



# The Seafaring Theme in Herman Melville's "Moby Dick" and "Billy Budd, Sailor": An analysis

*Markus Jack Dijkgraaf*

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Seminar paper from the year 2012 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,3, University of Rostock (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), course: "No! In Thunder!" Herman Melville's Short Fiction, language: English, abstract: Herman Melville's work is characterized by a dominant overarching theme in most cases. One of the strongest motives is that of seamanship. Be it in "Moby Dick", "Billy Budd, Sailor" or "Benito Cerino". But how great is the impact of those themes on the overall plot or story and, in conjunction, would they play out the same in a land-based setting?

To explore the psychological effects of isolation and confinement on the characters, this essay will mostly rely on studies by Jack Stuster. His work mainly deals with extreme isolation in arctic or space missions, but the same circumstances apply to life aboard a seagoing vessel, though to a lesser degree. In addition, the author draws on three years of personal experience working in a maritime setting, one year of which was spent on a civilian ship and two years of military service aboard navy vessels.

The first chapter will define the distinctive features of Melville's chosen setting and separate it from a dry land theme. In the second chapter, the essay will apply those features to the novel "Moby Dick" and the short story "Billy Budd, Sailor" in order to analyze their impact on the plot development.

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