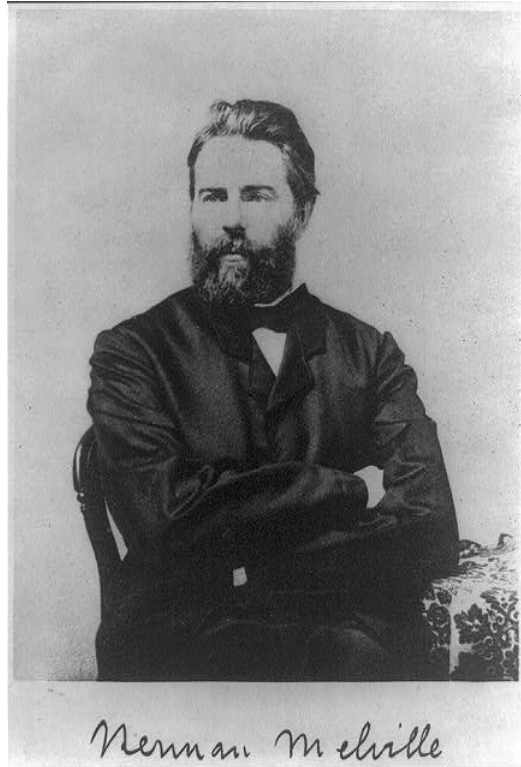


08/09 January 2017



Reproduction of photograph, frontispiece to *Journal Up the Straits*. Ca. 1860.
from <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/cph/3a40000/3a40000/3a40100/3a40100r.jpg>

Happy New Year, American Literature Scholars!—

I'm happy to see you back at school and hope you have all enjoyed restful and entertaining breaks!

Now it's time to return to our happy labors together! Today we'll write ourselves awake! And then read!

Today's agenda:

1. WEDGE—For roughly ten minutes, tell a fresh story. Try to imagine that you have been asked to write a college application personal essay based on an experience from the last three weeks. Draft a quick encapsulation of a moment from your holiday. Recall a conflict, likely a small one, the resolution of which reveals that you pay attention to your life and that you can convey the events of your life to an audience that was not present at the events. Also, the anecdote should reveal something positive about YOUR personality. Establish the exposition. Remember to provide specific imagery that will allow an audience of ignorant animals to

understand the experience vicariously. Can you start with an *in medias res* lead sentence that intrigues an audience by beginning the narrative at the climax?

2. Quick Tidbits—Semester marks are due on January 12 and all discussions of the final exam and most recent essay must be postponed until then. But I do have some general words of encouragement to share.

3. Reading Period—We will dedicate the remainder of the period to actively reading our Melville packet. Here's how:

A. Intro to Melville— We'll use a handout posted to the Moodle page entitled "Themes in Melville" to introduce some of the motifs found in Melville's work.

B. Anticipating Parallel Conflicts— The narrator of "Bartleby the Scrivener" is a complex and often befuddling character faced with very unusual circumstances. The narrator's external conflict with the increasingly problematic Bartleby runs in parallel with an internal conflict rooted in a profound philosophical question: to what extent are we responsible for our fellow human beings? As you read the short story, continue to ask how the Narrator's and Bartleby's actions can be interpreted as ethical or moral choices.

C. Read!

Tappa! Tappa! Tappa!—
Mr Leo

Homework:

Complete your reading of Herman Melville's short story, "Bartleby the Scrivener." OK, sure: call it a "parable" if you want to debate genre.

If you enjoy or benefit from hearing our texts as you read and annotate, I suggest that you plug in some headphones and try this version:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15KlhjTxTBw>

All of us can read faster than we can listen, but the reader in this audio version completes the entire story in a leisurely fashion in less than two hours. You can find quicker readings elsewhere, but this reader does a very nice job interpreting the tone of the tale. He understands that a severely gloomy story told by a profoundly perplexed narrator can contain within it moments of warped hilarity. Really: there are funny parts!

P.S. As I have probably mentioned, "Bartleby the Scrivener" has been filmed many times.

One of the most fascinating versions is a feature-length movie, an updated version of the tale from 2001 starring the eccentric actor, Crispin Glover, as Bartleby. When I saw this movie in its original theatrical release, roughly 1/3 of the very small audience walked out midway, some of them yelling obscenities at the screen. I stayed until the end, curious to see just how weird the movie would get. It got pretty weird. Especially the music. And the acting. And, well, everything else.

You can see a nice sample of Crispin Glover's almost convulsive interpretation here:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-9tAqdd_4Y