***Moby Dick***

***Chapter 39 – First-Night Watch***

***Summary:***

* This chapter is Stubb’s soliloquy.
* Stubb is alone, mending a brace.
* He’s decided to react to this whole situation with a good hearty laugh.
* It’s all predestined anyway, he thinks, and so the wise thing to do is just to be merry as long as he can.
* He feels a little better because now Ahab has mastered Starbuck the way Stubb himself got mastered earlier.

***Synopsis:***

“First Night-Watch” is Stubb’s monologue, providing yet another perspective on the voyage. Stubb, believing all to be “predestinated,” can only laugh and sing a ditty.

***Critical Study:***

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.

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.

***Notes:*** Starbuck in Chapter 38 is deeply disturbed by the reveling that is taking place in the wake of Ahab's announcement and by the prospect of serving under a madman like Ahab. [Stubb](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Moby-Dick/character-analysis/" \l "Stubb)'s thoughts in Chapter 39 are scattered. He does seem pleased about the fact that Starbuck had a run-in with Ahab. He thinks a little of home as well, before Starbuck summons him.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Stubb](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/moby-dick/characters) talks to himself, too, and in characteristic fashion, saying that of course [Ahab](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/moby-dick/characters/ahab) is mad, but that Stubb will “go along with it,” as is best. Stubb sees that Starbuck is worried about Ahab’s obsession, but Stubb also feels that the best course is simply to follow orders—Stubb will follow Starbuck—and Starbuck ought to follow Ahab. Stubb leaves his place when Starbuck calls to him.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Stubb, for his part, sees the hunt for Moby Dick as a component of the larger excitement of whale-hunting itself. If hunting sperm whales is enjoyable, then hunting a large and especially devilish sperm whale is doubly exciting. Stubb sees following orders as the best means of allowing him to live the life he wants to—a whale-hunting life.