

MOBY-DICK

JAKE HEGGIE AND GENE SCHEER

MUSIC I: The Characters

Students will

- Read the *Moby-Dick* Synopsis
- Read the information sheet “The Characters” included with the lesson
- Listen to audio selections from *Moby-Dick* online.
- Discuss and answer questions on the appropriate portion(s) of the Activity Worksheet

Copies for Each Student: *Moby-Dick* Synopsis, “The Characters”, Activity Worksheet

Copies for the Teacher: *Moby-Dick* Synopsis, “The Characters”, Activity Worksheet

Getting Ready

Decide which section(s) of the lesson you wish your group to complete.

Prepare internet access to the *Moby-Dick* online listening selections.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9CmZ531N1s>

Gather pens, pencils and additional writing paper as needed for your group.

Introduction

Have your students read the *Moby-Dick* Synopsis. Give each student a copy of the information sheet “The Characters” or display it on the screen. Read through the information, discussing each character and listening to the online selections as your go.

Guided/Independent Practice

Depending on your grade level, the ability of your students, and time constraints, you may choose to have students work as a whole class, in small groups, with a partner, or individually. Read the directions on the Activity Worksheet. Have students complete the portion(s) of the Activity Worksheet you have chosen with opportunity for questions. If students are working with a partner or in small groups, give them time to discuss their answers before writing them down. Have students share their answers individually or by groups and tell why they gave their answers.

Evaluation

Have students discuss and evaluate the answers of others. The teacher may want to guide the discussion. After individual or small group responses have been shared and/or turned in, the class can then formulate comprehensive answers for the class with the teacher asking leading questions to guide the discussion.

For Further Study

The teacher may want to have students continue researching *Moby Dick*. Students may also want to do additional research on Jake Heggie, Gene Sheer or Herman Melville, their lives and other works, or other related topics online or in their school library. Their findings can be shared with the class at the beginning of a later lesson.

TEKS

Fine Arts: Music

Middle School 1

117.208. c. 4 B,C Historical and cultural relevance

The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (B) describe written and aurally presented music representative of diverse styles, periods, and cultures; (C) identify relationships of music concepts to other academic disciplines such as the relationship between music and mathematics, literature, history.

Middle School 2

117.209. c. 4 B,C Historical and cultural relevance

The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (B) examine written and aurally presented music representative of diverse genres, styles, periods, and cultures; (C) identify relationships of music content and processes to other academic disciplines such as the relationship between music and mathematics, literature, history, and the sciences.

Middle School 3

117.210. c. 4 B,C Historical and cultural relevance

The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (B) compare and contrast written and aurally presented music representative of diverse genres, styles, periods, and cultures; (C) compare and contrast relationships of music content and processes to other academic disciplines such as the relationship between music and mathematics, literature, history, sciences, and language.

Music, Level I

117.310. c. 5 A,C,D,E Historical and cultural relevance

The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (A) compare and contrast music by genre, style, culture, and historical period; (C) identify and describe the uses of music in societies and cultures; (D) identify and explore the relationship between music and other academic disciplines; (E) identify and explore the impact of technologies, ethical issues, and economic factors on music, performers, and performances.

Music, Level II

117.311. c. 5 A,B,C,E Historical and cultural relevance

The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (A) compare and contrast music by genre, style, culture, and historical period; (B) define uses of music in societies and cultures; (C) identify and explore the relationships between music and other academic disciplines; (E) identify and explore the impact of technologies, ethical issues, and economic factors on music, musicians, and performances.

Music, Level III

117.312. c. 5 A,B,C,E Historical and cultural relevance

The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (A) classify representative examples of music by genre, style, culture, and historical period; (B) explore the relevance of music to societies and cultures; (C) define the relationships between music content and concepts and other academic disciplines; (E) analyze and evaluate the impact of technologies, ethical issues, and economic factors on music, performers, and performances.

Music, Level IV

117.313. c. 5 A,B,C,E Historical cultural relevance

The student relates music to history, culture, and the world. The student is expected to: (A) discriminate representative examples of music by genre, style, culture, and historical period; (B) evaluate the relevance

of music to societies and cultures; (C) define the relationships between music content and concepts and other academic disciplines; (E) analyze and evaluate the impact of technologies, ethical issues, and economic factors on music, performers, and performances.

Correlates: Language Arts, Drama, Music

Gardner's Intelligences: Verbal-Linguistic, Musical, Interpersonal

Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis

Sources:

Moby-Dick Libretto

Melville H. (1851). *Moby Dick*. London, England: Richard Bently.

Online Resources:

www.oxfordmusiconline.com

www.aria-database.com

<http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/42/moby-dick/>

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/25/arts/music/25moby.html?_r=1

Moby-Dick was premiered at The Dallas Opera in 2010 and commissioned jointly with San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, State Opera of South Australia and Calgary Opera.

