Great Short Works of Herman Melville Study Guide

Great Short Works of Herman Melville by Herman Melville

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Chapter 1 - The Town-Ho's Story

Chapter 1 - The Town-Ho's Story Summary

The narrator tells a sea story to a group of Spaniards—the events described transpired prior of the opening of the narrative. The unnamed narrator is a seaman aboard an unnamed commercial whaler (presumably the Pequod). The vessel encounters the Town-Ho, a whaler returning to port. The two ships exchange news at length, even exchanging a few crewmen for a period of time. Some of Town-Ho's harpooners converse at length with Tashtego, one of the narrator's ship's harpooners. The narrator speaks with several crewmen from the Town-Ho. The Town-Ho is crewed by only a handful of men, and very few of them are Caucasian.

The narrator pieces together the entire story of events leading up to the Town-Ho's situation. The ship had enjoyed a prosperous voyage and was full of sperm oil. Among the ship's crew of thirty-six was Radney, the mate, and Steelkilt, a popular seaman. Both men are characterized as proficient seamen, but possessed of a vengeful and quarrelsome nature. Beyond this, Radney is said to be cowardly, ugly, stubborn, and malicious, while Steelkilt is tall and good looking. Gradually a powerful enmity builds up between the two men and Radney uses his position of superiority as mate to relentlessly haze Steelkilt. Eventually, Steelkilt revolts against Radney and starts a general mutiny by savagely striking Radney to the deck. Steelkilt and nine other seamen participate in the mutiny, but they are driven down into the forepeak and locked in. After four days of imprisonment, four of the men recant their position and are allowed to return to the crew. On the fifth day, a further three men give up. Steelkilt is thus locked up with two compatriots and even they eventually surrender. In the end, Steelkilt surrenders and faces flogging by the captain who, about to strike, suddenly demurs after Steelkilt whispers some inaudible threat. Radney, head still bandaged and visibly still weak, emerges and flogs Steelkilt, regardless of several hissed threats. Subsequently, the crew, including Steelkilt, returns to normal duty.

Some days later Steelkilt moves to murder Radney but is prevented by the sighting of the white whale known as Moby Dick. Town-Ho moves to intercept and Radney's boat leads the charge. Radney's boat harpoons the whale who turns upon them—Radney himself is seized by Moby Dick and dragged down to the depths. Town-Ho later makes a nearby port and most of the crew desert. The captain enlists several native sailors and then sails for home, during which voyage he encounters the narrator's ship and the story is told.

Chapter 1 - The Town-Ho's Story Analysis

The short story originally appeared in October of 1851 in a magazine; the original publication was presented as an excerpt from the forthcoming Moby Dick, in which it appeared as Chapter 54. The narration is quite complex in construction, being the self-

effaced narrator's story told to an audience whose native language is not English. The narrator claims to have learned parts of the story directly from participants and other parts of the story indirectly from others. The details presented in the narrative, compared to the method by which the narrative was putatively transmitted, strongly suggest the narrator has greatly embellished events—for example, the narrator reveals interior thoughts and motivations of characters and reports fairly lengthy conversations at which he was not present (e.g., p. 33's consideration of motivation). The occasional interruption of the narration by the audience demonstrates a meta-fictional awareness within the text.

The story, within the novel Moby Dick, takes on yet another layer of narrative abstraction; by the time the reader reads the story they are many times removed from the events narrated. The author further plays with this notion of unreliable narration by subtitling the story "As told at the Golden Inn", as if suggesting the story might vary markedly at another telling place and time. Note the story is written in the first-person but reads as if it was written in the third-person, and the narrator's address to "You" (e.g., p. 22, p. 23, etc.) is directed toward the Spaniard audience who are characters within the story and not to the reader. In the narrative, particularly during the imprisonment episode of the last three men, Steelkilt obtains a subtle Christ-like presentation and the two perfidious mutineers are the thieves crucified either side of Christ. Steelkilt's persecutor, the unpleasant Radney, is seized and killed by Moby Dick, the great white whale and implacable force of nature.

Chapter 2 - Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street

Chapter 2 - Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street Summary

The narrator is a businessman, an aged lawyer of some success, and employs several scribes, or scriveners, to write and copy documents. The scriveners receive their pay on a piecework basis, receiving a set amount for each page written or copied. Their work is peer reviewed before it is accepted and paid for by the narrator. As the narrator's business grows, he finds he needs yet another scrivener to keep up with the paperwork burden. Fortunately, at the same time a young man named Bartleby appears, seeking employment as a scrivener. He is hired, and as office space is somewhat limited, Bartleby receives a corner of the narrator's otherwise private room.

At first, Bartleby works successfully as a scrivener. As time goes on, Bartleby's peculiarities manifest and the narrator comes to believe Bartleby has no social life and, in fact, even lives in the office rather than taking an apartment. Bartleby clearly does not need money, however. As time progresses, Bartleby irritates the other scriveners by refusing to peer review their work; he gradually copies less and less and spends more and more time in idle contemplation of a brick wall across the alley from the office. Eventually Bartleby declines to perform any work whatsoever—whenever something is requested of him he responds, "I would prefer not to" (p. 47).

Humorously, over the next weeks as the other office staff grow restive, they also adopt the word 'prefer' and use is subconsciously. Soon enough, Bartleby does not work but stares out the window all day, subsisting on a tiny amount of food in the form of ginger-nut cakes. The narrator decides that Bartleby must go and attempts several times to discharge him. Bartleby refuses to leave the office. The narrator contemplates having Bartleby arrested but is too timid to pursue this course of action. Finally, the narrator relocates his office in another building to rid himself of Bartleby.

The office's next tenants seek out the narrator and demand he remove Bartleby, who has stayed on as a sort of squatter. The narrator refuses to intervene, and eventually the new landlord summons the police who remove Bartleby and imprison him in the poorhouse. The narrator calls on Bartleby to see after his well-being—and even offers Bartleby a room in his own home—but Bartleby rebukes him, holding him responsible for his own misfortune. Eventually, Bartleby withers away and dies in the poorhouse as the narrator looks on frightened and appalled.

Chapter 2 - Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street Analysis

The story is one of the best known short works in the English language. It was originally published serially, in two parts, with an anonymous attribution, in late 1853. Bartleby is a type of antithesis of employee, moving in and then refusing to be productive. He is so obstinate in non-productivity yet so firmly attached to the work location, that the narrator—the owner of the business employing Bartleby—relocates his offices to get rid of the squatter. The next owners inherit the problem—something like a new apartment move-in discovering an affectionate cat—and responds by having Bartleby sent off to the poorhouse.

Just as interesting as the passive, and nearly non-existent, Bartleby is the acquiescent narrator, the very type of the passive aggressive personality. The various introspective machinations and plans the narrator evolves to rid himself of Bartleby—an obvious trespasser—are as amusing as they are ineffective. The narrator even invents a rationale for Bartleby's refusal to work—he believes Bartleby to suffer from an eye disorder. While Bartleby never dismisses this mistake, he neither supports it nor clarifies the situation in any way. Later, the narrator attempts to rescue Bartleby from the poor house by offering him personal lodging—Bartleby prefers not to go. The narrator arranges for Bartleby to receive good food in the poor house, but Bartleby prefers not to eat it and slowly starves to death. The story is obviously absurdist and is commonly held to have been an emotional response to the indifferent public reception of Moby Dick.

Chapter 3 and 4

Chapter 3 and 4 Summary

In Cock-A-Doodle-Doo! or, the Crowing of the Noble Cock Beneventano, the narrator is a man of some wealth who finds himself in middle age, of indifferent health, and burdened by financial debts because of poor management and a life of dissipation. He criticizes the world and humanity and finds existence rather pointless. Then one day he hears a distant cock crowing with such a beautiful song that he is revitalized entirely. Over the next weeks, the narrator resumes an active life, enjoys eating and socializing, and diligently searches for the cock with the magnificent crow. From time to time he hears the cock crowing in the distance and is continually revitalized by it, even as he speculates about what type of cock it might or might not be. He finally locates the owner, a man named Merrymusk. Merrymusk is old and in poor health, with little ambition but the steely ability to perform manual labor all day long without flinching. Merrymusk's wife and children are all ill and apparently dying. The narrator attempts to purchase Merrymusk's cock at any price, but Merrymusk declines and notes the cock is his only joy. As the narrator watches, the cock crows an ear-shattering crow and Merrymusk and his ill family all perk up for several minutes. Then, however, Merrymusk's wife passes away, followed shortly by the children, and then Merrymusk himself succumbs. The delightful cock struts about and crows loudly and beautifully before it too passes away, leaving the narrator speculating on life without the cock.

In The Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles, Melville provides a delightful blend of travelogue and personal anecdote to describe the Enchanted Isles, which are today better known as the Galapagos Islands. The section is divided into sketches, or parts, each of which builds upon the previous segments of the text. The first sketch considers the island group as a whole, and Melville describes them as forlorn and bleak, composed of black ash and rock, without much vegetation and of a fairly dry character. He comments upon their name, and briefly recounts their history from a mariner's point of view. The second sketch considers the inhabitants from which the islands draw their modern name—the land tortoise. Melville recounts a ship voyage where three such creatures were brought aboard. He observes them overnight and then helps kill, prepare, cook, and eat them. Much information is provided in the way of natural history. The third sketch considers a prominent rocky peak in the island group called Rodondo, from which various vistas are described. Melville also comments upon various seabirds found on the island rookery, including penguins, pelicans, albatross, petrels, gulls, and others. The fourth sketch considers the 'view' from Rodondo, though in scope, the 'view' includes far more than can actually be seen—the sketch orients the island group in the larger ocean as well as organizes the archipelago itself. The fifth sketch, the shortest, considers the history of a few famous vessels touching at The Encantadas. The sixth sketch relates some events transpiring on Barrington Isle, including its one-time use as a safe haven by buccaneers. Today, ruined abodes can still be found upon the island. The seventh sketch considers Charles' Island and its peculiar history. The island was ceded by Peru to a favored military figure. That man in turn used various methods to

gain inhabitants for his island, attempting to set up a type of independent kingdom. Most of his settlers proved not tractable, inasmuch as they generally were recruited by force of subterfuge, and the man used a pack of ferocious dogs to keep order. Eventually the entire scheme broke down with much bloodshed. The eighth sketch, the longest, considers Norfolk Isle and the narrator's memorable visit there. Upon departure, the narrator's ship picked up Hunilla, a widowed native woman who tells her tale of sad marooning, the accidental death of her brother and husband, her subsequent mistreatment at the hands of the sailors of a few passing ships, and her long and solitary life of woe. She is carried to the mainland and sent home. The ninth sketch discusses Hood's Island and one of its highly peculiar inhabitants named Oberlus. Oberlus was a hermit farmer of vegetables who would occasionally sell vegetables to ships touching at the island. He became quite haughty and convinced of his vast superiority over other men and eventually attempted to murder several. Finally, Oberlus vanished, leaving behind a rather cryptic note. The tenth sketch again returns to a general recounting of the islands but with a focus on old artifacts that may be found thereon.

