing to ease his physical suffering.

Ultimately, Santiago represents every man's struggle to survive. And just as Santiago's effort to bring the marlin back to land intact is doomed, no man can ever escape death. Yet through Santiago's struggle, Hemingway makes the case that escape from death is not the issue. As Santiago observes near the end of his struggle with the marlin, "a man can be destroyed but not defeated." In other words, victory over the inevitable is not what defines a man. Rather, it is a man's struggle against the inevitable, even when he knows it is inevitable, that defines him. And the more difficult the struggle, the more worthy the opponent, the more powerfully a man can prove himself.

### **2.2.2 Pride**

Pride is often depicted as a negative attribute that causes people to reach for too much and, as a result, suffer a terrible fall. After he kills the first shark, Santiago, who knows he killed the marlin "for pride," wonders if the sin of pride was responsible for the shark attack because pride caused him to go out into the ocean beyond the usual boundaries that fishermen observe. Santiago immediately dismisses the idea, however, and the events of *The Old Man and the Sea* support his conviction that pride is not the cause of his difficulties.

In fact, Santiago's pride is portrayed as the single motivating force that spurs him to greatness. It is his pride that pushes him to survive three grueling days at sea, battling the marlin and then the sharks. Yet it is important to recognize that Santiago's pride is of a particular, limited sort. Pride never pushes him to try to be more than he is. For instance, when Manolin tells him, "The best fisherman is you," early in the story, Santiago humbly disagrees. Rather, Santiago takes pride in being exactly what he is, a man and a fisherman, and his struggle can be seen as an effort to be the best man and fisherman that he can be. As he thinks in the middle of his struggle with the marlin, he must kill the marlin to show Manolin "what a man can do and what a man endures." Santiago achieves the crucial balance

between pride and humility—that "[humility] was not disgraceful and it carried no true loss of pride."

### **2.2.3 Friendship**

The friendship between Santiago and Manolin plays a critical part in Santiago's victory over the marlin. In return for Santiago's mentorship and company, Manolin provides physical support to Santiago in the village, bringing him food and clothing and helping him load his skiff. He also provides emotional support, encouraging Santiago throughout his unlucky streak. Although Santiago's "hope and confidence had never gone," when Manolin was present, "they were freshening as when the breeze rises." And once he encounters the marlin, Santiago refuses to accept defeat because he knows Manolin would be disappointed in him.

Yet most of the novella takes place when Santiago is alone. Except for Manolin's friendship in the evenings, Santiago is characterized by his isolation. His wife has died, and he lives and fishes alone. Even so, just as he refuses to give in to death, he refuses to give in to loneliness. Santiago finds friends in other creatures. The flying fish are "his principal friends on the ocean," and the marlin, through their shared struggle, becomes his "brother." He calls the stars his "distant friends," and thinks of the ocean as a woman he loves. Santiago talks to himself, talks to his weakened left hand, and imagines Manolin sitting next to him. In the end, these friendships—both real and imagined—prevent Santiago from pitying himself. As a result, he has the support to achieve what seems physically impossible for an old man.

### **2.2.4 Youth and Age**

The title of the novella, *The Old Man and the Sea*, suggests the critical thematic role that age plays in the story. The book's two principal characters, Santiago and Manolin, represent the old and the young, and a beautiful harmony develops between them. What one lacks, the other provides. Manolin, for example, has energy and enthusiasm. He finds food and clothing for Santiago, and encourages him despite his bad luck. Santiago, in turn, has wisdom and experience. He tells Manolin stories about baseball and teaches him to fish. Santiago's determination to be a good role model for Manolin is one of his main motivations in battling the marlin for three days—he wants to show Manolin "what a man can do."

Santiago's age is also important to the novella because it has made him physically weak. Without this weakness, his triumph would not be so meaningful to him. As Santiago says, he "had seen many [fish] that weighed more than a thousand pounds and had caught two of that size in his life, but never alone" and never as an old man. Santiago finds solace and strength in remembering his youth, which is symbolized by the lions on the beach that he sees in his dreams. He recalls these lions—slow, graceful but fierce creatures—from the perspective of an old man. In doing so, he realizes that he too, although slow, can still be a formidable opponent.

