

# Billy budd

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**What is the point of Billy Budd?** Some critics have interpreted Billy Budd as a historical novel that attempts to evaluate man's relation to the past.

**Is Billy Budd based on a true story?** Some scholars speculate that the character of Billy Budd is based on a young sailor named Philip Spencer. Spencer was a young and handsome sailor aboard the American warship, Somers, in 1842. Spencer was accused of inciting a mutiny and was executed under that suspicion.

**Why was Billy Budd killed?** Billy Budd, also known as the "handsome sailor," was on trial for killing the master-at-arms, Claggart. Everyone wished for Billy's life to be spared, but Captain Vere chose to follow the oath he pledged to the King. Consequently, Billy was given the death penalty and hanged.

**Who does Billy Budd symbolize?** Billy is the Christ figure whose characteristics and actions stress his identity as the son of God and man. His ordained execution symbolizes the fulfillment of Christ's victory over Satan and the purgation of man's inherited sin. Claggart is the allegory's Satanic figure.

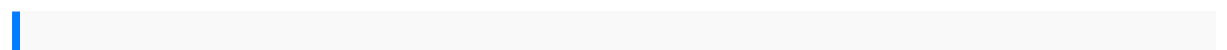
**Was Billy Budd innocent?** Billy, though innocent, is not perfect. Rather, he embraces death as a means of atoning for evil and goes willingly to his death, blessing Captain Vere as Christ blessed his enemies.

**Why is Billy Budd called Baby Budd?** Billy is quickly called "Baby Budd" because of his apparent youthfulness (230). Claggart and the Dansker, too, call him "Baby" (251). And he's described as "welkin-eyed," implying that his gaze and eyes are practically heavenly in their blue tone (230).

**How does Billy Budd end?** After a period of further deliberation, the jury finds Billy Budd guilty as charged and sentences him to death by hanging on the following morning.

**What is the major problem in Billy Budd?** Major conflict On one level, the conflict of the book is between the natural innocence and goodness of Billy and the subtlety and deceptiveness of evil, represented by Claggart.

**How is Billy Budd an ironic tragedy?** Billy Budd is an extremely ironic novella, and Melville uses dramatic irony to create tension in the story. When Budd is accused of mutiny by Claggart, the reader is aware that Billy wasn't trying to organize a mutiny, even though Captain Vere and other members of the crew are unaware.



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