

Mount Saint Mary Academy
English II – Honors
Summer Reading Assignments

Texts

A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway
Moby-Dick by Herman Melville

A Farewell to Arms

Instructions: Read and annotate the text carefully. After you have done this, consider the questions below. Take some notes on your thoughts (about a half page for each question). This is not a formal writing assignment, but you will be developing one of these prompts into your first essay.

1. Before going back to the front, Lieutenant Henry introduces us to Ettore, a decorated soldier of the Italian army. “He was a legitimate hero who bored everyone he met” (124). How does Hemingway portray heroism in this novel? Is Lt. Henry a hero? Is Catherine a hero? Why or why not?
2. Throughout the novel, we find out very little about the personal histories of Lt. Henry and Catherine. How does Hemingway go about developing these characters? Can you relate to them? Why or why not?
3. What role does religion play in this novel? Choose two characters and describe how he or she is affected (or unaffected) by religion.
4. How does Hemingway use rain in this novel? Choose three examples from the text. What does rain symbolize? How does it relate to the relationship between Lt. Henry and Catherine?

Moby-Dick

Instructions: Read and annotate the text carefully. Then respond to the following questions, writing about a half a page for each. Again, this is not a formal writing assignment. We will consider these and other topics as we prepare for a formal writing assignment in the first few weeks of school.

1. With regard to the fact that a large portion of this novel is dedicated to cetology and the history of whaling, Donald Weeks writes in *American Quarterly*:

The question is, is there more in *Moby-Dick* about whales than we need to know before the catastrophe? Is the natural history of the whale mere stuffing and padding?

What do you think is the purpose of Melville's attention to detail?

2. Reread the chapter "The Whiteness of the Whale." What is the significance of Moby-Dick's color? What is its connection to Christianity? What makes the color so forbidding?

3. Compare Ishmael's relationship to Queequeg at the beginning of the novel and the end. What is the significance of the character of Queequeg and the other two harpooners? Can you find other groups of three in the novel?

4. In "Calvinism and Cosmic Evil in *Moby-Dick*," T. Walter Herbert writes:

Melville establishes an antithesis between the doctrine of Father Mapple's sermon and the conduct of Captain Ahab. Jonah and Ahab react in opposite ways to a similar incident: the attack of a whale.

Return to these passages and compare the actions of Jonah and Ahab.

5. Consider the following passage, spoken by Ahab:

Come, Ahab's compliments to ye; come and see if ye can swerve me. Swerve me? Ye cannot swerve me, else ye swerve yourselves! Man has ye there. Swerve me? The path to my fixed is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run.
(Chapter 37)

Does Ahab believe in fate? Do you think the novel works in support of fate, free will, or neither of the two?

6. Cite examples of Melville's portrayal of the awesomeness of the sea. How does ocean compare to land?