

WILLIAMS COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

Educator's Guide

Mocha Dick

March 13 – August 8, 2010



Elementary, Middle, and High School Levels

WILLIAMS
COLLEGE
MUSEUM
OF ART

encounterart

Cover image:

Tristin Lowe (American, b. 1966)

Mocha Dick, 2009

industrial wool felt and armature; vinyl-coated fabric, internal fan

127 x 165 x 609 in. (322.6 x 419.1 x 1546.9 cm)

Collection of the Artist; created in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia

Guide developed by

Cynthia Way, Director of Education and Visitor Experience

Overview

We look forward to your visit to the Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA). We hope this information will help you to integrate your museum experience with your classroom lessons.

The Tour:

Tours of Mocha Dick can be tailored to any grade level. We are planning four options and are happy to adapt the tour based on educator's interests. For preschoolers and early elementary classes, our Storytime tours weave readings of picture stories into the tour. After exploring the artwork and listening to stories, children will have an opportunity to create and narrate their own Whale Tale. For elementary students, the tour will be integrated into an exploration of sculpture at the museum. Middle school students will explore the theme of myths and legends while examining *Mocha Dick* and Frederic Remington's famous *Bronco Buster* (1895) (see separate Bronco Buster Educators' Guide for more information on the sculpture). For middle and high school students, tours will explore elements of sculpture, issues relating to the whale and the maritime history, and how the epic leviathan has captured the imagination of artists and writers. Tours will include opportunities to sketch the whale and do writing exercises in the galleries, among other experiential activities. For high school students who are studying *Moby Dick*, more emphasis will be placed on the literary connection.

Should you have any questions or wish to share with us any of the creative work your students complete using this education material, we would love to hear from you. **Please let us know ahead of time about any areas of particular interest or special needs that your group may have.**

You can contact **Coordinator of Education Programs Joann Harnden** at **413-597-2038** or by email at **Joann.Harnden@williams.edu**.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

The Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA) presents *Tristin Lowe: Mocha Dick*, a sculpture of a 52-foot-long, ghostly white sperm whale made out of industrial wool felt. *Mocha Dick* was inspired by the whale that once harassed sailing ships near Mocha Island in the South Pacific Ocean. Described as having flesh as “white as wool,” that same whale was also the basis for Herman Melville’s 1851 novel *Moby-Dick*.

Sprawled across the museum’s largest gallery, *Mocha Dick* has the size and feel of an actual whale. Lowe achieves this effect through his use of industrial wool felt and an inflatable armature, carefully designed to mimic anatomical proportion. The wool is carefully stitched, pieced, and threaded together so that these constructed seams and zippers appear as harpoon-scars and squid-besieged gashes. Lowe also attached wool-crafted barnacles to the whale’s side. Lowe invites viewers to consider the magnificence of the whale, the legacy of whaling, care of our environment, and how the epic leviathan continues to capture the imagination.

“The body and flesh of Mocha Dick remind us of an actual, physical landscape; the wool is almost like a topographical map,” explains Class of 1956 Director Lisa Corrin. “Herman Melville worked on *Moby Dick* while living in Pittsfield in the shadow of Mount Greylock, which reminded him of the whale. This sculpture will remind our students and all of our visitors of the extraordinary literary and artistic legacy that has made our region so culturally significant. We are looking forward to the multidisciplinary programs, from the English Department to Environmental Studies and the Williams-Mystic Program, which will explore the issues that this artwork inspires us to consider.” This exhibition continues WCMA’s year-long focus on art and landscape—landscape in all of its guises: as topography, sustainer of life, site of conservation activism, cultural icon, metaphor, and object of awe and reverence.

Mocha Dick was originally shown in Philadelphia at the Fabric Workshop and Museum in May 2009. This exhibition was organized by Vivian Patterson, Curator of the Collections, and Cynthia Way, Director of Education and Visitor Experience.

(Source: Adapted from press release, curatorial text)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the Artist

Tristin Lowe (b. 1966) received his BFA from Massachusetts College of Art and studied at Parsons School of Design and Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. He has exhibited his work nationally and internationally. He was co-founder and co-director of the non-profit gallery Blohard. Lowe's work is in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, among others. He lives and works in Philadelphia.

Lowe is a multidisciplinary artist who manipulates a range of materials toward unexpected ends. Lowe's use of everyday materials, inflatable devices, and kinetics "liberate his work from expectations of what types of media are acceptable for making art" (*Gallery Notes*, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, 2009). Surveying his eighteen-year practice, one would find inanimate objects given the power of movement and flight, the mythic trickster figure reinvented as a clown, and fairy-tale characters exhibiting adult afflictions—for example, a giant inflatable pink elephant based on Dumbo with a bottle of bourbon at his side.