### **2.2.5 Man and Nature**

Since *The Old Man and the Sea* is the story of a man's struggle against a marlin, it is tempting to see the novella as depicting man's struggle against nature. In fact, through Santiago, the novella explores man's relationship with nature. He thinks of the flying fish as his friends, and speaks with a warbler to pass the time. The sea is dangerous, with its sharks and potentially treacherous weather, but it also sustains him by providing food in the form of dolphins and shrimp. Finally, Santiago does not just see the marlin as an adversary, he loves it as a brother. In the middle of their struggle, Santiago says to the marlin, "Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who." Santiago's statement shows the depth of his admiration for the marlin and hints at the fundamental law of nature that unites man and animal: all beings must die, must kill or be killed. In this way, man and nature are joined in a circular system, in which death is necessary and fosters new life.

### **2.2.6 Christian Allegory**

*The Old Man and the Sea* is full of Christian imagery. Over the course of his struggles at sea, Santiago emerges as a Christ figure. For instance: Santiago's injured hands recall Christ's stigmata (the wounds in his palms); when the sharks attack, Santiago makes a sound like a man being crucified; when Santiago returns to shore he carries his mast up to his shack on his shoulder, just as Christ was forced to bear his own crucifix; and Santiago's final position, resting on his bed, resembles Christ's position on the cross. More importantly, Santiago resembles Christ in that, like Christ, he transforms loss into triumph, faces the inevitability of death without complaint and, in doing so, transcends it. Christ literally is resurrected, while Santiago regains Manolin as an apprentice, providing both the companionship he had lost and the chance to pass his knowledge on to the next generation.

## ***2.3 Symbols***

### **2.3.1 The Marlin**

The marlin is Santiago's worthy opponent. Struggling against such an opponent brings out the best in an individual—courage, endurance, and love. At the same time, because Santiago comes to see the marlin as an alter-ego—he identifies the marlin as male and imagines the fish is old—the marlin comes to represent Santiago. In other words, Santiago's struggle with the marlin is in fact a struggle with himself. It is not a struggle of strength but rather of endurance, a refusal to accept defeat. Santiago's struggle with the marlin is in fact a struggle to face and overcome his own weaknesses as much as it is a struggle to subdue the great fish. In the process, by refusing to give in to the fish or the weakness of his mind and body, Santiago transcends those weaknesses.

### **2.3.2 Lions**

Santiago dreams of lions on the beaches of Africa, both, in his bed in the village and in his boat, which he saw when he was a boy on a ship that sailed and fished the coast of Africa. The lions symbolize Santiago's lost youth as well as his pride (a group of lions is called a "pride"). Santiago's love for the lions, which are fierce predators, also mirrors his relationship with the marlin, which he loves but whose death he feels is necessary to his survival. In this way, the lions also symbolize Santiago's affinity with nature. Now that Santiago is no longer young, and has lost his friends, family, and strength, he sees the lions only in his dreams. Santiago's dreams of the lions at the end of the novella suggest that in triumphing over the marlin, he has undergone his own rejuvenation.

### **2.3.3 The Shovel-Nosed Sharks**

Scavengers who eat dead flesh, the shovel-nosed sharks stand in contrast to the marlin. Unlike the marlin, the sharks are not worthy opponents. The shovel-nosed sharks can be seen as symbolizing the destructive forces of nature and of the people of Jerusalem, whose petty jealousies and rivalries led to the crucifixion of Jesus. Some have even argued that the sharks symbolize literary critics, whom Hemingway saw as "feasting" on the creations of true artists without actually creating anything themselves.

