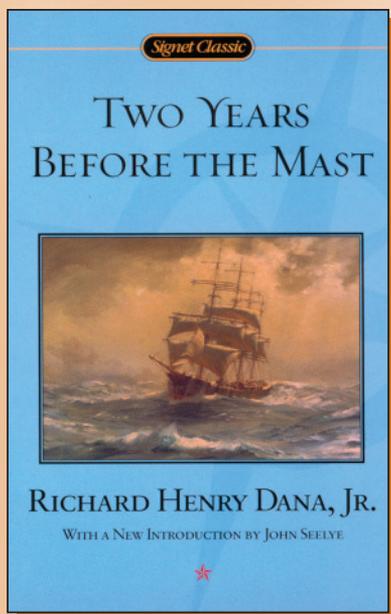




A TEACHER'S GUIDE
TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

RICHARD HENRY DANA, JR.'S
**TWO YEARS
BEFORE THE MAST**



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90 Eglinton Ave. East, Ste. 700
Toronto, Ontario
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Printed in the United States of America

INTRODUCTION

Two Years Before the Mast is a powerful 19th century personal narrative that will provide students with an authentic understanding of America's maritime heritage and the tremendous difficulties endured by sailors who outfitted the country's ships. The book was written after Dana, who suffered weakened eyesight after an attack of measles, dropped out of Harvard College in 1834 and signed on for two years as a common seaman "before the mast" on the brig *Pilgrim*. The narrative established the tradition from which Herman Melville wrote, and it inspired other autobiographies which provided real accounts of life at sea in the great age of sail. *Two Years Before the Mast* would enrich any curriculum, especially courses in American literature, and would best fit into a curriculum during the period of Romanticism. For thematic purposes, the book would serve readers well in exploring themes such as adventure and survival, status and social class, freedom and individuality, maritime life, and exploitation.

Students reading Dana's adventures will be able to analyze the concept of national expansion, and they will recognize the struggles associated with the abuse of power. Readers will appreciate the fact that sometimes the privileged must overcompensate in order to gain respectability for their intellect and work ethic, and they will sympathize with the tyrannies and injustices endured by workers due to the personal weaknesses of their bosses; in Dana's case, the abuse from captains. Teens will readily identify with the book's themes of persevering through life's challenges, working as a team, surviving difficult working conditions, and wanting to explore the world.

Two Years Before the Mast will prove challenging to sophisticated high school readers as they delve through nautical jargon. However, memorizing terms and nauticalese is in no way necessary for understanding the story; students should be encouraged to push their reading forward rather than get lost in Dana's use of specific terminology. While all students will benefit tremendously from reading this book, those living in the western United States may have an even greater interest in the narrative. This is because the story highlights Dana's experiences in California, which was part of Mexico at that time. By reading Dana's descriptions of his stops at Monterey, San Pedro, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Santa Clara, all learners will gain a stronger understanding of the region and the people living there in the early 19th century. The hardships of those working commerce during the age of sail, the plight of indigenous people, the strong sense of nationalism, and a realistic portrayal of events make the novel one that will resonate in the mind of its readers.

This teacher's guide presents an active learning approach for the study of the book. It emphasizes the importance of the genre of personal narrative, the connection of historical events to today's times, and the significance of this work to the modern reader. The first section is primarily for teacher preparation, as it provides an overview which includes a synopsis of the plot, background of the author, a description of the literary period in which Dana wrote, a brief historical overview, and a list of people. The second section contains suggestions for teaching *Two Years Before the Mast*. Questions and assignment suggestions are arranged according to the order in which they could be completed as students read the book. Activities before reading will prepare students for handling the work, engaging them with themes or ideas to be encountered. Activating schema and setting the stage are essential for student investment in the reading, and materials in this section will help instructors to enable their students to connect with prior knowledge so that there will be a vested interest in studying the book. Vocabulary words, maritime/naval terms, and a list of literary allusions are also included to assist students with their studies. Activities while reading are presented next; these materials include questions for discussion, writing prompts, quotations from the text which serve as springboards for discussion, and creative lesson ideas. Questions and assignments are written directly as they might be presented to students, rather than with instructional pedagogical terms that would be used exclusively by teachers. Honors students might be assigned all of the items for each section of reading, while instructors might scaffold and choose specific assignments for less equipped readers. Finally, activities for post-reading are also included. These activities focus on the book as a whole, including questions for discussion and writing, research topics and suggestions for projects. The guide concludes with a bibliography of resources.

DANA'S LIFE

Richard Henry Dana, Jr. was born in Massachusetts on August 1, 1815. A case of measles weakened his eyesight, and under medical advice he left his studies at Harvard. He signed on as a common sailor aboard the *Pilgrim* and made the voyage around Cape Horn to California, where he worked for several months and then shipped back to Boston aboard the *Alert*. His health restored, Dana returned to Harvard, graduated, and went on to study law. He was admitted to the bar in 1840, just prior to the publication of *Two Years Before the Mast*.

The book achieved tremendous success, and it was Dana's only noteworthy literary work. From a literary perspective, the book is important because during Dana's lifetime, most sailors could not read or write; therefore, publications about life at sea were typically penned from the captains' perspectives. *Two Years Before the Mast* was the first to present the realistic voice of the common seaman, and he noted that the book was his attempt to correct the overly Romantic portrayal of maritime life presented by James Fenimore Cooper. Dana hoped to use this literary success to promote the rights of men who chose maritime careers, and published a legal manual, *The Seaman's Friend*, which was very popular among sailors. Dana served as a delegate to the Free Soil Convention of 1848, appeared in many cases defending fugitive slaves, and served as a counsel for the United States in the trial of Jefferson Davis. He was writing a book on law when he died in 1882 from pneumonia.

THE LITERARY PERIOD

Dana wrote during the Romantic period of American literature, which lasted from 1830 to 1865. His contemporaries included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Though a nonfiction narrative, *Two Years Before the Mast* exhibits qualities of Romantic literature as it provides readers with adventurous journeys at sea, vivid descriptions of the landscape, and strong desire by the individual to heal himself by spending time in the natural world. However, like other dissenting voices of the Romantic period, the book is most striking for its address of social injustices and humankind's efforts to withstand the violence of nature—the darker side of human existence.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: CALIFORNIA HIDE TRADE

When Dana set sail on the *Pilgrim*, owned by Bryant, Sturgis & Co, he became part of the machinery that served the California hide trade. The hide trade opened in 1822 with the arrival of the Boston merchant ship *Sachem*. Guns, ironware, spices, cotton goods, boots and shoes were among the goods carried in merchant ships from New England to the California coast where they were traded for hides. International trade had also begun, as Russian, British, and French vessels also sailed the California coast.

GENERAL HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

- 1820: Missouri Compromise bans slavery in parts of the new territories.
- 1821: James Monroe begins his second term as president.
- 1823: Mexico becomes a Republic.
- 1825: John Quincy Adams is inaugurated as America's sixth president.
The Erie Canal's completion spurs canal building throughout the country.
- 1827: Edgar Allan Poe publishes *Tamerlane*, his first poetry collection.
- 1829: Andrew Jackson is inaugurated as America's seventh president.
- 1830: Tom Thumb, America's first steam-driven locomotive, begins service on Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.
- 1831: In France, Victor Hugo publishes *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.
- 1836: Battles at the Alamo and San Jacinto were fought and Texas becomes a Republic.

PEOPLE IN TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST

Amazeen: Crewmember of the *Pilgrim* ordered by Captain Thompson to assist in the floggings (89).

Ben: A poor English boy who was suggested to take Dana's place when he was to serve on the *Pilgrim*, rather than return to Boston on the *Alert*. Ben was saved from the exchange when a crewmember named Harry took Dana's spot (248).

Chips: The carpenter aboard the *Alert* who joins Dana on his watch during the return trip around Great Horn. An educated Finn who shared stories about his homeland (297).

Doña Anita de la Guerra de Noriego y Corillo: Fiancée of the *Alert's* agent and daughter of Don Antonio Noriego, who was an influential Californian (219).

Doña Augustia: Sister of Doña Anita who dances with Don Juan Bandini at the fandango (221).

George Ballmer: The young English sailor who is referred to as "the life of the crew." An active and willing seaman, he perishes after falling overboard (31).

Don Juan Bandini: An educated man who speaks good Spanish, he is described as a "decayed gentleman" from an aristocratic family who had lost the wealth of his estate (217).

Harry Bennett: The oldest man of the *Alert's* crew who broke down with a "stroke of the palsy" and was left behind at the hide house (258).

Mr. Brown: A Marblehead man who became Captain Thompson's chief mate after Dana left the ship; his skill brought a noticeable change in the captain's behavior (170).

The Cook: Described as a simple hearted, religious old African man, who reminds the crew after George's death that the end of life could come unexpectedly to anyone (32).