As Curator Alex Baker states in "Truffle Hunting and Pheromone Tales":

Tristin Lowe's artistic universe is populated by a host of characters and objects that fuse the contents of a child's toy box with the ingenuity of an amateur inventor. Employing forced air, medical mannequins, low-tech pumps and motors, clowns and fantastical figures—all filtered through a keen attention to the kinetic—Lowe utilizes ad hoc engineering and severe shifts in scale to explore the human psyche. ...Lowe's sculptures and installations evoke both fairytale fantasy and a sophisticated attention to the Surrealist world of dreams, the unconscious, and the triumph of the sensory over the cerebral.

(*Tristin Lowe: Withering Heights*, Glenside, PA: Arcadia University Gallery, p. 33)

Whereas Lowe's early work focused more on kinetic sculptures, in the mid 1990s he began to investigate figurative and narrative works. He often draws upon literary sources ranging from the great American novel *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville to children's stories such as *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. Interested in contradictions, he explores all sides of these characters—the positive and negative, humorous and sad, playful and threatening—and what they tell us about ourselves. Whether ancient trickster, beloved fairytale character, or the largest mammal in the world, his representations ask viewers to look again at what we thought we knew about the world we live in and the myths we create.

Mocha Dick: Lowe's Artistic Process

Lowe created the sculpture *Mocha Dick* at the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia in May 2009. The idea to create *Mocha Dick* came to him while working on a series of fabrications, exploring felt as material and issues relating to balance and scale, as well as to “keep his hands moving”—a sculptor’s way of taking notes or thinking through ideas. From these small fabrications suddenly emerged the concept of a giant, life-size rendition of the majestic, war-weary whale that inspired Melville’s 1851 novel, *Moby-Dick*—a novel that Lowe always loved.

Lowe collaborated with staff from the Fabric Workshop to design and construct the sculpture. Using ¼” industrial wool felt, Lowe designed the skin of the whale in a kind of “dress pattern” with zippers to connect the pieces. The felt covers an inflatable armature, maintained by an interior fan and calibrated to create anatomically correct muscle and blubber. Scale is an important consideration; *Mocha Dick* is a life-size whale—52 feet, which reflects their average size today, not in the 1800s when male sperm whales such as Mocha Dick could be as long as 85 feet. Lowe inserts this historic whale into the present day.

The felt is a ghostly white color, with barnacle appliqués and zigzagged stitches evoking the scars of a life spent in the sea outrunning harpooners. The sculpture deliberately shows the seams, evidence that it is a representation, yet the whale’s presence is massive and tactile in the gallery space. The whale sprawls across the gallery floor, with his flippers flanked on either side, but, Lowe says, the whale is not beached. Lowe intends for viewers to encounter the luminous white whale in the gallery space and imagine the ability to connect to this awesome creature of the sea, which has captured the imagination of people across history.

In creating this sculpture, Lowe was informed by research on whales, films including close-ups of markings on the skin, the great novel *Moby-Dick*, and two famous accounts of whales attacking ships. Nathaniel Philbrick’s awardwinning *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex* (2001) synthesizes maritime history and memoirs of survivors from the famous incident when a whale attacked and sank the Nantucket whaler *Essex* in 1819. In the 1839 article in *The Knickerbocker*, Jeremiah Reynolds recounts how a 70-foot albino sperm whale attacked a whaling vessel near Mocha Island, Chile, describing the beast as “white as wool.” The notorious whale was referred to as “Mocha Dick” after the island, and sometimes, “Old Tom.” This whale, represented in Lowe’s sculpture, inspired Melville’s 1851 novel *Moby-Dick*.

(Source: Adapted from curatorial text, interview with artist)

***Moby-Dick*: Melville's Creative Process**

When 22-year-old Herman Melville did his tour on the whaling vessel *Acushnet* in 1841, he had heard the legendary tales of Mocha Dick and of the Nantucket whaler *Essex*. He had read the *Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whale-Ship Essex*, written by one the survivors, First Mate Owen Chase, and published in 1821. Inspired in part by these accounts and his own maritime adventures, Melville wrote *Moby-Dick* ten years later, while living on his farm Arrowhead in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Out his study window, he gazed at Mount Greylock and imagined the profile of the epic leviathan.

In the novel, Ishmael sets sail on his first whaling voyage aboard *The Pequod*. He soon discovers that Captain Ahab is obsessed not solely with whaling but also revenge upon his nemesis—the elusive albino sperm whale that had attacked his ship and bitten off his leg. After the dramatic confrontation with Moby Dick, only Ishmael survives to tell the tale.