Chapter 3 and 4 Analysis

In Cock-A-Doodle-Doo! a lighthearted and chatty style is combined with a serious subject matter to yield an absurdist and risible portrayal of a downtrodden family graced with the single gift of a magnificently-crowing cock. The cock's crow is so powerful and delightful that all around the countryside, those who are depressed, upon hearing the crow, become happy and energetic for some time. The narrator thus stumbles onto the cock by hearing its crow and feeling its influence in his life. The crow changes him from a grouchy recluse into a chatty searcher. He searches for the cock. At the end of the story, the man who owns the cock dies alongside his entire family, and they are shortly followed by the cock itself, leaving the narrator to once again—presumably—descend into depression. The story is absurd and quite obviously allegorical. Most critics have interpreted the story as a reference to male sexuality, the oft-repeated phrase 'noble cock' being obviously phallic in nature. In this interpretation, the narrator is spared his humdrum and boring life only by the pursuit of sexual satisfaction, and Merrymusk becomes a younger sort of man; a man without wealth but possessed of a family and, most importantly, of a fine cock. As Merrymusk passes away—metaphorically ages—his family departs and he dies, or more accurately, he loses his cock. There are of course other ways to interpret the story.

The Encantadas consists of ten divisions, or sketches, each a topical treatment of specific topic. Each sketch is introduced with a short verse and the tenth sketch also ends with a short verse; the verses are adapted from Spenser's The Fairy Queen. The sketches are presented nearly as non-fiction and certainly they contain a great deal of auto-biographical, biographical, and geographical facts which are not fictional in nature. However, they are interesting in their presentation of narration and not all material can be interpreted as non-fictional. In style they are somewhat like an incomplete travelogue, though one interspersed with exciting details of history. In this way, the collected sketches can be viewed as a grab-bag of material comprising a novella—of

course, other interpretations are viable. The geography presented is correct and the depictions of the islands are considered generally accurate, even though Melville's opinion of the place as deserted and barren decidedly was not shared by the islands' most-famous visitor, Charles Darwin. Most of the sketches present the islands in a somewhat mystical, or magical, setting that supports their name of The Encantadas. Several of the sketches note the common presence of large tortoises from which the island group derives the contemporaneously common name of The Galapagos. The ninth sketch ends with a note indicating the events described are historical in nature and providing a citation in support of this—but also notes fictional departures from the historical account. This is much akin to the latter included novella Benito Cereno, based partly upon a historical account. The presence of the introductory verses firmly plants the travelogue-like novella in the realm of philosophy, and the novella has generally received wide and favorable attention from critics.

Chapters 5 - 7

Chapters 5 - 7 Summary

In The Two Temples, the narrator visits two locales, and each is described in its own segment. In 'Temple First', the narrator travels to a New York cathedral on a Sunday morning but is prevented from entrance because of his shabby appearance and inability to produce a minor bribe. Turned away, he happens to note the belfry door is unlocked. Sneaking inside, he mounts high into the bell tower and watches Mass through a small circulation portal cut between the middle course of the bell tower and the highest reaches of the cathedral chamber. Although hot air blows constantly through the ventilation hole, the isolated and solitary narrator watches Mass from his lofty vantage point. Afterward, he descends to street level and is horrified to find the door now locked. Unable to escape, the narrator paces up and down the tower for some time, considering his plight, and then rings the church bell to summon assistance. He is freed, but delivered into the hands of the waiting police.

In 'Temple Second' the narrator has traveled to London on a failed business excursion and finds himself penniless and nearly homeless. Loitering outside a popular theater, the narrator is given a re-admittance ticket by a departing patron. Entering the theater, the narrator is directed upwards to a lofty vantage point, where he joins a friendly throng watching the distant play. A young boy gives him a free beer and the crowd is very friendly and enthusiastic. The narrator them compares the 'temple' of the theater to the 'temple' of the cathedral.

In Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs, the narrator spends time with a friend who extols the virtues of being poor. He uses various pet names for things, such as referring to spring snowfall as 'poor man's manure' and so forth. The narrator's friend actually insists that "the poor, out of their very poverty, extract comfort" (p. 167). The conversation turns to food, and the narrator's friend insists that 'poor man's pudding' is a perfect food. Soon enough, he has arranged for the narrator to visit a working man's house in the locale. The narrator visits the house and takes lunch with the poverty-stricken family. Lunch consists of year-old salted meat and poor man's pudding—that is, low quality rice boiled in milk with salt. The narrator finds the meal to be inedible. After lunch, the husband departs to work and the wife bemoans her fate and the loss of their two infant children just months before. The narrator then travels to London and is invited by a friend to witness a putative great act of charity. They go to a grand hall where royalty has just eaten at huge cost, and the various poverty-stricken locals are allowed to queue up to receive the leftover scraps and fragments. The narrator finds the scene disturbing, but his friend insists it is the world's best charity.

In The Happy Failure: A Story of the River Hudson, the narrator accompanies his uncle and his uncle's slave on a clandestine mission to an island in the Hudson River to test out his uncle's marvelous new invention—a "Great Hydraulic-Hydrostatic Apparatus" (p. 180), meant to drain swampland at an incredible rate. After much toil, the island is

reached and the apparatus unloaded and positioned, whereupon it fails to work. In a fit of anger, the uncle destroys the machine he has worked on for the past ten years. On the trip home the uncle, now free of the machine, feels happy and free.

Chapters 5 - 7 Analysis

The Two Temples was rejected for publication in 1854—so far as is known, the only Melville story to be so rejected. Obviously, the comparison of the sterile American cathedral to the rowdy London theatre could be objectionable to some readers. The story is essentially a comparison between the two locales, and the physical placement of the narrator in both is nearly identical—he mounts to a high place and watches the performance far below, looking through an aperture screened by a transparent mesh. However, at the cathedral, he is refused charity and becomes a trespasser and minor criminal, while in the theatre he is granted charity and welcomed as a friend. The favorable theatre is located in London while the staid cathedral is located in New York. The narrator's penniless plight in both instances is an easy plot device to establish the basic comparison.

Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs is a story about unequal wealth distribution. The story suggests that middle-class and upper-class moralizing about the values of the lower-class are meaningless because of the vast differences between these groups of people. The poor do not eat poor man's pudding and line up for rich men's crumbs because they are somehow wholesome or attractive—they do it because they are hungry and have no alternative. Poor man's pudding is a distasteful concoction of necessity, not a food that somehow extracts comfort from poverty, as the narrator's wealthy friend insists. The story is a moral tale and fairly short on plot and characterization.

In The Happy Failure: A Story of the River Hudson, the narrator's uncle is a type of inventor during a period of wild speculation—he assumes fame and fortune will be his for inventing a machine—apparently a type of advanced pump—to salvage swampland. The machine not only does not work, but doesn't do anything at all, leaving one to wonder just what the uncle has been so obsessed with for ten years. After the machine's unspectacular failure, the uncle feels free from the tyranny of invention. The narrative suggests that scientific advances are not empowering so much as they are imprisoning, and the narrator instinctively realizes his failure as being a good thing. The story can also be interpreted in an auto-biographical light; Melville worked for about ten years with spectacular success and then faded into obscurity as his latter works were rejected by the public.

Chapters 8 - 11

Chapters 8 - 11 Summary

In The Lighning-rod Man, the narrator lives in a mountainous region, and during an intense thunderstorm, is visited by a door-to-door salesman of lightning rods. The salesman points out the concussive lightning storm outside, points out the elevation of the mountainside, and points out the exposed nature of the home. He then strongly urges the narrator to purchase a copper lightning rod to protect himself and his home. The salesman's technique involves acting desperately afraid of imminent electrocution because of the home's location within the storm. The narrator vituperates the salesman's fear, notes that lightning recently struck and destroyed a building sporting several lightning rods and that his own house without a lightning rod has never been struck in many years. The lightning-rod man departs without a sale, but in the ensuing weeks and months does a brisk business with the narrator's neighbors.

The narrator of The Fiddler, named Helmstone, is a poet who has published a poem that has been very poorly received of the critics. He angrily walks the streets until he encounters his friend Standard. Standard and Helmstone retire to lunch and are joined there by Hautboy, a man Standard introduces to Helmstone. Hautboy is about forty, chubby, and supremely happy. After lunch, the three men retire to a circus, where Helmstone watches Hautboy's enjoyment of the spectacle. Later, Hautboy departs and Helmstone and Standard discuss their now-mutual friend. Helmstone, himself prone to a negative and pessimistic outlook, comments that Hautboy's essential positivism and optimism is possible only because he lacks genius; he is merely ignorant and therefore capable of happiness. Standard asks leading questions and then reveals that in fact Hautboy, as a youth, was a musical phenomenon, playing the fiddle to huge crowds. His musical genius brought him riches and fame, which he subsequently discarded to pursue a normal but happy life as a fiddle instructor of little means. Stunned, Helmstone returns home and tears up his poetry manuscripts.