Richard Henry Dana, Jr.: The 19-year-old narrator of the story who steps aboard the *Pilgrim* in order to recapture his health and cure his eye ailment.

Captain Edward Faucon: The educated captain who takes control of The *Pilgrim* and is mentioned repeatedly as a "sailor, every inch of him" (148, 172).

Foster: The second mate described as an "idle, careless fellow, and not much of a sailor" (17) who frequently sleeps on watch and is demoted by Captain Thompson.

George: The boy from Boston who fights Nate and gains respect of the *Alert's* crew (215).

Jim Hall: The 2nd mate who replaces Mr. Foster, described by Dana as an "active and intelligent young sailor" (18).

Tom Harris: Dana's watchmate aboard the *Alert* who seems to have a perfect memory and extraordinary calculation skills (177). Dana notes that Harris might have achieved much more in life had he not suffered from drunkenness as a young man. Harris practices temperance and avoids alcohol, and is highly respected by the entire crew.

Mr. Hatch: The third mate on the *Alert* who was filling the bread locker with Dana when sunshine lifted their spirits during the journey around Cape Horn (300).

Hope: The Sandwich Islander for whom Dana has the most affection, who becomes ill from disease brought by traders (225).

Sam: The crewmember described as a heavy-molded fellow from the Middle States who is brutally flogged by Captain Frank Thompson.

Bill Jackson: The tall and handsome crewmember aboard the *Loriotte* described by Dana as "the best specimen of a thoroughbred English sailor" (75).

John, The Swede: Described by Dana as the "oldest and best sailor," who serves as Dana's watchmate in Santa Barbara and who is flogged for interfering with Captain Thompson's assault on Sam (45).

George P. Marsh: An educated 26-year-old sailor who comes aboard the *Alert* and who served time in the smuggling trade between Germany and the coasts of France and England (186).

Harry May: Referred to by crewmembers as Harry Bluff, a Boston boy who exchanges places with Dana on the *Pilgrim* so that Dana can return home to Boston (249).

Henry Mellus: A young man who worked as a clerk in a Boston countinghouse and serves as the *Pilgrim's* supercargo's clerk. He suffers from rheumatism, which would have made it difficult due to the wet and exposed nature of a sailor's environment (67).

Nat: The bully on board the *Alert* who fights George (215).

Nicholas: A Frenchman who joins Dana at the hide house described as being "considerably over six feet" with a large frame and enormous feet. He was tried for his life in Charleston and would never show his face again in the U.S. (129).

Professor Nuttall: Dana's professor at Harvard who travels to San Diego and is on the *Alert* during its voyage home (263).

Richardson: A man who put up a shanty in order to trade between the vessels and Indians; Dana notes that he later built an adobe that became known as the oldest home in the great city of San Francisco (205).

Robert: A conceited old Scotchman in charge of the *Catalina's* hide house in San Diego (145).

Mr. Russell: A short, red-haired, "vulgar looking fellow" who had lost an eye and is introduced as an officer when the crew heads toward San Pedro. He becomes master of the hide house in San Diego, but is later dismissed for misconduct (84, 228).

Sam: The young boy who serves as a cook at the hide house in San Diego.

Schmidt: An Austrian in charge of the *Rosa's* hide house in San Diego who speaks of morality but regularly gets drunk (146).

Stimson: A young man making his first sea voyage along with Dana on the *Pilgrim*, described as the son of a professional man (3).

Captain Job Terry: Captain of the *New England*, a whaleship, who claimed to have spent forty years in the whaling profession. Dana describes him as being six feet tall, wearing cowboy boots, and being able to tell a good "yarn" (28).

Captain Francis A. Thompson: Described as a "vigorous, energetic fellow" (82) who is severe in his discipline as exemplified by violent floggings of crewmembers.

Captain Wilson: The Scottish commander of the *Ayacucho*, the ship encountered by Dana and his crew while in the Canal of Santa Barbara (49). Described as a short, active, well-built man about fifty years of age, who was kind and encouraging.

SYNOPSIS

CHAPTERS I TO XIV

The narrative begins on August 14th, 1834, when Richard Henry Dana, Junior leaves his studies at Harvard and signs on as a common seaman aboard the *Pilgrim* "to cure ...a weakness of the eyes" (1). He seems out-of-place, with his inappropriate clothing, fair complexion and soft hands. Noting that there is no time for sentiment on a ship, Dana quickly says goodbye to his friends. He feels fortunate to have a good specimen of a sea captain (3) but the cramped living quarters, seasickness, loneliness, and constant orders all contribute to rough beginnings. After overcoming seasickness, Dana gets into sync with sea life.

The duties, regulations, and customs of an American merchantman are many, and these are often filled with "unvarying repetition," especially on a small merchant ship like the *Pilgrim*. (14). Sundays are typically pleasant, as sailors are given free time or "liberty" for activities such as reading, talking, and smoking. While it is typical for sailors to engage in religious instruction on Sundays, this does not occur on Dana's ship. Foster, the second mate, is described as an "idle careless fellow" (17), and is demoted by the captain. The *Pilgrim* experiences bad weather, as it meets with "violent gales from the southwest" (19) and then enters the region of Cape Horn.

Ninety-two days pass, and the men endure more severe weather conditions including rain, sleet, and hail. The *Pilgrim* alters its course northward toward Juan Fernandez. On November 19th crewmember George Ballmer falls overboard and dies (31). Dana feels as if it's like the "loss of a limb," and notes that a sailor's life is "at best but a mixture of a little good with much evil" (32). During his socialization with the cook, he is introduced to sailors' superstitions, and he is harassed about his college education (35).

The *Pilgrim* strikes anchor for the first time in 103 days in Juan Fernandez. Dana goes ashore with the second mate and four other hands to fill the water casks, and he enjoys fruits of the land. He notes that Chile has used the island as a penal colony for nearly two years. After providing a romantic description of the island, he criticizes the Spanish Americans for being lazy, applying the Yankee term of "loafer" (40). He goes back to the ship and is again sailing on the Pacific Ocean.

On board the brig, sailors must complete tasks such as working upon the rigging, tarring down, painting, and getting the vessel ready for port (43). Lack of fresh provisions and an extended time at sea make Dana and his shipmates irritable. Even Christmas offers no relief, as the crew argues with the steward about their meal. Dana moves from steerage to the forecabin and finally begins to feel like a real sailor. On January 14th, 150 days into the journey, the ship comes to anchor in the bay of Santa Barbara.

The crew's orders are to put in at Santa Barbara and wait for the agent who transacts business for the ship's owners. Dana is again jabbed about his education, as the second mate comments, "this does not look much like Harvard College, does it?" (52). Mr. Robinson, the *Pilgrim's* agent, boards the ship with the captain's brother and this man's wife. The crew suffers yet more bad weather, and the new passengers become seasick. After a few days, the *Pilgrim* lands at Point Pinos (61), the headland at the entrance of the bay of Monterey. Dana performs his first act of seamanship—sending down a royal yard.

Sunday arrives and there is no liberty, as the captain wants customhouse inspectors to board the ship the next day, and he requires crewmembers to stay on the ship to replace the destroyed topmast. The repair completed, Dana and four other shipmates go fishing in the direction of Point Pinos and catch a great mess of fish, returning to the *Pilgrim* at sundown. By eight o'clock, five customs officers board the brig. Following the inspection, the crew spends about ten days selling a wide range of goods; the work lasts from dawn until after dusk, as passengers are transported with their purchases. Bryant, Sturgis & Co., the owner of Dana's vessel, is responsible for nearly two-thirds of all imports from around Cape Horn. Dana sees the Californians as "idle, thriftless people" who can "make nothing for themselves" and notes that there is typically a three-hundred percent mark-up on many goods due to the heavy taxes on imports (67). He points out the irony that while California is abundant in grapes, the people pay great prices for poor wine made in Boston.

Dana again describes the attire of the Californians, noting that women are excessive in their fondness of dress. He is impressed, however, by the "fineness of the voices and the beauty of the intonations" as the people here speak elegant Spanish (70). He analyzes the class system, stating that having Spanish blood establishes a higher social status, and that an individual's rank may quickly be determined by complexion. Abundant horses, rich soil, and a good harbor all contribute to Dana's belief that Monterey is the "pleasantest and most civilized-looking place in California" (71, 74). He describes the layouts of towns, with the presidio at each center. In Monterey, Protestants have no political rights and can own no property; therefore, Americans and English who reside there become Papists. Dana describes the Sandwich Island crew of the *Loriotte*, in port with the *Pilgrim* in Monterey. He praises the *Loriotte's* Bill Jackson, who is physically handsome, fond of reading, and a good shipmate. The chapter ends with the crew receiving no break, despite Foster's attempts to persuade the captain that the men are deserving of liberty on a Sunday.

