

Herman Melville. Moby Dick -- From Chapter 1. "Loomings"

Again, I [Ishmael] always go to sea as a sailor, because they make a point of paying me for my trouble, whereas they never pay passengers a single penny that I ever heard of. On the contrary, passengers themselves must pay. And there is all the difference in the world between paying and being paid. The act of paying is perhaps the most uncomfortable infliction that the two orchard thieves entailed upon us. But BEING PAID,—what will compare with it? The urbane activity with which a man receives money is really marvellous, considering that we so earnestly believe money to be the root of all earthly ills, and that on no account can a monied man enter heaven. Ah! how cheerfully we consign ourselves to perdition!

Finally, I always go to sea as a sailor, because of the wholesome exercise and pure air of the fore-castle deck. For as in this world, head winds are far more prevalent than winds from astern (that is, if you never violate the Pythagorean maxim), so for the most part the Commodore on the quarter-deck gets his atmosphere at second hand from the sailors on the fore-castle. He thinks he breathes it first; but not so. In much the same way do the commonalty lead their leaders in many other things, at the same time that the leaders little suspect it. But wherefore it was that after having repeatedly smelt the sea as a merchant sailor, I should now take it into my head to go on a whaling voyage; this the invisible police officer of the Fates, who has the constant surveillance of me, and secretly dogs me, and influences me in some unaccountable way—he can better answer than anyone else. And, doubtless, my going on this whaling voyage, formed part of the grand programme of Providence that was drawn up a long time ago. It came in as a sort of brief interlude and solo between more extensive performances. I take it that this part of the bill must have run something like this:

"GRAND CONTESTED ELECTION FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES.

"WHALING VOYAGE BY ONE ISHMAEL.

"BLOODY BATTLE IN AFFGHANISTAN."

Define Each Word

urbane: _____

consign: _____

perdition: _____

dog (verb): _____

interlude: _____

Write the Correct Word from the Vocabulary

1. Because the rookie cornerback _____ the All-pro wide receiver so tenaciously, the receiver failed to catch a pass.
2. The old, triple-beam balance was _____ to the chemistry department for the purpose of weighing toxic compounds.
3. Mr. Sanchez evinced an _____ and worldly temperament when he politely dismissed the cashier's ethnic slur as the rumblings of a weak, ignorant person.
4. During the brief but uneasy _____ between the staff meetings, Derek and Sandy discussed their new roles in the restructuring of the company.
5. Some theologians believe that suicides are doomed to _____, eternally damned, never able to attain a state of grace.

Comprehension and Discussion: Answer Each Question in Complete Sentences

1. What two reasons does Ishmael give for going to sea as a sailor?

2. What does Ishmael suggest about political leaders with his statement that Commodores breathe air "second hand"?

