

Nature of the Request

The New Bedford Whaling Museum (NBWM) and the Melville Society Cultural Project (MSCP) propose to offer a two-week Summer Institute from June 19 to July 2, 2020 titled “*Moby-Dick* and the World of Whaling in the Digital Age.” This institute will build on the success of the 2018 Summer Institute of the same format and theme, which hosted 25 teachers, predominantly grades 9-12, in New Bedford, MA to investigate the art and contexts of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*. Through this institute, participants will encounter the rich worlds of *Moby-Dick* to better understand and appreciate Melville’s literary power and interpret its wonders for their students. This Institute will extend the sharing of our communal resources to twenty-five educators from around the nation, to empower them to journey with their students ever more boldly into *Moby-Dick*, and to dramatize the imperative value of the humanities as an essential antidote to the diminished discourse of tweet and sound byte.

Intellectual Rationale

The famous novel named for the white whale stands as a literary work at the center of the established canon and one of the most frequently referenced and adapted American novels. Within the last few years, it has been cited and praised by public figures such as Lin-Manuel Miranda, Bruce Springsteen, and Barack Obama, and it has inspired an ever-increasing array of poetry, painting, and music. Allusions to the book’s monomaniacal Captain Ahab and famous opening line—“Call me Ishmael”—crop up regularly in cartoons, music videos, and television.

Although *Moby-Dick* seems to become more popular and relevant with time, its reputation remains that of an icon that is known about but not frequently read. Teaching such a long and complex book to students is increasingly challenging in a time in which the internet vies for attention and information is dispensed in short, easily digested bits. The book has always

been susceptible to abridgement, especially in the present “age of distraction.” In addition, students are often quick to assume that its nineteenth-century setting and concerns are alien and even irrelevant to today’s world. This Institute focuses on overcoming these challenges and understanding the rewards of teaching *Moby-Dick* in the 21st-century classroom.

New Bedford is a dynamic location for intensive study of Herman Melville’s masterpiece in the context of the whaling industry. Melville arrived in New Bedford on Christmas day in 1840 and shipped nine days later on the *Acushnet* from Fairhaven across the harbor; when he wrote of his whaling adventure to the Pacific a decade later in his sixth novel *Moby-Dick*, the drama begins with Ishmael’s winter arrival in that port city. Since 2000 the New Bedford Whaling Museum has partnered with the Melville Society Cultural Project in such ventures as scholarly programming at the annual *Moby-Dick* Marathon and the establishment of the Melville Society Archive in the Museum’s library, one of the best collections of Melville scholarship anywhere in the world <https://www.whalingmuseum.org/explore/library/melville-society>. Participants in the 2018 Institute found the New Bedford Whaling Museum to be a wonderful and helpful setting for their learning.

In the Institute, we argue that the distinctive format of the novel—with its series of 135 relatively short chapters—actually calls for classroom techniques suited to reading habits shaped by digital encounters. Digital classroom technology, such as a digital, annotated edition of *Moby-Dick* as well as electronic editions of the surviving annotated volumes in Melville’s personal library, would also enhance any detailed study of the book. Moreover, the book grapples with issues of globalism, multiculturalism, political power, and environmentalism in ways that are as relevant as ever for today’s reader. Ishmael’s cross-cultural encounters with other sailors, Ahab’s demagoguery, and the whaling industry’s depletion of natural resources are occasions for putting

Moby-Dick into dialogue with the contemporary moment. Participants study the changing paradigms of critical and cultural response to the novel as a means of strengthening their capacity to interpret it with their students.

The Institute provides scholarly perspectives needed to understand the literary art of *Moby-Dick*, yet it also raises important questions about meaning-making that apply to the teaching of any text in a classroom. As Ishmael works to understand the enigmatic white whale, for example, he poses questions about the powers and limitations of the human mind and the maneuvers by which thinking makes sense of the surrounding world. He contemplates the subjectivity of interpretation and the merits of different modes of experiential and theoretical learning. Indeed, those moments in which Ishmael and other characters read texts and objects (both inanimate and animate) are always occasions for teachers and students to think about their own reading practices. Melville, in this way, models the complexity of humanistic inquiry.