The *Pilgrim* heads back toward Santa Barbara and Dana describes the difficult conditions of trading animal hides. Coupled with the high seas, the size, weight, and stiffness of the hides require sailors to undergo "a little hardening, even to the toughest" (78). Dana compares and contrasts the harbor duties to those at sea, and states that the length of the voyage, the exposure to the elements, and the remoteness of the coast make life difficult. The voyage is made more difficult by Captain Thompson's severity; he allows no time for reading or mending clothes, and requires his men to work all day. Much to the crew's discontent, Thompson also appoints a new officer, Mr. Russel. After landing in San Pedro, Dana discovers that while it appears desolate, it furnishes more hides than any other port on the coast (86). The crew loads two thousand hides, and the *Pilgrim* is hit with yet another storm.

CHAPTERS XV TO XX

For several days Captain Thompson seems “out of humor,” horrifying the crew when he becomes angry with Sam and proceeds to flog him. John the Swede is also flogged, after “interfering” by asking the captain why he must flog a fellow shipmate. The sadistic captain informs the crew that “he likes to do it,” and makes blasphemous and racist remarks (91). The boat goes ashore and Dana is told to stay with some hides that had been brought down the previous night. After filling the *Pilgrim* with hides, the crew sets sail for San Diego. The ship drifts toward the *Ayacucho*, and Captain Wilson, the vessel's commander, boards the *Pilgrim* and helps the crew to steady the ship. Captain Thompson, Dana, and the rest of the *Pilgrim*'s crew then go aboard the *Lagoda*. Sailors on this vessel say that they have never heard of such severe floggings as those endured by Sam and John.

Dana and his watch receive liberty in San Diego. The open air is delightful; the leave brings freedom from the strict rules and confinement at sea. Dana and Stimson encounter an old presidio, and they travel to a mission where they enjoy a delicious meal of baked meats, frijoles, macaroni, and wine. They enter a village in which Indians are playing a game of ball, and then go into a house for some rest prior to their return to the beach. The break rejuvenates their spirits, enabling Dana and his mates to feel more willing to go back to their duties.

The crew spends the next three days taking out and landing its hides. San Diego offers the best locale for the work because the harbor is small and landlocked, there is no surf, and the vessels can get close to the smooth beach (109). The crew of the *Pilgrim* takes possession of a hide house previously used by the men of the *California*, and realizes that they have the daunting task of filling it with 40,000 hides before their work is finished. The next Sunday, the other half of Dana's crew goes on liberty, while he stays aboard and mends his clothes and writes letters. Foster deserts the *Pilgrim*, and he is concealed by the crew of the *Lagoda* until the brig leaves. Dana's crew is down to three seamen and a 12-year-old boy, causing the work aboard his ship to be even harder.

Dana enjoys his next liberty on Easter Sunday as the ship arrives in Santa Barbara. Here he experiences a funeral for a young girl, rides horses, watches cock fights and a horse race. When reflecting upon the hide trade, Dana states that no vessels are so sparingly manned as those of the American and British, yet none do as well (122). After sailing to and gathering hides in San Juan—which Dana describes as the most romantic spot on the coast—the crew heads to San Diego. Upon the *Pilgrim*'s arrival, the harbor is deserted. Captain Thompson convinces Mr. Mannini, the most influential of the Sandwich Islanders, to come aboard with three of his men. Dana and the young boy from his ship go ashore to take quarters in the hide house for a few months.

Life now changes for Dana, as he transforms from a sailor into a beachcomber and hide curer (129). While living in the hide house he befriends Nicholas, his enormous messmate who is an uneducated man with a criminal past. During the four months spent in San Diego, Dana also becomes well acquainted with a group of Sandwich Islanders, referred to as “Kanakas” (131). The difficult process of hide curing is explained in detail. While the conditions are hard, the advantages of free time and leisurely Sundays help motivate the men to complete their work. In addition to hide curing, the men must also go on wood gathering excursions. These provide adventure, coupled with the danger of rattlesnakes.

The routine of hide curing life is broken as the *Rosa* and the *Catalina* come ashore, and the new arrivals bring the number of men to 40-50, from “almost every nation under the sun” (144). Dana learns that the *Pilgrim* is at San Pedro, and it is the only American ship on the coast. Meanwhile, he and his mates finish curing the hides left behind by the *Pilgrim* and cut a six-eight week supply of wood so that they can enjoy leisure time. The *Pilgrim* returns with more hides, and Dana learns that the ship has a new captain, Edward Faucon (148).

CHAPTERS XXI TO XXVII

Narration pauses as a detailed history of California is given. The decaying state of the missions, the political arrangements of presidios, and the general lack of law are highlighted (154). Dana points out the double standard of justice when it comes to Indians; while criminal punishment is typically arbitrary, justice or vengeance against Indians is expected. He also provides commentary on the vices and virtues of the people of California.

A year after departing from Boston, and realizing that it will probably be another year before he returns, Dana is feeling restless as he waits at the San Diego hide house for the arrival of the next vessel. Feeling as if he has mastered hide curing, he is anxious to return to a ship so that he can further his skills in seamanship. He adopts a puppy named Bravo and trains him to become one of the leading dogs of the beach. Six months after the last new vessel had entered San Diego, the *Alert* arrives with seven thousand hides. The brig *Catalina* enters the next day. After the cargo is discharged from the *Alert*, Dana petitions to go aboard and is granted permission to join the crew and finds himself afloat once more (163).

Dana finds the work aboard the *Alert* demanding, but notes the contrast in a crew that is "satisfied with the treatment" and "contented," as opposed to the crew he worked with on the *Pilgrim* (165). The *Alert* remains in the ward ports, while the *Pilgrim* begins a journey to San Francisco that is expected to last three or four months. The *Catalina* comes in from San Diego and sets sail with the *Alert* to Santa Barbara and arrives on October 4th. Dana describes Tom Harris, his watchmate of nine months, as the "most remarkable man I had ever seen" (176).

The *Alert* next sails to San Diego, arriving on October 11th. Dana goes ashore and is saddened by the news that his dog Bravo died after he left. Three days later, Dana and his crew are on the water again, mindful of the potential of severe weather that could be caused by southeasters. They get as far as San Juan and drop anchor three miles from the shore. The crew discharges its hides, and Dana exhibits bravery as he completes a dangerous feat of saving several hides that had fallen into a precipice. The *Alert* sets sail, endures rough waters, and arrives in San Pedro where the crew participates in its usual duties for ten days. A new sailor, George P. Marsh, joins the crew, sharing a wild story of how he had survived an attack by natives after the schooner he was on wrecked during a trading voyage that originated from Manilla (186).

Dana's crew next sets sail for Santa Barbara on Sunday, November 1st, and arrives four days later. The *Ayacucho* arrives; Captain Wilson boards the *Alert* and brings rumors that America is at war with France (189). A few months pass and the crew learns that there has been an "amicable arrangement of the difficulties" between the United States and France (190). Next, the whaleship *Wilmington and Liverpool Packet* arrives, and Dana is not impressed by the men aboard this "spouter," one of whom says that he has been stricken with scurvy. Fighting severe storms and a dry gale while sailing up the coast, the *Alert* is pushed back, losing the longitude it had sailed. After a passage of twenty days, the ship finally arrives at the mouth of the bay of San Francisco. The *Alert* anchors at the little harbor called Yerba Buena, near the Mission of Delores. While there, Dana visits a Russian brig, sees the crew as a "stupid and greasy-looking set" and makes trades and purchases of Indian goods (205). Terrible weather returns; colder temperatures bring frost. Dana thinks about returning home (210). The *Alert* sets sail and returns to Monterey; Dana was here eleven months ago with the *Pilgrim*. Here, he and his mates ride horses and enjoy a meal at the Carmel mission. Some crewmembers get drunk in a grogshop. Upon return to the ship, there is a "set-to," as Nate, a bully, fights a young Boston boy named George. As a result of the scuffle, George gains respect from the crew, and there is no more quarreling on board (216).

A group of Mexicans joins the crew as the *Alert* heads to Santa Barbara. Dana is intrigued by Don Juan Bandini, a "decayed gentleman" (217). Meanwhile, great preparations are made in Santa Barbara for the marriage of the *Alert's* agent to Doña Anita de la Guerra de Noriego y Corillo, a woman from "the first family" of California (219). After the wedding, the crew enjoys the fandango. Having been in port for three weeks and fearing bad weather, the captain calls the crew back to the *Alert*.

CHAPTERS XXVIII TO XXXII

The vessel sails for San Pedro and arrives the next day, where it meets again with the *Pilgrim*, reminding Dana once more of his return to Boston. The *Pilgrim* leaves for San Francisco; the *Alert* heads to San Diego and arrives on February 6th. At this point, more than thirty thousand hides have been collected, and Dana realizes that the next trip around San Diego point will be "homeward bound" (225).