### **2.3.4 The Mast**

At the end of *The Old Man and the Sea*, the exhausted Santiago removes his mast from his skiff, and haltingly drags it up the beach to his shack by resting one end of the cross on his shoulder. The position in which Santiago carries the mast exactly mirrors the position in which Jesus Christ was forced to drag his cross on the way to his crucifixion. The mast, then, becomes a symbol for the cross, and cements the parallel that Hemingway sets up between Santiago's ordeal and Christ's.

## **3. Character List**

### **3.1 Major Characters**

#### **3.1.1 Santiago**

Santiago is an impoverished old man who has endured many ordeals, whose best days are behind him, whose wife has died, and who never had children. For 84 days, he has gone without catching the fish upon which his meager existence, the community's respect, and his sense of identity as an accomplished fisherman all depend. As a result, the young man who is like a son to him (the young man who, since the age of five, has fished with him and learned from him) now fishes, at the behest of his parents, with another fisherman.

Indeed, Santiago's philosophy and internal code of behavior make him unconventional in his society (as critics such as Bickford Sylvester have mentioned). Santiago's dedication to his craft (beyond concerns of material gain or survival) separates him from the pragmatic fishermen motivated by money. He stands apart from Cuba's evolution to a new materialism and a village fishing culture converting to a fishing industry. He remains dedicated to a profession he sees as a more spiritual way of life and a part of nature's order in the eternal cycle that makes all creatures brothers in their common condition of both predator and prey.

What Santiago desperately wants is one epic catch — not just to survive, but to prove once more his skill, reassert his identity as a fisherman, secure his reputation in the community, and ensure for all time that Manolin will forever honor his memory and become his successor in what matters most in life. For Santiago, what matters most in life is to live with great fervor and nobility according to his beliefs, to use his skills and nature's gifts to the best of his ability, to struggle and endure and redeem his individual existence through his life's work, to

accept inevitable destruction with dignity, and to pass on to the next generation everything of value that he has gained. In these desires, he reflects the desires of us all.

What makes Santiago special is that despite a lifetime of hardships that have hurt him (as the morning sun has always hurt his eyes), he is still a man in charge and an expert who knows the tricks of his fisherman's craft. His eyes remain young, cheerful, and undefeated. He knows how to rely on the transcendent power of his own imagination to engender the inspiration and confidence he needs and to keep alive in himself and others the hope, dreams, faith, absorption, and resolution to transcend hardship.

### **3.1.2 Manolin**

Manolin is present only in the beginning and at the end of *The Old Man and the Sea*, but his presence is important because Manolin's devotion to Santiago highlights Santiago's value as a person and as a fisherman. Manolin demonstrates his love for Santiago openly. He makes sure that the old man has food, blankets, and can rest without being bothered. Despite Hemingway's insistence that his characters were a real old man and a real boy, Manolin's purity and singleness of purpose elevate him to the level of a symbolic character. Manolin's actions are not tainted by the confusion, ambivalence, or willfulness that typify adolescence. Instead, he is a companion who feels nothing but love and devotion.

Hemingway does hint at the boy's resentment for his father, whose wishes Manolin obeys by abandoning the old man after forty days without catching a fish. This fact helps to establish the boy as a real human being—a person with conflicted loyalties who faces difficult decisions. By the end of the book, however, the boy abandons his duty to his father, swearing that he will sail with the old man regardless of the consequences. He stands, in the novella's final pages, as a symbol of uncompromised love and fidelity. As the old man's apprentice, he also represents the life that will follow from death. His dedication to learning from the old man ensures that Santiago will live on.

### **3.1.3 The Marlin**

The marlin is more than a great fish locked in an evenly balanced and protracted battle with an accomplished fisherman. It is also a creature onto whom Santiago projects the same qualities that he possesses, admires, and hopes to pass on: nobility of spirit, greatness in living, faithfulness to one's own identity and ways, endurance, beauty, and dignity. As Santiago and the marlin remain locked in battle for three days, they become intimately

connected. Santiago first pities and admires the fish and then empathizes and identifies with it. He recognizes that just as the marlin was born to be a fish, he was born to be a fisherman. They are brothers in the inevitability of their circumstances, locked in the natural cycle of predator and prey.

