

# Moby Dick

Longman Simplified English Series



**LONGMAN SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH SERIES**

**MOBY DICK**

# LONGMAN SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH SERIES

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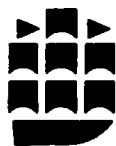


*"Stand up, and give it to him!"*

# Moby Dick

by  
Herman Melville

Abridged, simplified and  
illustrated by  
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## Longman Simplified English Series

This book has been specially prepared to make enjoyable reading for people to whom English is a second or a foreign language. An English writer never thinks of avoiding unusual words, so that the learner, trying to read the book in its original form, has to turn frequently to the dictionary and so loses much of the pleasure that the book ought to give.

This series is planned for such readers. There are very few words used which are outside the learner's vocabulary<sup>1</sup>. These few extra words are needed for the story and are explained when they first appear. Long sentences and difficult sentence patterns have been simplified. The resulting language is good and useful English, and the simplified book keeps much of the charm and flavour of the original.

At a rather more difficult level there is *The Bridge Series*, which helps the reader to cross the gap between the limited vocabulary and structures of the *Simplified English Series* and full English.

It is the aim of these two series to enable thousands of readers to enjoy without great difficulty some of the best books written in the English language, and in doing so, to equip themselves in the pleasantest possible way, to understand and appreciate any work written in English.

<sup>1</sup>The 2,000 root words of the *General Service List of English Words* of the *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection*.





## READ THIS BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE STORY

Whales are the largest living animals on land or sea.

They are hunted because of the valuable oil they give. Before electric light was invented, this oil was mostly used for burning in oil lamps.

The whale is usually called a fish, although it is not really one as it breathes air. It can dive deep down into the sea, and stay under the water for nearly an hour. When it rises to the surface again, it blows out air mixed with water. This rises in a "spout" to a great height. When the look-out men on a whaling-ship saw this spout, they used to point to it and give a great shout of "There she blows!" As soon as they heard this cry, the sailors lowered the rowing boats which hung over the rails of their ship, and with oars and sails they went after the whale whose spout had been seen. When a boat got close enough to the whale, the harpooneer threw his harpoon at it. The harpoon had a very sharp steel point, like an arrow, made so that it could not be pulled out of the whale by the rope that was fixed to its long wooden handle. Maddened with pain and fear, the whale used to struggle, sometimes pulling the boat along for miles, sometimes diving down far under water. The harpoon rope had to be very long, and very carefully arranged in the boat so that it would run out freely when the whale dived. As the wounded whale grew tired, the boat was pulled up close to it. Then the whale was killed at last with another weapon called a lance.

The dead whale floated until the ship sailed up to it. Then the whale would be fastened to the ship, and cut up into pieces

which were boiled over a great fire in a brick fireplace on the ship called a "try-works". The oil that ran out would be put into barrels and stored away. Then the search for more whales would go on.

A hundred years ago, whaling-ships used to sail all over the world in search of whales. Most of the ships started from New Bedford, a small American town on the Atlantic coast, or from Nantucket, an island close by. Sometimes they did not return for three years or more. Whaling was a lonely and very dangerous life, calling for great skill and courage.

This story tells of the fierce and proud Captain Ahab, and of his search over the oceans of the world for the great white whale that sailors called Moby Dick.

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# I

**C**ALL me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind exactly how long—having little or no money in my pockets, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of raising my spirits when they are low; I quietly take to a ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they only knew it, almost all men in some degree, some time or other, share the same feelings towards the ocean with me.

When I go to sea, I go as a simple sailor. Then they pay me for my trouble—but they never pay passengers a single penny that I ever heard of. Having often been to sea in a merchant ship, I now took it into my head to go on a whaling voyage. The great whale himself stirred all my curiosity. The wild and distant seas where he rolls his great body, the dangers of the hunt, the thousand far-away sights and sounds, all helped to persuade me. So I packed a spare shirt or two, took my bag under my arm, and started for Cape Horn and the Pacific Ocean.

When I arrived in the whaling town of New Bedford on a Saturday night I was disappointed to learn that the little passenger-boat to Nantucket had already sailed, so that there would be no way of reaching that place until the following Monday. (For my mind was made up to sail in a Nantucket ship.) It was a dark and stormy night and miserably cold. I knew no one in New Bedford. I had only a few pieces of silver. So wherever you go, Ishmael, I said to myself as I stood in the middle of the street with my bag on my shoulder, be sure to ask the price, and don't be too particular.

Such streets! Blocks of blackness, rather than houses, on either side. At this hour of the night the town seemed empty. At last I came to a light, not far from the harbour, and looking up at the house, I saw a swinging inn-sign over the door. Entering, I found myself in a dark, low hall with wooden walls like those of an old ship. Beyond was the public room, with heavy beams above and a rough wooden floor beneath, so that you might almost think that you *were* in a ship, especially on such a wild and windy night as this.

I told the landlord I wanted a room, but received the answer that the inn was full—not a bed empty. “But wait,” he said, “you have no objection to sharing a harpooneer’s<sup>1</sup> bed, have you? I suppose you are going whaling, so you had better get used to that sort of thing.”

I told him that I never liked to share a bed, but if the harpooneer was clean and polite I would do so, rather than wander about a strange town on so bitterly cold a night.

“I thought so,” said the landlord. “All right; take a seat. Supper? You want supper? Supper will soon be ready.”

Late that night, though other men kept coming in and going up to bed, there was still no sign of my harpooneer.

“Landlord!” said I. “What sort of fellow is he—does he always stay up so late?” For it was now nearly midnight.

The landlord smiled. “No,” he said, “generally he’s early. But to-night he went out on business, you see, and I don’t know what on earth keeps him so late, unless perhaps he can’t sell his head.”

“Can’t sell his head? What sort of story is this you’re telling me? Do you mean to tell me that this harpooneer is going about the town this Saturday night trying to sell his head?”

<sup>1</sup> Harpooneer. In each of the whaling ship’s rowing boats there was a harpooneer—a specially skilful man who threw the harpoon when the boat was close enough.



*. . . I saw a swinging inn-sign over the door.*



"That's exactly it," said the landlord, "and I told him he wouldn't sell it. There are too many on the market."

"Too many what?"

"Well, aren't there too many heads in the world? But calm down, calm down! This harpooneer I've been telling you about has just arrived from the South Seas, where he bought a lot of preserved human heads. They're very curious things, you know. He has sold all but one of them, and he's trying to sell that one to-night, because to-morrow is Sunday, and he mustn't sell human heads in the street when people are going to church. He wanted to, last Sunday, but I stopped him just as he was going out of the door, carrying four of his little preserved heads with him."

That explained the mystery, but what was I to think?

"He sounds a dangerous man."

"He pays me regularly. But come, it's getting late. You'd better be going to bed."

Upstairs we went, and I was shown into a small room, cold as the grave, with a great bed, big enough for four harpooneers to sleep in side by side.

When I got into bed, I could not sleep for a long time. At last I heard a heavy footfall in the passage. That must be the harpooneer, I thought, the strange head-seller! But I lay perfectly still and decided not to be the first to speak. When he turned—what a face! It was a dark purple-yellow colour, with a pattern of black squares all over it. He took off his hat, and I nearly cried out with surprise. There was no hair at all on his head, except one small knot twisted up on top. As he undressed, he showed his chest and arms, and these, his back and his legs were all covered with the pattern of black squares like his face. At last he took up an Indian tobacco pipe from the table, held it to the light with his mouth at the handle, and puffed out great clouds of tobacco smoke. The next minute he put the lamp out, and, with the pipe