During a now-famous hike up Monument Mountain in Great Barrington, Melville befriended Nathaniel Hawthorne, and their conversation over the following months prompted Melville to reshape his novel. He elevated it from a popular adventure tale to an epic conflict that explored man versus nature, good and evil, issues of race and class, and the practice of whaling. Published in 1851, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* is dedicated to Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Melville wrote many stories and novels about his adventures in Polynesia, but *Moby-Dick* is the most famous. When it was first published, however, it was not well received. Due to the lack of success of his following novels, Melville eventually had to sell his beloved Arrowhead and move to New York City, where he supported his family as a customs inspector. In the 1920s, critics rediscovered the author and hailed *Moby-Dick* as a masterpiece of American Renaissance literature.

(Source: Adapted from curatorial text)

About Whales

“Sperm whales are easily recognized by their massive heads and prominent rounded foreheads. They have the largest brain of any creature known to have lived on Earth. Their heads also hold large quantities of a substance called spermaceti. Whalers once believed that the oily fluid was sperm, but scientists still do not understand the function of spermaceti. One common theory is that the fluid—which hardens to wax when cold—helps the whale alter its buoyancy so it can dive deep and rise again. Sperm whales are known to dive as deep as 3,280 feet (1,000 meters) in search of squid to eat. These giant mammals must hold their breath for up to 90 minutes on such dives. These toothed whales eat thousands of pounds of fish and squid—about one ton (907 kg) per day.

“Sperm whales are often spotted in groups (called pods) of some 15 to 20 animals. Pods include females and their young, while males may roam solo or move from group to group. Females and calves remain in tropical or subtropical waters all year long, and apparently practice communal childcare. Males migrate to higher latitudes, alone or in groups, and head back towards the equator to breed. Driven by their tail fluke, approximately 16 feet (5 meters) from tip to tip, they can cruise the oceans at around 23 miles (37 kilometers) per hour.

“These popular leviathans are vocal and emit a series of ‘clangs’ that may be used for communication or for echolocation. Animals that use echolocation emit sounds that travel underwater until they encounter objects, then bounce back to their senders—revealing the location, size, and shape of their target.

“Sperm whales were mainstays of whaling’s 18th and 19th century heyday. A mythical albino sperm whale was immortalized in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, though Ahab’s nemesis was apparently based on a real animal whale called Mocha Dick. The animals were targeted for oil and ambergris, a substance that forms around squid beaks in a whale’s stomach. Ambergris was (and remains) a very valuable substance once used in perfumes. Despite large population drops due to whaling, sperm whales are still fairly numerous.”

(Source: National Geographic website,

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/sperm-whale.html>)

Making Connections

Art

Tours and activities discuss and analyze the artistic methods, materials, processes, and sources of inspiration for the sculpture, as well as for the novel. The attention to process and sources of inspiration—both for the artist and the writer—helps students understand their own creative process and builds their critical and creative thinking skills. Tour and curriculum activities offer opportunities for planning and creating multimedia art projects that integrate writing.

English Language Arts

Tours and activities make a connection between the art on view and the literary source that inspired it. By emphasizing the connection between artistic and literary inspiration, students gain a deeper, more personalized sense of how writers develop their stories. Using art to facilitate the writing process, students are introduced to various forms: novels, myths, legends, and poetry, and types of writing: descriptive language, creative writing, and analytical discourse.

Science

Tours and activities engage students in guided inquiry and explore the inventive use of materials and technology in the sculpture.

History

Tours and activities explore the context of maritime history and the whaling industry in the nineteenth century that set the stage for the story of Mocha Dick.

STANDARDS

The following list presents examples of Massachusetts standards that relate to the material and activities covered in the tour and curriculum guide activities.

Visual Arts Standards

- 1 Methods, Materials, and Techniques. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the methods, materials, and techniques unique to the visual arts.
- 2 Elements and Principles of Design. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the elements and principles of design.

- 3 Observation, Abstraction, Invention, and Expression. Students will demonstrate their powers of observation, abstraction, invention, and expression in a variety of media, materials, and techniques.
- 5 Critical Response. Students will describe and analyze their own work and the work of others using appropriate visual arts vocabulary. When appropriate, students will connect their analysis to interpretation and evaluation.
- 9 Inventions, Technologies, and the Arts. Students will describe and analyze how performing and visual artists use and have used materials, inventions, and technologies in their work.
- 10 Interdisciplinary Connections. Students will use knowledge of the arts and cultural resources in the study of the arts, English language arts, foreign languages, health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering.

English/Language Arts

- 1 Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.
- 2 Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions or interviews in order to acquire new knowledge.
- 9 Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its contemporary context or historical background.
- 10 Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.
- 11 Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- 14 Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of poetry and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- 15 Students will identify and analyze how an author's words appeal to the senses, create imagery, suggest mood, and set tone, and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- 16 Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of myths, traditional narratives, and classical literature and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- 19 Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.
- 20 Students will write for different audiences and purposes.