The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids consists of two main parts. In the first part the narrator visits London on business and spends some time in the company of his friend, a bachelor involved in legal practice who lives at Temple Bar. The narrator comments extensively on the architecture and layout of the area, noting that most of the lodging in the area is restricted to club members or their acquaintances. The narrator particularly notes a large stone gateway, designed by Christopher Wren, arching over the roadway. During the narrative, the narrator attends a bachelor's dinner and enjoys the many removes and frequent bouts of drinking and smoking. The conversation is stimulating and the narrator concludes that the area is a veritable paradise for bachelors.

In the second part, the narrator visits a paper factory in the Berkshire Hills—the factory is referred to as the Devil's Dungeon. After concluding business, he tours the factory and finds it staffed nearly entirely of women—the proprietor refers to them as girls,

because regardless of age they are putatively all virgins, or maids. The factory is located in a freezing cold valley and powered by a nearly-frozen river. The women work twelve hours each day, six days per week, for little pay. Their working conditions are appalling and often quite dangerous.

The Bell-Tower is the story of the construction of a massive bell-tower by a gifted but eccentric inventor named Bannadonna. The monumental and phallic bell-tower marks the local Italian community as distinctive and modern. During construction, Bannadonna lashes out at one non-proficient workman, killing him, but the action is tolerated because of Bannadonna's reputation. Also during construction, a veiled but strangely anthropoid object is hoisted into the tower—an event that causes some speculation. Near the completion of the tower, the town leaders visit and receive an abbreviated tour and a brusque turning out by Bannadonna. On the promised day, the town citizens assemble and collectively count down the final seconds on their own timepieces until the moment of unveiling—but nothing happens. Further investigation eventually discloses that Bannadonna has been killed by a type of robotic bell ringer, strangely human in form. Most deem the death an accident—believing the absent-minded Bannadonna had been perfecting the engraving on the bell at the moment the golem-like bell ringer struck the hour one, inadvertently smashing in Bannadonna's head.

Chapters 8 - 11 Analysis

The Lightning-Rod Man is told in a lighthearted tone. The appearance of the lightning-rod man, along with many of his mannerisms and speech (for example, "Mine is the only true rod", p. 190) strongly casts him as a preacher. In this role, he urges the narrator to protect himself from divine fury by purchasing a rod, the equivalent in the extended allegory of joining a particular sect of religion. For his own part, the narrator is convinced that his own lifetime and experiences are predestined and therefore a lightning rod is spurious. He also notes the lightning-rod man does business only during lightning storms. The salesman's discussion of the particular merits of his product is amusing.

The Fiddler is rich in subtle meaning; Helmstone's reference to his own poem suggests a very stilted and officious type of poetry. Clearly it is not well-received by the critics. He is an angry and pessimistic man who views life darkly. His friend, Standard, has apparently contrived an object lesson for Helmstone and guides him to make Hautboy's acquaintance (Hautboy's name is risible in and of itself). Hautboy's tale is cautionary—if the artist cannot happily live with genius, then genius is best discarded in favor of happiness. Helmstone decides to follow Hautboy's example. Note that several modern critics have suggested the story is essentially a homoerotic encounter; other interpretations are possible.

In The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids, the narrator's visit to the paper factory uses starkly sexual imagery, obviously beginning with the narrator's employment as a seedsman, to describe landscapes and mechanical operations, concluding that the factory is an example of patriarchal domination of women. The story is obvious social commentary made interesting by imagery and the spanning of two continents—England

and America—and a comparison of their cultures. On the one hand bachelors—single men—live in splendor, pursue academia or professions, and enjoy each other's company, excellent pay, exclusive lodging, and copious food. On the other hand, maids—single women—live in barracks, perform brutal manual labor, cannot speak while working, receive sub-subsistence wages, and appear ill and malnourished. Note also that all of the bachelors in the story are presented as distinct individuals with peculiar interests and circumstances, whereas all of the maids in the story are merely nameless cogs in the machinery of production. The story draws its own obvious conclusions through comparison and contrast, a construction technique seen earlier in Two Temples.

The narrative of the Bell-Tower is very concerned with time and its divisions. The fact that the bell-tower is nothing more than a large public clock is noted repeatedly, and the method of the bell's construction, hanging, and decoration are all considered in considerable detail. Bannadonna is eccentric but gifted—and also very agitated. His homicide of the negligent workman is tolerated by the authorities but also stains the bell itself in a method that only Bannadonna can detect. Rather than recast the whole work, Bannadonna hides the defect, showing his vanity and impatience. The sounds heard during the town council's visit are explained by Bannadonna as falling mortar, but yet a possible explanation is that of the bell-ringing automaton moving about upon its own volition. Thus Bannadonna's death can be viewed as either accidental or in turn, another homicide. The story is ambiguous and indeterminate, rich in symbols, and can be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways.

Chapter 12 - Benito Cereno

Chapter 12 - Benito Cereno Summary

Benito Cereno tells the story of the ship San Dominick, captained by Benito Cereno. The ship is an ancient Spanish galleon. The ship boards passengers, goods, and many black slaves for a trip along the west coast of South America. Because Alexandro Aranda, the chief passenger, slave-owner, and personal friend of Cereno, claims the slaves are tractable, they are not chained during the voyage. Part-way through the voyage the slaves commence a rebellion and seize the ship. Aranda himself is butchered with axes and his body is apparently cannibalized, at least in part, during a dark ritual. His skeleton is subsequently riveted to the prow of the ship, replacing its figurehead. Many of the Spanish crewmen, including all of the officers except Cereno, are murdered in various methods—being hacked apart or tied up and thrown overboard, or both, being the most common methods. The leaders of the slaves then demand to be taken to Senegal, a country of native blacks, and released. Cereno, supported by a handful of surviving Spanish sailors and ship's boys, begins the long and arduous trek toward Senegal. The ship keeps out of sight of any land for fear of reprisals but eventually calls at Santa Maria, a small deserted island on the southern coast of Chile, to water. There, the ship encounters The Bachelor's Delight, captained by Amasa Delano of Duxbury, Massachusets, a large sealer and trader. Delano observes the ship having difficulty gaining anchorage and eventually takes his ship's boat alongside her and boards her, offering help. He discovers a ship in poor repair and with a much-diminished crew, captained by an indecisive Spaniard. Delano spends several hours aboard and causes minimal supplies to be brought over from his own ship. Delano finds Cereno absent-minded, nervous, and in a bizarre frame of mind. Cereno delivers a rambling and partially incoherent tale of prolonged calms, savage gales, and several plagues, all causing the crew to be decimated. As the hours pass, Delano begins to believe that some foul plot is afoot and notices numerous bizarre occurrences that cause him to become worried. Finally, he departs, and as his boat pulls away, Cereno leaps into it from the ship and several Spanish sailors jump into the sea. Many of the slaves attempt to recover the boat but are unable to do so. Delano regains his ship as San Dominick puts out to sea, whereupon Cereno explains the true circumstances aboard his recent ship. Delano's crew sets out in ship's boats and with musket fire and good weapons, board and recapture San Dominick. Both ships then make for port where the numerous slaves are tried for mutiny, murder, and other affronts. The ringleaders are hanged. Delano continues on his way. Cereno, broken in body and spirit, apologizes for his complicity in the initial ruse, noting he had no other course of action, then retires to a hospital and dies some weeks later.

Chapter 12 - Benito Cereno Analysis

The novella was originally published in a serialization of three parts; it was later lightly re-written for inclusion in a collection of works. The re-written version is most commonly

found in anthologies. The story is narrated in the third-person but is closely related from Delano's point of view. The first portion of the novella presents Delano's experiences aboard San Dominick in such a way that the reader is left to guess with Delano why the ship's company behaves so strangely. It is not until Cereno escapes that the situation is clarified. The story's construction then changes to a presentation of excerpts from court proceedings documents that reestablish the story. This method of construction requires substantive retelling of several developments. The story claims to be largely historic in fact, though embellished in the particulars. The cast of characters is quite large, though most of them are of little significance within the plot. A second reading of the novella is quite enlightening, as many of the bizarre but apparently random events noted by Delano in fact make perfect sense when a complete knowledge is had. The complicated knot that is thrown overboard symbolizes Delano's note of the events but inability to make sense of them at the time (refer to p. 271).

The story can be interpreted as a valiant body of slaves acting in concert to attempt freedom from slavery; it can also be read as a bloodthirsty mutiny and wholesale slaughter of sailors by savages. Note the blacks are led by Babo, who is described as very intelligent but physically weak, while the white sailors gain victory through an unimaginative frontal assault of arms—quite the reverse of typical slave narratives. Cereno's fragmentary deposition attempts to not only set the record straight but also to exculpate him from wrongdoing through his repeated assertions that he could have taken no other course of action—this may or may not be interpreted as truthful. The complex narrative weaves together much material in a subtle mix of plot and characterization and is an excellent example of Melville's mastery of narrative and writing.

Chapters 13 - 16

Chapters 13 - 16 Summary

In Jimmy Rose, William Ford, the narrator, recalls a long friendship with Jimmy Rose. Rose had been a man of substance and well-known in social circles. He had entertained lavishly until an unexpected business turn left him impoverished and hiding from debtors. Over the next twenty-five years, Rose lives as a pauper, indulged to occasional meals by former business acquaintances. Throughout it all, Rose remains essentially happy and positive. As an old man, Rose grows sick and approaches death—he is nursed by a rich young woman but somewhat resents his situation contrasted to her cheery, youthful situation. Rose then dies, and sometime later the narrator happens to move into the same rundown tenement in which Rose lived out his poor days.

