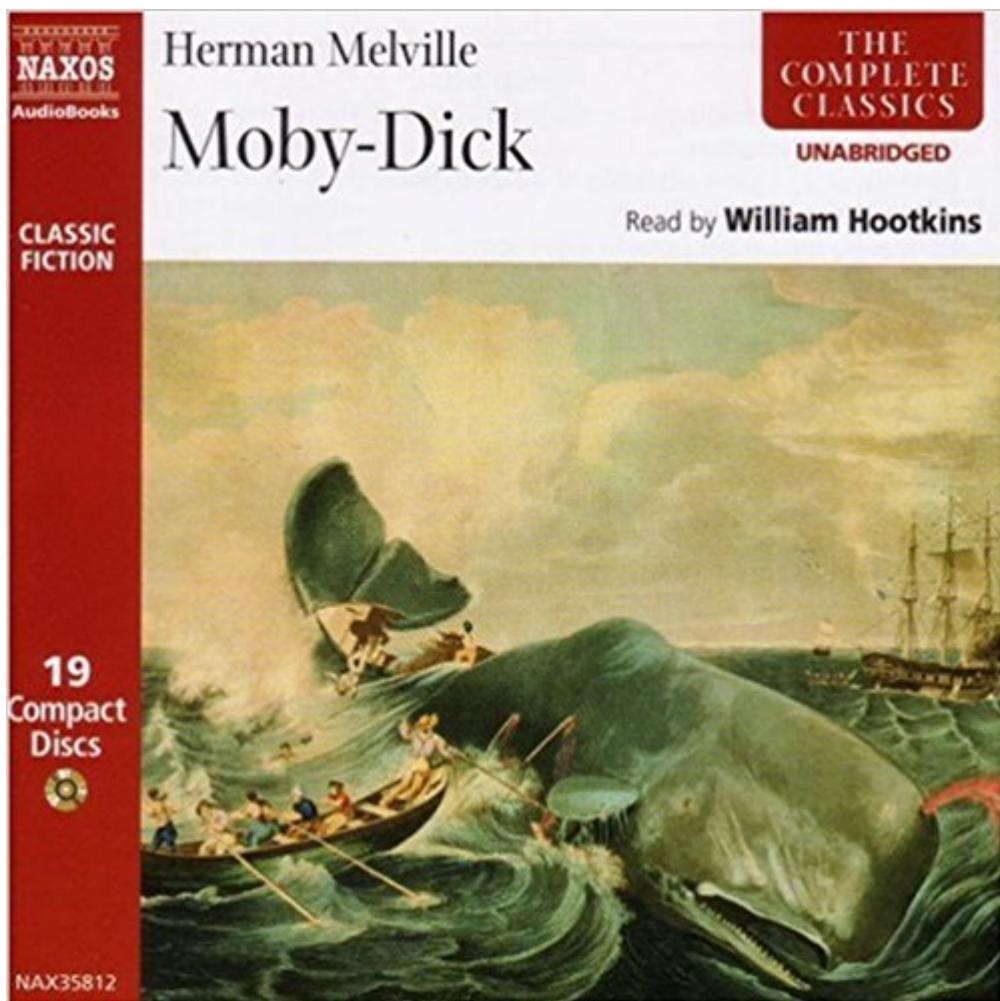


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Moby Dick (Naxos AudioBooks)



Synopsis

'Call me Ishmael'. Thus starts the greatest American novel. Melville said himself that he wanted to write 'a mighty book about a mighty theme' and so he did. It is a story of one man's obsessive revenge-journey against the white whale, Moby-Dick, who injured him in an earlier meeting. Woven into the story of the last journey of The Pequod is a mesh of philosophy, rumination, religion, history and a mass of information about whaling through the ages. This epic story, here presented in unabridged form, receives an equally epic reading from the outstanding American actor William Hootkins.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up
Herman Melville's classic about one man's obsession with the white whale is filled with philosophy, marine biology, history, adventure, and even humor. William Hootkins' voice is superb for the telling of this great sea story, maintaining the attention of listeners even through some of the less adventurous parts. His intonations convey Ishmael's and Captain Ahab's thoughts in a way that helps listeners understand them and their times. Ishmael becomes an actual person and the Captain's madness is real. The individual personalities of each crew member is apparent.

Through Hootkins' telling, the history of whaling becomes intriguing. Students who would normally shy away from this classic will find this format enjoyable. Listeners will gain a new appreciation for and understanding of the novel and Melville's times.

Anita Lawson, Otsego High School, MI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

William Hootkins, like a skilled conductor, creates a charmed reading that explodes with a symphony of contrasts. Oh, it starts easily enough with a certain playfulness of tone--Ishmael's surprise at Queequeg and the frothy bluster of Captains Peleg and Bildad. But the reader soon plunges into deeper seas. The almost childish voice of Ishmael, as if on a skylark, alternates with the later excitement of the chase. The enthusiastic study of the parts of the whale contrasts with the darker innuendos on God; the colorful excitability of Stubb butts up against the diabolic indifference of Ahab's Fedallah. Over all, the mad ruminations of Ahab himself, initially undervoiced, like a recurrent theme, build to a mounting crescendo. Hootkins, exercising perfect control, orchestrates all these voices into the symphonic whole that is Melville's dark masterpiece. P.E.F. Winner of AudioFile Earphones Award © AudioFile 2006, Portland, Maine-- Copyright © AudioFile, Portland, Maine