- 21 Students will demonstrate improvement in organization, content, paragraph development, level of detail, style, tone, and word choice (diction) in their compositions after revising them.

Science

All Grades: Scientific Inquiry Skills: WCMA's tours utilize an inquiry-based approach, meaning that discussions revolve around student observations, questions, and evidence-based interpretations.

PreK-2: Life Science

- 1 Recognize that animals (including humans) and plants are living things that grow, reproduce, and need food, air, and water.

PreK-2: Technology: Materials and Tools

- 1.1 Identify and describe characteristics of natural materials (e.g., wood, cotton, fur, wool) and human-made materials (e.g., plastic, Styrofoam).
- 1.3 Identify and describe the safe and proper use of tools and materials (e.g., glue, scissors, tape, ruler, paper, toothpicks, straws, spools) to construct simple structures.

Grades 3 -5

- 8 Describe how organisms meet some of their needs in an environment by using behaviors (patterns of activities) in response to information (stimuli) received from the environment

Grades 6-8

- 9 Relate the extinction of species to a mismatch of adaptation and the environment.

Grades 9-12

- 6.2 Analyze changes in population size and biodiversity (speciation and extinction) that result from the following: natural causes, changes in climate, human activity, and the introduction of invasive, non-native species.

History

Grade 6 – Geography

United States History

- USI.27 Explain the importance of the Transportation Revolution of the 19th century (the building of canals, roads, bridges, turnpikes, steamboats, and railroads), including the stimulus it provided to the growth of a market economy. (H, E)

World History

- WHII.5 Identify the causes of the Industrial Revolution.
- WHI.12 Explain why European nations sent explorers westward and how overseas expansion led to the growth of commerce and the development of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

PREPARING FOR A VISIT

Preparation and Discussion

- Review the description of the exhibition and background material.
- Consider the possible curriculum connections and provide your students with relevant background before your visit.
- Inform students of what they will see and do at the museum, introducing key concepts through class discussion and/or activities.

PRE & POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Literacy Connections

Grades PreK-2

For young students, reading picture books before a visit to the museum can help students to understand key concepts and vocabulary that may be used during a tour. Reading books after a visit can reinforce ideas and offer additional opportunities to analyze and discuss connections between words and art.

The Following Books Are Available Through the Central/Western Massachusetts Library System:

Barnett, Mac and Adam Rex (illustrations). *Billy Twitters and his Blue Whale Problem*. NY: Disney Hyperion Books, 2009.

Ita, Sam. *Moby-Dick: A Pop-Up Book*. Sterling, 2007.

Segal, John. *Alistair and Kips Great Whale Adventure*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2008.

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Has't Thou Seen the Whale? *Adapt for all grades*

Students research whales and aspects of maritime history, as appropriate per grade level.

Goals

- To develop research skills and find interesting primary sources for post-visit projects
- To better understand the biology of whales and the historical context of the sculpture

Standards

Visual Art 10

ELA 9

Life Science 1 (preK-2); 8 (3-5); 9 (6-8); 6.2 (9-12)

History USI, 27; WHII.5 & WHI.12

Materials

- Access to technology, internet, library resources, and copy machine

Procedure

1. Inform students about the exhibition they will see at the museum and that the whale represented is actually an historical whale (see Background Information). Mention that the contemporary artist, Tristin Lowe, did a lot of research in order to create the whale sculpture. Lowe learned about whales, the legendary whale Mocha Dick, the whaling industry in the nineteenth century, maritime history, and literary history that set the context for the sculpture he was making.
2. Develop topics as appropriate for your grade level: for example, biology of whales, whales and maritime history, the whaling industry in the nineteenth century, the novel *Moby-Dick* and its illustrations, Melville's writing life and journeys at sea.
3. Ask each student to find out something about whales, past or present, to share with the class. Point to research methods and media appropriate to your grade level (see Recommended Resources).
4. Ask students to save these primary resources for post-visit projects that will involve writing and art-making. Ask them what they expect to see at the museum.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

It's a Fluke

Pre-school - Early Elementary

Students create a bookmark or collage and tell a Whale Tale.

