

### Moby Dick Thematic Review

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The production of movies whose stories are based on literary pieces is a common occurrence and most movies have indeed been developed from famous literary pieces. Reading requires the reader's own richness of imagination in order to make up visuals and imaginations that represent whatever is told throughout the story. The textual content is explicit and offers more details about events and characters. On the other hand, the viewing of movies implicitly presents whatever is written within any book due the limitations on time presented by designated film lengths which only allow the inclusion of some, but not all details of a book. As such the viewers are left to make their own in-depth conclusions on some presented aspects that may be briefly depicted by certain brief scenes within the whole movie. Therefore, in many cases the books explicitly express the thematic content of a piece of literary writing, whereas; the movies or films offer an implicit version of some of the content so as to avoid too a lot of details. This paper highlights this phenomenon by citing thematic differences between "Moby dick" the movie and "Moby dick" the book.

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Moby dick presents various themes including blasphemy, revenge, harbingers and superstition-among many others. The plot of the story revolves around a captain named Ahab that fervently seeks revenge on a whale that destroyed his ship and bit his leg off. The act of seeking revenge against the whale forms one of the greatest themes of the novel. The theme dominates much of the plot and it highlights various aspects of the act of revenge such as its futility and drive. The theme is equally represented within the book and the novel, where finally the whale causes the death of the crew in both cases but in different ways. The theme of blasphemy in the novel is shown by Ahab's act of thinking of himself as being equal to God (Michael, 24). The second depiction of blasphemy in the novel is portrayed by Ahab's creation of an alliance between him and the devil. The author expresses this explicitly throughout the book in various episodes, such as when one of the crew members (Gabriel) warns Ahab about the end results of blasphemy.

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More thematic highlight on blasphemy is depicted by Ahab's act of believing that he is omnipotent. The story has thematic variations in the manner in which it is presented within the movie in comparison to the book. Notably, there is a great change in the presentation of the theme of harbingers and superstition. Strong representation of the theme is depicted by various superstitions and harbingers that are detailed within the book and through various characters. The theme is weakly represented within the movie, and this can be exemplified by the total elimination of the character Fedallah—a harpooner that is demonic. The elimination of the character as well as his superstitious predictions and dreams weakens the theme considerably. The theme of harbingers and superstition is greatly featured in the book, however; the directors may have decided to make it milder within the production of the movie so that other more important themes would stand out. Melville's work also presents the whale not only as the main focus of the story but also as a symbol that represents unparalleled greatness. This theme is extensively highlighted in the book through Melville's narration about the whale.

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Melville presents this theme through various approaches where he describes the superiority of the whale in various aspects including biology and history (Michael 43). Melville's theme on the excellence of the whale helps in showing the futility of the task that Ahab is about to undertake. This representation of the Excellence of the whale is not greatly portrayed in the movie version of the same story. This is probably due to the fact that the producers chose to offer more time and effort to the representation of major themes such as revenge and blasphemy as an act of going against God and pursuing human desires in futility. The whale is not so much portrayed as a symbol of excellence within the movie as is the case in the book.

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Another important theme portrayed throughout the story is race. Notably Moby Dick has diverse characters and these include Native Americans, African tribesman and the sea islander from the south. The story's protagonist in the novel shows an attitude of racial tolerance that surprisingly may not have been found at the time of the novel's setting and even at the time of writing. Overt types of racism are condemned by the novel's tone. The non-white characters are however portrayed as funny depictions of their culture and they all are subordinate to the whites. There is however limited representation of blacks or freedmen in the novel besides Pip. Melville seemingly avoided commenting on any issues on slavery despite the fact that it was in practice during this same era. The movie version of the story does not offer any excessive focus on this theme, but rather chooses to hold it in a similar manner as portrayed by the author of the book.

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The contrast between pagan and civilized society is also portrayed throughout the whole book. The theme is strongly expressed in side by side comparisons of Ishmael and Queequeg. The two depict the uncivilized society and Christian civilized society. The comparisons and contrast are most ideal for the author, more especially with the case of Queequeg. The theme is also used as an expression of learning about other cultures. This theme is weakly portrayed in the film version of the story and there is little highlight on the various cultural encounters. The futility in man's endeavors and religion are also widely portrayed in Moby Dick and these are some of the strongest themes. Religion is depicted by two conflicting elements-the belief in the devil and the church's belief in one God. Ahab as a character seeking revenge takes the devil's side alongside Fedallah-who does not appear in the film version of the story.

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The quest of Ahab is portrayed as a negative approach on the revenge aspect. The character is extensively used as a portrayal of the evil nature of man's desires and thinking. The theme of religion is perhaps the strongest themes presented within this work (Michael, 54). The theme of harbingers and superstition is also greatly used within the story, and there are various instances where there are cases of foretelling of events based on harbingers and superstitious believes. The characters within the story in the book make use of these two elements to express their faith and belief system. On the other hand, the film version of the story highlights less of this theme that is extensively included in the book's version of the story. The general use of the two is also used as a representative element to show the types of different belief systems that existed during this period. The theme of duality also stands out all through the story. Melville tends to present much of his work, events and characters with equal or non-equal opposites. This can be evidenced by the characters that seem to be exact representation of each other's opposites and the representation of religion and religious believes that exist in systems that are parallel to one another (Anon. npag).

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Generally, the novel and the movie do differ on various aspects of how they represent the various themes that present within the novel. Many themes do not come out strongly in the movie as they do in the book, probably because producers did not have the capability to fix all themes with an equal scale of weight. However, the major themes are maintained and represented with an almost equal weight as that presented within the book.

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**Works Cited**

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