You know that thin, sixtyish, balding guy at the gym who still uses a disc-man? Well, since late April, he has been listening to the estimable William Hootkins read MOBY-DICK. And guess what? Thirty minutes on the treadmill, twenty-five minutes on the treadmill, a day-off, and then repeat the three-day cycle and that persistent old guy has powered through all nineteen discs in the Naxos Audio Book. While this old buzzard doesn't claim to have actually read MOBY-DICK, he has heard Hootkins read it--every word. And the Hoot brings this masterpiece--which, let's face it, needed a stronger editor--to life. Any of you out there who have started and then put aside this great book might consider this same expedient approach, thereby ticking off another must-do on your bucket list. In his attempts to read Moby-Dick, this wizened gym rat never overcame a huge obstacle--namely, the voice of Ishmael. Certainly, even the defeated reader will recognize that Ishmael is a brilliant person who makes profound and insightful associations. And when he's talking about the universe, his thoughts haven't dated. But there is also something about his manner of speaking, the rhetoric of his language, that invites the mind to wander. But when Hootkins channels Ishmael? Well, the Hoot takes Ishmael's voice--he's the guy at the dinner party who isn't as charming or as wry as he thinks--and gives it focus and conviction. Then add to the mix Hootkins's orotund baritone, which is like the second-coming of Orson Welles. What you get is a prolix but plausible character and communicator. And while he has no sense of humor, he can hold the stage. Anyway... Call me Ishmael. Some of the chapters of MOBY-DICK are painfully boring. For example, chapters 54, 55, and 56 are: "Monstrous Pictures of Whales", "Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales", and "Of Whales in Paint, In Teeth, & C." And a strong editor might have asked: Gee, Herman, isn't this padding? Even so, Hootkins is a game reader and endows even these chapters with a kind of

twisted delight. And the listener who endures such chapters and stays with the complete text will also encounter chapters 42, 47, and 48, which are the absolutely great: "The Whiteness of the Whale", "The Mat-Maker", and "The First Lowering". Then, the listener encounters Melville in his modes of profundity or great action writing. Hootkins, in other words, makes the best of what Melville gives him. And usually, that's a lot. The Naxos version of MOBY-DICK is highly recommended, especially for those who have been defeated in the past by this great American classic. I notice, by the way, that Naxos also offers an unabridged reading of PARADISE LOST. As Dr. Johnson said: "None wished it longer..."

Hootkins did a really great job reading through this novel, doing his best to retain interest in even the most boring of chapters. Listening to the majority of the novel in the car, I really feel like I received a much better understanding and experience for my first time going through the book by listening to this particular recording, over another or by actually reading the text. I felt engaged in the story the entire time and I really did lose myself to Hootkins' read.

I will be returning it - two of the CDs do not work.

A fantastic rendition! The entire family can't wait to get in the car to listen to it.

There are many parts you must hear twice...or thrice, they are so beautifully written. Great narration too, almost better than reading the book. (Almost.)

If you're going to get an unabridged recording of Moby-Dick, you certainly can't go wrong with this one, by William Hootkins. I am a big Melville nut and was VERY, VERY PLEASED with this. Avoid at all costs the only other (as far as I know) unabridged one out there, read by Adams Morgan. Morgan's reedy, effete voice is totally unsuited to this material: his enunciation is so precious it's almost dandyish. And his mispronunciations are legion. Hootkins, however, reads like a man, in long, strong, lingering swells. He has a deep, resonant voice, is literate, sensitive to the material, and rarely, I feel, misreads a line. The whole thing is very convincing. Neither does he read it too fast. Another strength of Hootkin's reading is that his style really brings out how full of jokes this book is. Hootkins is very good at conveying Melville's insouciant tone, especially through many of the cetology chapters, where you intellectually understand that Melville is kidding but it just doesn't work. Well, Hootkins really brings Melville's irreverent tone to the fore. My only possible criticism of

his performance is that, in the final act of the book, Hootkins frequently continues with this leisurely, almost jovial tone, even though Melville has gotten by then dead serious. But this is nitpicking. NOTE: It's not TOTALLY unabridged. The etymology, extracts sections, and all of Melville's annotations have been cut. But otherwise the rest is there. There are no sound effects or music.

Call me Ishmael. One of the most famous opening lines in all of English literature. I was thrilled to find this audio edition of a lengthy classic that I, like many Americans, doggedly plowed through in high school, when I was certainly much too young to appreciate its depth and meaning. Having recently completed Ahab's Wife, my interest in Ahab and what his choices brought about for him, was piqued, and I decided to take another look. This audio version is perfect for someone like me - I know I would not have persevered in reading this on my own. This version has kindled an understanding and admiration for Moby Dick as adventure story, allegory, and journey of self-discovery. It was surprising how much I learned, simply in the factual sense, about the whaling industry in New England, where I was born and raised and still reside today. This is a book that is probably ruined by the introduction of it during adolescence, when it has little to say to the very young reader. Like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Melville is an author who speaks to the reader who has grappled with the universal questions about life and death, sanity and madness, revenge and forgiveness. Not to mention multiculturalism, racism and tolerance. And, a new word - moby - was coined and entered into the English language. Intelligently narrated by William Hootkins, the audio version has a lot to recommend it and is a pleasant way to revisit an important American masterpiece. Take another look (or listen!).

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