

Does Mr. Nigro
really expect me
to do this crap?

Writing an Academic Paper - The Casebook

(Yes I do, and it's not as hard as it looks)

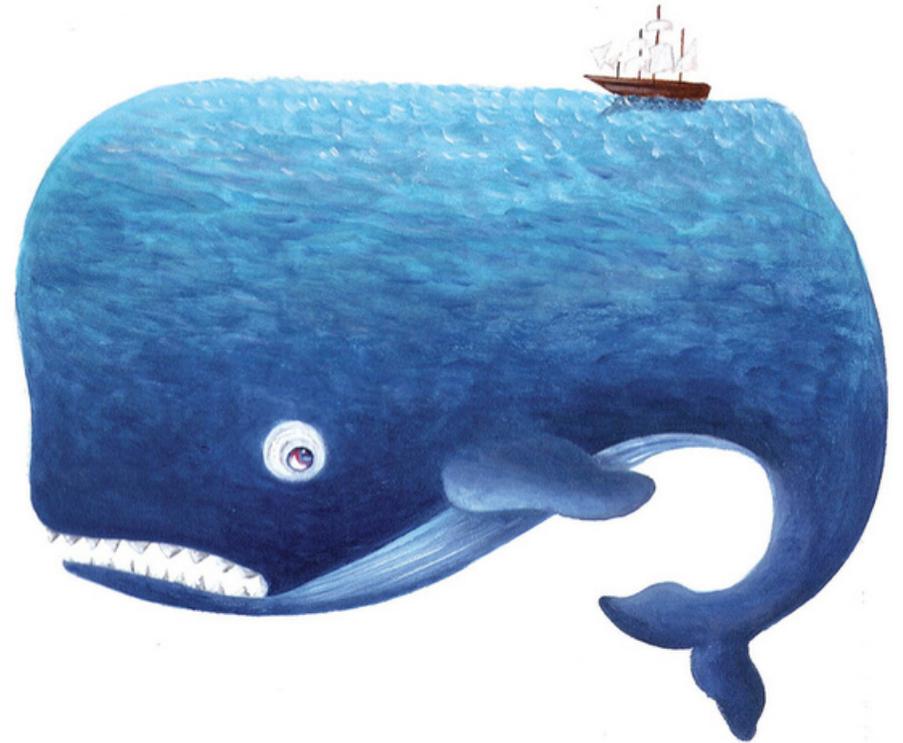
A Casebook is a review of literature, or an evaluation of sources—books & articles—that addresses your subject: in this case, it's anything pertaining to *Moby Dick*.

Gather your sources, create a bibliography (MLA style), and make notes on each one.

Arrange the sources in some kind of order that makes sense (chronological, topical, etc.). Consider points of connection between the sources.

