

MOBY DICK by Herman Melville – Grammar and Style

EXERCISE 16 STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 4

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning. (From Chapter LXIV Stubb's Supper).

Though amid all the smoking horror and diabolism of a sea-fight, sharks will be seen longingly gazing up to the ship's decks, like hungry dogs round a table where red meat is being carved, ready to bolt down every killed man that is tossed to them; and though, while the valiant butchers over the deck-table are thus cannibally carving each other's live meat with carving-knives all gilded and tasseled, the sharks, also, with their jewel-hilted mouths, are quarrelsome carving away under the table at the dead meat; and though, were you to turn the whole affair upside down, it would still be pretty much the same thing, that is to say, shocking sharkish business enough for all parties; and though sharks also are the invariable outriders of all slave ships crossing the Atlantic, systematically trotting alongside, to be handy in case a parcel is to be carried anywhere, or a dead slave to be decently buried; and though one or two other like instances might be set down, touching the set terms, places, and occasions, when sharks do most socially congregate, and most hilariously feast; yet is there no conceivable time or occasion when you will find them in such countless numbers, and in gayer or more jovial spirits, than around a dead sperm whale, moored by night to a whale-ship at sea. If ever you have seen that sight, then suspend your decision about the propriety of devil-worship, and the expediency of conciliating the devil.

Read the passage a second time, marking figurative language, sensory imagery, poetic devices, and any other patterns of diction and rhetoric, then answer the questions below.

- 1 Though amid all the smoking horror and diabolism of a sea-fight, sharks will be seen longingly gazing
- 2 up to the ship's decks, like hungry dogs round a table where red meat is being carved, ready to bolt
- 3 down every killed man that is tossed to them; and though, while the valiant butchers over the deck-table
- 4 are thus cannibally carving each other's live meat with carving knives all gilded and tasseled, the
- 5 sharks, also, with their jewel-hilted mouths, are quarrelsome carving away under the table at the
- 6 dead meat; and though, were you to turn the whole affair upside down, it would still be pretty much
- 7 the same thing, that is to say, a shocking sharkish business enough for all parties; and though sharks
- 8 also are the invariable outriders of all slave ships crossing the Atlantic, systematically trotting
- 9 alongside, to be handy in case a parcel is to be carried anywhere, or a dead slave to be decently
- 10 buried; and though one or two other like instances might be set down, touching the set terms ,
- 11 places, and occasions, when sharks do most socially congregate, and most hilariously feast;
- 12 yet is there no conceivable time or occasion when you will find them in such countless numbers,

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13 and in gayer or more jovial spirits, than around a dead sperm whale, moored by night to a
14 whale-ship at sea. If you have never seen that sight, then suspend your decision about the
15 propriety of devil-worship, and the expediency of conciliating the devil.

- ___ 1. The tone of the passage is best described as . . .
a. witty and ironic
b. sarcastic and satiric
c. humorous and paradoxical
- ___ 2. Line 9 contains an example of . . .
a. analogy b. euphemism c. inference
- ___ 3. All of the following descriptions are parallel in meaning EXCEPT . . .
a. *socially congregate* (Line 11)
b. *hilariously feast* (Line 11)
c. *devil-worship* (Line 15)
d. *jovial spirits* (Line 13)
- ___ 4. In Lines 4 and 5, the ornate handles of the knives are compared to . . .
a. cannibal's knives
b. shark's teeth
c. dogs' collars
- ___ 5. All of the following descriptions are parallel in meaning EXCEPT . . .
a. *shocking sharkish business* (Line 7)
b. *a dead slave to be decently buried* (Lines 9 and 10)
c. *conciliating the devil* (Line 15)
d. *quarrelsome carving* (Line 5)
- ___ 6. Line 13 contains an example of . . .
a. assonance b. consonance c. alliteration