In I and My Chimney, the narrator and his family live in a large but peculiar country home. The home is quite spacious even though it has had an upper floor removed by a prior occupant. The home's entire layout is based upon a massive central chimney, a full twelve feet square in the cellar and rising far above the roof with minimal taper. Even though the chimney has been reduced in height by a prior tenant, it still soars above the house. The chimney dominates the exterior and interior of the house and the narrator's wife and daughters constantly petition him to have the chimney removed and the interior remodeled. Yet the narrator is inordinately fond of the chimney and refuses to have it modified. Over the course of several weeks, an architect examines the chimney and declares its dimensions suggests it hold some hidden compartment. The narrator causes the architect to inspect again and personally checks the results. The architect eventually recants and issues a statement that the chimney is fully sound. The narrator ends the story by considering the utility of the chimney.

In The 'Gees, the narrator presents himself as somewhat of an expert on a particular ethnicity of commonly-encountered sailor called a 'Gee, a pejorative contraction of Portuguee, a corruption of Portuguese—itself an inaccurate appellation. The 'Gees hail from Fogo island and are anxious to serve aboard ship because of their great love of ship's biscuit. The narrator claims most seamen hold them in particularly low regard.

The Apple-Tree Table, or Original Spiritual Manifestations, tells the story of a family that moves into a new house. In the house is a garret space that has been locked up for many years. The narrator—father of the family—finds a rusty old key and unlocks the space. Therein he finds an old table of peculiar construction and an old book about witchcraft. The narrator has the table refurbished and placed in the home, over the objections of his wife and daughters, who find its three clawed feet somehow demonic. The narrator stays up late one night reading the book on witchcraft and hears a quiet ticking coming from the table. Over the next days, the daughters become convinced the table's ticking is a spiritual manifestation and are much frightened. Finally, however, an insect emerges from the table and the ticking stops. Then the ticking starts again and the family stays up all night until a second insect emerges. The captured insect is

shown to a naturalist, who examines the table and concludes the insect eggs must have been laid some one hundred and fifty years previous.

Chapters 13 - 16 Analysis

Jimmy Rose is another tale of a rich man coping with financial ruin. The protagonist, Rose, remains basically unaffected by his loss—over the next decades of life he lives as a pauper but remains happy. He calls on old social acquaintances, though with far less frequency, and manages to survive largely on borrowed charity. Some critics consider the Rose to be a fictional alter ego of the narrator. Note the symbolic roses on the wallpaper of the tenement—fabulous in quality, yet ruined by weather. Humorously, the serving girl believes the roses to be onions. The narrator has only minimal presence in the narrative.

I and My Chimney is a peculiar story about a family's reaction to an overwhelmingly dominant architectural element in the house—in this case, a massive chimney all out of proportion with the house and even countryside. The portrayal of the chimney is clearly phallic, and much sexual imagery attends the early portions of the story. The central crisis of the narrative arrives when an architect states the chimney must contain some hidden room or compartment. The narrator believes the architect suggests this because of the meddling of the narrator's wife—who wants the chimney demolished. The narrator pursues another inspection and demands a written note of soundness. Most critics consider the story to be fictionally autobiographical, where the house represents Melville's family life and the chimney represents his literary career. Melville's family encouraged him to abandon writing, yet he would not—even though it was not economically rewarding; this is symbolized by the narrator's unwillingness to have the hugely impractical chimney removed. The repeated visits by the architect, including the written statement of soundness, are usually interpreted as symbolic of a series of examinations Melville endured for his family who considered him possibly insane—the examinations ended with a certificate of good health being issued.

The 'Gees is quite short and is a brief sketch of a class of sailor identified by ethnicity. The narrator claims the purpose of the story is to avoid having to explain the term in other writing. The Apple-Tree Table, or Original Spiritual Manifestations, is a peculiar blend of ghost story and philosophical narrative. It lacks the sustained interest and final impact of other stories in the collection, but it is lighthearted and entertaining. Most of the philosophical content is a contrast between experiences—that of absolute science, symbolized by Democritus, and that of mystical interpretation, symbolized by Cotton Mather. The familiar interactions are enjoyable and the narrator's wife proves compellingly adaptable, an unusually strong female lead character for the collection.

Chapters 17 - 21

Chapters 17 - 21 Summary

In The Piazza, the narrator lives in a country house without a piazza, or porch. He has one built and selected the northern side of his house, much to his neighbors' amusement. He thereafter spends much time sitting on the piazza and gazing at the magnificent view of forested mountains. Several times his eye is drawn to a singular spot on a distant mountainside, usually by some play of light. Fancifully imagining the spot must be the home of fairies, the narrator decides to investigate. A fairly lengthy voyage follows, involving sailing and horseback riding, and the narrator eventually dismounts and scrambles through dense underbrush to reach the spot. He finds there a dilapidated house with a few new repairs. Inside he meets a young woman of forlorn countenance who identifies herself as Marianna. Marianna lives in the house with her brother, who spends all of nearly every long day away working. She remains at home and passes the time as she is able. Hers is a life of crushing solitude and she finds little joy. The narrator and Marianna hold a conversation interrupted by many pauses. The conversation ends as Marianna points out a distant house—the narrator's own house—and rhapsodizes about how lovely life must be at such a distant, beautiful place.

The Marquis de Grandvin is a short piece that extols the virtues of the Marquis. He is said to be a forthright and honest fellow whose company everyone enjoys. His personal charisma is such that even political agitators respectfully refer to him as the Marquis. Three "Jack Gentian Sketches" includes three sections, or sketches, extolling the virtues of Major John "Jack" Gentian, known by various honorifics. Like the Marquis de Grandvin, with whom he is friendly, Gentian is a well-known bachelor with many admirable qualities. He has a certain populist streak that is appreciated by all. Gentian is likely to use hard language, is proud of his American heritage and military service for the Union, but openly admiring of the Southern effort. John Marr is an elegiac commemoration of an expert forecastle sailor who longs for the golden days of sail and yearns to talk about his past—but finds no ready audience. After being wounded by pirates, he retires to various odd-jobs ashore. He marries and has a child but loses his family to disease. Daniel Orme is a similar short biographical treatment of a man, much like the preceding chapters. Orme is an aged sailor using an assumed name. After many years at sea, he becomes too old to function as a sailor and retires ashore. His appearance is fairly distinct and he is silent about his past—thus several rumors arise. On one occasion some fellow tenants drug him and examine his chest to find a large tattooed cross marred by a scar. This fuels further rumors. Finally, Orme passes away and is buried.

Chapters 17 - 21 Analysis

The Piazza provides an odd style of metrical prose much akin to poetry. The story reads nearly as a parable and is devoid of realistic facts and plot developments common

elsewhere in the collection. The story focuses on themes of the transient nature of joy, constant discouragement, and reality infused with dreamlike sequences. The story also provides elements of the heroic quest, inasmuch as it is essentially a difficult voyage to a distant mythic place which is not as is appears. In the end, the narrator realizes that yearning for the distant place is fanciful. The story is introduced with a coupled of verse and features a reference to Edmund Spenser.

The Marquis de Grandvin was unpublished in Melville's lifetime. It was apparently intended to be an introduction to a lengthy poem entitled "At the Hostelry". The sketch is something of a brief biography of the subject and does not feature a plot, a setting, or other elements of typical fiction. Three "Jack Gentian Sketches" has a complicated publishing history—portions were unpublished in Melville's lifetime while other portions were published only in an extremely limited printing. The material was not fully organized by Melville, but was apparently intended to be an introduction to a lengthy poem entitled "An Afternoon in Napes". The sketches comprise something of a brief biography of the man—they do not feature a plot, a setting, or other elements of typical fiction. The second sketch does include a few stanzas of verse. John Marr is another elegiac commemoration of a forecastle sailor who longs for the golden days of sail and yearns to talk about his past—but finds no ready audience. The piece initially introduced a collection of verse and also includes several stanzas of verse. Daniel Orme was also intended as a preface to a poem and it is quite similar to the preceding vignettes. It was unpublished—indeed unfinished—by Melville. The central theme of Daniel Orme concerns a person's past—how they are not always free to start anew. Orme dies alone, apparently at peace, and looking out to sea.

Chapter 22 - Billy Budd

Chapter 22 - Billy Budd Summary

The year is 1797 and England is at war with France. The British Empire's primary force is the Royal Navy. These are the days of sailing ships with a certain poetic, if violent, flair to combat. However, a pair of widespread and serious mutinies has occurred that threatens the efficacy of the Royal Navy as a fighting force. The mutinies have been put down but the command structure of the Royal Navy remains very sensitive to mutinous sentiment. Billy Budd, a sailor, is impressed (essentially, he is drafted) from the merchant ship Rights of Man and enters involuntary service aboard HMS Bellipotent, Captain Vere, a seventy-four gun ship-of-war. Budd, twenty-one years old, is exceptionally handsome and physically perfect, except for a grievous stutter when under stress. He is innocent, trusting, and in many ways naïve, but everyone instinctively likes him. Budd demonstrates certain vulnerabilities and is completely ignorant about immoral behavior.

Captain Vere is a bachelor of forty, tall and spare, modest, highly capable, experienced, and naturally aristocratic. He is sterling, if not brilliant, and very dedicated to bookish study. He reads constantly and is quite intellectual, but is simultaneously generally opposed to new-fangled advances. Some consider him dry and pedantic. Vere's officers are largely nondescript if competent men, typical in all ways, except for John Claggart, the Master-at-arms. Claggart's role is to serve as a sort of police constable aboard ship, keeping the peace and administering punishment. Claggart is thirty-five years old, strong, well-built, and handsome—save a large, protuberant chin. Claggart has an above-average intellect but his behavior hints at a grave abnormal morality, a natural moral depravity that cannot be rationally explained. Something of a tyrant, his position aboard ship insures that all are afraid of him and resent his presence. The narrative strongly suggests that Claggart is a predatory homosexual molester of the ship's boys.

