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White-Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War: Volume Five (Melville)

Herman Melville

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Herman Melville wrote *White-Jacket; or, The World in a Man-of-War* during two months of intense work in the summer of 1849. He drew upon his memories of naval life, having spent fourteen months as an ordinary seaman aboard a frigate as it sailed the Pacific and made the homeward voyage around Cape Horn.

Already that same summer Melville had written *Redburn,* and he regarded the books as "two *jobs*, which I have done for money--being forced to it, as other men are to sawing wood." The reviewers were not as hard on *White-Jacket* as Melville himself was. The English liked its praise of British seamen. The Americans were more interested in Melville's attack on naval abuses, particularly flogging, and his advocacy of humanitarian causes. Soon Melville was acclaimed the best sea writer of the day.

Part autobiography, part epic fiction, *White-Jacket* remains a brilliantly imaginative social novel by one of the great writers of the sea. This text of the novel is an Approved Text of the Center for Editions of American Authors (Modern Language Association of America).

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From reader reviews:

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