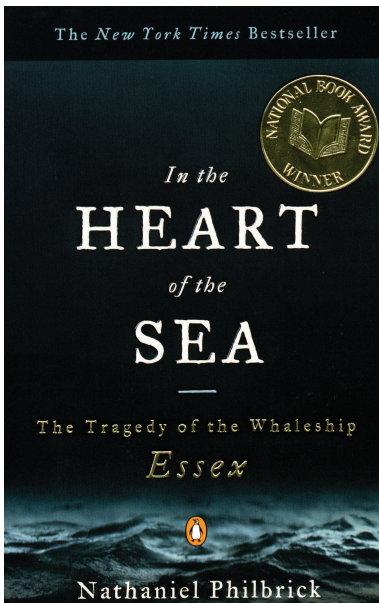


Hast thou seen the white whale? VIRTUAL BIG READ KICKS OFF FEB. 17

■ Big Read's "In the Heart of the Sea" tells true story that inspired "Moby-Dick"



ONLINE — Art Center East and Cook Memorial Library are teaming up to help bring the Fishtrap Big Read to Union County for the fourth year running.

The Big Read is a program funded by the National Endowment for the Arts that "broadens our understanding of the world, our communities and ourselves through the joy of sharing a good book," according to the NEA's website, www.arts.gov.

This year's book is "In the Heart of the Sea" by Nathaniel Philbrick, which recounts the true story of the whaleship Essex that inspired Herman Melville's "Moby-Dick."

In 1819, 20 crew members on the Essex 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.

"In the Heart of the Sea" tells the true story of the crew members' fight for survival and the circumstances surround-

ing the disaster that inspired Melville's classic 30 years later.

To participate in the month-long Big Read, which is virtual this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, just read the book then attend any or all of Fishtrap's free online weekly events designed to guide you and your family as you explore the subject and themes of the book. Events range from a keynote with the author, Nathaniel Philbrick, to a free screening of the movie adaptation of "In the Heart of the Sea."

Copies of Philbrick's book may be borrowed from the Art Center East Gift Gallery or the Cook Memorial Library (print and digital available). To purchase a copy, readers are encouraged to buy a copy from a local bookstore.

KICK OFF TALK

The Big Read officially 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.

Join the event live or watch the recording anytime beginning 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



Dr. Lisa T. Ballance

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 Interna-

tional 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.

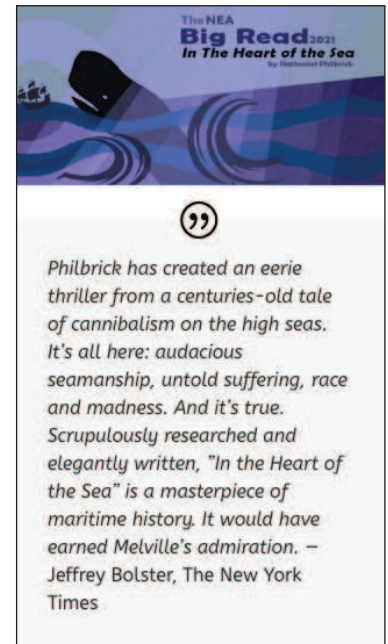
Ballance came to OSU from NOAA

(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 FOR KIDS

Fishtrap has provided more than 400 free books to Wallowa and Union County schools and libraries, including companion books for younger readers.

Additionally, according to Art Center East, the Mountain Valleys Reading Council is organizing a companion Big Read for students. The council purchased copies of two picture books that will be shared with students in local schools. They also have provided books to Cook Memorial Library, and are arranging a Zoom chat with the author of one of the picture books.



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