Aboard ship, Budd quickly becomes popular and gains the friendship and trust of his companions. Claggart publicly is kind to Budd but privately begins to hate him. Claggart arranges for his assistants to haze Budd in minor ways. Budd, afraid of being disciplined, strives to render punctual and excellent service. Even so, the hazing continues and Budd begins to feel that someone is deliberately against him. Budd seeks advice from a wise old crewmember, and the man tells Budd that it is Claggart who hates him. Budd, innocent and naïve, refuses to believe that Claggart could be responsible. On one occasion, Budd spills his soup directly in Claggart's path—Claggart steps over the soup with a peculiar facial expression; from this point forward Claggart's persecution of Budd intensifies greatly. Claggart, at heart, has a mania of evil nature; he becomes increasingly envious of Budd's good looks and open friendliness, and longs for Budd. As the weeks go by, Claggart's hatred of Budd increases. Eventually, one of Claggart's agents attempts to recruit Budd into mutinous plotting. Budd, much alarmed at being approached, refuses and thereafter avoids the man.

Again, Budd seeks the advice of the wise old sailor, again he is told that Claggart is behind it, and again Budd refuses to believe Claggart to be capable of such behavior. While Claggart's antagonism has become obvious to most of the crew, Budd is inexperienced, simple, fairly oblivious, and does not understand the developing situation.

More time passes as the ship continues in wartime service. Claggart's hatred of Budd continues to develop. Finally, the ship is involved in a prolonged chase of an enemy vessel, which ends in the enemy escaping. Immediately after this exciting confusion, Claggart approaches Vere and charges that during the pursuit Budd had been involved in mutinous plotting. Vere refuses to believe it, but does order Claggart and Budd to his private cabin to discuss the incident. There, Claggart repeats the charges directly into Budd's face, causing Budd to become so frustrated that he cannot speak. As Claggart elaborates on the charges, Budd lashes out with a savage punch to Claggart's forehead. The blow is so great that Claggart is killed. Stunned, Vere sends for the surgeon to confirm death and then determines to call a drum-head court.

The court is convened and Vere acts as the only witness. Budd is questioned and corroborates Vere's account. The court, comprised of a lieutenant, the ship's master, and a marine captain, vacillates, concluding that Budd is in no way guilty of the charges Claggart brought. Vere agrees, but insists that is not the point—Budd has struck and killed a senior officer and regardless of circumstances, he must be held accountable for that act. Military service demands unswerving application of military justice, which is of necessity harsh and merciless. The court vacillates again, but under Vere's decisive opinion they finally relent, find Budd guilty of the killing of Claggart, and sentence him to death. Vere visits Budd and conveys the results. The chaplain visits Budd twice. The shocked ship's crew is assembled and informed, and the sentence is carried out. As Budd is hung, the noble and innocent man exclaims "God bless Captain Vere" (p. 497); the crew repeats the phrase. Vere then causes the crew to be set about various shipboard duties to disperse their feelings. Months later, Vere is wounded in combat and transferred ashore where he dies. His dying words are "Billy Budd, Billy Budd" (p. 502). The official naval account of Budd's death bears little resemblance to the events narrated. An elegiac poem appears sometime later, commemorating Budd's life.

Chapter 22 - Billy Budd Analysis

The novella is generally considered one of the finest in the English language and is considered Melville's second-greatest work, second only to Moby Dick. It is very spare and virtually everything in the narrative drives relentlessly to the conclusion. The writing is exceptional, brilliant, and engaging. The novella has received as much critical attention as nearly any work in the English language. The setting—the mutinous year of 1797—is critical to a full understanding of Vere's apprehension about, and secret response to, the critical incident. The novella features three main characters—Budd, Vere, and Claggart. Budd and Claggart are fairly straightforward, while Vere is greatly conflicted. The narrative features heavy and constant Christian symbolism with repeated references from the Old and New Testaments. Budd is compared to Jesus

Christ, Adam, Moses, Able, and Isaac; Vere is contrasted with Pontius Pilate. Claggart is a Judas figure; this allusion is strengthened by the Chaplain's Judas' Kiss of Budd.

Claggart's natural depravity has been the subject of much critical speculation. The narrative suggests he is a predatory homosexual who finds Budd's beauty and inaccessibility frustrating. The ship's boys are afraid of Claggart, and the Dansker seems to infer Claggart finds Budd attractive and unobtainable. Certainly narrative phrases about Budd such as "...who in the nude might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall" (p. 473) sexualize him, as do the constant references to his impressive beauty and near-feminine charms. The scene in which Budd spills his soup across the path of Claggart has unmistakably sexualized symbolic meaning. Regardless of Claggart's motivation, his underlying natural depravity and wickedness are obvious. Like Claggart, Budd's character is easy to comprehend, though his naïve simplemindedness is sometimes difficult fully to accept. On the other hand, Vere is conflicted and complex. He knows that Budd is morally innocent, yet he feels that to maintain order in his ship he must exact a terrible revenge—he says of Claggart and Budd "Struck dead by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang" (p. 478). Much of the novella's latter chapters are devoted to Vere's philosophical musings, both internal and spoken, and this forms the dénouement of the novella.

The novella has a complex publication history. Melville began working on the piece by around 1886 and it remained unfinished at his death in 1891. It was not discovered until 1924, when it was found partially completed, with many notations and notes. The novella was first published in 1924; in 1962 a completely revised edition was published by Hayford and Sealts; today the 1962 edition usually is considered definitive. Nevertheless, various editions are encountered and they vary in title, wording, organization, and even chapter content.

Characters

Don Benito Cerenoappears in Benito Cereno

Benito Cereno, the title character of the novella, is captain of San Dominick, an aged Spanish galleon. In the story, Cereno transports several guests including his lifelong friend along the west coast of South America. Cereno is captured during a slave revolt aboard ship and he watches helplessly as all of his officers and senior men are murdered over the course of a few days. Cereno is spared as he is the only one left capable of navigation. The slaves cause him, under threat of death to himself and his few remaining crew, to steer a course of Senegal, where they believe they can live without reprisal. Cereno complies until reaching the deserted island of Santa Maria, where he expects to be able to take on water. However, there another ship is already anchored. The black leaders vacillate about whether to land or to put to sea again—water is critically short. They devise a complex stratagem of lies and then allow the other ship's captain, Amasa Delano, to board. Aboard ship, he assists in bringing the ship into the harbor and then begins plans to assist in repairs and provisioning.

Throughout Delano's hours-long stay, Cereno behaves nervously and is despondent. He knows that any obvious sign of warning will cause the slaves to fall upon both himself and Delano, and thus he feels compelled to go along with the slaves' designs—they plan to capture Delano's ship and kill most of its men. At a critical moment, Cereno acts by leaping into the sea as Delano's boat pulls away. Cereno thereafter tells Delano, already deeply suspicious, what is really going on. Delano's men quickly recapture Cereno's ship and both vessels proceed to port. There, Cereno gives lengthy but often disorganized testimony about the rebellion and subsequent brutalities. Cereno proves broken in body, spirit, and mind by the tortuous event. He retires to a local hospital where he lingers on for several weeks and finally dies.

Captain Amasa Delanoappears in Benito Cereno

Amasa Delano is captain of the Bachelor's Delight, a large sealer and trading ship plying the western coast of South America. Delano appears to be a typical captain in nearly all respects—strong, charismatic, decisive, and intelligent. His ship's voyage has been marked by very limited success, which has caused many of his seasoned crewmen to abscond at various ports. Delano has been forced to staff his ship with raw recruits, and among them are several desperate men. For several months before the opening of the narrative's primary timelines, Delano has struggled with training his crew and keeping them in line. Alternating discipline with rewards, he has become successful in welding his crew into a functioning whole—as is demonstrated by their actions within the narrative. Delano calls upon the island of Santa Maria to water and has nearly completed that operation when the ship San Dominick is seen entering the harbor. San Dominick's handling is very tentative, and after some time Delano concludes that they must require some assistance. He therefore travels to the ship in his own ship's boat

and offers assistance, primarily as a pilot. On board San Dominick, Delano immediately is aware of several bizarre things going on, and during his several-hours' stay he sees many more inexplicable actions and situations. Chiefly, he is incredulous at the various moods and statements of Benito Cereno, the apparent captain of San Dominick. However, Delano's essentially trusting and forthright nature cause him consistently to act as if nothing is untoward, and he eventually departs San Dominick having brought her to anchor and minimally resupplied her. At this point, Delano is surprised when Cereno and other sailors leap into the sea from San Dominick; shortly, Delano learns that San Dominick is in fact a mutinous ship and that Cereno and others have been held captive aboard her. True to his nature, Delano orders a boarding action which recaptures San Dominick; he then renders substantive aid to Cereno and his crew, bringing both ships safely to a primary port. While Delano himself is not overly-interested in prize money garnered from San Dominick, he does use that potential remunerative award to stimulate his own crew to greater interest in rendering aid.

Bartleby the Scrivenerappears in Bartleby the Scrivener

Bartleby is a pale young man of slight stature and nearly no personality who appears in the eponymously named short work "Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street". Bartleby moves into his employer's workplace—literally living there round the clock—and gradually comes to refuse to perform any work whatsoever. The business owner fails to eject Bartleby, and eventually relocates to get rid of Bartleby. Subsequently, the new tenant sends Bartleby to the poor house where he languishes and dies. Bartleby is often interpreted as a personification of Melville's writing work—at first Bartleby writes copious amounts of text that is very well received by the narrator, his employer. Later, Bartleby's output diminishes and then ceases altogether. Bartleby thereafter is not appreciated by anyone. This mirrors Melville's own popular reception during his early great successes and later falling out of favor with the public.

The Lightning-Rod Manappears in The Lightning-Rod Man

The story The Lightning-Rod Man features a door-to-door salesman of lightning rods. He promotes his own lightning rod as vastly superior to the competition and urges the product on the reluctant narrator. In most respects, the lightning-rod man can be interpreted as a preacher of a particular Christian sect. The narrator's response suggests that man needs no intermediary to achieve salvation; it also repeats a common theme in the stories in the book dealing with the alienating impact of modern developments.

