Review
The following comments, questions, and observations are offered as a stimulus to think about the novel after finishing it. They are in no particular order or groupings. Some were included in the Reading Sections and repeat here. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but something to get you started. Feel free, of course, to add your own.
photo credit

**Reminders:** **1)** Absolute, "right" answers are nonexistent. Answer your way and support your answer by referencing the novel. *How do you arrive at your answer?* is the ultimate question. **2)** After a first reading, you may have interest in only some of these prompts. You may have no interest in any of them. That’s O.K. You finished your first reading. Skip over this Review. **3)** Second-time and third-time readers may find them interesting to pursue.

[Search the Novel](http://etcweb.princeton.edu/batke/moby/moby-1.html)


Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Topics To Consider

As you consider these, we agree, of course, that you will **support your answers with specific references to the novel**.
**TIP:** The [Quotations List](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CHome%5CDesktop%5C201705_MobyReDo%5C2016ReDo_ReadMoby_CEOBizzyTemplate%5Cresources%5Cextensions%5CQuotations.pdf), catalogued by chapter number and title, may help in locating specific occurences. For instance, skim through to find specific references about Starbuck or mention of a paradox.

1. Do you think the ending fanciful, totally not really possible? Actually, the possibility and reality of it happening in this way is told in tales of whalers and in their folk songs. [Listen to a folk song](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CHome%5CDesktop%5C201705_MobyReDo%5C2016ReDo_ReadMoby_CEOBizzyTemplate%5Csounds%5CFishCanThink.mp3) based on a true story written in the 1840s by a sailor named Scammon. Tommy Makem sings.
2. The story of the sinking of the whale ship, Essex, as recorded by First Mate Owen Chase in 1821 was a gripping tale read by many, including a young Herman Melville. The sinking of the Pequod is noticeably similar to the description of the sinking of the Essex. [Read it here](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CHome%5CDesktop%5C201705_MobyReDo%5C2016ReDo_ReadMoby_CEOBizzyTemplate%5Cresources%5Cextensions%5CDocuments%5COwenChase_Narrative.pdf).
3. Why does Melville, as author, include the mysterious men in Chapters 46 and 50. What purpose do they serve in the story line?
4. Why does Starbuck cooperate with Ahab, rather than relieve him of command? Is Starbuck a coward?
5. Readers have diametrically opposed opinions of Ahab. Often, some say that Ahab is evil, a Satan figure rebelling against God, and that Moby Dick is God's agent, punishing Ahab.
Review Chapter 8, *The Pulpit*. Reread Father Mappel's sermon. Those who support the idea that Ahab is evil and the whale is God's agent, most often refer to this sermon as foreshadowing and the basis of their opinion. Others point to this sermon and say that the sermon expresses the very ideas that the novel itself rails against. How important is this sermon to the novel as a whole? Do you see it as foreshadowing? If not, what is its purpose?
6. "Ahab has his humanities" (Chapter 16). Do you see any "humanities" reflected in Ahab? Where?
7. What was Ahab's motivation, his own justification, for putting all lives at risk. Dive deeper than "The white whale bit his leg off. He wanted revenge." Ahab's passion to the point of monomania must exceed "revenge."
8. Did Ahab ever waver in his decision to face Moby Dick? That is, did he ever consider stopping the hunt for Moby? If so, why did he not do so? What would be his thinking?
9. At what point does Ishmael become a "sea person." That is, when does he become transcendental in his outlook? Is there a particular moment or is it gradual?
See Chapter 35, *The Masthead*:"...lulled into such an opium-like listlessness of vacant, unconscious reverie..." through "Heed it well, ye Pantheists!"
Explicate this passage by Ishmael as he stands on the masthead. What is he talking about? Why does he say, "Heed it well, ye Pantheists!"
10. What, if any, is the symbolic gesture of Fedallah hammering the bird into the mast at the end?
11. Paradoxes are numerous. Do so many paradoxes indicate a theme for this novel? Or, at least, an attitude?
	* Whiteness of the whale
	* Christian and Heathen
	* Fear of cemeteries
	* Ahab himself
	* Starbuck himself
	* the idea that meaning in life and meaninglessness in life co-exist.
	* List others
12. Much can be said about the symbolism of the equator in Western Literature. For instance, in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*, fantastic images and events occur only after they cross the Equatorial Line into the Southern Hemisphere.
Something can be said about the voyage of the Pequod and about Ahab's mental state as they cross the Equatorial Line. Begin with Chapter 30, when Ahab throws his pipe into the ocean.
Research the events, both physical and psychological, associated with the Pequod's relationship to the equator.
13. Some readers have pointed out that, although Ishmael introduces himself immediately as the first-person narrator, he is not, by definition, the narrator. They point out that a first person narrator can only express what he himself sees, hears, and experiences. Ishmael, they say, reports on much that he could not have heard or seen. Do you agree or disagree? How do you support your stance?
14. Consider Ishmael, the seaman: What is his philosophy of life after all of his observations and experiences?
15. Consider Melville, the author: What, if anything, is he communicating about Life and Humanity and God and Nature. What does it all *mean*? What do you say is his philosophy of life as reflected in this work?
16. This novel has abundant Biblical references. Do you see them as supporting religion, whether Christianity or other? If so, how so? If not, why not?
17. Do you think the following speech bears any resemblance to Ahab?
**Satan’s Speech in Milton's *Paradise Lost, Book I***.
CONTEXT: Satan and his supporters lost their rebellion against God. God threw them from Heaven. They fell for nine days through the void, and crashed, stunned and unconscious, in Hell. Satan is the first to awaken, and rises to awaken and speak to his army (beginning line 83):
*`Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,’
Said then the lost archangel, `this the seat
That we must change for heav’n, this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
Who now is sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right: furthest from him is best
Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme
Above his equals. Farewell happy fields
Where joy for ever dwells: hail horrors, hail
Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less than he
Whom thunder bath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; the almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in hell:
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven*.
18. Research Keat's *negative capability*, first mentioned in 1817. Can it apply to *Moby Dick* and/or to Melville? [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negative_capability) is a decent place to start. It offers an overview of the term.
19. What is your statement of "theme" for *Moby Dick*?
If you cannot decide on just one, you are in good company.
See [this chart](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CHome%5CDesktop%5C201705_MobyReDo%5C2016ReDo_ReadMoby_CEOBizzyTemplate%5Cresources%5Cextensions%5CThemes_Possible.pdf).
20. Need a research idea? See [these suggestions](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CHome%5CDesktop%5C201705_MobyReDo%5C2016ReDo_ReadMoby_CEOBizzyTemplate%5Cresources%5Cextensions%5CResearch_Ideas.pdf).

 Videos
The following documentaries were listed in the PreReading section. If you did not watch them, you may want to now.

* *Moby Dick: The True Story* originally produced for the [Discovery Channel.com](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CHome%5CDesktop%5C201705_MobyReDo%5C2016ReDo_ReadMoby_CEOBizzyTemplate%5Cstore.html#Discovery) in 2002. Watch this video first. Some information will overlap with the next one, but most does not.
* *Essex: True Story of Moby Dick* originally produced for the [History Channel.com](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CHome%5CDesktop%5C201705_MobyReDo%5C2016ReDo_ReadMoby_CEOBizzyTemplate%5Cstore.html#History), History's Mysteries, in 2001.