The marlin's death represents Santiago's greatest victory and the promise of all those intangibles he so desperately hopes for to redeem his individual existence. Yet, like the marlin, Santiago also must inevitably lose and become the victim. After the mako shark's attack, Santiago eats the marlin's flesh to sustain himself, completing the natural cycle in which the great creature passes on something of itself to Santiago. Not only are all creatures predator and prey, but all also nourish one another. Allusions to the crucified Christ that were previously associated with the marlin (images that represent suffering, apparent defeat, and the endurance through which one redeems an individual life within nature's tragic cycle) are transferred to Santiago (as critics such as Philip Young and Arvin Wells have suggested). The marlin's brave and unavailing struggle to save its own life becomes Santiago's brave and unavailing struggle to save the marlin from the scavenger sharks.

The scavenger sharks strip the marlin of all material value, leaving only its skeleton lashed to Santiago's skiff. But before that skeleton ends up as so much garbage to be washed out with the tide, it becomes a mute testimony to Santiago's greatness and the vehicle for those intrinsic values Santiago craves to give his existence meaning and dignity. The fisherman who measures the marlin's skeleton reports that it is 18 feet long — evidence of the largest fish the villagers have ever known to come out of the Gulf. And when Manolin accepts the marlin's spear, he accepts for all time everything that Santiago wishes to bequeath him.

## **3.2 Minor Characters**

### **3.2.1 Joe DiMaggio**

Although DiMaggio never appears in the novel, he plays a significant role nonetheless. Santiago worships him as a model of strength and commitment, and his thoughts turn toward DiMaggio whenever he needs to reassure himself of his own strength. Despite a painful bone spur that might have crippled another player, DiMaggio went on to secure a triumphant career. He was a center fielder for the New York Yankees from 1936 to 1951, and is often considered the best all-around player ever at that position.

### **3.2.2 The shovel-nosed sharks**

Scavengers and little more than swimming appetites, the shovel-nosed sharks are Santiago's fiercest antagonists. Although Santiago manages to kill most of them, they tear apart the marlin's body and leave Santiago devastated. While the marlin is portrayed as both an adversary and a noble companion to Santiago, the sharks are portrayed as purely vicious.

### **3.2.3 Perico**

Perico, the reader assumes, owns the bodega in Santiago's village. He never appears in the novel, but he serves an important role in the fisherman's life by providing him with newspapers that report the baseball scores. This act establishes him as a kind man who helps the aging Santiago.

### **3.2.4 Martin**

Like Perico, Martin, a café owner in Santiago's village, does not appear in the story. The reader learns of him through Manolin, who often goes to Martin for Santiago's supper. As the old man says, Martin is a man of frequent kindness who deserves to be repaid.

### **3.2.5 John J. McGraw**

The coach and manager of the American baseball team. He often comes to The Terrace, a restaurant in Santiago's village.

### **3.2.6 Rogelio**

A young boy who helps Santiago with his fishnets.

## **4. Hemingway's contribution to American Literature:**

Ernest Hemingway has been called the twentieth century's most influential writer. With the publication of *A Farewell to Arms* in 1929, he achieved widespread fame, and despite a steady decline in the quality of his work thereafter, his fame continued to grow until his suicide in 1961 and beyond. Striking evidence of this is the 1958 movie of *The Old Man and the Sea*; it's hard to imagine a book less suited to the big screen, and yet Hemingway's celebrity at the time of its publication was so massive that Hollywood had virtually no choice but to film the novella. The publication of recovered fragments from the writer's



unpublished *oeuvre* has never failed to make headlines worldwide, from *A Moveable Feast* in 1964 to the so-called "fictional memoir" *True at First Light*, in 1999. Like those of Shakespeare and Einstein, Hemingway's face is recognized by millions who have never read a word he wrote.

Hemingway achieved more than celebrity, however. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then he was a great writer indeed. Especially after reading *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway's influence is easy to discern in an enormous number of the writers who have followed him. This influence has taken three forms: thematic, stylistic, and the "Papa" Hemingway lifestyle.

