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Moby-Dick in Pictures: One Drawing for Every Page

Matt Kish

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A collection of illustrations inspired by lines from every single page of the 552-page Signet Classics paperback edition of Herman Melville's Moby-Dick

Inspired by one of the world's greatest novels, Ohio artist Matt Kish set out on an epic voyage of his own one day in August 2009. More than one hundred and fifty years following the original publication of Moby-Dick, Kish began illustrating Herman Melville's classic, creating images based on text selected from every page of the 552-page Signet Classics paperback edition. Completely self-taught, Kish refused to set any boundaries for the artwork and employed a deliberately low-tech approach in response to the increasing popularity of born-digital art and literature. He used found pages torn from old, discarded books, as well as a variety of mediums, including ballpoint pen, marker, paint, crayon, ink, and watercolor. By layering images on top of existing words and images, Kish has crafted a visual masterpiece that echoes the layers of meaning in Melville's narrative. In retrospect, Kish says he feels as foolhardy as Ishmael, the novel's narrator, and as obsessed as Captain Ahab in his quest for the great white whale. "I see now that the project was an attempt to fully understand this magnificent novel, to walk through every sun-drenched word, to lift up all the hatches and open all the barrels, to smell, taste, hear, and see every seabird, every shark, every sailor, every harpooner, and every whale," he says. "It was a hard thing, a very painful thing, but the novel now lives inside me in a away it never could have before." Kish spent nearly every day for eighteen months toiling away in a small closet he converted into an art studio. In order to share the work with family and friends, he started the blog "One Drawing for Every page of Moby-Dick," where he posted art and brief description about his process on a daily basis.

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