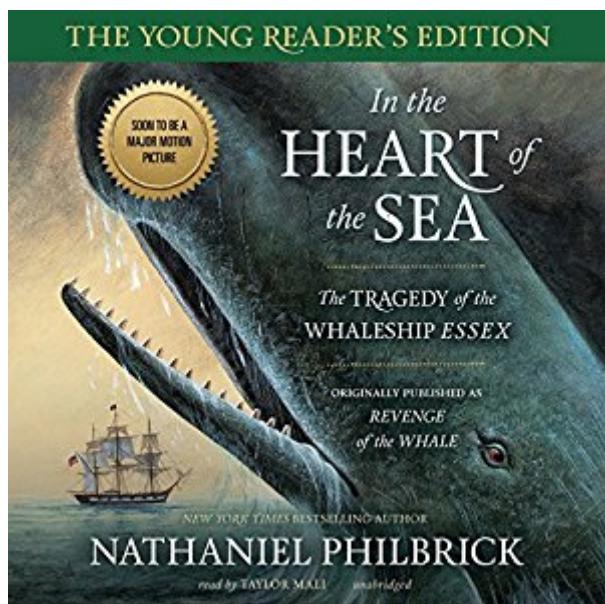


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In The Heart Of The Sea: Young Reader's Edition: The Tragedy Of The Whaleship Essex



Synopsis

In the Heart of the Sea brings to new life the incredible story of the wreck of the whaleship Essex - the inspiration for the climax of Moby-Dick. In a harrowing pause resister, Nathaniel Philbrick restores this epic story to its rightful place in American history. In 1819, the 240-ton Essex set sail from Nantucket on a routine voyage. Fifteen months later, in the farthest reaches of the South Pacific, it was repeatedly rammed and sunk by an 80-ton bull sperm whale. Its 20-man crew, fearing cannibals on the islands to the west, made for the 3,000-mile-distant coast of South America in three tiny boats. During 90 days at sea under horrendous conditions, the survivors clung to life as, one by one, they succumbed to hunger, thirst, disease, and fear. In the Heart of the Sea tells perhaps the greatest sea story ever. Philbrick interweaves his account of this extraordinary ordeal of ordinary men with a wealth of whale lore and with a brilliantly detailed portrait of the lost, unique community of Nantucket whalers. Impeccably researched and beautifully told, the audiobook delivers the ultimate portrait of man against nature. At once a literary companion and a pause resister that speaks to the same issues of class, race, and man's relationship to nature that permeate the works of Melville, In the Heart of the Sea will endure as a vital work of American history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I knew the outlines of the story of the Essex from reading Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America. What was most interesting to me was the story of how the crew dealt with the event, their tenacity, ability to endure enormous suffering, and willingness to follow leaders, even leaders with

very different skill sets. Lots of revealing detail about the community of Nantucket, the construction of the ships, how the crews were assembled of novice and veteran whalers, the sheer enormity of the task of finding, killing, rendering whales and sailing these relatively small, relatively fragile ships thousands of miles into unknown waters. These were courageous, if not desperate, men.

In 1819, the Nantucket based whale ship Essex set off on a two year journey, around Cape Horn and into the whale rich waters of the South Pacific. With a new captain, first mate and many green sailors, the trip suffered from several minor setbacks (not unusual in the trade), before the Essex was sunk in the first documented case of a ship being attacked by a sperm whale, estimated to be an 85 foot monster. Relegated to whale boats, not suited for long trips on the open ocean, and hampered by trade winds which prevented steering a direct course for South America, the survivors spent three months in their whale boats, suffering through unimaginable bouts with starvation, dehydration, weather and ultimately cannibalism. This work paints a fascinating picture of the people and the culture of Nantucket and the whaling community, the Essex in particular. It is educational and instructive in both the customs of the era and the trade, as well as the psychology involved in disaster response and leadership. I have read numerous accounts of extreme exploration and the privations associated therewith and this treatment is very good in that genre. There are two very good maps and several photos and illustrations which assist the reader in following the narrative. The book is very short, at 230 pages with additional notes and reference material. My only quibble is that the endnotes are not associated with the primary text. A reader will finish the entire book, before even discovering that there are, in fact, notes associated with the text. Being able to read the notes in conjunction with the text would have been instructive.

This was an outstanding account of a traumatic test that these men were thrown into and an amazing telling of events that were part of the inspiration for Moby Dick. I thought this was going to be a story about an epic whale attack, but the attack comes early and, while it was devastating, didn't have the hollywood flair or the fictionalized grandeur of a novel. For a moment I was let down but I soon realized this book wasn't about the whale but about the crew and their uphill, vicious battle to survive the trials that come from being afloat on a lonely, expansive, and unforgiving ocean. I love novels where I can relate to or simply like characters and this book is all the better because these are actual men who are struggling, who have gone to the brink of death, and who have had to slum down to unspeakable acts for survival, do things they would have never thought they would do, all in the name of getting home again. From the explanation of the whaling culture on

Nantucket, to the acts of sailing and whaling, to the destruction of their ship, to being afloat, and everything that happens afterward, this is a great read. Following the story of these men is something that I believe most people will enjoy. The raw telling of their culture, the job of whaling itself, and the acts committed in the name of survival are shocking, amazing, and horrifying in some respects, but the no-holds-barred telling of this event was fantastic.

Heck, with over 1,000 reviews already for this book, I will not discuss its merits (or lack thereof). I will just say that I enjoyed it a lot, I suffered with the guys, I suffered for the butchering of the whale, I rooted for the survivors. And I was shocked by the totally absurd and unreal way that Captain Pollard was portrayed in the movie of the same name... Anyway, a gripping reading all the way.

It is a compelling, well-researched true story, but an emotionally grueling read as one follows the long ordeal of the few survivors of the whaling ship Essex, shipwrecked far out in the Pacific, as they attempt to reach the South American coast. It was tremendously ironic to learn that had they chanced a landing on the mostly unknown "Society Islands," which were a week's sail away, they could have recuperated on the now-famous island paradise of Tahiti. Fears of cannibals made the crew overrule their captain's plan to go there, and instead they became the cannibals themselves. Truly horrible. Captain Ahab is not a simple portrait of any of the men on the Essex, but news of the disaster inspired young Herman Melville to begin work on the greatest novel of his career--Moby Dick (Oxford World's Classics). Philbrick's account of the whaling industry is unsparing and brutal, and it made me admire all the more the way Melville could convey the same facts but transform them into high literary art. If Ahab resembles any of the crew, it may be Owen Chase, the First Mate (played by Chris Hemsworth in the recent film adaptation). Philbrick also wrote *Why Read Moby-Dick?*

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