New Bedford offers educational opportunities in the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park in addition to the Whaling Museum that supplement our collective learning by providing resources and a unique vantage point from which to examine the world of 19th-century whaling, an energy industry that spanned the globe and relied on an international workforce. We draw on these local resources, including the Museum's material artifacts and the port as an active fishery, to consider how Melville used the anatomy of whales and the accoutrements of whaling to craft an epic that still resonates with readers today.

Faculty and Staff

Six Melville scholars who make up the Melville Society Cultural Project, along with one high school teacher from the 2018 Institute – from seven different states – will serve as principal faculty of the Institute. Four of these faculty will be present for eight days of the institute, and,

unlike the last Institute, three will be engaged for the duration. Indeed, this re-application results from an ardent and continuing desire to share and extend the fruits of the work in which we have long engaged together with a wider, national group of educators hungry for a revitalizing encounter with the humanities so that they can in turn build communities of inquiry with their students back home. Full faculty biographies and resumes can be found in the Appendices.

Jennifer J. Baker is Associate Professor of English at New York University, where she specializes in 18th- and 19th-century American literature, culture, and intellectual history. She is the author of *Securing the Commonwealth: Debt, Speculation, and Writing in the Making of Early America* (2005) and is currently writing a book on mid-19th-century American literature and the life sciences (a chapter of which will be devoted to *Moby-Dick* and natural history).

Mary K. Bercaw Edwards is Associate Professor of English and Maritime Studies Faculty at the University of Connecticut. Former President of the international Melville Society, she now serves as an Editor for *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies*. She is the author of *Melville's Sources* (1987) and *Cannibal Old Me: Spoken Sources in Melville's Early Works* (2009) and the co-editor of Wilson Heflin, *Herman Melville's Whaling Years* (2004).

Wyn Kelley (Co-Director), is Senior Lecturer in Literature at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a former high school English teacher. She is author of *Melville's City: Literary and Urban Form in Nineteenth-Century New York* (1996) and *Herman Melville: An Introduction* (2008); and co-author, with Henry Jenkins *et.al.*, of *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Re-Mixing Moby-Dick in the English Classroom* (2013).

Jeff Markham has taught English at New Trier High School since 1994. There he helped to create the Integrated Global Studies School, a self-directed curriculum that brings together English, social studies, and art. Jeff was a participant in the 2018 Summer Institute.

Timothy Marr (co-director) is an Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he has taught since 2000. He is a co-editor (with other Institute Faculty) of *Ungraspable Phantom: Essays on Moby-Dick* (2006) and has published on Melville in *The Historical Guide to Herman Melville*, *Melville and Women*, *Melville "Among the Nations,"* *The New Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, the third Norton Critical edition of *Moby-Dick*, and in the journal *Leviathan*.

Christopher Sten is a Professor of English at George Washington University. He is the editor of *Savage Eye: Melville and the Visual Arts* (1992) and author of many articles and two book-length studies of Melville's fiction, including *The Weaver God, He Weaves: Melville and the Poetics of the Novel* (1996) and *Sounding the Whale: Moby-Dick as Epic Novel* (1996).

Robert K. Wallace is Regents Professor of English at Northern Kentucky University. His books on Melville include *Melville and Turner* (1992), *Frank Stella's Moby-Dick* (2007), *Douglass and Melville* (2005), Heggie and Scheer's *Moby-Dick: A Grand Opera for the Twenty-First Century* (2013), and *Fast Fish and Loose Fish: NKU Students Make Moby-Dick Art* (2015). Wallace is a founding member of the Melville Society Cultural Project at the New Bedford Whaling Museum (2001) and has supervised its art acquisition program.