Goals

- To make connections between art and stories
- To experiment with line, shape, color, sound, mixed media
- To exchange ideas and tell stories out loud
- To connect to and learn about whales

Standards

Visual Art 1, 2

ELA 1, 2

Science 1, 1.3

Materials

Cut outs of the whale fluke or whale shape on card stock (whale template included after lesson)

CD of whale sounds & CD Player

Colored pencils and markers, glitter pens

For collage: paper, felt, glue, seashells, and other mixed-media collage materials

Glue, scissors

Procedure

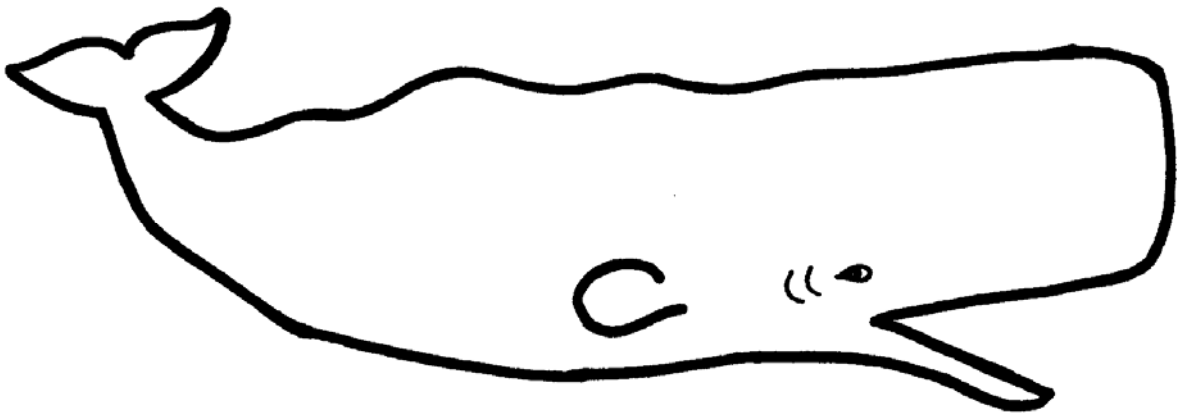
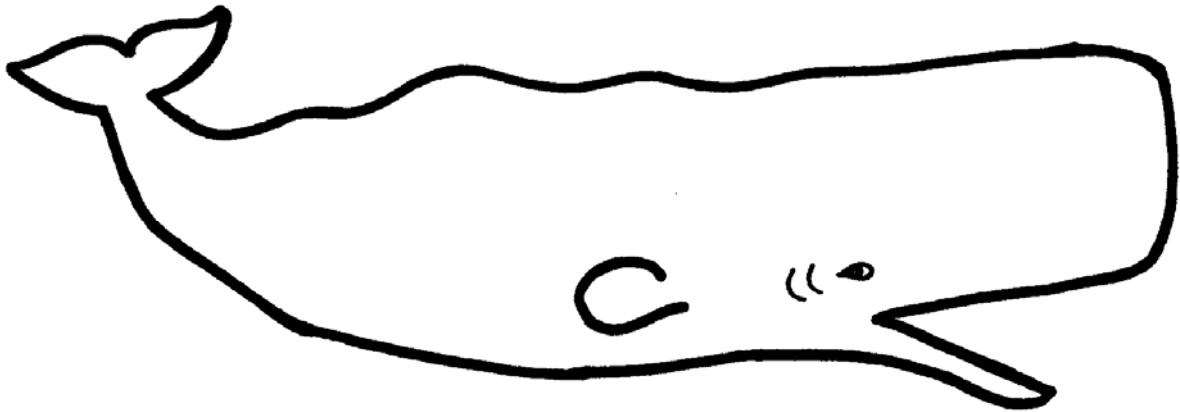
Part 1: Whale Tale Bookmark

1. Ask students what they remember about the sculpture of the whale at the museum.
2. Explain that everyone will now have a chance to create their own whale tales. Hand out materials and encourage each student to make and decorate their whale shape. Show them your example.

3. Turn on the whale sounds and explain that this is how whales communicate to each other. Can you imagine what they are saying?
4. As they decorate and color, ask them to think of a name for their whale.
5. Have students work in pairs to introduce their whales to each other.
6. They can use their whale tale as a bookmark! Or integrate it into a seascape collage.

Part II: Seascape Collage

7. Have students combine the whale tale with other elements and create a seascape collage. Turn on the whale sounds for inspiration as they work. Ask them to think about what their whale is like and what the whale is doing.
8. Gather everyone together to share their whale tales. Go around the group and ask each student to talk about their whale, share its name, and what the whale is doing—or whatever story they want to share about their artwork.
9. Extension: Now that students have connected to whales, learn more about their biology and habitat. Explore other picture stories about them. (See Recommended Resources.)



Thar She Blows

Elementary

Students create their own Whale Tale illustrated with pop-up art.

Goals

- To make connections between art and writing
- To experiment with multimedia and multidimensional artwork
- To create stories using visual and written material
- To learn more about whales

Standards

Visual Art 1, 2, 3, 9, 10

ELA 1, 2, 9, 11, 19, 20

Science 1, 8

Materials

Card stock, 8½ x11" pre-cut in half to make pieces that are 4x11".