While in San Diego, Dana is deeply saddened to realize that his friends, the Sandwich Islanders, have become the victims of disease brought into the region. He notes that "the white men, with their vices, have brought in diseases before unknown to the islanders," and secures medicine for his friend, Hope (227). The *California* arrives with mail, and Dana receives a letter that was written

nearly a year before it was delivered. He also secures several newspapers and enjoys reading them. The crew sails to San Diego, where it must “smoke the ship” (239). While idle, Dana reads to his mates before they begin the process of “steering,” which presses the hides so that they can be stowed more efficiently (240). The sailors sing songs to motivate themselves. The *Pilgrim* and *California* arrive and discharge their hides. Meanwhile, Dana is told by his captain that he will have to work on the *Pilgrim*, which means he will have to spend more time at sea before he is able to go home, or find someone else to take his place. Harry May fills the spot on the *Pilgrim*, and Dana escapes the fate of losing his chance to begin a return voyage to Boston.

The *Alert* sets sail on its homeward voyage, heading toward Cape Horn. It has a smaller crew, but has a passenger named Professor Nuttall, who Dana knew from his days at Harvard. Struck by the pain of a horrible toothache, Dana suffers en route to the Cape while the crew battles raging storms and icebergs. Just when the crew has had enough, a beam of sunshine appears and serves as an omen for good fortune (300). Staten Land is spotted, a sign that the *Alert* has passed the Cape and is nearly into the Atlantic Ocean.

CHAPTERS XXXIII TO XXXVI AND “TWENTY-FOUR YEARS AFTER”

The good weather and the sun finally reappear, and the men spend a Sunday mending clothes and preparing the ship, realizing that they are truly “homeward bound” (309). The ship endures another tropical storm, and several crewmembers suffer from scurvy (322). Their health is restored, thanks to the crew of the *Solon*, who provides them with onions and potatoes (325). One hundred thirty-five days after leaving San Diego, the *Alert* finally drops its anchor. Surprisingly, Dana says that he is not overjoyed with his return home, but actually feels a sense of apathy. He and the others leave the ship, and Dana’s journey comes to an end.

Upon his return to the California coast “twenty-four years after,” he realizes that everything has changed. The hide industry has halted, while the quest for gold has replaced it. Houses of worship have become plentiful, offering services for many denominations of Christians. Captain Wilson appears, and Dana enjoys reminiscing with him. His overall reaction to his journey was that “The past was real. The present, all about me, was unreal, unnatural, repellent” (350). The chapter closes as Dana provides updates on the men and ships he knew during his days at sea.

PREPARING TO READ

Activity 1: Prior to reading the novel, it is important to activate schema and to provide students with connections to the themes presented by an author. Ask students to write brief responses to each of the following statements. Discuss student responses in class, so that readers will be able to appreciate the universal messages presented in *Two Years Before the Mast*.

1. Explain the paradox that physical labor can be exhilarating and exhausting.
2. Education can make a difference in the way a person views the world.
3. Being outdoors can be rejuvenating to the body and spirit.
4. Nature will always be more powerful than humankind.
5. The history of the American people’s strong work ethic makes the United States a superior nation.

Activity 2: Much like a drama coach must instruct students of the directions on a stage, so must sailors learn the directions and parts of a ship. Using the list of nautical terms, prepare students for reading by familiarizing them with “ship talk.” Divide the class into separate “crews,” and assign roles. Practice addressing each other with the appropriate salutations. If time permits, put students into small cooperative groups, and have them create 2-5 minute skits utilizing the nautical vocabulary.

Activity 3: Review the definition of *jargon*: the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of a special activity or group. Have students brainstorm professions or groups that use jargon—such as doctors, lawyers, athletes, musicians, and create a list of that profession’s jargon.

MARITIME VOCABULARY

Readers of *Two Years Before the Mast* will find it filled with nautical terms that may prove intimidating. Students should be encouraged to continue reading, and not to allow lack of sailing knowledge to deter their attempts to appreciate the novel. Helpful ship diagrams are included for reference in the book's appendix. Basic terms for easy reference are included here.

Before the mast: the area of a ship before the foremast, the forecastle [folk' sul]. Most often used to describe men whose living quarters are located here, officers being housed behind the mast and enlisted men before the mast. In modern times on mechanized ships, this arrangement is reversed, with the forward living space known as "officers' country."

Aft: In rear to, towards the stern.

All hands: The whole crew.

Aloft: Above the deck, in the rigging.

Aye: Yes.

Bale: *To bale a boat* is to throw water out of it.

Ballast: Heavy substances, such as rocks or sand, loaded low in a vessel to improve stability.

Binnacle: A case that supports and protects a ship's compass, located near the helm.

Bow: The whole forward end of a vessel.

Brig: A square-rigged vessel, with two masts. A *hermaphrodite brig* has a brig's foremast and a schooner's mainmast.

Fid: A block of wood or iron, placed through the hole in the heel of a mast, and resting on the trestle-trees of the mast below. This supports the mast. Also, a wooden pin, tapered, used in splicing large ropes, in opening eyes.

Fore: In front of, towards the bow, as in "before the mast."

Forecastle: The forward part of the vessel, under the deck, where the sailors live, in merchant vessels.

Furl: To roll or gather up a sail.

Heaver: A short wooden bar, tapering at each end.

Larboard: On the left, or port side of a ship.

Lee side: The side sheltered from the wind.

Magellan Clouds: These cosmic clouds are now understood to be dwarf irregular galaxies, satellites of our larger spiral Milky Way Galaxy.

Marlingspike: An iron pin, sharpened at one end, and having a hole in the other for a lanyard. Used both as a fid and a heaver.

Mast: A vertical spar for supporting sails and rigging.

Port: The left-hand side of a vessel, as one is facing forward.

Quarterdeck: The after part of the upper deck of a ship usually reserved for officers.

Schooner: A small vessel with two masts and no topsails.

Ship: A vessel with three masts, with topsails and yards to each. To come aboard a vessel. To fix anything in its place.

Spar: A support for sails or rigging: a yard, boom, or gaff.

Starboard: The right-hand side of a vessel, as one is facing forward.

Steeve: The angle formed by the bowsprit and the horizon or the keel.

Stern: The backward end of a vessel.

Stow: To put something away in its proper place.

Southern Cross: A constellation in the shape of a cross used to determine the direction of the South.

Pole when traveling in the southern hemisphere.

Windlass: Rotating drum device used for hauling line or chain, such as to raise and lower an anchor.

Yard: A horizontal spar that holds the sails.

A GLOSSARY OF MARITIME PERSONNEL

Boatswain: A warrant officer in the navy, who has charge of the rigging, and calls the crew to duty. Responsible for maintaining the ship (pronounced “bosun”).

Captain: The chief officer and commander. He would be addressed, “Sir.”

Chief or First Mate: The second in command. The captain tells him what is to be done, and he must make it happen. Typically, the first mate is also the disciplinarian. Addressed as “Mr.”

Cook: The crewmember who is responsible for preparing meals. Dana says that his title is “Doctor,” and those in his favor get to dry their wet stockings or mittens or light their pipes at the galley.

Crew: The collective term referring to a group of people working together on a ship.

Second Mate: The next officer in command after the Chief or First Mate, usually in charge of navigation. Dana and his crew refer to the second mate aboard the *Pilgrim* as the “sailor’s waiter.” Addressed as “Mr.”

Steward: The person who manages the storage of goods and provisioning of food. On the *Pilgrim* Dana says that the steward is “the captain’s servant.” He is not required to keep watch.

Watch: Crewmembers who maintain a lookout, even through the night.

VOCABULARY STUDY

Vocabulary words are best learned when not taught in isolation. Review words with students prior to reading, pronouncing them together so that students know how the words sound when spoken aloud. In an effort to maximize exposure to vocabulary, create a word wall in the classroom. Using regular typing or construction paper, place each word and its definition on a separate sheet of paper. Consider using categories such as “nautical terms,” “geography,” “ship names,” “allusions,” “SAT Study.” If categorizing, use a different color paper for each set of words. For example, blue paper might be used for the words that will be stacked in the “nautical” category. Word walls can be teacher created, or they can be done by students. They may be placed on bulletin boards or simply placed on available wall or chalkboard space.