Hautboyappears in The Fiddler

In The Fiddler, the narrator meets a forty-year-old man named Hautboy. Hautboy is described as an overgrown child, always smiling and happy, always receptive to good humor, possessed of a good appetite and chubby body, and a person generally optimistic in outlook. The narrator notes that Hautboy's enthusiastic presence is contagious and uplifting. During the narrative, it develops that Hautboy was once a famous fiddle player of wide renown and many riches; however, such a life did not make Hautboy happy. Thus, Hautboy deliberately repositioned himself into obscurity and made his now-paltry income as a fiddle instructor. Nearly destitute and entirely unknown, Hautboy becomes the happy person the narrator meets. Many critics have pointed out that Hautboy's life mirrors Melville literary career—an early period of great success followed by a long period of literary failure such that Melville, like Hautboy, ends up unknown on the street.

Cupidappears in The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids

In The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids, Cupid is a young boy who works in the paper factory visited by the narrator in the second half of the narrative. Cupid understands the machinery and processes of the factory and gives the narrator a thorough and informative tour at the request of the proprietor. His odd name is symbolic of his introduction of the narrator to the factory girls—really women—and the subsequent feelings the narrator espouses for their plight. For his own part, Cupid seems totally nonplussed at the appalling working conditions of the factory. Throughout the latter part of the story, Cupid provides many insightful comments—many of which are fairly droll and meant to simultaneously impress and entertain. Aside from giving tours, Cupid's exact role in the factory is not well-established; he is probably a factotum.

Bachelorsappears in Many

Many—perhaps most—of the characters in the collected stories are bachelors, that is, widowers or men who have never married. Examples include Bartleby, Jimmy Rose, the Marquis de Grandvin, John Gentian, John Marr, Daniel Orme, and Billy Budd. If seamen, bachelors are typically excellent physical and nautical specimens; if not seamen, they are usually much devoted to philosophy, the arts, smoking, and wine drinking. Melville seems to consider bachelors of middle-age or advanced years as particularly noteworthy examples of philosophic men—the type recurs with great frequency in Melville's work.

Billy Buddappears in Billy Budd

Billy Budd is the title character of the collection's concluding novella. He is described as a perfect physical specimen of young manhood. His body is strong, healthy, and perfectly proportioned. His face is beautiful, open, and honest. His personality matches his appearance and nearly everyone likes him. He is twenty-one years old, a virgin, and in general naïve, honest, and devoid of any malicious characteristics. Indeed, throughout the narrative he is described, more or less, as a perfected male. At the opening of the novella, he is pressed out of the merchant ship Rights of Man into HMS Bellipotent, a 74-gun ship-of-war. He is there assigned to the foremast top; some editions of the novella include 'Billy Budd, foretopman' in the sub-title. Budd makes many friends on the ship-of-war and is favored by the captain because he is diligent in performing his duties and very punctual. In fact, Budd is eager to perform his duty well as he has a natural aversion to being disciplined. Most of Budd's shipmates like him and he enjoys a variety of nicknames, most of them referring to his physical beauty. Because of Budd's naïve nature, one old shipmate habitually refers to him as Baby Budd. Budd's only physical defect is that he stutters when frustrated or antagonized. When Budd is very upset he loses the ability to speak and has a tendency to fly out in rage—this happens at least once aboard Rights of Man and happens again in the climax of the novella, when Budd strikes Claggart. During one early exchange with ship's officers, it develops that Budd was a foundling infant and does not know who his parents were, where he was born, or really even how old he is. The narrative subtly compares Budd with the Biblical Jesus Christ, Adam, Moses, and Able. Although Budd is the primary character of the novella, his principle biography is found in Chapter 2.

Captain the Honorable Edward Fairfax Vereappears in Billy Budd

Vere is captain of Bellipotent and therefore the ultimate judge over all matters concerning the ship and crew while on independent service at sea. He is described as a bachelor of forty, capable, modest, and of an aristocratic bearing. The narrator describes him as sterling but not brilliant, and within the Royal Navy he is usually referred to as Starry Vere. Vere is quite intellectual and spends nearly all of his free time aboard ship reading. He is something of a Luddite and prefers the old ways to new-fangled ideas and devices. Slightly pedantic, in personal qualities he is somewhat dry, reserved, and bookish. Vere has spent his life in the service, has an exceptional amount of command experience—both in an out of combat—and has been present at several historic naval engagements. His minor officers respect him and his men generally approve of his actions. Due to recent circumstances, however, Vere is particularly frightened of losing his command to mutiny. Because he is so reserved, he does not seem to have sufficient intimate contact with his crew accurately to gauge their feelings on this matter. Vere, though honest and forthright, errs on the side of military caution when he reviews Budd's case during the latter portion of the novella. While Vere believes his condemnation of Budd was correct, in addition to being expedient, his actions torture him for the rest of his life. Within the narrative, as Budd is presented as a

Christ-figure, so Vere, condemning Budd to an unjust and undeserved death, assumes the role of God; in other interpretations that of Pontius Pilate. While Vere appears with regularity throughout the latter portions of the novella, his principle biography can be found in Chapters 6 and 7.

John Claggart, Master-at-armsappears in Billy Budd

Claggart is a petty officer, the master-at-arms of Bellipotent; the title is a little misleading, as discussed in Chapter 8, because Claggart's official role aboard ship is to maintain order, somewhat like a police constable—he does not instruct anyone in the use of arms. Because of his role, Claggart is of necessity quite unpopular with the crew, who refer to him as Jimmy Legs. Claggart has several mates, including one nicknamed Squeak, who help him gather information and administer punishment. Claggart is thirty-five years old, spare and tall, and well-formed except for a large protruding chin that mars his appearance. He is possessed of an above-average intellect and has risen rapidly through the ranks, being first shipped some few years previous as a landsman. Nothing is known of his past, though most assume him to have been some type of petty criminal, impressed directly from jail. Claggart's great moral failing is described as "natural depravity" (p. 457); in more-familiar terminology he is a predatory homosexual. The ship's boys are all afraid of him and avoid him as much as possible, and the ship's older and wiser crewmen, as symbolized by the Dansker, know of and disapprove of Claggart's activities—but are of course powerless to prevent them. Claggart is quickly infatuated with Billy Budd because of his great physical beauty; he subsequently grows envious of Budd and then begins deliberately to haze and persecute Budd, realizing that Budd is beyond his sexual sway. Over the course of several weeks, Claggart's frustrated envy and desire turns toxic and he charges Budd with severe crimes; this confrontation, before Captain Vere, precipitates the central climax of the novella. Just as Budd is a symbol of the Christian Jesus Christ, so Claggart becomes a symbol of Judas Iscariot. Claggart's presentation is also several times equated to a snake, further strengthening the allusion to evil.

Objects/Places

Moby Dickappears in The Town-Ho's Story

Moby Dick is the appellation given to a huge white whale appearing in the short story "The Town-Ho's Story" and also appearing in the novel Moby Dick, in which "The Town-Ho's Story" is included as a chapter. The whale is possessed of a malevolent nature and cunning intelligence; it is hunting Radney while the Town-Ho mistakenly believes the whale is the prey.

The Noble Cock Beneventanoappears in Cock-A-Doodle-Doo!

In Cock-A-Doodle-Doo! or, the Crowing of the Noble Cock Beneventano, Beneventano is the nickname given by the narrator to a magnificently crowing cock. The cock is owned by a poor laborer named Merrymusk and is the only object in the man's life that gives him pleasure. The cock's crowing excites and gladdens all hearers. The narrator attempts to purchase the cock but Merrymusk declines, claiming that it is beyond any price. By the story's end, the noble cock has died alongside Merrymusk. Most critics interpret the cock as a thinly-veiled allusion to male sexuality.

The Encantadasappears in The Encantadas

The novella The Encantadas or Enchanted Isles is set in, and precisely describes, an island archipelago now know more-commonly as The Galapagos. The islands are described as deserted and barren, and many are compared to piles of cinders. They largely are devoid of vegetation but support a great variety of reptile and insect life. The ten sketches of the novella each focus on a different aspect of the islands.

The Bell Towerappears in The Bell-Tower

The Bell-Tower features as its central symbol a large, phallic, bell-tower constructed by Bannadonna. The bell tower is essentially a giant public clock with a highly ornate mechanical devise, only slightly described, as a clock face. The clock uses a large, intricately engraved, bell which is struck by an automaton on the hour. The automaton, called a domino in the story, is vaguely humanoid in appearance and size. Some passages in the story infer the automaton, or domino, is self-aware.

The Piazzaappears in The Piazza

The Piazza is a story about a house that lacks a piazza, or porch. The narrator, tenant of the house, causes a north-facing piazza to be constructed and then spends many

enjoyable hours sitting on the piazza. From there he espies a distant location that seems to be mysterious. He sets out to travel there, where he meets a young woman who points out his own distant house and piazza and states that whoever lives at such a distant, mysterious abode must be lucky indeed.

The Apple-Tree Tableappears in The Apple-Tree Table

The Apple-Tree Table, or Original Spiritual Manifestations, is a story featuring a peculiar table as the central object of the narrative. The table is quite ancient and is constructed from apple wood. Its circular top pivots about the legs for convenient storage against a wall. The table's main support is a single complex stand that, near the ground, splits into three feet. The table's feet are styled as cloven-hooves and the narrator and his daughters think they are demonic-looking. The narrator finds the table in an attic and has it refurbished. It then sits in the family dining room for a few weeks before exciting great comment as it begins to emit an irregular ticking sound. It develops that the sound comes from trapped beetles, boring out of the table. A naturalist surmises the beetles to have hatched from eggs deposited about one hundred and fifty years before the story occurs.

The Big Chimneyappears in I and my Chimney

In I and my Chimney the narrative is dominated by a massive chimney, measuring twelve feet square at the base in the cellar and soaring high above the house's roof. Nearly all of the neighbors find the chimney unsightly, and the narrator's wife and daughters constantly request that the chimney be demolished and the vast interior space of the house occupied by the chimney converted into usable living space. The narrator refuses, being inordinately fond of the giant chimney. Most critics consider the story to be fictionally autobiographical, where the house represents Melville's family life and the chimney represents his literary career.

