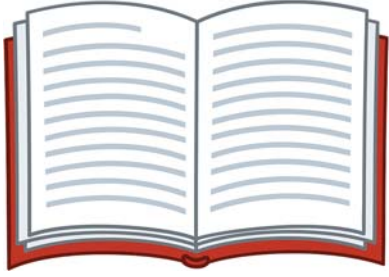


Name _____



Moby Dick Symbolism

Directions: Read the excerpt provided below. Track how the **white whale** functions as a symbol. Answer the reflection questions, supporting your ideas with textual evidence and thoughtful interpretation.

Excerpt (Chapter 36: "The Quarter-Deck")

"All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event, in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him."

1. In what ways does the white whale represent **Captain Ahab's obsession**?

2. How does Melville describe the whale as a symbol of the **unknown or unknowable**?

3. What universal human struggles can the whale symbolize beyond Ahab's personal quest?

4. Do you think the whale is more of a **personal enemy** for Ahab or a **universal mystery** for humanity? Defend your answer.