Stencil or cut outs of whale with fluke, about than 3x6", white, black, or grey card stock or heavy paper (make model first to measure exactly)

Brass fasteners

Colored paper and markers

Glue, scissors

Procedure

1. Ask students what they remember about the sculpture of the whale at the museum. Now they will make a pop-up illustration and write a story about their own whale.
2. Make a demo: Explain that the card stock is the seascape. Cut a hole in the center of the card. Put the brass fastener through it. Poke a hole in the center of the whale cut out, and pull back the ends of the fastener. The whale cut out is behind the seascape. Now show how you can push up one side of the whale cut out to show the whale's head surfacing behind the water, and then push the other side up to show the fluke appearing. Color or decorate the seascape.

3. Hand out materials and guide students through the activity. Encourage them to decorate their seascape and consider what their whale is like.
4. Now have students write a story about the whale. What is the whale's name? What is it doing? What happens to the whale? Who is telling the story—the whale, a sailor, you on vacation?
5. Revise the story until it is ready for presentation. Do an interactive group reading of everyone's stories and their pop-up illustrations. (Note: Many whales, in a group like this, are called a "pod.")
6. Extension: Now that students have connected to whales, learn more about their biology and habitat. Explore other stories about whales. (See Recommended Resources.)

Whale of a Tale

Middle School

Students create a myth or legend of their own using the visual and written notes and experiences at the museum as inspiration.

Goals

- To make connections between art and writing
- To use drawing as a way to think through story ideas
- To develop a deeper understanding of the genres of myth and legend
- To develop writing skills

Standards

Visual Art 1, 2, 3, 10

ELA, 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21

Science 8, 9

Materials

Drawing paper, writing paper, and pencils

Procedure

1. Ask students what they remember about the sculpture of the whale at the museum. How did Tristin Lowe create the sculpture? What kind of research did he do? What is mythical or legendary about his whale? Why?
2. If students did the pre-visit research, ask them to look again at their primary resources. How is Lowe's artwork different from/similar to facts they gathered? Make sure that students share their research with each other. Research can provide inspiration for their legend, just like research inspired the artist to create the sculpture.
3. If students did sketches and wrote notes for their story at the museum, have them take them out. If they did not do the writing prompts in the gallery, do them now, using their drawing as inspiration. Tell them if one prompt is too hard that they can move on to another one and come back to it.

PROMPTS

These prompts will help you develop your own legend about a whale.

Looking at the whale and thinking about your drawing, what three words come to mind:

Name your whale:

What are the most striking characteristics of your whale? (Think of what caught your interest as you were drawing.)

Think about what might make your whale a legend. For example, you could pick a characteristic and exaggerate it. A purple whale, the smallest whale ever known, a whale that can talk in Chinese, a whale that uses an ipod.

In your story, what is the whale trying to do?

What obstacles does the whale face?

How does the tale end?

What makes it a legend?

4. Have students think about a key dramatic event in their story. Draw the whale before the event, the event itself, and after the event. Tell them these drawings are to help them think through their story ideas.
5. Write your story: use your research, drawings of different ideas for the plot, and notes on characteristics and events that turn the whale into a legend.
6. Work in pairs to share and review your stories and revise based on feedback.
7. Integrate your drawings into your story on facing pages.

Monumental Dialogue

High School

Students explore the creative process of both artist and writer and create their own epic tale.

Goals

- To develop a deeper understanding of the artistic and writing process
- To make connections between art and literature
- To understand the context of the sculpture
- To use research and a dialogic process to generate stories

Standards

Visual Art 1, 2, 3, 10

ELA 1, 2, 9, 11, 15, 19, 20, 21

History USI.27, WHII.5, WHI.12

Materials

Writing and drawing paper and pencils

Procedure

1. Ask students what they remember about Tristin Lowe's sculpture *Mocha Dick* at the museum. How did Lowe create the sculpture? How did Herman Melville approach writing *Moby-Dick*? What inspired them both? Discuss how interesting it is that the same historical account of legendary Mocha Dick inspired a nineteenth century writer and a contemporary artist.
2. As a whole class, share what you know about the history of this time period when Mocha Dick was roaming the seas. If you did research as a pre-visit activity, share the facts on whales, maritime history, and literary history.
3. This was the peak of the whaling industry – what was the whaling industry supporting? What caused the whaling industry to fade? What were the effects of the whaling industry? (See Recommended Resources.)
4. What do you think life was like for Melville at this time period? Imagine him on his whaling trips. Imagine him years later, on his farm in Arrowhead, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, writing his

novel. He looked out his study window and imagined that he saw the profile of Moby Dick in the grey undulating forms of Mount Greylock. (See Background Information.)

