

Extended Essay Annotated Bibliography

Student Researcher: Joel Adams

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Subject Area	Topic
Group I	Whales in American novels.

Original Research Question:

What is the role and significance of cetology in Moby Dick?

Revised Research Question:

How does Herman Melville's use of cetology create interpretative complications in Moby Dick by mixing scientific and literary language?

Annotated Sources:

Smith, Stephanie A. "A Strange Whiteness: Radical Indeterminacy in Melville's Long Fiction." American Literature Quarterly 104 (2001): 325-350. [JSTOR]

Summary: In "A Strange Whiteness," Smith contends that Moby Dick's reliance on several different registers of language makes any final interpretation of its narrative impossible. According to Smith, the novel's titular whale exists at once as a scientific, biological, and literary oddity. This multifaceted and equivocal presence at the heart of Moby Dick forces each reader to make complicated and consequential rhetorical decisions in order for the narrative to make any sense at all.

Assessment: Smith's article is central to any argument concerned with interpretative ambiguity in Moby Dick. By isolating particular moments within the novel in which the white whale shifts registers from the literary to the scientific, the article provides strong support for the current research question. Of special note are the article's copious and specific citations to the novel - which should prove valuable as a guide in constructing my essay.