

'In the Heart of the Sea'

Fishtrap kicks off The Big Read

ENTERPRISE, LA GRANDE — Several communities in Eastern Oregon will join together — virtually — in reading the same book.

This year's selection is "In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex," by Nathaniel Philbrick.

The book tells the story of 20 crew members who, in 1819, set sail on a ship called the Essex to hunt whales.

They left the popular whaling island of Nantucket, Massachusetts, and headed for the South Pacific in what was to be a routine voyage.

Instead, they found themselves part of one of the most horrifying maritime disasters in American history when an 85-foot angry sperm whale rammed and sunk their vessel. For 90 days, the crew drifted in small boats with no sense of where they were in the vast sea. Facing starvation, disease, brutal weather, and a near loss of hope, they succumbed to drastic measures as they fought to stay alive.

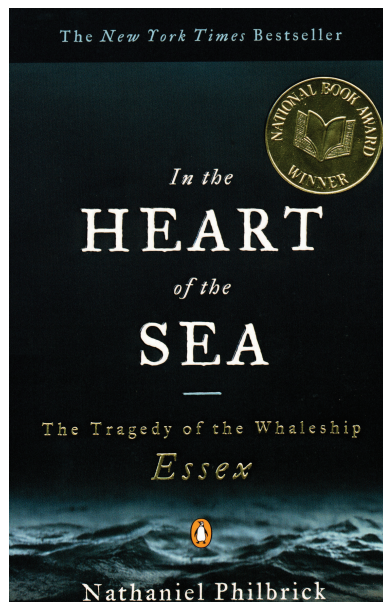
Philbrick tells the true story of the disaster that inspired Herman Melville's novel "Moby-Dick" 30 years later.

Fishtrap has provided more than 400 free books to Wallowa and Union County schools and libraries, including companion books for younger readers. Big Read books are available for purchase at Jax-Dog Café & Books in La Grande, The Bookloft in Enterprise, other bookstores, and online.

KICK OFF TALK

The Big Read official kicks off Wednesday, Feb. 17, at 1 p.m. with a talk about whaling with Dr. Lisa T. Ballance, director of Oregon State University's Marine Mammal Institute and Endowed Chair of Marine Mammal Research.

To find the link, visit fishtrap.org/the-big-read-2021/. Participants



can either join live, or watch the recording anytime after Feb. 18.

The Essex of "In the Heart of the Sea" was of the era of industrial whaling from the late 1800s to mid-1900s, which was ultimately responsible for the removal of 2.9 million large whales from the world's oceans.

Ballance will talk about large scale illegal whaling, of "scientific whaling" that is allowed through a provision in the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling, and of aboriginal whaling that is practiced by many indigenous peoples all over the globe, including here in the Pacific northwest.

"I will provide an overview of each of these and touch on current hot topics and long-standing ethical debates," she said.

Ballance comes to OSU from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), where she spent 30 years conducting research on cetaceans and seabirds around the world, including the tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans, Antarctica, the Bering Sea, and the Mekong River in Cambodia. She holds a PhD in marine ecology, an

MS in marine science, and a BS in biology.

BIG READ EVENTS

For a schedule of events, visit fishtrap.org/the-big-read-2021/



Submitted photo

Dr. Lisa Ballance will give the opening talk for The Big Read on Wednesday, Feb. 17.

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