Christina Turner, Program Director, is Director of Education at the New Bedford Whaling Museum. She provides leadership, strategy, and direction for a dynamic museum education team and is responsible for the overall design, staffing, program evaluation, and financial sustainability of museum learning experiences and resources. The Whaling Museum will also devote a Program Manager and a Logistics Assistant to the Institute to focus on the successful administrative of the project.

Program of Study

During the Institute, participants will make their way through progressive reading of *Moby-Dick* and come to understand varied contexts of interpretation. The mornings are devoted to intensive readings and discussions of a sequential cluster of chapters from *Moby-Dick*. The first session is devoted to a collective exploration of issues and resources relevant to those parts of the book. After morning break, the teachers gather in crews of six, eight, or twelve with different resident faculty who engage themes and patterns from these chapters and reflections emerging from the morning discussions. The constitution of each crew's interactive dialogues varies daily by size, topic, and grouping -- including teacher interest, grade and subject level, experience with teaching *Moby-Dick* in the classroom, and exposure to the different resident faculty. These smaller group discussions are highly valued by the participants and the presence of several lead faculty enables smaller groups of teachers to engage more intimately and intensely and creates the special sense of intellectual community that suffused the first Institute.

Although the book is known as a hefty "doorstopper," the relatively short chapters (some just a single paragraph long) act as free-standing texts that can be read closely (even line-by-line) as a poem might be. Lead faculty explore with teachers how to conduct discussions organized around manageable chunks of text but always in such a way that encourages students to keep larger issues and crucial contexts in mind. Because it is usually impossible to discuss every chapter of *Moby-Dick*, teachers also learn how to use representative chapters to illustrate dynamic themes that recur throughout the book and also to draw through-lines to help readers discern the narrative threads at work in an often-overwhelming array of chapters. Some of the themes and questions that will be raised include Melville's composition process and *Moby-Dick's* book history, social relations between the characters in Melville's crew, the problem of

power and democratic leadership, Ishmael's philosophical anatomy of the whale, the book's engagement with the industry and labor of whaling, environmentalism and human-animal relations, and the diversity of *Moby-Dick*'s aesthetic and generic forms.

One excellent decision that paid dividends in the first Institute was to schedule 90 minutes for lunch. This was not only a needed break and down time from intense intellectual engagement, but also it allowed for different groups of teachers to converse and get to know each other as well as to enjoy without rushing the many restaurants in the vicinity of the Whaling Museum. Another key element of the success in building community among the teachers was the ability to have a space away from the classroom and accommodations that created an opportunity for ongoing conversations. This was accomplished through the rental of an Airbnb apartment (the "Spouter Inn") between the hotel and the Museum. Two lead faculty stayed at that facility at a rate negotiated then to be the same as two hotel rooms. This space was used for late afternoon confabulations and created a wonderful spirit of ongoing conversation on other registers.

Afternoon sessions consist of expert seminars taught by institute faculty that provide important critical, historical, and pedagogical contexts that illuminate the book's literary art as well as situate its questions, themes, and issues within both the moment it was composed and in the lives of twenty-first-century readers. These sessions also engage the contributions of the additional texts assigned for the Institute. Each day there will also be experiential encounters during which participants will explore the geography, architecture, exhibitions, nautical displays and varied archives and collections (historical, aesthetic, and Melville-focused) afforded by the Museum and its location in the heart of the port of New Bedford. Every lead faculty member has in the past given talks and tours at the Whaling Museum that allow for a multiplicity of encounters with different artifacts.

We show teachers how to use the unusual and unwieldy format of *Moby-Dick* to draw students into conversation. As Ishmael works to understand whales, and the mysterious white whale in particular, he draws from the discourses of natural history, law, industry, labor, trade, political science, and painting, to name just a few. The result is a dizzying mixture of genres and perspectives; yet, class discussions that attend to this mixture make *Moby-Dick* more approachable by giving students of diverse backgrounds and interests multiple ways into the book. As students watch Ishmael study the whale from various perspectives, they discover that the whale looks very different depending on whether the animal is viewed as an economic resource, a natural historical specimen, or the subject of a painting. Such a juxtaposition of perspectives can help students think about disciplinarity itself and the different observational methods at work in science, economics, visual arts, and other fields of knowledge.