The following additional activities offer creative approaches to making meaning with words. For optimum learning, students should be given choices when directing their learning. Students may be asked to include any number of words for each of the following assignments:

1. Create a want ad that might appear in the local classified section of a newspaper.
2. Create an advertisement for a magazine such as *Seventeen* or *Sports Illustrated* that uses vocabulary in its text.
3. Using a sheet of construction or typing paper, create a collage of newspaper or magazine images that represent the meaning of the word. Write the word on the back side of the paper.
4. Using crayons, colored pencils, or markers, draw a representation of the word’s definition.
5. Look up synonyms for the word. Write or type the synonyms, and cut them out in strips. Place the vocabulary word in the center, and attach the synonyms around it.
6. Create a comic strip of four panels, using vocabulary words in the dialogue of the strip’s characters.
7. Using a regular sheet of paper, mark off four boxes. In the center of the paper, write the word. In the top left box, write a definition for the word. In the right box, write a situation in which the word might be used. In the bottom left box, write a synonym for the word. In the bottom right box, write an example of how the word might personally connect with your life.
8. With a few classmates, reenact a scene from the book, using vocabulary words from the assigned reading.

VOCABULARY LISTS

Page numbers in parentheses are used for easy reference to the following words. Definitions provided in this section originate from *Merriam-Webster's* online edition, located at: <http://www.m-w.com>. Students may be asked to translate some of the Latin phrases used in the text; this may be accomplished by using the online translator available at: <http://cdsjcl.f2g.net/translate.html>.

CHAPTERS 1-4:

Emetic: *n.*, an agent that causes vomiting (6)

Experimentum Crucis: critical experiment

Fastidious: *adj.*, excessively scrupulous, meticulous, or sensitive, especially in matters of taste or propriety (7)

Terra Firma: *n.*, solid ground; dry land (7)

Ad infinitum: to infinity, having no end (13)

Binnacle: *n.*, a support or housing for a ship's compass (16)

Harangue: *n.*, a speech or piece of writing characterized by strong feeling or expression; a tirade (18)

Catamaran: *n.*, a raft of logs or floats lashed together and propelled by paddles or sails (19)

Pampero: *n.*, a violent wind that blows across the Pampas (19)

CHAPTERS 5-8

Condescension: *n.*, patronizing attitude or behavior (29)

Sublime: *adj.*, lofty, grand, or exalted in thought, expression, or manner (32)

Ludicrous: *adj.*, amusing or laughable through obvious absurdity, incongruity, exaggeration, or eccentricity, (32)

Palisade: *n.*, a fence of stakes, especially for defense (36)

Cask: *n.*, a barrel-shaped vessel of staves, headings, and hoops usually for liquids (37)

Redress: *v.*, to set right (46)

CHAPTERS 9-12

Presidio: *n.*, a garrisoned place, especially a military post or fortified settlement in areas currently or originally under Spanish control (50)

Tallow: *n.*, the white nearly tasteless solid, rendered fat of cattle and sheep used chiefly in soap, candles, and lubricants (52)

CHAPTERS 13-16

Papist: *adj.*, Latin for pope, used in a disparaging way in reference to the pope or Catholicism (72)

Martyrdom: *n.*, the suffering of death on account of adherence to a cause and especially to one's religious faith (72)

Expedient: *adj.*, suitable for achieving a particular end in a given circumstance; advantageous for practical rather than moral reasons (78)

Vexations: *n.*, irritations (80)

Impudent: *adj.*, marked by contemptuous or cocky boldness or disregard of others (89)

Bivouac: *n.*, a usually temporary encampment under little or no shelter (94)

CHAPTERS 17-20:

Degradation: *n.*, decline to a low, destitute, or demoralized state (115)

CHAPTERS 21-25

Venerable: *adj.*, made sacred, calling forth respect (153)

Arbitrary: *adj.*, depending on individual discretion (as of a judge) and not fixed by law (154)

Caprice: *n.*, a sudden unexpected action, impulsive decision, or change of mind (154)

Caucus(ing): *n.*, a closed meeting of a group of persons belonging to the same political party or faction, usually to select candidates or to decide on policy; also: a group of people united to promote an agreed-upon cause (154)

Libel(ing): *v.*, to make a written or oral defamatory statement or representation that conveys an unjustly unfavorable impression (154)

Hidalgo: *n.*, a member of the lower nobility of Spain (155)

Intemperance: *n.*, lack of moderation, especially habitual or excessive drinking of intoxicants (157)

Abstemious: *adj.*, marked by restraint, especially in the consumption of food or alcohol (157)

Conjecture(s): *n.*, a conclusion deduced by surmise or guesswork (160)

Requisite(s): *n.*, essential, necessary (183)

Precipice: *n.*, a very steep or overhanging place (183)

Acquisition: *n.*, something that has recently been acquired (185)

Amenability: *n.*, responsiveness to suggestion and likely to cooperate (186)

CHAPTERS 25-28

Amicable: *adj.*, characterized by friendly goodwill (190)

Premonition(s): *n.*, a strong feeling without a rational basis that a particular thing is going to happen (198)

Abate(d): *v.*, to lessen or make something lessen gradually; to suppress or end an act (203)

Cessation: *n.*, a temporary or final ceasing (as of action); to stop (206)

Dissipate(d): *v.*, to spend or use something wastefully (217)

Fandango: *n.*, a lively Spanish or Spanish-American dance in triple time that is usually performed by a man and a woman to the accompaniment of guitar and castanets (220)

Sic vos non vobis: from Latin, "thus we labor but not for ourselves" (224)

Latent: *adj.*, a power or quality that has not yet come forth but may emerge and develop (234)

Forsan et haec olim: from Latin, "Perhaps someday we will look back upon these things with joy" (236)

CHAPTERS 29-32

Intimation: *n.*, a subtle hint or sign of something; a formal announcement (243)

Diminution(s): *n.*, the act, process, or an instance of diminishing (259)

Botany: *n.*, a branch of biology dealing with plant life (263)

Ornithology: *n.*, a branch of zoology dealing with birds (263)

Poultice: *n.*, a soft usually heated and sometimes medicated mass spread on cloth and applied to sores or other lesions (284)

CHAPTERS 33-36

Traverse(d): *v.*, to travel or move across (307)

Encroachment: *n.*, an advance beyond the usual or proper limits (310)

Anomalous: *adj.*, inconsistent with or deviating from what is usual, normal, or expected (335)

Apathy: *n.*, lack of feeling or emotion (335)

A GUIDE TO LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Neptune: Roman god of the sea (1, 16).

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: Poem written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1798) alluded to by Dana when referring to the albatross. The poem presents the dark voice of Romanticism. The albatross, once seen as a symbol of good luck by sailors, is used today to symbolize a hindrance or handicap (29).

Cowper's Letters: Correspondences written by William Cowper, a British lawyer who became a Christian evangelist. In addition to his letters, he wrote poetry and hymns (39).

Robinson Crusoe: An adventure novel, featuring a shipwreck, published by Daniel Defoe in 1719. The book presents themes of survival and morality, both of which would have appealed to sailors of the 19th century (39).

Babel: City in Shinar where the building of a tower is held in Genesis to have been halted by the confusion of tongues (74).

Hercules: Mythical Greek hero renowned for his great strength and especially for performing twelve labors imposed on him by Hera (75).

The Pirate: Novel published in 1821 by Sir Walter Scott, the author popularly recognized for his poem *The Lady in the Lake* and his novel *Ivanhoe* (95).

Harpies: Foul, malign creatures in Greek mythology that are half woman and half bird of prey (153).

Job: Righteous man in the Bible who suffers but perseveres in his faith (297).

Paul Clifford: Novel published by Edward Bulwer Lytton that served as a treatise on social frauds. The book begins with the famous first line, "It was a dark and stormy night," used often by Snoopy in the Peanuts comic strip. Dana reads it in Chapter 23; the book is appropriate due to the great storms faced by seamen (166).

Shipwreck: Epic poem written by Scottish poet William Falconer (1762), containing nearly three thousand lines, which describes disaster at sea. Dana tells the reader that this was the only poem ever read by his brilliant mate Tom Harris (177).

Land of Nod: Reference to the region east of Eden where Cain went after he had killed Abel; found in Genesis 4:16. Used as a pun for "falling asleep" (199).

Gil Blas: Early 18th century adventure story written by Alain-Rene LeSage (216).

Erkönig: Poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe that depicts the death of a child assailed by a supernatural being (297).

DURING READING

The following questions may be addressed in discussion, whole-class or small group, or in journal format. If students respond individually, they should share thoughts so that they may be aware of the variety of possible responses.