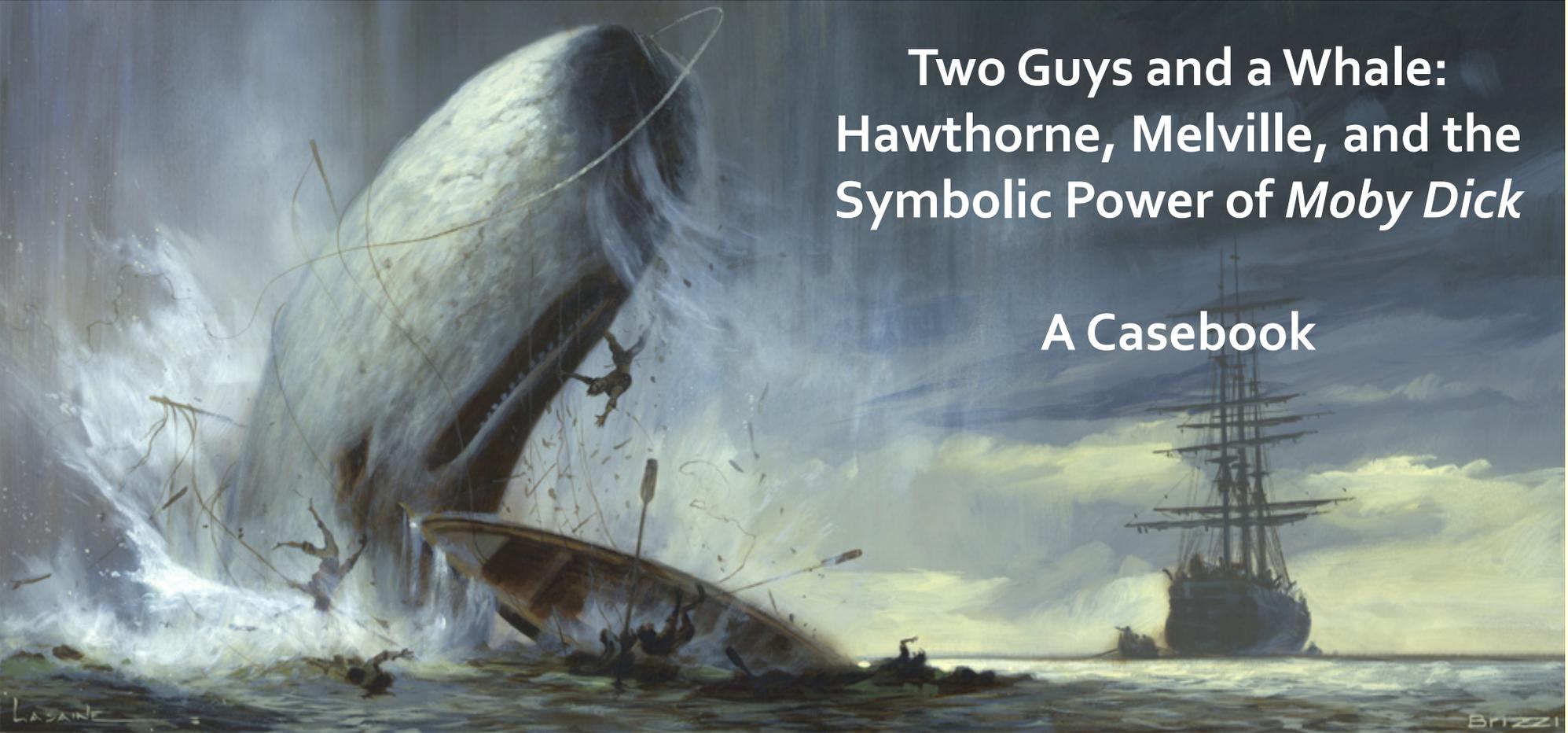
Decide on your own position on the issue. Draft a thesis sentence.

There is an example of a student casebook on the blog.



The Casebook

For our subject, let's say we're interested in the extent of Hawthorne's impact on Melville's writing of his whale book.



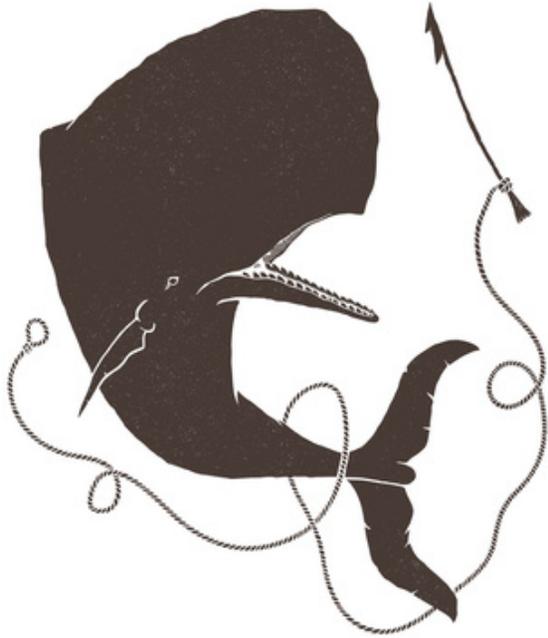
Two Guys and a Whale: Hawthorne, Melville, and the Symbolic Power of *Moby Dick*

A Casebook

Before you write anything

find and evaluate your sources, select the ones you will work with, prepare an informal annotated bibliography (or at least notes), construct an outline, and write a draft your thesis.

Mates, A. Hoy, *Melville's Man Crush and the Making of Moby Dick*. San Francisco: Rainbow Press, 2008. Print.



Argues for an erotic attraction to Hawthorne that sparked Melville's creative impulses; made him imitate Hawthorne's style to gain favor, etc.

Sheebloes, Thar. "Melville's Mountaintop Experience." *Berkshire Journal* 38.4 (1988): 413-434. MLA. Web. 24 Jan. 2014.

Theorizes that Hawthorne explained his literary theories to Melville during the hike on Monument Mountain, "blackness," symbolism, etc.

