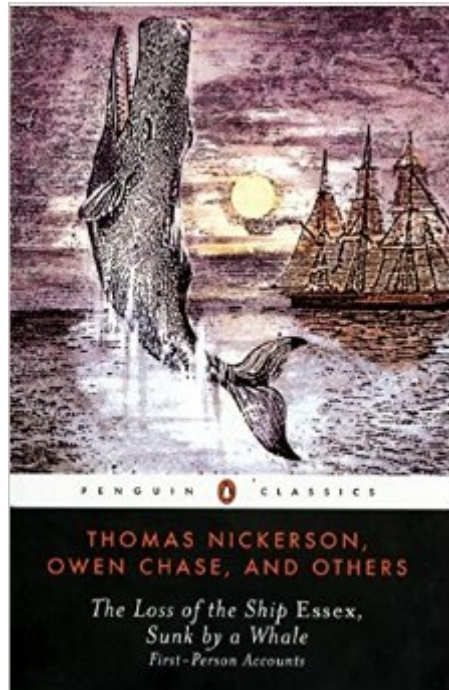


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The Loss Of The Ship Essex, Sunk By A Whale: First-Person Accounts (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

The gripping first-hand narrative of the whaling ship disaster that inspired Melville's *Moby-Dick* and informed Nathaniel Philbrick's monumental history, *In the Heart of the Sea*. In 1820, the Nantucket whaleship *Essex* was rammed by an angry sperm whale thousands of miles from home in the South Pacific. The *Essex* sank, leaving twenty crew members drifting in three small open boats for ninety days. Through drastic measures, eight men survived to reveal this astonishing tale. The *Narrative of the Wreck of the Whaleship Essex*, by Owen Chase, has long been the essential account of the *Essex*'s doomed voyage. But in 1980, a new account of the disaster was discovered, penned late in life by Thomas Nickerson, who had been the fifteen-year-old cabin boy of the ship. This discovery has vastly expanded and clarified the history of an event as grandiose in its time as the *Titanic*. This edition presents Nickerson's never-before-published chronicle alongside Chase's version. Also included are the most important other contemporary accounts of the incident, Melville's notes in his copy of the Chase narrative, and journal entries by Emerson and Thoreau. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

This book is a collection of accounts, remarks, annotations, and letters from the people involved in the tragedy, their rescuers, and other notable persons, which paints a vivid portrayal of the life of a Nantucket whaler in the 1800's. After having killed off the whale population in the Atlantic, the New England whale ships pushed farther into the ocean to find their prey - the sperm whale.

Hunting grounds in the Pacific were discovered and, after a year's journey rounding South America in which it lost half of its boats in a sudden gale, the whale ship Essex set out to fill its hold with the valuable whale oil armed with only 3 small boats. During a hunt, one of the boats was stove by the death throes of a speared sperm whale and returned to the ship. While enacting repairs, the pings of the first mate's hammer attracted the attention of a large bull sperm whale, a creature uniquely designed for ramming. The bull made two charges, collapsing the bow of the ship on either side of the keel, and 20 men found themselves alone, in 3 open boats, deep in the heart of the blue Pacific, with only faint hopes of rescue. The Essex did not sink immediately, and the men were able to salvage a few casks of water, some navigational instruments, and hard biscuits (which would later be fouled by ocean spray and induce dehydration in the men). The first mate also had paper and pencil, which he used for keeping a daily diary of their attempts to survive the ravages of storms, thirst, hunger, and attacks by killer whales and large sharks. I read this book prior to reading "In The Heart of The Sea", also by Nathaniel Philbrick, and I was glad I did. The first-person narratives really bring home the tale, and Philbrick's other book helps fill in the historical background.

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