CHAPTERS 1-4

1. In the first chapter Dana provides a rationale for his journey. Review his reasoning for joining the crew of the *Pilgrim*. Does it make sense? Why or why not? Find at least one source (online or print) to back up your opinion.
2. The term *juxtaposition* is used when a writer places two very different things side-by-side to show contrast. How does Dana juxtapose his Harvard attire with what would be worn by a crewmember on a ship? Write a paragraph in which you analyze the purpose of such juxtaposition.
3. In the first chapter, Dana makes an *allusion* when he states: "I thought myself to be looking as salt as Neptune himself" (1). Research Neptune and create a visual representation of him. You may sketch, create a collage, or use a series of words that would be attributed to him. Avoid the use of a clip art image. Next, write a paragraph in which you analyze the allusion and its appropriateness to Dana's situation.
4. In Chapter 2 Dana describes his first difficulties associated with becoming a man of the sea. How do his descriptions of a sailor's life contrast with the Romantic notions of the sea? How do his early descriptions of the hardships differ from those associated with a career based on intellect, rather than the physical? Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the hardships of a sailor versus those of an attorney, the career Dana ultimately chose.
5. When describing various ships, Dana uses the nautical reference of "she" when referring to each one. In a journal entry, discuss why it makes sense that ships are *personified*. In addition, explain an object in your life that you or someone you know refers to with personification.
6. In chapter 3 Dana goes into great detail about the chain of command on a ship and the various parts of a ship. Write a brief dramatic scene in which you place shipmates carrying out their duties in appropriate places on a vessel. With a few of your classmates, act out the script for the class.
7. You are the author of a nautical dictionary for novice sailors. Draw a diagram of a ship in which you identify the most important sections, along with the terms used to describe them.
8. Imagine that you are Dana in the very early stage of his journey. Write a diary entry in which you express the conflicts encountered so far.
9. On page 14 Dana comments that "our life was nothing but the unvarying repetition of these duties." How could repetition make a job easy or difficult? Interview an adult about a time when he or she had a job that required repetition, and record the person's responses. Was the job rewarding? What made it difficult? Be prepared to share your interview with the class.
10. In Chapter 4, Dana describes the weather in great detail. Why would weather be absolutely crucial in a sailor's life? Make a list of other careers that rely heavily on weather conditions.

CHAPTERS 5-8

1. Write a weather report that shows your understanding of how Dana further develops the conflict of humankind versus nature in Chapter 5.
2. When authors use parallel structure, they repeat key grammatical structures. Review the paragraph on page 31 that begins "Death is at all times solemn." How does Dana employ parallel structure in this passage, and what effect does it have in conveying his message? For extension, write a eulogy in honor of someone who is still living, using parallel structure for effect.

3. In reference to the loss of a sailor, Dana remarks that it is “like losing a limb.” In a brief paragraph, explain why this analogy is fitting for the situation.
4. In reflecting upon his journey thus far, Dana remarks: “Yet a sailor’s life is at best but a mixture of a little good with much evil, and a pleasure with much pain. The beautiful is linked with the revolting, the sublime with the commonplace, and the solemn with the ludicrous” (32). From what you know of Dana’s journey so far, how is this true? Consider this philosophy and evaluate whether or not it is true exclusively for sailors, or whether it might apply to other professions as well. Write a paragraph, including specific examples to support your thinking.
5. In Chapter 6 the cook tells Dana that few men die without having warning of it and proceeds to tell stories and discuss a variety of superstitions. In your opinion why might it be fitting for some sailors to be superstitious? How superstitious do you think people are today? List a few examples of superstitions that still exist, explaining why some people might believe in them. Research the history of at least one superstition, and be prepared to present its origins to the class in a 1-2 minute oral presentation.
6. At the end of Chapter 6, the cook says, “what do you tink o’ dat?” In a paragraph define dialect and explain what the cook’s language might reveal about his social status.
7. Dana is told, “You tink, ‘cause you been to college, you know better dan anybody” (35). Write a paragraph explaining the minor conflict Dana experiences as established in this quote.
8. After 103 days Dana’s ship struck anchor at the Island of Juan Fernandez for the first time since leaving Boston. Create an illustration of the island as depicted in Dana’s impressions detailed in Chapter 7.
9. Upon his journey into the island, Dana makes an allusion to *Robinson Crusoe*. In a short answer response, examine the relevance of this allusion, along with the Romantic description provided of it in Chapter 7.
10. After entering the island, Dana tells readers that it was governed by Chile and that it had been used as a penal colony for nearly two years. Research penal colonies and write a persuasive paragraph in which you convince the reader that penal colonies are or are not a good solution to dealing with criminals.
11. In Chapter 8 Dana provides more narrative about the difficulties of a sailor’s life. In this chapter, he begins to feel like a real sailor. List some of the hardships mentioned in this chapter and analyze why Dana begins to feel more worth as a sailor.

CHAPTERS 9-12

1. In the opening of Chapter 9, Dana explains the two provinces of California. Based on Dana’s descriptions, which province would have been more prestigious or important, and why?
2. Based on Dana’s descriptions of Santa Barbara (49-50), create a real estate ad that might have been placed in the 1800s for property in this area.
3. Review the passage on p. 52 in which Dana’s education is again mentioned. Explain the pun being used by a crewmember, and consider why Dana makes yet another mention of his Harvard background.
4. Describe the passengers who come aboard the *Pilgrim* in Chapter 10. Create a T-Chart and compare and contrast their appearance and behavior with members of the crew.
5. Explain the geographical significance of Point Conception as detailed on pages 61-62. You may write your answer in paragraph form or create a clear visual illustration of the area.
6. On page 62 Dana notes that in sailor language, “Christian” is synonymous with “civilized.” In a short answer response, explain how these two words were used in a similar fashion by colonists first encountering Native Americans in Boston. Are these situations comparable? Why or why not?

7. In the closing lines of Chapter 11, Dana tells readers that he completes his first official act of seamanship. Describe this rite of passage. Think of another literary character you've studied who went through a coming of age or a similar rite of passage. Compare the two experiences.
8. Describe the minor conflict that irritates crewmembers at the opening of Chapter 12. Make a connection between what the sailors experience and your own life.
9. When Dana and his crew are released to go fishing, Foster hooks a beautiful pearl-oyster shell. Research the types of shells indigenous to this area, and create a pamphlet in which you provide information on at least a few of the shells.
10. Describe the wardrobe of the customs officers and the "dress of a Californian" (p.66). How does clothing symbolize status? Can a person's wardrobe serve a similar function in today's society? Explain your ideas in a well-written paragraph.

CHAPTERS 13-16

1. In Chapter 13 Dana again makes specific mention of the Californians' clothing and how it differentiates various social classes and gender. Consider the following passage: "The fondness of dress among the women is excessive, and it is sometimes their ruin" (69). Review Dana's descriptions and analyze the social classes associated with wardrobe. Write a journal entry in which you address the idea that women tend to be more excessive in their attention to wardrobe. Was Dana making a correct assumption, or was he being gender biased?
2. Consider the following quotation: "Their complexions are various, depending—as well as their dress and manner—upon the amount of Spanish blood they can claim, which also settles their social rank" (69). Explain the connection Dana is making between race/ethnicity to status in this passage from the text, and analyze its relevance in today's world. How might it be related to Jean DeCrevecour's *Letters from an American Farmer*, in which he enumerates the identity of an individual in America's melting pot?
3. Dana provides commentary on the language spoken by the people he encounters (70). He then goes on to discuss how he makes strides in mastering the language and how it benefits him. Write a paragraph in which you make a connection between speaking a language and making an impression in today's world.
4. Describe the two means of currency used by the people of Monterey (70). If you could use an alternative currency in today's economy, what would it be, and why?
5. Describe the importance of the presidio in Monterey. Create a diagram of a typical town, its houses, and the surroundings, based on the descriptions provided on pages 71-72.
6. In regard to the method he used for learning Spanish, Dana commented: "This was a good exercise for me, and no doubt taught me more than I should have learned by months of study and reading" (71). What implication is Dana making about education here? To what extent do you agree with his theory?
7. Explain the importance of Catholicism in Monterey during this time. How does religion maintain an influence on cultures of the modern world? List some examples of particular faiths, and how people living in societies must conform to existing religious beliefs. Find a magazine, newspaper or online article that provides a comparison for discussion about the influence of religion.
8. Describe the availability of horses in Monterey. How might this influence life in this part of California? (73). For enrichment, research the history of the horse. What cultures or civilizations have relied heavily on this animal?
9. Analyze the character of the people of Monterey, based on the description of their recreational activities (74).
10. Bill Jackson is described as having an arm like Hercules. Why is this allusion appropriate, given the details provided about Bill? Find another mythological allusion and make a comparison to another crewmember mentioned in this section.

11. What evidence of racist behavior exists in this section? Is the language used shocking, or is it expected? How does this clash with the ideals of the Romantic writers? How would authors such as Emerson and Thoreau feel about the floggings?
12. Explain how indirect characterization enables the reader to appreciate the evilness of Captain Frank Thompson.
13. In Chapter 15 Dana comments that “The more you drive a man, the less he will do” (88). To what extent do you agree with this statement? Write a journal in which you make a connection between the idea presented in this quote and your own life.
14. Throughout the book Dana repeatedly writes that he wants to be seen by his shipmates as one of them. How does his use of language sometimes betray him? Find examples of phrases or words he uses in this section that are indicative of his intellect and advanced education.