Annotated Bibliography

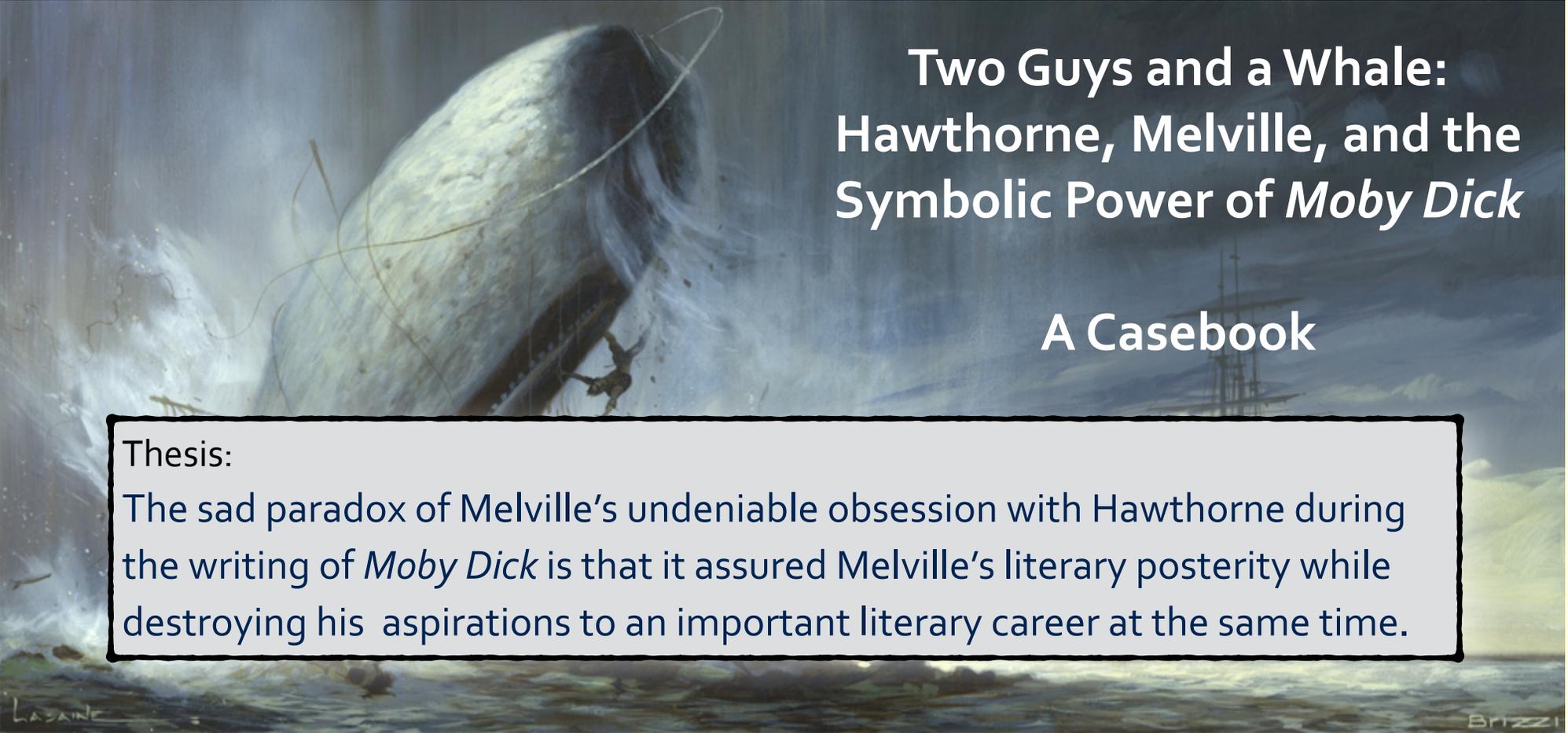
Here are sample bibliographic entries with annotations. Your notes would be much more detailed. In what ways are these two sources connected? Which makes the stronger argument? Why? Could they both be right?

- I. Introduction (includes thesis)
- II. Melville's encounters with Hawthorne
 - A. Review of *Mosses from an Old Manse*
 - B. Meeting on Monument Mountain: August 5, 1850
- III. Hawthorne's Impact: Melville re-writes "The Whale"
 - A. The Personal Issues
 - B. "Blackness" in *Moby Dick*
 - C. Symbolism in *Moby Dick*
- IV. Mixed Reviews—Melville's failed attempt at being Hawthorne
- V. Conclusion



Outline

Your sources should all make major contributions to the relationship between the two authors and its possible impact on *Moby Dick*. Your outline, then, can be built on the information you have.



