



lingoda

Moby Dick

READING

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_1027R_EN

LANGUAGE
English





Goals

- Can read and understand a more complex literary extract from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.
- Can discuss the impact of the stylistic devices used by the author and share my own thoughts on why it is a classic.



For not by hook or by net could this
vast leviathan be caught, when sailing a
thousand fathoms beneath the
sunlight.





Background

**Are you familiar with
the novel *Moby Dick*?**

**What do you know
about it?**



What makes a classic a classic?

Moby Dick is a novel written by Herman Melville, set on an 1850s whaling ship. This tale is set 150 years ago about an industry few in the 21st century can relate to.

Why do you think it is still regarded as a classic?



Background

This text in this lesson is taken from chapter 85 of Moby Dick. The narrator's name is Ishmael, a seasoned crew member on the whaling ship *Pequod*.



Chapter 85: The Fountain

That for six thousand years—and no one knows how many millions of ages before—the great whales should have been spouting all over the sea, and sprinkling and mistifying the gardens of the deep, as with so many sprinkling or mistifying pots; and that for some centuries back, thousands of hunters should have been close by the fountain of the whale, watching these sprinklings and spoutings—that all this should be, and yet, that down to this blessed minute (fifteen and a quarter minutes past one o'clock P.M. of this sixteenth day of December, A.D. 1851), it should still remain a problem, whether these spoutings are, after all, really water, or nothing but vapor—this is surely a noteworthy thing.



Chapter 85: The Fountain

Continue reading, but this time fill the gaps as you read. Each gap is missing a noun.

Let us, then, look at this matter, along with some interesting items contingent. Every one knows that by the peculiar cunning of their gills, the finny tribes in general breathe the _____ which at all times is combined with the _____ in which they swim; hence, a herring or a cod might live a _____, and never once raise its head above the _____. But owing to his marked internal structure which gives him regular lungs, like a human being's, the whale can only live by inhaling the disengaged air in the open _____. Wherefore the necessity for his periodical visits to the upper world. But he cannot in any degree breathe through his _____, for, in his ordinary attitude, the Sperm Whale's mouth is buried at least eight feet beneath the surface; and what is still more, his _____ has no connexion with his mouth. No, he breathes through his spiracle alone; and this is on the top of his _____.

air

surface

mouth

atmosphere

century

element

windpipe

head



Melville uses a lot of archaic and unusual words. Review these with your teacher.

mistifying

spoutings

contingent

peculiar

cunning

disengaged

wherefore

spiracle

inhale



Complete the sentences

Complete the following sentences, using the information given in the text you have just read.

1. The narrator does not know whether a whale's spoutings are...
2. The exact time and date the narrator is speaking is...
3. Cod and herring are part of what the narrator calls...
4. The whale differs from these because...
5. The whale cannot breathe as a human because...



The narrator

Ishmael's job is to hunt whales.



1

Having read the first part of the text, how do you think he feels about the creatures he is paid to kill?

2

Do you think he has an easy job?

3

Would you ever take a similar job?



Chapter 85: The Fountain

If I say, that in any creature breathing is only a function indispensable to vitality, inasmuch as it withdraws from the air a certain element, which being subsequently brought into contact with the blood imparts to the blood its vivifying principle, I do not think I shall err; though I may possibly use some superfluous scientific words. Assume it, and it follows that if all the blood in a man could be aerated with one breath, he might then seal up his nostrils and not fetch another for a considerable time. That is to say, he would then live without breathing.



Chapter 85: The Fountain

Anomalous as it may seem, this is precisely the case with the whale, who systematically lives, by intervals, his full hour and more (when at the bottom) without drawing a single breath, or so much as in any way inhaling a particle of air; for, remember, he has no gills. How is this? Between his ribs and on each side of his spine he is supplied with a remarkable involved Cretan labyrinth of vermicelli-like vessels, which vessels, when he quits the surface, are completely distended with oxygenated blood. So that for an hour or more, a thousand fathoms in the sea, he carries a surplus stock of vitality in him, just as the camel crossing the waterless desert carries a surplus supply of drink for future use in its four supplementary stomachs.



Chapter 85: The Fountain



The anatomical fact of this labyrinth is indisputable; and that the supposition founded upon it is reasonable and true, seems the more cogent to me, when I consider the otherwise inexplicable obstinacy of that leviathan in having his spoutings out, as the fishermen phrase it. This is what I mean.