5. Tell students the story of how one day Melville met Nathaniel Hawthorne while hiking up Monument Mountain. During their conversation then and in the following months, Hawthorne had a monumental influence on Melville's writing and ambitions for his novel. Melville elevated the novel from a popular adventure tale to an epic conflict that explored man versus nature, good and evil, issues of race and class, and the practice of whaling. He even dedicated the novel to Hawthorne.
6. Now, students will have a similarly inspiring dialogue. Tell students that the goal is to write stories that take the artwork and novel as inspiration. Possible topics include a contemporary story about a whale, a story set at the peak of the whaling industry, a conflict of good and evil set on a whaler, a conversation between Melville and Hawthorne.
7. Form pairs. First, have students pretend to be Melville and Hawthorne, discussing ideas for *Moby-Dick*.
8. Next, have students brainstorm their own story ideas together. Use their research and drawings from the tours as inspiration for the story.
9. After their dialogue, have each student write their intentions for their story, based on this conversation, in the form of a letter to their dialogue partner (just like Melville did to Hawthorne).
10. Students can use drawing to help develop their ideas: before and after scenes, critical plot points, close-ups of character's expressions.
11. Students write their stories. After they finish the first draft, share with their partner from the "monumental dialogue."
12. Revise and share with the class. Consider using selected drawings as illustrations. You may wish to do an exhibition of creative process as well, showing the letter on intentions for the story, the before and after drawings, or gallery sketches.

Illustrious *Moby-Dick*

High School

Students create artistic interpretations of the text in *Moby-Dick*.

Goals

- To develop a deeper understanding of artistic process and media
- To use close examination of literary text as a source for artwork

Standards

Visual Art 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 10

ELA 1,2, 9, 14, 15

Materials

(If students have not read *Moby-Dick*, inform them about the story line and read select chapters.)

Xeroxes of pages from *Moby-Dick* (*pre-selected, but also can have students choose*)

Colored pencils

Mixed-media collage materials

Procedure

1. Ask students what they thought of Tristin Lowe's sculpture *Mocha Dick* at the museum. How does the sculpture relate to Herman Melville's novel *Moby-Dick*?
2. What artistic choices did Tristin Lowe make? How did these artistic choices relate to the novel *Moby-Dick*? What characteristics of Moby Dick did Lowe choose to emphasize? What did he leave out? What did he leave to our imagination?
3. If students did sketching and the erasure visual poem activity at the museum, take these materials out. If not, have them create a visual poem:

Erasure: Visual Poem

- a. Tell students that they will create a "found poem" using a page from Melville's masterpiece, *Moby-Dick* as inspiration. They will identify the words they want to keep from the text, and "erase" the rest, by covering the extra words with color.
- b. Read the page.
- c. Circle words you want to keep in pencil. You can only use the words you circled in the text for your poem.

- d. Find more words in the text until you are happy with your poem.
 - e. Select colored pencils and cross out and shade the other words you don't want the reader to see. Think about how it looks visually on the page.
4. Once they have their visual poem, encourage students to find other excerpts—page, chapter, or scene—in *Moby-Dick* that they like the best.
 5. Consider the main theme of the excerpt as well as the quality of the writing—how the writer made these expressive moments come across in imagery, metaphors, sentence structure, and tone.
 6. Encourage students to create a visual illustration combining image and text that expresses these qualities (theme, expressive moments, imagery, metaphors, sentence structure, tone). If needed, discuss the text with them or have them discuss it in pairs.
 7. Title the work with their favorite quote from the excerpt.
 8. For inspiration, show them this project online by amateur artist Matt Kish, who decided to make illustrations for every page of *Moby-Dick*: <http://www.spudd64.com>. What elements of the text did Matt Kish emphasize in his drawings? In his "Bio" on the website, Kish describes why he decided to do this project. Ask students what they think of embarking on a project of this scope, just for the pleasure of doing it. What texts might they approach in this manner?
 9. Extension/Alternative: Create sculptures or three-dimensional interpretations, which likewise focus on illustrating an excerpt of the novel—the main theme, expressive moments, and the quality of the writing (imagery, metaphors, sentence structure, and tone).

WCMA Blog

WCMA BLOG!

The Williams College Museum of Art is excited to announce its first blog! We enlist guest bloggers for different exhibitions. This is a great opportunity for you to hear directly from artists, museum staff, and Williams faculty; to ask questions; and to see behind-the-scenes photographs of exhibition installation. We invite you to get in the spirit! Here are some suggestions for ways that you can connect with WCMA's blog:

EXPLORING BLOG BASICS

While older students may be familiar with blogs and may already be active participants in online discussions, younger students may require more of an introduction. The following lesson plans lay out step-by-step suggestions for guiding students in the elementary grades through the process.