Two Guys and a Whale: Hawthorne, Melville, and the Symbolic Power of *Moby Dick*

A Casebook

Thesis:

The sad paradox of Melville's undeniable obsession with Hawthorne during the writing of *Moby Dick* is that it assured Melville's literary posterity while destroying his aspirations to an important literary career at the same time.

Preliminary Thesis

Having read, analyzed, and organized your sources, you should be able to put forth a thesis for your essay. Your casebook (which includes your essay with the sources) will be, in effect, a comprehensive guide to your subject.

III. Hawthorne's Impact

A. The Personal Issues (Mates, etc.)

B. "Blackness" in *Moby Dick* / pp. 130-144 in Peter Parker, "Suspended in Hawthorne's Web: Melville's Review of *Twice-Told Tales*"

C. Symbolism in *Moby Dick*

1. **Biblical symbols: Ishmael (the outcast) & Ahab (evil in the heart of man)**

/ **Bruce Wayne**; use quote on p. 35, "The Dark Night of the Soul in Great Books"--"Like King Ahab in the Bible..."

2. **The Whale: Nature? Knowledge? God? Satan?** / paraphrase p. 23, **Clark Kent**, "Super Man, Super Monster" about the many views of the whale

3. **Vessels: The *Pequod* & Queequeg's coffin** / quote **Tony Stark**, p. 13, *Iron-y and Other Technical Marvels in Literature*-- "The *Pequod* is actually a microcosm of America herself..."

Expand your outline to include specifics

Incorporate information from your sources to support your claims.

The mid 19th century was a time of rapid progress and dramatic change in America. In the 1840's alone, a military action against Mexico dramatically increased the size of the young nation. Political movements such as abolition and the push for women's rights dominated the news. Technological advancements were stunning: perhaps most emblematic of the time was the first message ever sent by telegraph between Baltimore and Washington on May 24, 1844, which read, simply, "What hath God wrought?"

Often overlooked is the impact of literature, specifically the novel, on Americans' emerging values during this period. This Casebook will focus on how Nathaniel Hawthorne's professional and personal influence on Herman Melville inspired the creation of the most socially significant work in all of American Literature, Melville's epic novel, *Moby Dick*. In it, Melville builds on Hawthorne's romantic style to create lasting symbols that help to define the American experience. The sad paradox of Melville's undeniable obsession with Hawthorne during the writing of *Moby Dick*, however, is that, while it assured Melville's literary posterity, it also destroyed his personal aspirations to an important literary career in his own time.

The Casebook

Two Guys and a Whale: Hawthorne, Melville, and the Symbolic Power of *Moby Dick*

Introductory Paragraph with Thesis

Potter suggests that Melville's fascination with Hawthorne began when his editor, Evert Duyckinck, asked him to review a collection of Hawthorne's stories, *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Melville found in Hawthorne's haunting tales exactly what he himself had been looking for to add depth and power to his own work (261). "For spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul," Melville writes, "the other side-like the dark half of the physical sphere-is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black" (Melville, "Hawthorne" 13). This blackness, **Potter** asserts, "hangs over every page of *Moby Dick* like a funeral shroud," signaling the death of American idealism and "warning of a coming storm on the American horizon" (274). The white whale itself serves as the most powerful symbol of this ominous truth (**Potter** 255).

Weasley recognizes this blackness shared by the two writers, but claims it was present in earlier works by Melville, such as in the second half of his third novel, *Mardi* (34). "The Hawthorne connection is not so much one of tone or even theme, but of the power of symbols to convey powerful subliminal messages" (Weasley 38). In his article, "Oh Bloody Hell You Can't Trust Ishmael," he clearly sets forth at least five key symbols in *Moby Dick* that have double meanings, much as Hester's famed letter A does in Hawthorne's classic Romance. The first of these, Ahab's pipe...