Moby-Dick Synopsis

ACT ONE

Scenes 1 to 4. Day One: The whaling ship Pequod has been at sea for one week

Captain Ahab stands alone on deck in the hours before dawn. Below deck, while most of the crew sleeps, the harpooner Queequeg prays and wakes Greenhorn, a loner and newcomer to whaling. Dawn breaks and the call is made for "All Hands!" While the crew is raising the ship's sails, Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask talk about Ahab, whom no one has seen since the ship left Nantucket.

The crew sings of whales, wealth and home when suddenly, Captain Ahab appears. He tells them of Moby Dick, the white whale that took off one of his legs, then nails a gold doubloon to the mast and promises it to the man who first sights him. This is the real reason they have sailed, he explains: to search the globe to find and destroy this one whale. His rousing call of "Death to Moby Dick!" excites everyone but the first mate, Starbuck. To no avail, he confronts Ahab about what he sees as a futile and blasphemous mission.

Starbuck instructs Greenhorn about the dangers of whaling. When he ponders never again seeing his wife and son, he is overcome with emotion and orders Queequeg to complete the lesson. Stubb sights a pod of whales, but Ahab will not allow the eager crew to hunt since they have not yet found Moby Dick. Starbuck orders the crew to sail on and sends Greenhorn up to the lookout on the masthead, joined by Queequeg.

As the sun begins to set, Ahab looks over the wake of the ship and mourns that his obsession deprives him of any enjoyment of beauty. All is anguish to him. At the masthead, Queequeg and Greenhorn look over the world, while Starbuck, on deck, bemoans Ahab's madness.

Scenes 5 to 7. Day Two: Three months later

After three months without a single whale hunt, Stubb jokes with the young cabin boy Pip about the sharks circling the ship. The song ignites a dance for the full crew, but rising tensions take over and a dangerous racial fight erupts. When Greenhorn suddenly sights a pod of whales, Starbuck is at last able to persuade Ahab to let the men hunt. Starbuck and Stubb harpoon whales, but Flask's boat is capsized and Pip is lost at sea.

On board the Pequod, an enormous whale is being butchered and the oil rendered in the burning tryworks. Flask tells Ahab that the search for Pip is under way, but Ahab thinks only of finding Moby Dick. As they butcher the whale, the crew imagines Pip lost and struggling in the heart of the sea. Flask tells Starbuck that many oil barrels are leaking and he goes below to tell Ahab they must find a port for repairs.

Ahab is unmoved by Starbuck's report, and is concerned only with the white whale. When Starbuck refuses to leave, Ahab grabs a musket and orders him to his knees. From afar, Greenhorn shouts that Pip has been found. Ahab orders Starbuck out of the cabin.

On deck, the crew listens to Greenhorn describe how Queequeg rescued Pip. As the men return to work, Greenhorn pleads with Starbuck to get help for Pip, who has gone mad. But, the first mate ignores him. Greenhorn observes how life really works on the ship and decides to befriend Queequeg.

Starbuck returns to Ahab's cabin, where he finds the captain asleep. He picks up the musket with which Ahab had threatened him and contemplates what he should do. Pull the trigger and he may survive to see his wife and child again. When Ahab cries out in his sleep, Starbuck replaces the musket and leaves the cabin.

ACT TWO

Scenes 1-3. Day Three: One year later

An enormous storm is approaching, but Stubb, Flask and the crew sing a jolly work song. From the mastheads, Greenhorn and Queequeg talk of traveling together to his native island. Greenhorn wants to learn Queequeg's language and write down their adventures. Suddenly, Queequeg collapses. The crew gets him down and Ahab announces he will take the masthead watch himself, as he wants to sight Moby Dick first.

Below deck, Queequeg tells Greenhorn that he is dying and asks that a coffin be built for him. Pip enters from the shadows and sings a lament, joined by Greenhorn.

The massive storm now surrounds the *Pequod*. As Ahab sings defiantly to the heavens, bolts of lightning engulf the ship and the masts glow with St. Elmo's fire. Ahab demands that the men hold their posts, promising them the white flame is a sign from heaven to guide them to the white whale. The crew is inspired once again by the captain, much to Starbuck's distress.

Scenes 4 to 7. Day Four: The next morning

The ship has made it through the storm. From afar, the voice of Gardiner, captain of the *Rachel*, calls out. He pleads with Ahab to help him search for his 12-year-old son who was lost in the storm, but Ahab refuses. Pip shouts to Gardiner of the *Pequod*'s own lost boy. Pip cuts himself and gets blood on Ahab's clothes. The captain orders the ship to sail on, leaving Gardiner behind. Ahab contemplates the heartless God who devastates so many lives and baptizes his new harpoon with Pip's blood.