The Institute will open on Friday evening, June 19, with a seafood dinner at which New Bedford Whaling Museum staff and Melville scholars will welcome the participants aboard. After discussing the early “land” chapters of *Moby-Dick* on Saturday, June 20, the bulk of which are set in New Bedford, faculty will guide participants on the “Melville Trail” tour through the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park and visit sites connected with the novel. An afternoon panel of resident faculty will present facets of Melville biography leading up to *Moby-Dick*. On Sunday, June 21, participants will travel to Mystic Seaport to tour the *Charles W. Morgan*, the only extant whaler built at the time of Melville’s own travels, and go on the water to row its whale-boats. During the sessions on Monday, June 20, Mary K. Bercaw Edwards will follow up the visit to Mystic by educating teachers about the technology of whale hunting and the realities of life that Melville experienced at sea on whale-ships. In the afternoon, Mark Procknik, NBWM librarian, will provide access to some of the whaling logs that form an

outstanding feature of its collections. On Tuesday, June 23, Jennifer Baker will analyze Melville's complex figuration of gender on board the *Pequod*, and participants will examine the Museum's collection of scrimshaw and be introduced to the Melville Society Archive of volumes and scholars' papers. In Wednesday's sessions, Wyn Kelley will introduce participants to MEL (Melville Electronic Library), an NEH-supported archive that offers extensive notes, maps, art images, and pedagogical materials for exploring and editing the text in interactive ways. She will also share Professor Steven Olsen-Smith's "Melville's Marginalia Online," a collection of electronic editions of the surviving annotated books of Melville's personal library, along with a number of digital databases containing scholarship about nineteenth-century American literature and maritime history. Our aim would be to make digital resources a source of pleasure and inspiration, a vivid aid to learning, and a springboard for critical reading, thinking, and writing.

Crucially, the Institute would emphasize ways for teachers to relate *Moby-Dick* to 21st-century concerns. The *Pequod*'s motley crew representing an assortment of nationalities can be a starting point for thinking about the globalization of American industries, and the book also depicts a pursuit of carbon-based energy sources that should ring familiar for present-day readers (when the development of petroleum extraction in 1859 made whale oil obsolete, the hunt for energy trapped in fossilized life-forms replaced the hunt for energy contained in living ones). Aboard the *Pequod*, Ishmael looks forward to modern ecological consciousness when he sympathizes with the whale's suffering and wonders whether the pursuit of profit will threaten whale populations. On Thursday, June 25, lead faculty in residence will offer a panel on Global Ecologies and *Moby-Dick* relating the text to present-day animal studies and ecological concerns:

questions about human kinship with and estrangement from animals, as well as the possibility that animals exist in their own right.

Nowhere is the continuing relevance of *Moby-Dick* more evident than in the rich array of visual, musical, and performance art inspired by the book. The Institute introduces these resources to teachers and explore how the book has served as a muse for artists. During the first week, Bob Wallace will introduce teachers to art works in the collection that respond to specific chapters from the novel. On Friday, June 26, he will lead a seminar that explore which artists influenced Melville's writing (including the artwork he owned), how *Moby-Dick* has inspired many artists to respond to it with their own creations, and how Professor Wallace has empowered students to generate their own artistic responses to the novel. Artist Matt Kish will be a visiting faculty member and share his venture of creating a piece of art for every page of *Moby-Dick* -- for 552 consecutive days—which resulted in *Moby-Dick in Pictures: One Drawing for Every Page* (2011). The week will end with a screening of the documentary *Call Us Ishmael* which explores the cultural fascination with Melville's masterpiece and features Matt Kish and several of the Institute's lead faculty.