Daniel Orme's Tattooappears in Daniel Orme

In the sketch Daniel Orme, the eponymous character has a large crucifix, or "cross of the Passion" (p. 426) tattooed on his chest in indigo and vermilion. The crucifix is marred by a long scar that slashes across Orme's chest. Some old seamen assume the scar to have come from a cutlass during some boarding action—others believe Orme has deliberately defaced the crucifix. Toward the end of his long life, Orme takes to surreptitiously looking at the tattoo and contemplating it for long periods. This behavior causes much suspicion among other boarders at his tenement. In brief, the scarred tattoo can be viewed as symbolic of the man—his age bringing on debility. Of course, Orme's face is also 'tattooed' by tiny pieces of burned powder driven there during an explosion—in one instance, the man disfigures the tattoo; in the other instance the tattoo disfigures the man.

Rights of Manappears in Billy Budd

The merchant ship Rights of Man is named after a book authored by Thomas Paine. In Billy Budd, the title character is removed from Rights of Man by impressment. As he sails away from the merchant ship, bound for the ship-of-war HMS Bellipotent, Budd stands up and cries out a fond adieu to 'Rights of Man', an obvious pun upon his fate at impressment. Budd initially believes impressment might lead to "novel scenes and martial excitements" (p. 435); in fact it does—primarily in a metafictional way with a pun to boot. Captain Graveling, Rights of Man, notes Budd's calming influence on the crew and bemoans losing such a fine seaman.

HMS Bellipotentappears in Billy Budd

Bellipotent, literally meaning war-potent, is a British ship-of-war commanded by Captain Vere. It is a seventy-four gun ship renowned for its good handling and quick sailing; it is often sent on detached duty when a lighter frigate is not available. Billy Budd, during 1797, is impressed into Bellipotent at the opening of the novella. Several officers are named, including John Claggart, master-at-arms, and Squeak, his mate; also named is Lieutenant Radcliffe. Named crewmen include Billy Budd, a man referred to as the Dansker, and Red Whiskers. Other crewmen noted include a grizzled man, the ship's surgeon, the first lieutenant, and the sailing master. The ship is the primary setting for most of the novella; Captain Vere fears that the ship might be tending toward mutiny. In the original published editions of the story the ship was named Indomitable.

Themes

The Alienating Impact of Scientific Progress

Many of the stories in the collection deal specifically with the alienating impact of scientific progress. Examples are common—Bartleby is dehumanized by modern business practices; in The Two Temples theatrical plays replace Christian worship; the machine in The Happy Failure consumes the narrator's uncle's passions; the Lightning-Rod man peddles ineffective protection from nature; the women in The Tartarus of Maids are tormented by their horrific factory working conditions; Bannadonna is killed by his invention in The Bell-Tower; and in I and My Chimney the narrator struggles to retain his old, unimproved, chimney; in The Piazza the narrator examines the nature of happiness and equates it with solitude. Throughout the collection, Melville always links scientific or social 'progress' with a loss of humanity. For example, when the swamp-draining machine in The Happy Failure proves unworkable and is demolished, the would-be inventor suddenly finds happiness and is glad of his failure. Likewise, in The Lightning-Rod Man, the lightning-rod salesmen promotes his wares by using outright lies of efficacy combined with apparent fear of unprotected houses. Those who succumb to his sales pitch find themselves defrauded. Many of the bachelors considered in several sketches are hard-working sailors who have been thrust aside as unneeded on mechanized ships. Melville sees mechanical and scientific progress as impoverishing, as illustrated in Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs. Throughout the collection there is a notable theme of mistrust in advances and a tenacious clinging to old things of the past—an example being the table itself in The Apple-Tree Table.

Isolation

Most of the principle characters in the stories of the collection are quite isolated. This isolation takes a variety of forms but is generally very obvious. In the Town-Ho's Story, the two crews are isolated by thousands of miles of ocean; Bartleby is isolated within his own preferences; the narrator of Cock-A-Doodle-Doo! lives an isolated life as well as being a bachelor, as are Jimmy Rose, the Marquis de Grandvin, John Gentian, John Marr, and Daniel Orme. Indeed, the notion of bachelorhood is essentially a notion of deliberate isolation from family ties, as presented in The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids. Many characters, such as the narrator in The Lightning-Rod Man, are not overtly isolated but simultaneously seem to have no family life or even tableaux of community. Notable exceptions occur in I and my Chimney, where the narrator is philosophically isolated from his family; and The Apple-Tree Table, where the narrator seeks to unite with his family. But these are the exceptions. Bannadonna, in The Bell-Tower, prefers to work in isolation and no one even knows when he dies. In The Piazza, the narrator and Marianna are both entirely isolated and seek some type of personal connection only to realize they are more desirous of each other's position than forging a new beginning. Finally, Billy Budd lives aboard a ship-of-war, surrounded by many

hundreds of men with whom he comes in daily contact, yet he lives essentially isolated, though popular, and at the conclusion of that novella his entire existence is condemned as part of a vast impersonal system that views him only as a minor cog in a great machine. Though isolation is featured in most stories, it is not always condemned as undesirable—clearly, the narrators of stories such as I and My Chimney highly value time for contemplation and personal introspection.

Introspection

Nearly all of the stories in the collection are highly introspective, particularly the novellas and longer pieces. Melville packs his stories with observations, deviations from central plot, and philosophical excursions. Thus, in Billy Budd, many of the early chapters are devoted to an introspective brooding over the nature of deviancy, evil, envy, and morality. The latter chapters are given over to introspection on the nature of justice and relativism. Likewise, much of the early narrative of Benito Cereno is devoted to Captain Delano's introspective consideration of Cereno's bizarre behavior and a private consideration of the things he sees aboard San Dominick. On the other hand, Bartleby withdraws so completely into introspection and isolation that he eventually dies of inanition, though food and exercise are readily available to him. The narrator of Cock-A-Doodle-Doo! spends most of the narrative introspectively wondering why the magnificent cock's crow is so powerfully stimulating. Most of the sketches of The Encantadas have a brooding, introspective theme. The Fiddler presents two artists who have taken a different path in life—one, successful, gives up art for happiness; the other broods over art and reflects about the relationship between creativity, criticism, and happiness. The process of introspection is presented in some stories as somewhat destructive; in others it is held to be a productive and good activity. In most of the stories, the process of introspection is a recurring theme.

Style

Point of View

The stories feature a variety of points of view, but the most common are the first person, limited, and the third person, unlimited. The Town-Ho's Story, first in the collection, presents a sort of hybrid point of view where the narrator relates the story with complete details that would be impossible to know by any individual—he divulges internal thoughts, motivations, and other details that would not be known to someone only overhearing fragments of the tale. Bartleby uses a more traditional first person, limited point of view, as does Cock-A-Doodle-Doo! The Encantadas uses a blend. The stories told in two contrasting parts, such as The Two Temples, Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs, The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids, and The Piazza use a first person, limited point of view. The novellas Benito Cereno and Billy Budd are related in the third person, unlimited point of view by a reliable narrator who periodically intrudes in a first person metafictional method. Melville, clearly a master of narration, plays with the very notion of point of view throughout most of the stories in the collection. The stories are complex enough to challenge critics but simultaneously enjoyable enough to satisfy readers—much of this satisfying complexity comes from the author's notion of point of view.

Setting

The two novellas and many of the longer pieces in the collection are set upon sailing ships isolated at sea. Examples of this setting can be found in The Town-Ho's Story, The Encantadas, Benito Cereno, The 'Gees, and Billy Budd. Other stories, such as John Marr and Daniel Orme, are not set at sea but have a strong nautical influence. Most of the other stories are set in metropolitan areas which are contrasted to rural areas, or rural areas which are contrasted to urban areas. In most of the stories, the setting is secondary to the plot, and the author creates a texture of introspective philosophizing that largely replaces the traditional need for setting. Other stories, such as Bartleby the Scrivener are tightly coupled to a specific location—in this case, Wall Street; clearly The Encantadas are predominantly set within that island group. Some stories feature two primary settings that are contrasted by juxtaposition—for example, The Two Temples, Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs, and The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids. The setting of the bell tower in The Bell Tower is particularly well developed, as is the setting of San Dominick in Benito Cereno and Bellipotent in Billy Budd.

Language and Meaning

Most of the stories feature dense language and a multi-layered philosophic construction that allows for a wide interpretation of meaning. This is complicated by frequent

narrative ambiguity which again allows a wide variety of interpretation. For example, the mutiny in Benito Cereno can be interpreted as a violent uprising of lawless passengers against a hapless ship's crew, or it can be interpreted as a desperate attempt at freedom pursued by an enslaved populace. Other interpretations are also possible. Likewise, Billy Budd features a complex and layered construction that allows Vere to be seen as either a ruthless and disinterested agent of a cruel law or as a tortured captain striving to maintain control on a near-mutinous ship. Most of the longer stories in the collection feature similar narrative ambiguity and can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Some of the stories derive much meaning from juxtaposition, even if devoid of much authorial philosophizing. Examples of this include The Two Temples, Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs, and The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids. In these three stories, most of the meaning can be derived from a comparison and contrast of the first portion of the tale with the latter portion. The language used is advanced and literary allusions are frequent—nearly constant, in fact. The rich language and variety of meaning and interpretation doubtless account for the stories' enduring appeal to a wide audience.

Structure

The 510-page volume presents an introduction and twenty-two named short works. Following the short works chapters, a selected bibliography, a chronology, and a biography of the author are presented. Each short work is prefaced by introductory matter that explains something about the short work. The short works and novellas range considerably in size from the six-page "The Marquis de Grandvin" and seven-page "The 'Gees" to the seventy-seven page "Billy Budd, Sailor" and the seventy-eight page "Benito Cereno". The average length is about twenty-two pages. Most of the material presented has been previously published and is in the public domain—free on-line texts of some of the collected stories are readily available. Many of the shorter pieces are much more difficult to locate in any format. Many of the longer pieces were originally published serially in two or three installments in periodicals. A few of the shorter pieces were originally published as headers or introductions to collections of poetry. Some of the selections, including Billy Budd, were unpublished—and unfinished—at the author's death. The stories presented vary in numerous small ways from other published editions of the works; in particular, the publication history of Three "Jack Gentian Sketches" and Billy Budd are complex. The structure of individual stories varies greatly, from the fairly straightforward chronology of The Apple-Tree Table to the convoluted narrative and chronology of The Town-Ho's Story.