Below deck, Greenhorn sees Queequeg's newly built coffin and contemplates the madness that seems to surround him.

On deck, Ahab and Starbuck gaze over the horizon. Ahab describes his forty years at sea and all he has left behind. And why? To what end? He cannot say. But he sees in Starbuck's eye a human soul and it touches him deeply. Starbuck seizes the moment and persuades Ahab that they should return to the wives and sons who wait for them in Nantucket.

Just as Ahab appears to relent, he sights Moby Dick on the horizon. Great excitement ensues and the whale boats are lowered. Ahab looks again in Starbuck's eye and orders him to stay on board. The crew declares its loyalty to Ahab. During the chase, Moby Dick destroys two whaleboats in succession, drowning their crews. Then, the *Pequod* is rammed and sunk, killing all aboard. Ahab's boat is then attacked and all but the captain jump or fall off. Finally alone with the white whale, Ahab cries out and stabs at Moby Dick before being dragged down into the sea.

Epilogue: Many days later

Greenhorn floats on Queequeg's coffin, barely alive, softly singing his lost friend's prayer. Gardiner calls from afar, thinking he has at last found his missing son. Instead, he learns that Ahab and all the crew of the *Pequod* have drowned, except for this one survivor.

Moby-Dick

The Characters

Captain Ahab: (tenor) Captain of the Pequod (a whaling ship). Ahab lost his leg while hunting Moby Dick, a white whale, and he is so obsessed with finding and killing the whale he has gone mad. He is unmoved by his crew's needs or the needs of the ship – he only thinks of Moby Dick. In the midst of his madness, he is still able to inspire his crew to follow him on his quest. His obsession leads to his end, alone with Moby Dick in the sea.

Greenhorn: (tenor) Loner and newcomer to whaling. He befriends Queequeg and tries to learn as much as he can about his dangerous new profession. When Moby Dick rams and sinks the Pequod along with the other whaleboats, Greenhorn is the only survivor, left to float on the coffin made for Queequeg.

Starbuck: (baritone) The first mate on the Pequod. He is afraid his Captain's obsession with destroying Moby Dick will cause him to never again return home to his family. This fear, justified Ahab's growing madness, causes him to contemplate killing his Captain. Starbuck's humanity is the only thing that can reach Ahab and he is able to convince the Captain to stop the hunt and return home. However, in that moment Moby Dick is sighted and Ahab goes after the whale, ordering Starbuck to stay on board the Pequod.

Queequeg: (baritone) A harpooner on the Pequod, he rescues Pip when he falls overboard during a whale hunt. He is befriended by Greenhorn, the ship's newcomer, and falls ill while they are out to sea.

Flask: (tenor) A member of the Pequod crew

Stubb: (baritone) A member of the Pequod crew

Pip: (soprano) The young cabin boy aboard the Pequod. He goes overboard during a whale hunt but is rescued by members of the crew. He is injured, however, and goes mad.

Captain Gardiner: (baritone) Captain of the Rachel, another whaling vessel, who lost his 12 year old son in the same storm the Pequod survives. He asks Ahab to help search for his son, but Ahab is unmoved and continues to search for Moby Dick. When the Pequod has sunk, Captain Gardiner finds Greenhorn floating on Queequeg's coffin.

Links to Musical Excerpts:

San Francisco Opera Highlights: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9CmZ531N1s>

Behind the scenes at the opera: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4e7E3hPrBo>

Name _____

Date _____

Moby-Dick
Activity Worksheet

Part I

1. Captain Ahab is so obsessed with destroying Moby Dick that he ultimately leads the Pequod to its end. List some of the things Ahab sacrifices to find Moby Dick.

2. What do you think caused Ahab's obsession with the white whale?

3. Have you ever known someone who was so obsessed with something it caused them to act in a way that harmed them or someone they cared for? What happened?

Name _____

Date _____

Moby-Dick
Activity Worksheet

Part II

4. Not only did Ahab's obsession end his life, but he also inspired his crew to follow him to destruction. Write about a time in history when a leader inspired his people to follow him or her into something destructive. Is this still something that happens today? Give an example.

5. Have you ever been influenced by someone to do something you knew would be harmful? What happened? Did you know what the consequences could be? What made you decide to follow?

6. Did anyone in Ahab's crew know they were headed into a bad situation? Who was it and what could they have done so stop the madness?

7. If you were on board the Pequod, what would you have done?

Name _____

Date _____

Moby-Dick Activity Worksheet

Part III

The opera *Moby-Dick* was based on the famous novel of the same name by Herman Melville. Books are often the inspiration for movies, plays, musicals and operas. Think of a book you love that would make a good opera. In the space below, list the title of the book, the author and why you think Jake Heggie should consider using it as inspiration for his next operatic work. (Give specific ideas about characters, staging, costumes, music, etc.)
