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Diving Deep: Moby Dick

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### The Big Read Reflection

For the Big Read assignment I have chosen to read chapter 116, *The Dying Whale*. At first I wanted to do a lengthier chapter but as I began narrowing down my search I realized there were more important things to focus on during this assignment than trying to over-achieve with a fifteen page section. For starters, reading a chapter aloud takes much longer than reading it in one's head, even for slow readers such as myself. To fully feel the words of Herman Melville, I concluded that I need to go slow. This allowed me to read poetically and express the intended rhythm of the sentences versus merely stating the words as they come. Initially, it was hard for me to wrap my head around the fact that even for a book which is not heavily based on plot, the words still share a story. Choosing a short chapter helped me hone in on how I was reading over what I was reading. Furthermore, every time we listened to audio recordings in class, the pace was leisurely and pleasant to the ear; I wanted to create the same experience. In order to have the time to do this, I needed a short chapter. Additionally, I took the time to fully understand what I was reading. This chapter had a handful of words I did not know the definition of: adroop, bagging, inwreathing, baronial, unverdured, imminglings. I took the time to look up the definition of these words. After understanding them, I was better able to assess how the sentences were meant to flow. I also did not know how to pronounce a variety of words: orisons, unverdured, imminglings. I used multiple sources to hear the pronunciation for these words to make sure I properly learned how to say them correctly. There are multiple reasons I took extra time

to learn the definitions and pronunciations of all of these words. The first was to make the read easier overall. My first time reading, even in my head, was choppy and confusing. I did not have a clear image of what Melville was trying to convey. The second was to sound more professional in my reading. I did not want to shy away from these words with volume fluctuations in my recording. The third reason was to improve the flow of my reading. Adding to my statement earlier of the rhythm of the read, the tempo and flow of each chapter can shift how the audience perceives the story. To best express this chapter I needed to understand Melville's dialogue and read it as if I was him to the best of my abilities.

While actually recording, I was surprised by how many times I had to stop and redo phrases. I sectioned my recordings out by paragraphs which were usually only several sentences long for each. Even with this being the case, I had to practice each one repeatedly before starting my recording. And then re-record each one at least three times. I think a large part of this is due to the punctuation Melville uses. He is quite prone to very lengthy sentences and this chapter was no exception. Even in the first sentence alone of this chapter, there were six commas. I had to figure out how to properly read each of the sentences based on the written punctuation. Then in addition to this, I had to add my own annunciation of the words to dramatize or simplify their significance. The sentence I struggled with the most was seven lines long, had two semicolons, a colon, and seven commas. I decided to read it with many pauses to really separate each part, whether it was isolated by comma, colon, or semicolon. The second half of the chapter was much easier for me to get through. To me this part was obviously meant to be read more dramatically compared to the first half which I had to figure out. There were many dashes and exclamations. There were also phrases that were not direct quotes, but resembled speech which was less difficult for me to decipher.

After the completion of my recording I can confidently say that I understand the style of Melville's writing more thoroughly. I would even argue that listening to this novel (by a professional) may be more beneficial to the reader's experience than by simply reading it. I had a completely different perception of this chapter after slowing down to register how it is supposed to have sounded. All of the commas created a wave-like flow, developing an image in my head compared to the first time I read it and loosely pictured what was actually going on. I am happy with my decision to have chosen *The Dying Whale* for my chapter because I do not think I would have gotten everything out of my Big Read experience had I chosen something longer.