

Moby-Dick is published

1851 | Grade 8 · Analyze & connect

Words to know

author — a person who writes a text

industry — work that makes goods or provides services

imagine — form an idea or picture in your mind

Look closely



Portrait of Herman Melville.

Read the story

Herman Melville published *Moby-Dick* while living in Massachusetts. The novel tells an imagined story about a whaling voyage. Real whaling ports such as New Bedford helped shape its world.

Melville wrote at Arrowhead in Pittsfield. Fiction can reveal ideas, but invented characters are not eyewitnesses. Compare a passage with museum objects or ship records to investigate the whaling industry.

A timeline helps put events in order, but order alone does not establish a cause. People acted with the knowledge and choices available to them at the time. Records can reveal some experiences while overlooking others. Compare a contemporary source with a later interpretation. Explain the source's purpose, the detail it contributes, and a question it cannot answer on its own.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. Write an objective summary. Separate the event from the writer's interpretation of its importance.
2. Explain a cause, consequence, or continuity supported by the text. Identify a connection that would need more evidence.
3. Open the research source. Identify its creator or institution and purpose. Is it a contemporary source, a later account, or both?
4. Evaluate the image's date and purpose. Explain one useful detail and one limitation without treating an illustration as eyewitness evidence.

Follow-up reading: Anthony Burns is returned to slavery

1854

Anthony Burns had escaped slavery and reached Boston. He was arrested under the Fugitive Slave Act. People protested, but officials sent him back to slavery. Supporters later helped purchase his freedom.

The case exposed conflict between federal enforcement and antislavery resistance. Protests did not overturn the federal law. Burns's own life and agency matter beyond the political symbol made of his case.

Write a paragraph comparing these events. Use evidence from both passages, distinguish chronology from causation, and identify a perspective missing from the readings.

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.8.1: cite evidence; RI.8.2: objective summary; RI.8.6: analyze purpose and viewpoint; RH.6–8.1–2: evidence and summary in history; W.8.2: explanatory writing.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: Herman Melville published *Moby-Dick* while living in Massachusetts. The novel tells an imagined story about a whaling voyage. Real whaling ports such as New Bedford helped shape its world. Melville wrote at Arrowhead in Pittsfield. Fiction can reveal ideas, but invented characters are not eyewitnesses. Compare a passage with museum objects or ship records to investigate the whaling industry.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

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The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's [HTML page](#). External sources may need adult guidance.