



NATIONAL WRITERS SERIES

Writers Series of Traverse City™

presents

“FIND YOUR PARK”... in a great book

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) is celebrating their 100th anniversary. The National Writers Series (NWS) is joining in the celebration by suggesting books and providing discussion guides that encourage book groups to read stories that are connected to the NPS. We hope that by reading one of these books, your book group members might rediscover a favorite park or discover a new place. In celebration

of their 100th anniversary, the NPS hopes to connect people to parks and help communities protect what is special to them, highlight their history, and retain or rebuild their economic and environmental sustainability. Join in the celebration and encourage your book group to read one (or more) of these great books.

In the Heart of the Sea

by Nathaniel Philbrick

Nathaniel Philbrick made a NWS appearance in 2012 to discuss his book Bunker Hill.

Watch a Conversation with Nathaniel Philbrick: <http://bit.ly/1aDxTjb>

A champion sailor and a renowned scholar and historian, Nathaniel Philbrick's passion for history, sailing and the open water are evident in his critically acclaimed books, *Mayflower* and *In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex*, which detailed the true story of a tragic 1819 voyage that served as inspiration for the climatic scene in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*.

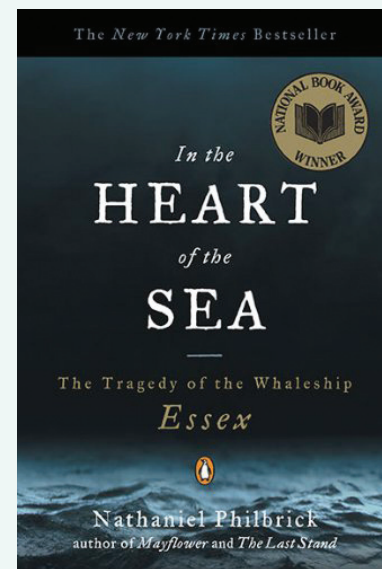
Eloquently “righting” history is something Philbrick does expertly. And audiences and critics love him for it. *In the Heart of the Sea* won the prestigious National Book Award in 2001. *Mayflower*, a book that debunks the long-accepted mythology of the Pilgrims voyage to the New World and their interactions with their indigenous neighbors, was a finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in History.

Philbrick also received critical acclaim for *The Last Stand*, a tightly structured narrative about two larger-than-life antagonists: Sitting Bull and George Armstrong Custer. A *New York Times* “notable book,” *The Last Stand* was the basis for the 2-hour PBS American Experience film, *Custer's Last Stand*.

In his latest book, *Bunker Hill: A City, A Siege, A Revolution*, Philbrick brilliantly tackles the Boston battle that ignited the American Revolution. A captivating and meticulously researched narrative, *Bunker Hill* brings a fresh perspective to the brutal and complicated story behind the forming of the United States.



Nathaniel Philbrick visited NWS in 2012 to discuss his bestselling book *Bunker Hill*.



FIND YOUR PARK

FINDYOURPARK.COM

Monthly
Book Discussion Group

JUNE 2015 SELECTION

In the Heart of the Sea

by Nathaniel Philbrick

ENHANCE YOUR BOOK GROUP & FIND YOUR PARK

- Read *Moby-Dick* (no small undertaking) instead of, or in addition to *In the Heart of the Sea*.
- Do you know someone with a boat? Conduct your book club while at sea (or on a lake or river).

BOOK GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In 1820, Nantucket was a Quaker town. What do Quakers believe? Was it hypocritical of a Quaker community to embrace such a violent occupation as whaling?
2. Given their proximity to the shipwreck, why did the Essex survivors avoid the South Pacific islands? What factors—historical, cultural, and otherwise—contributed to the decision to take a longer route home?
3. With what you've learned about the people of Nantucket and the whalers in particular, can you explain their fearlessness in the face of nature? And, conversely, their great fear of strange human beings? How is our world different today? Does this account somewhat for our contemporary fascination with tales of man versus nature?
4. The book discusses a few potential reasons why the whale attacked the Essex. What are these and which do you believe to be true? Why was the notion of a vengeful whale so terrifying to Owen Chase? How do you think contemporary views of whaling differ from those in 1820? How would you explain this change in attitudes?
5. There are moments in the book where natural events are viewed by the author as metaphorical to the men's experiences. Choose one or two and discuss how the metaphors illuminate the story. Also, discuss their importance to the narrative.
6. What was the difference in the leadership styles of George Pollard and Owen Chase? Did these differences contribute to the demise of the Essex or the eventual loss of lives? If so, how? Who do you think made a better leader and why?
7. What was the established hierarchy on the Essex? How did this reflect the social stratification of Nantucket?
8. In 1820, what options did a captain have for navigating his ship? Which of these were available to the Essex? How did "dead reckoning" work? How have navigational tools evolved since then?
9. Did race have anything to do with who lived or died on the Essex? How?
10. In the Heart of the Sea has been optioned by a production company to be made into a feature film. Imagine you are the screenwriter chosen to adapt this book. What are the central dramatic situations you would choose and who would be your main character? Is there a clear protagonist? Is there a clear antagonist?

EXPLORE MORE

- New Bedford National Whaling Historical Park: <http://www.nps.gov/nebe/index.htm>
- Protecting our waters: <http://www.npca.org/protecting-our-parks/air-land-water/great-waters/>
- Climbing Moby Dick at Yosemite National Park: <http://www.mountainproject.com/v/moby-dick/105870188>

NATHANIEL PHILBRICK'S WEBSITE:

<http://nathanielphilbrick.com/>



Photo courtesy New Bedford Historical Whaling Park