

<b>Agrégation interne d'anglais</b>
<b>Session 2025</b>
<b>Épreuve EPC</b>
<b>Exposé de la préparation d'un cours</b>

<b>EPC</b> <b>421</b>
--------------------------

Ce sujet comprend 3 documents :

- Document 1 : Richard Powers, *Playground*, Hutchinson Heinemann, 2024.
- Document 2 : "Welcome to UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography", Scripps Oceanography YouTube Channel, 24 June 2024.
- Document 3 : Philip Hoare, "Cetology: How science inspired *Moby-Dick*", *Nature* Vol. 493, 10 January 2013.

Compte tenu des caractéristiques de ce dossier et des différentes possibilités d'exploitation qu'il offre, vous indiquerez à quel niveau d'apprentissage vous pourriez le destiner et quels objectifs vous vous fixeriez. Vous présenterez et justifierez votre démarche pour atteindre ces objectifs.

**Document 1** : Richard Powers, *Playground*, Hutchinson Heinemann, 2024, pp.329-330.

ANSWERING THE LETTERS proved harder than writing the book had been. Chained to her desk again, slaving over the urgencies of strangers, she answered questions she was shaky on and gave aid and comfort that she was not qualified to dispense. It came to her that this was why she had always shied away from human love. To give it was always to incur a growing obligation: someone else's gratitude.

"My girlfriends love it," her daughter said. "You're their hero." It took all Evie's willpower to keep from shouting, *But what about you?* Dora had read it. That gift was enough.

"I never knew most of that stuff," Danny told her. It was the most affection her son had shown her since he was ten.

For a year and a half, Evelyne talked on the radio and gave interviews for newspapers and magazines. She went on television and accepted invitations to give keynotes around the country. She hated it all. Every seat on an airplane was an exercise in soul-strengthening misery. She would be sick to her stomach in her hotel rooms before each event. And then some other creature would take control of her body and she would breeze out onstage in front of hundreds of people, somehow able, for an hour, to make them laugh, gasp, and cry over the ocean, the source of all amazement.

Her disconcertment was not helped when Bart came to her with more news.

"Enrollment is up at Scripps. And we're not alone. I checked. Ocean studies programs around the country are reporting significant bumps. Woods Hole is blaming you."

It made her want never to step out of the house again.

But she had discharged her obligation to the Earth. She could retire, give up everything, do nothing but dive and look in silence for the rest of her days.

Then the letter came from the White House asking her to serve on the President's national advisory board on the oceans. It was followed by another, asking if she would help to run the United States Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The invitation came from Dr. Earle, her former captain on the Tektite mission and now the first female chief scientist at NOAA. Evie revered the woman too much to turn her down. Earth was losing whole ecosystems before people could discover what was in them. And it fell to her flawed, powerless, bureaucratic agency to try to slow that down.

Administration. Washington. Trapped in a terrestrial life, among bickering humans. The brutal penalties of success were now complete.

**Document 2** : "Welcome to UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography", Scripps Oceanography YouTube Channel, 24 June 2024

Document vidéo (3'26") à consulter sur la tablette multimédia fournie.

**Document 3 :** Philip Hoare, "Cetology: How science inspired *Moby-Dick*", *Nature* Vol. 493, 10 January 2013, pp.160–161.

***Philip Hoare tracks the scientific influences and insights that breach throughout Herman Melville's epic novel.***

More than a century and a half after it was published, Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* remains a key cultural bridge between human history and natural history — expressed in the vast and ominous shape of the whale. This epic novel is a laboratory of literature, created in an age before art and science became strictly demarcated.

Melville wrote his book — which drew on his own youthful experiences on a whaling ship — as a tribute to the first period of modern whaling in the eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, which he claimed to be worth US\$7 million a year to the fledgling United States. At the same time, science was undergoing a sea change as the gentleman scientists and polymaths of the century's start gave way to more specialized and professionalized successors.

Melville's attitude to, and use of, science in *Moby-Dick* was in line with the eclectic ethos of that period. Drawing on the work of luminaries such as William Scoresby, Thomas Beale, Georges Cuvier and Louis Agassiz, Melville used contemporary knowledge of natural history — or the lack of it — to his own ends.

[...] Of course, the greatest scientific figure of the age hovers over Melville. Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, eight years after *Moby-Dick* came out. Melville's sole mention of Darwin is a quote — from *Darwin's Voyage of a Naturalist* (sic) — in the extracts at the start of *Moby-Dick*. He had read Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* (1839) in preparation for his own 1854 work, *The Encantadas or Enchanted Isles* — as the Galapagos were then known. Melville visited the islands in 1841, six years after Darwin's fateful landing. Darwin's recorded observation of marine iguanas as "imps of darkness" seemed to set the tone for Melville's metaphoric view of the Galapagos, which he saw as "five-and-twenty heaps of cinders ... In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist".

Such dark analogies are in line with a man who declared all human science to be "but a passing fable" — and yet created a fable of his own. In *Moby-Dick*, Ishmael is a perpetually sceptical and questioning figure, a man attuned to science — a stark contrast to the vengeful Ahab and his pursuit of the whale that "dismasted" him. As the critic Eric Wilson, in his essay 'Melville, Darwin, and the Great Chain of Being', notes, a "primary subtext of Melville's novel is the passing of pre-Darwinian, anthropocentric thought, espoused by Ahab, and the inauguration of a version of Darwin's more ecological evolution, proffered by Ishmael".

40 Melville lived through that process. US Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay *Nature* (1836), with its declaration of moral law at the heart of the cosmos, was the new philosophy of Melville's youth. But as biographer Andrew Delbanco points out, Melville read *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), William Dean Howells's Darwinian-inflected view of  
45 society. *Moby-Dick* itself has been seen as a parody of the Transcendentalists' 'back-to-nature' excesses. But Melville does more than lambast philosophy or use science as interior decoration. He achieved a marvellous synthesis of his own poetic and philosophical impulse with the increasingly science-aware ethos of his age. And he did so with a sense of  
50 black humour that transcended Transcendentalism to prove that nature — and its science — was much stranger and more wonderful than they had imagined.

*Moby-Dick* failed to make any impact in Melville's lifetime, and he died forgotten in 1891. But his spirit of enquiry and experiment stood him in  
55 good stead as far as literary immortality is concerned. His allusive style chimed with a new century of discovery, and twentieth-century experimentalists of literature such as D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf reappraised him as a modernist who lived before modernism was invented.

Melville's masterpiece also resonates powerfully with today's scientific  
60 concerns. *Moby-Dick* contrasts the glory of the whale with the threats posed by humanity. Melville even seems to anticipate the effects of a changing environment. In the moving chapter 'Does The Whale's Magnitude Diminish? — Will He Perish?', Melville wonders about a flooded future, but sees the whale as triumphant, spouting "his frothed defiance to the skies".  
65 Yet by the time his book finally came into its own, Melville's vision had turned into a nightmare for the whale.