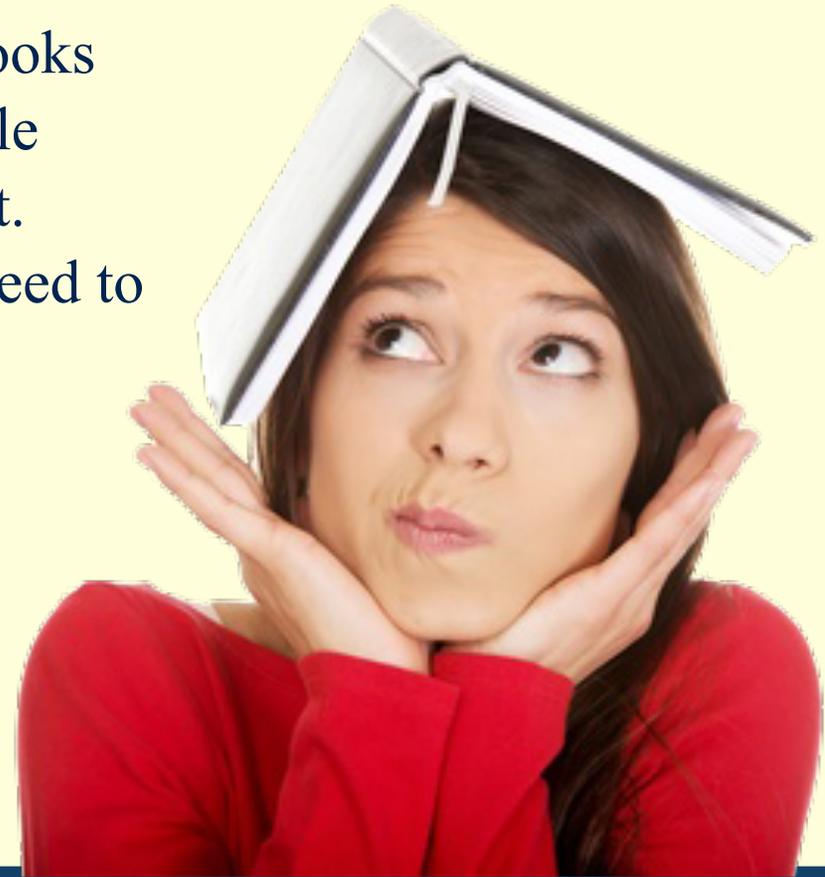
Malfoy dismisses literary interests entirely in favor of a purely sexual motivation behind...

The Casebook

Two Guys and a Whale: Hawthorne, Melville, and the Symbolic Power of *Moby Dick*

Compressed example of the Casebook approach to criticism

The following slides are random examples of academic writing with in-text parenthetical referencing, just so you can see what it looks like. They aren't written in Casebook style because you already know how to do that. This is purely technical MLA stuff you need to know if you don't know it already.



Academic Writing

The competition was fierce. Hawthorne, frustrated at being outsold by a number of popular women writers, himself referred to his competitors as “that damned mob of scribbling women” (Eenie 302). Like today, America’s primary readers were women in the mid-19th century (Meenie 16), and women writers knew the kind of story their readers wanted. Hawthorne, not to be outdone, promoted *The Scarlet Letter* as “a Romance,” and placed a heroine—the indomitable Hester Prynne—at the center of his tale (Miny 130). The fact is that Hawthorne, an accomplished master of the short story, was still learning how to write an extended work; according to Eenie, the long preface entitled “The Custom House” was added primarily to add length and substance worthy of the cost of a printed book (287). Melville, a best-selling novelist already, was seeking to experiment, and Hawthorne’s bold new style appealed to him (Moe 48).

Writing the Paper

Sample text using Parenthetical Citations:

(This random paragraph isn’t about symbolism; the purpose is to illustrate the way to cite sources in your text.)

As for the origin of the name, Melville never explained it. There are many speculations, but one seems to stand out:

In the early 19th century, a legendary white whale known as Mocha Dick was associated with the destruction of the whale ship, *Essex*—a story that was certainly known by Melville and likely served as inspiration for his novel. “Mocha” refers to the name of the islands where the whale was most often sighted; “Dick” was a general appellation of the time, like Tom or Joe might be used today. (Bert and Ernie 74)

No one is sure how “Mocha” became “Moby,” but it has been suggested that Melville simply wanted to disassociate his whale from the color mocha (Oscar 33).

More Random Writing Advice

Sample text using Parenthetical Citations in Block Form

By all accounts, the relationship between Melville and Hawthorne ran hot and cold. Most scholars agree that it was Melville who initiated the friendship with his “gushing” review of Hawthorne’s collection of stories, *Mosses from an Old Manse* (Griffeth and Fife, “A Whale of a Critic” 12). Such ebullient praise seems odd, for though Melville was a decade younger than Hawthorne, he was inestimably more famous at the time, due to the widespread success of his early works, most notably *Typee*, which details his thrilling escape from the cannibals. Melville’s rock-star status is undeniable; at least one writer points out that even Sophia Hawthorne was quickly smitten with the “dashing and robust” Melville (Opie 76). But as a writer of quality literature, Melville knew he had not yet matured, whereas Hawthorne certainly had (Griffeth and Fife, *Melville* 122).