As the literary critic Leslie Fiedler argues in his study *Love and Death in the American Novel*, the classic American literary hero is a soldier, sailor, or cowboy who is brave, laconic, and (ultimately) alone. From Hawkeye in James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* through *Moby-Dick's* Ishmael and Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, these characters "light out for the territories" because they don't quite fit in polite society, and they quickly learn self-sufficiency in the wilderness, at sea, or in combat. Hemingway, who identified *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as the source of all American literature, recognized this archetype, then updated and refined it. The overriding theme of his stories and books was "grace under pressure" — specifically, the ability of "men without women" (the title of an early story collection) to remain calm and competent in the face of life-threatening violence.

Thus, Hemingway heroes like Frederic Henry stoically accept not only war wounds, but the pain of losing whom they love, as well. (Think of Henry walking into the rain after the agonizing death of his lover and child at the conclusion of *A Farewell to Arms*.) Whether handling firearms, betting on horses, or ordering wine, they are almost scarily adept at what they do, and when the universe conspires to defeat them, they never complain.

The influence of the Hemingway hero can therefore be seen in many of the literary soldiers who followed in Henry's footsteps: for instance, the protagonist of James Salter's *The Hunters*, an account of the exploits of a Korean War jet pilot squadron. It is even more evident in the archetypal tough-talking detectives of Raymond Chandler (*The Big Sleep*) and James Ellroy (*L.A. Confidential*). (Note: Like Frederic Henry, Chandler's protagonist Philip Marlowe is a veteran of World War I, as evinced by his trademark trenchcoat — the coat worn by Allied officers in the trenches of France and Italy. Nearly every character Humphrey Bogart ever played onscreen was influenced by the Hemingway hero.) The cowboys in Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy* are essentially Hemingway characters, too.

## 5. Questions:

1. Consider just some of the literary and biblical characters with whom Santiago is identified. In what ways is he the same and in what ways different?
2. Three times during the novella's conclusion, Manolin expresses his faith in Santiago and all he represents. What do each of these three affirmations represent? Considering that Santiago eventually must die, what role(s) will Manolin assume after Santiago's death and how will Santiago's memory continue to impact Manolin's behavior?
3. What is the role of the sea in *The Old Man and the Sea*?
4. Santiago is considered by many readers to be a tragic hero, in that his greatest strength—his pride—leads to his eventual downfall. Discuss the role of pride in Santiago's plight.
5. Discuss religious symbolism in *The Old Man and the Sea*. To what effect does Hemingway employ such images?
6. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated," says the old man after the first shark attack. At the end of the story, is the old man defeated? Why or why not?
7. *The Old Man and the Sea* is, essentially, the story of a single character. Indeed, other than the old man, only one human being receives any kind of prolonged attention. Discuss the role of Manolin in the novella. Is he necessary to the book?

## 6. Further Readings of Ernest Hemingway:

### 6.1 Novels/Novella

- The Torrents of Spring* (1925)
- The Sun Also Rises* (1926)
- A Farewell to Arms* (1929)
- To Have and Have Not* (1937)
- For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940)
- Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950)
- The Old Man and the Sea* (1952)

*-Adventures of a Young Man (1962)*

*-Islands in the Stream (1970)*

*-The Garden of Eden (1986)*

## **6.2 Non-Fiction**

*-Death in the Afternoon (1932)*

*-Green Hills of Africa (1935)*

*-The Dangerous Summer (1960)*

*-A Moveable Feast (1964)*

## **6.3 Short Story Collections**

*-Three Stories and Ten Poems (1923)*

*-In Our Time (1925)*

*-Men Without Women (1927)*

*-The Snows of Kilimanjaro (1932)*

*-Winner Take Nothing (1933)*

*-The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories (1938)*

*-The Essential Hemingway (1947)*

*-The Hemingway Reader (1953)*

*-The Nick Adams Stories (1972)*