CHAPTERS 17-20

1. In this section of the book, Dana provides great detail about his work. Review the passages that provide strong description of the process of preparing the hides. Imagine that you are a writer in the 1830s, and prepare a general instruction manual for curing hides.
2. Based on Dana's reflections about the advantages and disadvantages of curing hides, make a list of the pros and cons. Next, create a job advertisement for hide curers, providing persuasive reasons for entering the profession.
3. “There was only one point in which they had the advantage over us, and that was in lightening their labors in the boats by their songs. The Americans are a time- and money-saving people, but have not yet, as a nation, learned that music may be ‘turned to account’” (122). In a journal entry, respond to Dana's comment. What is he saying about the power of music? Do you agree with his philosophy? Is his account of America representative of today's culture?
4. “No vessels in the world go so sparingly manned as American and English; and none do so well” (123). Examine this passage in Chapter 18. Is Dana's comment ethnocentric, or is it validated? Does our country still celebrate such pride in workmanship? Give examples to support your answer.
5. In a few sentences explain how the whales described in Chapter 18 provide an example of the conflict between humankind and nature.
6. Dana again mentions his education. What is he reiterating here?
7. While the Sandwich Islanders, or Kanakas, possessed no books and spoke little English, Dana remembers them fondly in Chapter 19. Select a quote from the chapter that exemplifies the honorable qualities of these people, and write a journal in which you make a connection between them and today's world.
8. What are Dana's first impressions of Faucon? On what merits does he base his opinion? How does he use direct and indirect characterization to develop his portrayal?

CHAPTERS 21-24

1. In Chapter 21 Dana describes the decaying state of the missions, blaming their condition on the “harpies” of civil power. Research the meaning of harpies, and explain the connotation Dana is using. How might the term be applied to people living in today's society? Prepare a short answer to discuss with the class.
2. When elaborating upon the government in California, Dana states that there is no common law. However, Indians guilty of crimes are often brought to justice. Review pages 154-155. What social commentary is being made here? Are there sectors of today's American population that might be targeted by law officials? If so, give specific examples. Does this make contemporary law enforcers seem arbitrary in their upholding of the law? Why or why not? Write a journal response in which you address these issues.

3. Review the following quotation: "The Americans...are indeed more industrious and effective than the Mexicans; yet their children are brought up by Mexicans in most respects, and if the 'California fever' (laziness) spares the first generation, it is likely to attack the second" (157). How does Dana's commentary about "California fever" reflect the Puritan belief in having a strong work ethic? Do you agree with the general theory he is promoting here? Why or why not?
4. Compare and contrast Dana's experiences aboard the *Pilgrim* and the *Alert*. Consider the size and structure of the two ships, the work required of the crew, the attitudes of those onboard each ship, and the captains. Which ship does he clearly prefer and why?
5. What commentary about morality is made through the description of working on Sundays (175) and through his observations on Tom Harris's life? (179-180). Write a journal entry in which you analyze Dana's philosophy.
6. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in his journal: "We are shut up in schools and college recitation rooms for ten or fifteen years, and come out at last with a bellyful of words and do not know a thing." Based on Dana's comments about Harris (178), in what ways would Dana agree with Emerson? Why or why not?
7. Recount the story of George P. Marsh. How does a tale like this add to the adventure of Dana's narrative?

CHAPTERS 25-28

1. Dana is told by one of the men aboard the whaler that he is suffering from scurvy. Research this ailment to learn more about its causes and effects. Can it still be a medical issue? Why or why not? For enrichment, create a pamphlet in which you provide an overview of this condition.
2. Review the definition of local color. How does Dana employ this to enable the reader to appreciate his experience at the fandango? Compare and contrast this celebration to wedding receptions held in your hometown.
3. Review Dana's comments about the "curse of the Christians" on page 225. What is he implying here? Is there truth in what he said? Provide specific support for your answer.

CHAPTERS 29-32

1. In chapter 29 Dana says he was known as a "hide curer." Can a job or profession become part of a person's identity? Make a list of professions in which a person would be best known for what he or she does for a living.
2. Review the passages about the sailors' songs, or shanties, on pages 241-242. What is the purpose of these songs? How might they compare to spirituals such as "Go Down Moses" or "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" sung by the African-American slaves?
3. What are Dana's views regarding alcohol? How do these views coincide with your views? Modern society's views? Review pages 282-283 when considering your answer.
4. Review the depictions of icebergs on page 293. What are the Romantic qualities of the description? For enrichment, choose another weather phenomenon and describe it as a Romantic writer.
5. "It seemed as though the genius of the place had been roused at finding that we had nearly slipped through his fingers, and had come down upon us with tenfold fury." Explain the literary device employed in this quotation from page 294, and analyze why expressing the idea in this fashion is so powerful.

CHAPTERS 33-36

1. In the last section of the narrative, Dana describes the ship's attack of scurvy. Review his thoughts on the reason for the outbreak. Are they correct? What was responsible for the crew's recovery?
2. What evidence in this section reinforces the notion that men at sea are unaware of what is going on in the world around them? How might this add to the difficulties of a sailor's life?

3. Explain the *paradox* of Dana's reaction to the return to Boston. Find a quote in which he reflects on his feelings about returning home.

AFTER READING

DEALING WITH NOVEL AS A WHOLE

Upon completion of the novel, some instructors might choose to assess learning through a traditional objective or essay exam. Instructors may also choose to provide opportunities for alternative assessment, such as any of the options listed here. Specific items might be assigned to students, or students could be given the option to pick one or several of the assignments. These options could also be included in addition to a traditional test, based on the instructional time allotted for the unit or on the skill levels of students.

TOPICS TO DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE NOVEL

1. Explain how the setting plays an integral part in Dana's story.
2. Identify the major and minor conflicts described in the narrative, and explain how they are resolved. Consider the following forms of conflict: person versus self, person versus person, person versus society, and person versus nature.
3. Identify three symbols used in the novel and explain their significance.
4. While writing during the Romantic period, Dana presents the harsh realities of the sea. Explain how *Two Years Before the Mast* paradoxically presents a narrative that includes positive and dissenting Romantic views.
5. This story is told from Dana's perspective. How important is point of view in this narrative? How might the story have been different had it been told by someone else?
6. What are some of the statements Dana makes about religion in his narrative? To what extent are they relevant? Find passages in the text to support your view, including the concluding chapter in the appendix. Are his beliefs held by others in today's world?
7. How might the journey at sea have been different if women were employed as sailors?
8. How does Dana examine social class in the book? Give specific examples that demonstrate the different positions and the circumstances behind them.
9. Examine the significance of clothing and wardrobes in the book. Consider the attention to detail regarding women's attire, the clothing of various guests on board the vessels, the sailors, and other groups. How does Dana use clothing to define his characters and their station in life?
10. Cite at least three themes in *Two Years Before the Mast* and explain how each is presented.
11. Read a chapter or more of *Moby Dick*. How does Melville's narration compare to Dana's? How does each represent a dissenting voice of Romanticism?
12. Examine the changes in mood throughout *Two Years Before the Mast*. Describe the mood or tone at various stages in the story.
13. Upon his return to California, Dana writes: "...when I saw all these things, and reflected on what I once was and saw here, and what now surrounded me, I could scarcely keep my hold on reality at all, or the genuineness of anything, and seemed to myself like one who had moved in 'worlds not realized'" (340). Explain the meaning of this passage, and how it could be universally appreciated.
14. Based on Dana's narrative, examine the concept of education. What are the different ways in which a person may learn new things? Compare the education received at school, as compared to one in the world. Does Dana value education? How does he make the reader aware of his scholarship?

ACTIVITIES TO EXTEND LEARNING

At the conclusion of class study of *Two Years Before the Mast*, students may select from these suggested activities to enhance their grasp of the work. They may work individually or as part of a small group. Choices should be made depending upon the students' individual strengths and inclinations.