If unmolested, upon rising to the surface, the Sperm Whale will continue there for a period of time exactly uniform with all his other unmolested risings. Say he stays eleven minutes, and jets seventy times, that is, respire seventy breaths; then whenever he rises again, he will be sure to have his seventy breaths over again, to a minute.



Chapter 85: The Fountain

Now, if after he fetches a few breaths you alarm him, so that he sounds, he will be always dodging up again to make good his regular allowance of air. And not till those seventy breaths are told, will he finally go down to stay out his full term below. Remark, however, that in different individuals these rates are different; but in any one they are alike. Now, why should the whale thus insist upon having his spoutings out, unless it be to replenish his reservoir of air, ere descending for good? How obvious is it, too, that this necessity for the whale's rising exposes him to all the fatal hazards of the chase.





Chapter 85: The Fountain

For not by hook or by net could this vast leviathan be caught, when sailing a thousand fathoms beneath the sunlight. Not so much thy skill, then, O hunter, as the great necessities that strike the victory to thee!

In man, breathing is incessantly going on—one breath only serving for two or three pulsations; so that whatever other business he has to attend to, waking or sleeping, breathe he must, or die he will. But the Sperm Whale only breathes about one seventh or Sunday of his time.





Consider the new vocabulary

indispensable

vivifying

aerated

distended

supplementary

inexplicable

obstinacy

unmolested

ere



Match each new word with its definition or synonym





Reading comprehension

Discuss these questions with your teacher or classmates.



1

What would a human need to do to breathe in the same manner of a whale, according to Ishmael?

2

How long can a whale stay under the sea, according to the narrator?

3

How does the narrator describe the whale's breathing system? What do you think of the description?



Reading comprehension

Discuss these questions with your teacher or classmates.



1

What does the narrator say is noteworthy about the periods when the whale comes to the surface?

2

How does this differ if the whale is interrupted during that time?

3

What, according to the narrator, does this say about the skill of the hunter?

simile

metaphor

Melville's writing is full of descriptive literary techniques called **similes** and **metaphors**. Can you remember anything about these techniques?

A simile compares two distinct things using **like** or **as**.

A metaphor compares two distinct things by saying one **is** the other.



Her eyes were **as** bright **as** the sun.
The fire's warmth was comforting, **like** the hearth at my parents' house.



He **was** a cunning fox.
She **is** the only light in a dark world.



Similes and metaphors

See how many similes and metaphors you can find in the section of text you have just read. Which is which?

A blank sheet of white paper with a spiral binding on the left side. The paper has ten horizontal lines for writing. The spiral binding is made of small white rings.



Using similes and metaphors

Describe these pictures using similes or metaphors.



The bridge was
as tall as a
mountain, and
wide as a
canyon.



The boat rocked
gently, a small
bead on a sea of
shining
turquoise.



Discussion

***Moby Dick* was a failure when first published in the 1850s as whaling was a dying industry. Why do you think the book became such a success after Melville's death?**

Seen as a representation of American history

Elaborate writing

Relatable themes

Interest in past ways of life

People are forced to read it at school!



Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





Answer Key

Slide 8:

Air; element; century; surface; atmosphere; mouth; windpipe; head

Slide 10:

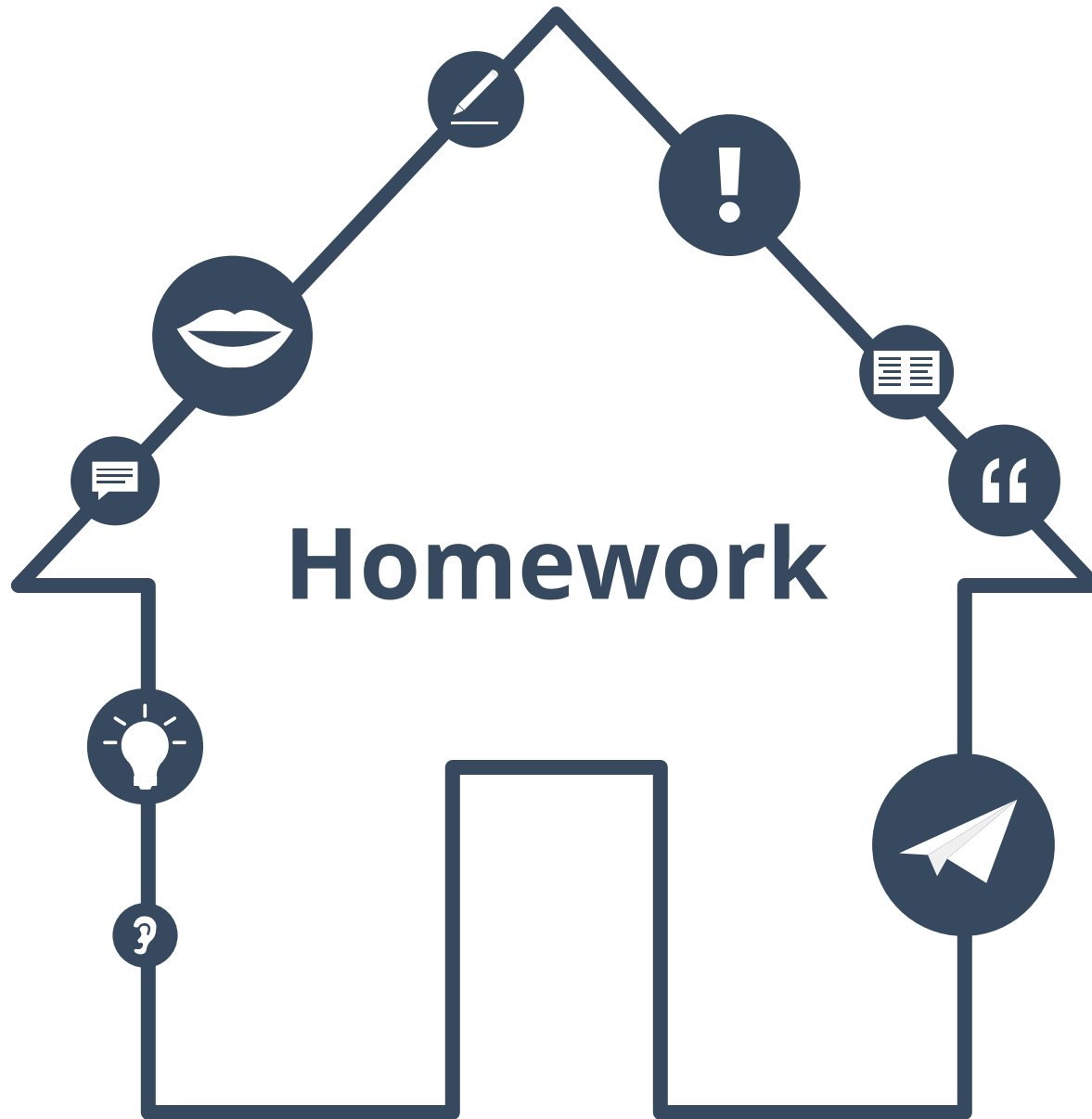
Water or vapour; 1:30 pm on December 16th, 1851; “the finny tribes”; he has regular lungs like a human; he lives under the surface and his windpipe is connected to the top of his head.

Slide 17:

Indispensable – too important to be without; distended – swollen, stretched; inexplicable – unable to be explained; obstinacy – stubbornness; supplementary – additional.

Slide 18:

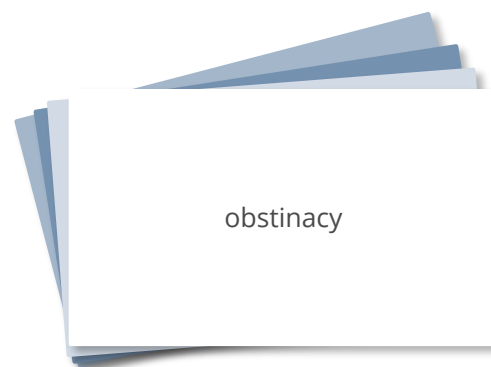
1. Aerate all blood in one breath and seal up his nostrils; 2. an hour or more; 3. “a remarkable involved Cretan labyrinth of vermicelli-like vessels, which vessels, when he quits the surface, are completely distended with oxygenated blood”; 4. Always the same length of time for each individual whale; 5. the whale will keep coming up until he gets his preferred amount of time; 6. there is no skill: the whale has to come up for air.





Vocabulary review

Review the new words learned in this lesson, as well as any others which were new or unfamiliar to you.





Evaluate the lesson

How did you find this lesson? What was easy? Difficult? Most interesting?

A vertical sheet of white paper with horizontal lines, resembling a notepad or notebook page. It has a dark blue binding edge on the left side.



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