Still More Random Writing Advice

Sample text using Parenthetical Citations: two works, same authors

Title is centered on top half of the page

(1) Your name, (2) the course name, (3) the teacher's name, and (4) the date are centered on the bottom half of the page

Remember: TNR 12pt type!

The Casebook

Sample Cover Page

Two Guys and a Whale:
Hawthorne, Melville, and the
Symbolic Power of *Moby Dick*

A Casebook

Joe Student
English 4 IB HL
Mr. Nigro
April 22, 2015

Your last name, followed by the page number, should appear in the header at the top right of every page.

Student 1

The Casebook

Note: you can omit the cover page and just begin on page one if you want.

Use proper MLA form; list entries in alphabetical order; double-space everything (no extra spaces!); use hanging indents; follow 7th edition.

All you really have to do is delete the notes from your Annotated Bibliography.

List only works you cite in the paper!

Works Cited

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. New York: Random House, 1995. Print.

Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. Boston: Little, Brown, 2003. Print.

The Casebook

Works Cited (Just remove the annotations from your annotated bibliography, delete unused sources, and you have it.

Nathaniel Hawthorn was a good writer. He wrote lots of stories. He lived in Salem, Concord, and Lenox, Massachusetts. His stories were about New England mostly. He wrote the Scarlit Letter. It was about a woman who had sex with this preacher but they both kept it a secret and they made her wear this big A all the time but they didn't do nothing to him.

↑ **BAD** / **GOOD** ↓

Nathaniel Hawthorne was already established as a writer of short stories about New England life when he published his first novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, a shocking tale of adultery and religious hypocrisy that served as a bold declaration of freedom from the shackles of Puritanical legalism that had so limited American thought.

Fix Crappy Writing!

Revising, Editing, Correcting

Moby Dick was really long and a lot of people hated it. Some even said it was monstrous. (34) I think it is good though. Qweequeg is my favorite, I like when he has the shrunk head. You have to be brave. To be a harpooner. And Starbucks is where they got their coffee.

↑ **BAD** / **GOOD** ↓

Early critics disparaged Melville's great work for its length, its tedious lectures on the whale species, and its odd language (Maxwell 34). Sadly, they missed the author's subtle commentaries on such things as multiculturalism and religious freedom—ideas that have come to shape modern America. This is why, more than a century and a half later, *Moby Dick* is beloved by many, like the founders of Starbucks, who named their company after one of the book's noblest characters (House 45).

Fix Crappy Writing Again

Revising, Editing, Correcting

A strong, well-crafted thesis sentence. (Everything flows from your thesis; think hard, organize your ideas into clear, distinct phrases, and choose your words carefully!)

Connect your points to your thesis throughout the body of your paper. (Remind the reader how your points are linked together... one way is through transition sentences.)

Make your conclusion memorable. (Use examples, anecdotes or stories, or a good summarizing quotation; it should theoretically stand alone—it's not just an afterthought!)

The Casebook

The stuff that can make a good paper great

Avoid repetition! (It is annoying to read the same annoying words that annoyed you the first time, and then to be annoyed by them again is very annoying!)

Correct those run-ons & fragments! (It's a good idea. To vary sentence structure by that I mean combine two fragments into one. Sentence. Whenever possible.)

Proofread for errors in spelling and punctuation! (U can loose alot of points, just bcuz u dont no where, commas r suppose to go :/ lol)

The Casebook

The stuff that can make an otherwise good paper suck



Yes! I did it! That was so much fun, I think I'll write another one!

The Casebook

Re-write the following paragraph from a paper entitled, “Were Poe’s Critics Right?” Correct, expand, and reshape sentences as necessary.

Edgar Allen Poe was pretty good at stories but a lot of people thought he was nuts. And a really bad poet. Like Emerson who called him the jingle man because his poems rimed so much they would make you crazy to read them. But the raven was pretty good. So you can look at a picture of Poe and see his giant head. This is why he was into frenology. The dark secrets of the brain. So this is why he drank a lot, and people didn’t like him a lot. He started the detective story and said that the most important thing was the death of beautiful women, so you have to give him credit for that.

Just for Fun

Practice Exercise

“...the death...of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world...”