The seminar led by Chris Sten on Saturday, June 27, uses his helpful book *Sounding the Whale* to examine how *Moby-Dick* works to exemplify and teach the genre of the epic. Participating teachers will also encounter an assortment of other innovative teaching tools. Wyn Kelley will provide a seminar on Monday, June 29, on *Moby-Dick*, Participatory Culture, and the Global Digital Age drawing upon her co-authored book *Reading in a Participatory Culture: Remixing Moby-Dick in the English Classroom*, that provides teachers with strategies from media studies, community theater, traditional literacies, and public humanities (museum and civic spaces) to make Melville's whaling novel accessible to all readers in cultures outside the

classroom. On Tuesday, June 30, the focus shifts to the popular cultural resonances in the novel, and Tim Marr will dramatize the varied ways that both *Moby-Dick* the text and Moby Dick the White Whale have circulated through such genres as film, comics, commercial culture, science fiction, music, and body art. There will be an evening screening of the John Huston film “Moby Dick,” which created a sensation during its world premiere in New Bedford in 1956.

Lead faculty will remain in regular consultation with participants to plan and develop a “lesson” that would stand as a final fruit of reflection from their involvement in the Institute. This production would be generated individually or in groups and could take many different forms, such as a traditional lesson plan, a short research inquiry, an annotated bibliography or assemblage of resources, or an artistic response. Participants will share their results on Tuesday and Wednesday, June 30-July 1. We will conclude our time in New Bedford with a panel on “How *Moby-Dick* can Swim on through your Classroom,” followed by a reception and dinner in the Harbor View Gallery at the New Bedford Whaling Museum

A special feature of the Institute will be that our deliberative conversations and academic presentations will be enhanced through three active explorations. The first is the visit to Mystic Seaport with lead faculty member Mary K. Bercaw Edwards to practice whaling procedures and engage sailor expressions on board the *Charles W. Morgan*, the only extant wooden whaler, built seven months after the *Acushnet* on which Melville sailed in 1841. The second exploration is explained in the Project Development section. The seminar concludes on Thursday, July 2 with a journey to the Berkshires of Massachusetts and with visits to Arrowhead, the home where Melville wrote *Moby-Dick*, the Melville Room at the Berkshire Athenaeum, and a reenactment by participants of the hike that Melville made up Monument Mountain with Nathaniel Hawthorne and others while in the throes of writing his *Whale*.

A testimony to the impact of the Institute is that fact that during the Moby-Dick Marathon at the Whaling Museum during the first week of January over half of the 25 participants, including the teacher from Alaska, made their way back to the matrix of the summer experience in wintry New Bedford. Two of the teachers submitted proposals that were accepted at the 12th International Melville Conference in New York City in June of 2019, the centenary of Melville's birth. One participant published a cookbook, *Pequod's Gallery*, that intermeshes references to *Moby-Dick* with delicious recipes. A GroupMe listing has remained heavily active since the Institute with participants sharing information, insights, and images from their classes. A follow-up survey this February of how the Institute had impacted their teaching (included in the appendix) not only attested to how their involvement in the Institute dynamized their capacity to get their students to engage *Moby-Dick* more deeply, but also influenced the energy of their overall involvement in their schools.

Project Development

The impact of the 2018 Institute, as shared in the proposal and by the teacher comments in the appendix, has already been profound and beyond our expectations. There are several areas in which we plan to develop the Institute in 2020 and spread more widely its fruit and impact.

1. The Institute in 2018 featured a one-day journey by ferry to Nantucket and its whaling museum and Melville's history with the island. Though this experience was wonderful, enabling participants to get out on the water and experience an island with a whaling museum important to Melville and his novel, one element lacking from the first Institute (longed for by some participants) was an actual encounter with living whales. For this Institute we propose that the journey to Nantucket be replaced by a whale-watch on Sunday, June 28 from Plymouth to the whaling-grounds of Stellwagen Banks for real engagement with the mammals.