1. Suppose you are an owner of a fleet of ships, and you must hire at least three individuals to work on your vessels. Create resumes for Dana and two other individuals mentioned in *Two Years Before the Mast*, and write a summary of why you would choose to hire these three individuals. Review the text in order to incorporate key details of their lives and experiences.
2. Create a map in which you chart the course of the *Pilgrim*. Include landmarks, cities, missions, and ports.
3. Create a scrapbook for *Two Years Before the Mast*. Include a page for each of the following topics: Plot, people, setting, allusions, conflicts, themes, nautical terms, and geography.
4. Imagine that you were an unnamed crewmember on Dana's ship. Write a series of personal letters to a loved one, describing your adventures and hardships.
5. On page 29 Dana makes an allusion to Coleridge's poem about an albatross. Read *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and explain how it might symbolically connect with Dana's story of life at sea.
6. In his commentary about Bill Jackson, the handsome crewmember of the *Loriotte*, Dana describes his tattoos. When people get tattoos, they choose images that are symbolic of their lives. Imagine that you are a tattoo artist, and you've been given the job of designing tattoos for five people in *Two Years Before the Mast*. Create a tattoo for each individual and write a paragraph of explanation for each of the designs you have created.
7. After witnessing the floggings of his crewmates, Dana comments: "I vowed that, if God should ever give me the means, I would do something to redress the grievances and relieve the sufferings of that class of beings with whom my lot had so long been cast" (93). Research Dana's publications after *Two Years Before the Mast* and determine whether or not he was successful. For further enrichment, research the poor working conditions of a modern workplace, such as fast food or assembly lines, and then write a persuasive letter to the company's owners or management convincing them to improve conditions for their workers.
8. Consider the following two quotations and then find two quotations from other Romantic works that would parallel the ideas set forth by Dana in these passages:
 - a. "Everything was in accordance with my state of feeling, and I experienced a glow of pleasure at finding that what of poetry and romance I ever had in me had not been entirely deadened by the laborious life..." (125)
 - b. "These wooding excursions always had a mixture of something rather pleasant in them. Roaming about in the woods with hatchet in hand, like a backwoodsman, followed by a troop of dogs, starting up birds, snakes, hares, and foxes, and examining the various kinds of trees, flowers, and birds' nests was, at least, a change from the monotonous drag and pull on shipboard" (140).
9. Throughout the book, Dana mentions the powers of music. In various scenes Dana demonstrates how it motivates people to work, it brings people together, and it provides entertainment. Find passages from the text that highlight the presence of music. Next, research the various effects of music, and write a paper in which you enumerate its benefits.
10. Research the use of shanties by sailors. Find the lyrics and sheet music, and analyze how the songs reflect sailors' lives. Next, write a modern song that depicts the life of the working person. Be prepared to perform the shanty, along with your original song.
11. Suppose that a new film version of the book is going to be created. Create a score for the film by choosing at least ten songs to include in the motion picture. Make a CD, and create liner notes in which you give each song's title, the name of the musical performer, and a brief explanation of why the song would be appropriate.

12. Create a musical composition that would capture the mood of scenes in *Two Years Before the Mast*.
13. Research the history of California's missions. Create a travel guide for those wanting to visit these historical sites. Include such things as brief histories, city information, climate, and modern attractions of the area. For review of Dana's descriptions of the missions, re-read Chapter 21.
14. Suppose that Benjamin Franklin could travel in a time machine and join Dana in his adventures in California. How might he apply the thirteen virtues found in his *Autobiography* to the people he meets, such as sailors, captains, Sandwich Islanders, Indians, and Mexicans? What virtues might he add to his list, based on his experiences? Create an "afterword" to the *Autobiography* highlighting these ideas.
15. *Two Years Before the Mast* was praised by Ralph Waldo Emerson as: "a voice from the forecastle. Though a narrative of literal, prosaic truth, it possesses something of the romantic charm of *Robinson Crusoe*. Few more interesting chapters of the literature of the sea have ever fallen under our notice." Based on what you know about Emerson's writings, explain why he gave such a favorable review of the book.
16. Suppose you are part of a public relations team hired by the publisher of *Two Years Before the Mast*. In an effort to market the book to modern students, create a design for a graffiti wall that might be placed on billboards across the country. Use strong images and symbols that clearly reflect your appreciation of the book.
17. Compare and contrast the difficulties on the water to those of Huck and Jim in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
18. Write a persuasive letter to the school newspaper encouraging your peers to read the book.
19. Find a series of newspaper articles that you can connect in some way to *Two Years Before the Mast*. Look for such things as thematic connections, conflicts, and social issues. Write paragraph responses in which you make the connections.
20. Create a museum exhibition in which you explore the "Age of Sail." Use pictures, models, and brief, reader-friendly description cards to highlight your display. Prepare a short presentation and act as a docent, or museum guide, to your visitors.

PRINT RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

BIOGRAPHY & CRITICISM

Adams, Charles Francis. *Richard Henry Dana, a Biography*. New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890.

Gale, Robert. *Richard Henry Dana, Jr.* New York: Twayne, 1969.

Shapiro, Samuel. *Richard Henry Dana, Jr.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1961.

MARITIME HISTORY

Braynard, Frank O. *Famous American Ships: Being an Historical Sketch of the United States as told Through its Maritime Life*. New York: Hastings House, 1956.

Labaree, Benjamin W., Ed., *America and the Sea: A Maritime History*. Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Seaport, 1998.

MacGregor, David R. *Merchant Sailing Ships, 1815-1850: Supremacy of Sail*. London: Conway Maritime, 1984.

Matthews, Frederick C. *American Merchant Ships, 1850-1900*. Salem, Massachusetts: Marine Research Society, 1930.

Matthews, Frederick C. *American Merchant Ships, 1850-1900: Series Two*. Salem, Massachusetts: Marine Research Society, 1931.

Millar, John F. *American Ships of the Colonial and Revolutionary Periods*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978.

Mills, James R. *Where California Began*: San Diego: San Diego Historical Society, 1985.

Rowe, William Hutchinson. *The Maritime History of Maine: Three Centuries of Shipbuilding & Seafaring*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1948.

Wolfe, Reese. *Yankee Ships, an Informal History of the American Merchant Marine*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953.

ONLINE RESOURCES

THE LIFE OF RICHARD HENRY DANA, JR.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

This website of The Library of Congress American Memory Collection, offers primary resources for researchers. It includes excellent primary resources for studying Richard Henry Dana, Jr.

<http://www.du.edu/~ttyler/ploughboy/danabiography.htm>

A general biography of Henry Dana, Jr. is found here.

<http://www.winthrop.dk/seventyfive.html>

Dana's son responds 75 years after *Two Years Before the Mast*.

<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/bio/dana/dana.htm>

This site provides another biography of Richard Henry Dana, Jr.

http://www.wvu.edu/~lawfac/jelkins/lp-2001/dana_rh.html

A portrait of Dana as it appeared in the 1880 publication of *The Cyclopaedia of American Literature*.

CALIFORNIA HISTORY

<http://www.californiamissions.com/cahistory/index.html>

This site contains a directory of missions, their history, and hypertext definitions for terms and Spanish words.

<http://www.ca-missions.org/illusgl.html>

Illustrations and a glossary of mission terms can be found here.

<http://www.presidio.gov/history/>

A history of presidios is provided on this site.

<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/books/wcb/wcb3.htm>

The San Diego Historical Society provides rich background on the hide trade and its impact on California.

<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/books/smythe/2-2.htm>

This is a link on the San Diego Historical Society website that provides an overview of the beginnings of agriculture and commerce.

<http://www.sandiegohistory.org/books/wcb/wcb3.htm>

Historical information about traffic of hides is provided on this site.

MARITIME RESOURCES: PEOPLE, SHIPS, PLACES

<http://www.winthrop.dk/danalex.html>

Here is a dictionary of sea terms as they appeared in *The Seaman's Friend*

<http://beatl.barnard.columbia.edu/beatldb/maritimedb/display/>

A search engine on this site allows students to research vessels, captains, and more.

SHANTIES (SONGS SUNG BY SAILORS):

<http://www.geocities.com/captcutlass/Tune.html>

An excellent for the resource of shanties, this site contains several lyrics of several songs and plays the music for each of them.

<http://www.chivalry.com/cantaria/music/a-hundred-years-ago.gif>

This site contains the sheet music of "A Hundred Years Ago."

http://www.chivalry.com/cantaria/lyrics/a_hundred_years_ago.htm

This site provides background information on the shanty.

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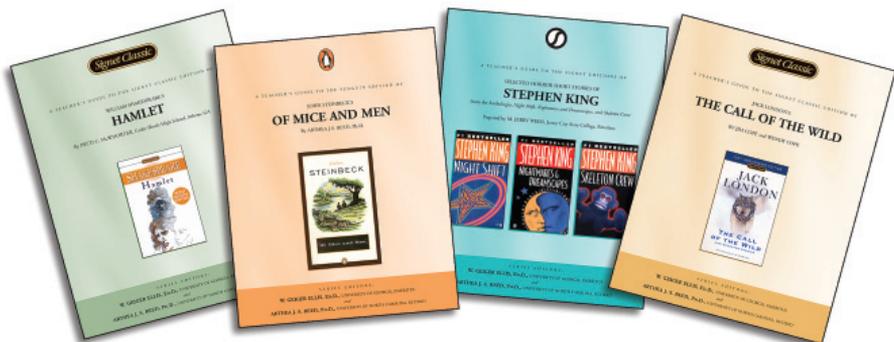
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The Scarlet Pimpernel
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