

Moby Dick

Herman Melville

What does Ahab's pasteboard-mask metaphor allow him to claim about the white whale?

TOTAL TIME

PASSAGE

30 minutes	Pasteboard masks
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FIND THE ANCHOR TEXT

Use the Anchor Text Table of Contents in the Enhanced Reader to open the START anchor. Then use the dropdown to select the END anchor.

SECTION / LOCATION	Chapter XXXVI · The Quarter-Deck
START	All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks.
END	To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me.
PASSAGE ID	sec-md-02

THE MOVE

Follow a metaphor from perception to obsession

WHY THIS PASSAGE

Ahab's pasteboard-mask metaphor converts visible reality into a surface hiding an unseen force. Once he accepts that model, the white whale can become the wall behind which all hostile meaning is concentrated, allowing obsession to feel philosophical.

MARK

Circle the parts of the pasteboard-mask metaphor—surface, mask, hidden force, wall. Underline the step where Ahab applies the metaphor specifically to the whale. Star the assumption that cannot be verified from the whale itself.

NOTICE

- What does Ahab claim visible things are hiding?
- How does the metaphor make striking the whale seem like striking something beyond the whale?
- Why does this way of seeing the world make obsession harder to challenge with ordinary evidence?

THINK

Answer provisionally: What does Ahab's pasteboard-mask metaphor allow him to claim about the white whale? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response to: What does Ahab's pasteboard-mask metaphor allow him to claim about the white whale? Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and explain why.

STRONG ANSWER	The pasteboard-mask metaphor lets Ahab claim visible things are surfaces hiding an unseen hostile force. The whale becomes a wall or mask behind which Ahab imagines the real enemy, making physical pursuit feel metaphysical.
EVIDENCE	Use the mask/wall language and Ahab's move from visible whale to hidden force.
WATCH FOR	Do not assume the metaphor proves there is a hidden malicious force. It explains how Ahab's obsession interprets reality.
SOLO	Read the exact passage independently.
SUPPORTED	Use narration and sentence highlighting while reading the same passage.
LISTENING	Listen to the exact passage; visual following is optional. Same question and evidence demand.

STUDENT PAGE · SAME PASSAGE, SAME THINKING

Moby Dick

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What does Ahab's pasteboard-mask metaphor allow him to claim about the white whale?

START ANCHOR	All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks.
END ANCHOR	To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me.

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OPEN THE MARKED PASSAGE IN TUMBLELIT

SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration + highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the exact passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. MARK - Circle the parts of the pasteboard-mask metaphor—surface, mask, hidden force, wall. Underline the step where Ahab applies the metaphor specifically to the whale. Star the assumption that cannot be verified from the whale itself.
2. NOTICE - What does Ahab claim visible things are hiding? How does the metaphor make striking the whale seem like striking something beyond the whale? Why does this way of seeing the world make obsession harder to challenge with ordinary evidence?
3. THINK - Answer provisionally: What does Ahab's pasteboard-mask metaphor allow him to claim about the white whale?
4. WRITE - Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.

Use evidence from the assigned passage. Show what you noticed and how the text supports your interpretation.