2. The Institute will be improved in powerful ways by the presence of co-director Wyn Kelley who was not able to participate in the summer of 2018. We are focusing more on the consistent collaboration and enthusiastic engagement of the members of the Melville Society Cultural Project who have long worked together to bring *Moby-Dick* to broader audiences.
3. The addition of Jeff Markham, a participant in the 2018 Institute, as a faculty member will allow him to share his experiences in the classroom, and assist teachers with more direct and relevant information about the materials they are creating for their K-12 students.
4. We are excited to incorporate interdisciplinary scientific perspectives on whales by a visit from Dr. Michael Moore, a Senior Scientist at Woods Hole (and Trustee of the New Bedford Whaling Museum) who has researched whales in deep and dynamic ways, including as a necrologist for stranded marine mammals, and by using drones to examine stress through the breathing patterns of their blow-holes.

Participant Selection

The selection committee will be comprised of the Institute's co-directors, a staff member from the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and one teacher-participant from the 2018 Institute, with guidance from the other members of the Melville Society Cultural Project. This Institute is highly appropriate for teachers of secondary school literature who teach Melville and/or *Moby-Dick*. The selection committee will also work to attract teachers of history, social studies, science, and other disciplines—as well as teachers at other grade levels and school administrators—who are interested in passionate, interdisciplinary inquiry. Applicants will submit a resume and a short essay explaining their interest in the Institute and how participation would have a beneficial impact on their teaching, schools, and students.

Interest in this Institute is strong. There were 105 completed applications for the first offering in 2018, in part because of rigorous outreach to principals and chairs throughout the country. (157 applications were initiated and 20 of those were duplications.) We accepted 25 participants and placed five on the waitlist. Two teachers were unable to commit so two back-ups were eventually accepted. There were several inquiries about submitting late applications and many who asked if the Institute would be offered again in future years.

There was a strong balance of important types of diversity in the 2018 Institute. There were 13 women and 12 men. Participants included two social studies teachers, and art teacher, a math teacher, two middle-school teachers, and one who taught in the Bureau of Corrections. The age range extended from new teachers in their twenties to career educators in their sixties. Here is a list of the states where the participants lived: Massachusetts (7); California (4); North Carolina (4); Rhode Island (2); and one each from Alaska, Illinois, Kentucky, Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin.

Project Outreach

The Institute's website, teachingmelville.org, was created in 2017 and serves to attract applications by explaining the nature of our collective inquiry into *Moby-Dick*. It has been linked to the Melville Society and New Bedford Whaling Museum websites. The work on the website for the second offering of the Institute will be focused on how to make it a resource for Melville studies that will make public the educational materials created by participants and others as a resource for all educators.

In an effort to make this Institute attractive and equitable to a national and diverse pool of participants, special planning will be made in collaboration with Christina Turner, Director of Education at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, to expand the recruitment audience. This goal

can be conjoined with the new impetus to preserve spaces for teachers at the outset of their classroom careers. The directors and faculty will engage in active outreach to publicize the Institute through social media, networks, newsletters, professional organizations and networks, making an intentional effort to include channels that focus on cultural diversity and equity.

The faculty will increase the impact of the Institute by developing a section of the teachingmelville.org website to compile lessons, curriculum, and material for engaging the novel, including those generated by participants in the two Institutes, as resources available for teachers. The activities and assignments shared by teachers on Sakai, the course management site used for the Institute, will form the nucleus for this Curricular Resources section.

Institutional Support

The New Bedford Whaling Museum's campus is well-positioned to host this two-week-long workshop. Sessions will occur in the Museum's newly built Wattles Jacobs Education Center, which includes a spacious, climate-controlled meeting space, expansive harbor views, and modern technology, including Wi-Fi and interactive digital screens. The NBWM will arrange for a discounted block of single and double rooms for workshop participants to stay at the Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott for \$120 per night plus taxes. This new hotel offers complimentary breakfast and is within a short walking distance of Museum and its historic district with dozens of reasonably priced options for lunch and dinner.