Quotes

"The Cape of Good Hope, and all the watery region round about there, is much like some noted four corners of a great highway, where you meet more travelers than in any other part." p. 19

"I am a rather elderly man. The nature of my avocations, for the last thirty years, has brought me into more than ordinary contact with what would seem an interesting and somewhat singular set of men, of whom, as yet, nothing, that I know of, has ever been written—I mean, the law-copyists, or scriveners. I have known very many of them, professionally and privately, and, if I pleased, could relate divers histories, at which goodnatured gentlemen might smile, and sentimental souls might weep. But I waive the biographies of all other scriveners, for a few passages in the life of Bartleby, who was a scrivener, the strangest I ever saw, or heard of." p. 39

"In all parts of the world many high-spirited revolts from rascally despotisms had of late been knocked on the head; many dreadful casualties, by locomotive and steamer, had likewise knocked hundreds of high-spirited travelers on the head (I lost a dear friend in one of them); my own private affairs were also full of despotisms, casualties, and knockings on the head when early one morning in Spring, being too full of hypos to sleep, I sallied out to walk on my hillside pasture." p. 75

"Take five-and-twenty heaps of cinders dumped here and there in an outside city lot; imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot the sea; and you will have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles. A group rather of extinct volcanoes than of isles; looking much as the world at large might, after a penal conflagration." p. 99

"'You see,' said Poet Blandmour, enthusiastically—as some forty years ago we walked along the road in a soft, moist snow-fall, toward the end of March—'you see, my friend, that the blessed almoner, Nature, is in all things beneficent; and not only so, but considerate in her charities, as any discreet human philanthropist might be. This snow, now, which seems so unseasonable, is in fact just what a poor husbandman needs. Rightly is this soft March snow, falling just before seed-time, rightly is it called "Poor Man's Manure." Distilling from kind heaven upon the soil, by a gentle penetration it nourishes every clod, ridge, and furrow. To the poor farmer it is as good as the rich farmer's farm-yard enrichments. And the poor man has no trouble to spread it, while the rich man has to spread his.'" p. 165

"The appointment was that I should meet my elderly uncle at the river-side, precisely at nine in the morning. The skiff was to be ready, and the apparatus to be brought down by his grizzled old black man. As yet, the nature of the wonderful experiment remained a mystery to all but the projector. I was first on the spot. The village was high up the river, and the inland summer sun was already oppressively warm. Presently I saw my uncle advancing beneath the trees, hat off, and wiping his brow; while far behind staggered poor old Yorpy, with what seemed one of the gates of Gaza on his back. 'Come, hurrah,

stump along, Yorpy!' cried my uncle, impatiently turning round every now and then." p. 179

"What grand irregular thunder, thought I, standing on my hearth-stone among the Acroceraunian hills, as the scattered bolts boomed overhead, and crashed down among the valleys, every bolt followed by zigzag irradiations, and swift slants of sharp rain, which audibly rang, like a charge of spear-points, on my low shingled roof. I suppose, though, that the mountains hereabouts break and churn up the thunder, so that it is far more glorious here than on the plain. Hark!—some one at the door. Who is this that chooses a time of thunder for making calls? And why don't he, man-fashion, use the knocker, instead of making that doleful undertaker's clatter with his fist against the hollow panel? But let him in. Ah, here he comes. 'Good day, sir:' an entire stranger. 'Pray be seated.' What is that strange-looking walking-stick he carries: 'A fine thunder-storm, sir.'" p. 187

"So my poem is damned, and immortal fame is not for me! I am nobody forever and ever. Intolerable fate! Snatching my hat, I dashed down the criticism, and rushed out into Broadway, where enthusiastic throngs were crowding to a circus in a sidestreet near by, very recently started, and famous for a capital clown. Presently my old friend Standard rather boisterously accosted me. 'Well met, Helmstone, my boy! Ah! what's the matter? Haven't been committing murder? Ain't flying justice? You look wild!' 'You have seen it, then?' said I, of course referring to the criticism. 'Oh yes; I was there at the morning performance. Great clown, I assure you. But here comes Hautboy. Hautboy—Helmstone.'" p. 195

"Sick with the din and soiled with the mud of Fleet Street—where the Benedick tradesmen are hurrying by, with ledger-lines ruled along their brows, thinking upon rise of bread and fall of babies—you adroitly turn a mystic corner—not a street—glide down a dim, monastic way, flanked by dark, sedate, and solemn piles, and still wending on, give the whole careworn world the slip, and, disentangled, stand beneath the quiet cloisters of the Paradise of Bachelors." p. 202

"In the south of Europe, nigh a once frescoed capital, now with dank mould cankering its bloom, central in a plain, stands what, at distance, seems the black mossed stump of some immeasurable pine, fallen, in forgotten days, with Anak and the Titan." p. 223

"In the year 1799, Captain Amasa Delano, of Duxbury, in Massachusetts, commanding a large sealer and general trader, lay at anchor with a valuable cargo, in the harbor of Santa Maria—a small, desert, uninhabited island toward the southern extremity of the long coast of Chile. There he had touched for water. On the second day, not long after dawn, while lying in his berth, his mate came below, informing him that a strange sail was coming into the bay. Ships were then not so plenty in those waters as now. He rose, dressed, and went on deck." pp. 238-239

"In relating to my friends various passages of my sea-goings, I have at times had occasion to allude to that singular people the 'Gees, sometimes as casual acquaintances, sometimes as shipmates. Such allusions have been quite natural and

easy. For instance, I have said The two 'Gees, just as another would say The two Dutchmen, or The two Indians. In fact, being myself so familiar with 'Gees, it seemed as if all the rest of the world must be. But not so." p. 355

"When I first saw the table, dingy and dusty, in the furthest corner of the old hopper-shaped garret, and set out with broken, be-crusted, old purple vials and flasks, and a ghostly, dismantled old quarto, it seemed just such a necromantic little old table as might have belonged to Friar Bacon. Two plain features it had, significant of conjurations and charms—the circle and tripod; the slab being round, supported by a twisted little pillar, which, about a foot from the bottom, sprawled out into three crooked legs, terminating in three cloven feet. A very satanic-looking little old table, indeed." p. 362

"When I removed into the country, it was to occupy an old-fashioned farmhouse, which had no piazza—a deficiency the more regretted, because not only did I like piazzas, as somehow combining the coziness of in-doors with the freedom of out-doors, and it is so pleasant to inspect your thermometer there, but the country round about was such a picture, that in berry time no boy climbs hill or crosses vale without coming upon easels planted in every nook, and sunburnt painters painting there. A very paradise of painters." p. 383

"John Gentian, Esq., or Major Gentian, or the Dean, or the Major or Jack—for all these styles are his according to circumstances and the person mentioning or addressing him—is one of those socially notable characters whose names for all the notability will be found rather in the trustworthy City Directory than in the not-always-reliable Biographical Dictionary." p. 402

"John Marr, toward the close of the last century born in America of a mother unknown, and from boyhood up to maturity a sailor under divers flags, disabled at last from further maritime life by a crippling wound received at close quarters with pirates of the Keys, eventually betakes himself for a livelihood to less active employment ashore. There, too, he transfers his rambling disposition acquired as a seafarer." p. 17

"A sailor's name as it appears on a crew-list is not always his real name, nor in every instance does it indicate his country. This premised, be it said that by the name at the head of this writing long went an old man-of-war's man of whose earlier history it may verily be said that nobody knew anything but himself; and it was idle to seek it in that quarter." pp. 424-425

"In the time before steamships, or then more frequently than now, a stroller along the docks of any considerable seaport would occasionally have his attention arrested by a group of bronzed mariners, man-of-war's men or merchant sailors in holiday attire, ashore on liberty. In certain instances they would flank, or like a bodyguard quite surround, some superior figure of their own class, moving along with them like Aldebaran among the lesser lights of his constellation. That signal object was the "Handsome Sailor" of the less prosaic time alike of the military and merchant navies. With no perceptible trace of the vainglorious about him, rather with the offhand

unaffectedness of natural regality, he seemed to accept the spontaneous homage of his shipmates." p. 429-430

Topics for Discussion

The Town-Ho's story is presented as an atomic work of fiction, yet it was intended to be included as a Chapter in the author's magnificent novel Moby Dick. Does the story function independently? Or does it lose much of its meaning by presentation alone?

Bartleby the Scrivener is one of the most-famous stories in the English language. What aspects of the story do you think give the narrative such a wide and enduring appeal?

Stories such as Cock-A-Doodle-Doo! and I and My Chimney feature many obviously sexual symbols. Other stories have more subtle sexual images, such as Billy Budd's spilled soup scene. How do sexualized symbols function within these narratives to construct multiple layers of meaning?

Melville published some of the stories collected in a work entitled The Piazza Tales. Of the stories included, The Piazza, Bartleby the Scrivener, Benito Cereno, The Lightning-Rod Man, The Encantadas, and The Bell-Tower, it was initially The Encantadas that received the most critical acclaim. What about this collection of sketches makes it so accessible and appealing to critical interpretation?

Stories such as The Lightning-Rod Man and Billy Budd feature many obviously religious symbols. How do religious symbols function within these narratives to construct multiple layers of meaning?

Is the narrative portrayal of women in The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids essentially sexist? Why or why not?

Is the narrative portrayal of minorities in Benito Cereno and The 'Gees essentially racist? Why or why not?

In I and My Chimney the narrator becomes inordinately devoted to his house's massive chimney, and refuses anyone to demolish it. Discuss the symbolic parallels of the story and Melville's literary career and family life.