[Scholastic: How to Use Blogs, Grades 3 - 5](#)

- <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3749958>

[Langwitches Blog: Introduction to Blogging Lesson Plan](#)

- <http://langwitches.org/blog/2008/12/25/introduction-to-blogging-lesson-plan/>

[Blogging is Elementary](#)

- <http://mscofino.edublogs.org/2008/12/05/blogging-is-elementary/>

Students will need time to explore some sites online, and the lessons above provide links to blogs created by and for kids. Class discussions following online exploration allows students to thoughtfully evaluate what they find and to consider:

- What do blogs look like?
- What's the difference between a post and comment?
- How long are posts? How long are comments?
- What makes a good comment?
- What kinds of things can you find on blogs (words, pictures, video, audio clips, author's name, archives, links, etc.)?
- What do many blogs have in common? What differs from blog to blog?

Working as a whole class to establish criteria for good posts and comments and practicing as a class can be helpful. This gives students a chance to think about what makes a comment constructive, respectful, interesting, and meaningful. Explicit discussion of online safety is also

very important before students go online. The “Blogging is Elementary” page provides Public Service Announcement video clips exploring online safety issues. On “Langwitches Blog,” scroll down and you’ll find an elementary blog unit, including a section dedicated to online safety.

BLOG-BOARD

If your students would benefit from some low-tech practice with the process of writing posts and comments before going online, try devoting a section of your classroom bulletin board to a “Blog Board.” For the weeks leading up to and following your visit to the museum, the Blog Board could take on the theme of the tour. Each week could feature a guest student blogger (or pair of guests), who post a brief essay exploring some aspect of the art. You may wish to provide a list of suggested topics for students to choose from. Give the rest of the class opportunities during the week to read the “post” and to write comments on index cards and tack them to the board beneath the essay. On Friday, give the guest blogger a few minutes to respond to the comments, answering any questions and summarizing what the experience was like. The guest blogger for the following week might select a topic suggested by comments from the previous week, or something completely different.

CONNECT to WCMA’S BLOG

Watch WCMA’s blog for a guest blogger that interests you—whether artists, curators, or faculty. Follow their posts for the week and join in the conversation by submitting a comment or a question. Older students can interact with the blog individually. Classes in the younger grades can read posts and brainstorm comments together. Discuss student reactions as a class. What comments did the guest blogger make about the exhibition? What comments stood out to students? Why? Where was the blogger’s thinking similar to your own? Where did it differ? What makes this kind of conversation different?

START YOUR OWN CLASS BLOG

Believe it or not, creating and launching your own blog takes only a few minutes and costs nothing. If you use a free blog site like blogger (<https://www.blogger.com>), the site provides basic templates and walks you through each step. If you can use Microsoft Word, you have all of the skills you need to make a blog. 21 Classes (<http://www.21classes.com/>) offers a free blog service, including classroom-

Recommended Resources

Books for PreK-2

Segal, John. *Alistair and Kips Great Whale Adventure*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2008.

Barnett, Mac and Adam Rex (illustrations). *Billy Twitters and his Blue Whale Problem*. New York: Disney Hyperion Books, 2009.

Books for ages 9-12

Ita, Sam. *Moby-Dick: A Pop-Up Book*. Sterling, 2007.

Teacher Resources

Hoare, Philip. *The Whale: In Search of the Giants of the Sea*. Ecco, 2010.

Labaree, Benjamin, Fowler, Williams, Hattendorf, John, Safford, Jeffrey, Sloan, Edward, and German, Andrew. *America and the Sea: A Maritime History*. Mystic, CT: Mystic Seaport, 1998.

Philbrick, Nathaniel. *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex*. Penguin, 2001.

Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Web Sites

Westward by Sea: A Maritime Perspective on American Expansion, 1820-1890

Arts & Humanities, *Moby-Dick*:

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/westward/langarts.html>

National Geographic, Sperm Whale Facts:

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/sperm-whale.html>

Discovery Channel: <http://dsc.discovery.com/>

Mystic Seaport: <http://www.mysticseaport.org/>

New Bedford Whaling Museum: <http://www.whalingmuseum.org/>

Matt Kish's Illustration for every page of *Moby-Dick*: <http://www.spudd64.com/>

Education Programs

At the Williams College Museum of Art, our Education Programs strive to instill in visitors a love of art and an appreciation for all that a museum can offer.

As a teaching museum, we are committed to finding innovative approaches to teaching and learning through art—making connections across disciplines, building literacy skills, and encouraging the exchange of ideas.

Our programs engage participants in active experiences with art and investigate art history, artistic practices, and the issues that artwork raises. We are always available to discuss ways to tailor our programs and provide support to help you make the most of your experience with us.

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