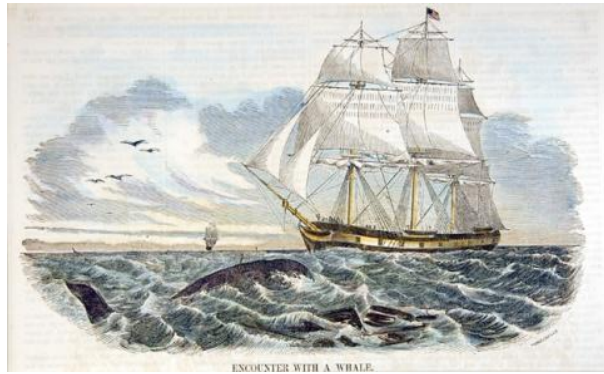


**0. In the Heart of the Sea: The Tragedy of the Whaleship Essex - Story Preface**

1. THE CREW of the ESSEX
2. FACTS and MYTHS about SPERM WHALES
3. KNOCKDOWN of the ESSEX
4. CAPTAIN POLLARD MAKES MISTAKES
5. WHALING LINGO and the NANTUCKET SLEIGH RIDE
6. OIL from a WHALE
7. HOW WHALE BLUBBER BECOMES OIL
8. ESSEX and the OFFSHORE GROUNDS
9. A WHALE ATTACKS the ESSEX
10. A WHALE DESTROYS the ESSEX
11. GEORGE POLLARD and OWEN CHASE
12. SURVIVING the ESSEX DISASTER
13. RESCUE of the ESSEX SURVIVORS
14. LIFE after the WRECK of the ESSEX



Although extremely rare, whales attacked ships during the 19th century. The first-known encounter happened in November of 1820 when a sperm whale (cachalot) attacked the *Essex*, a Nantucket-based whaleship. This image depicts a woodcut illustration from *The Mariner's Chronicle of Shipwrecks, Fires, Famines, and other Disasters at Sea*, Volume 1 (Boston, 1835).

*The waters were gathered together,  
the floods stood upright as a heap,  
and the depths were congealed  
in the heart of the sea.*

Exodus 15:8

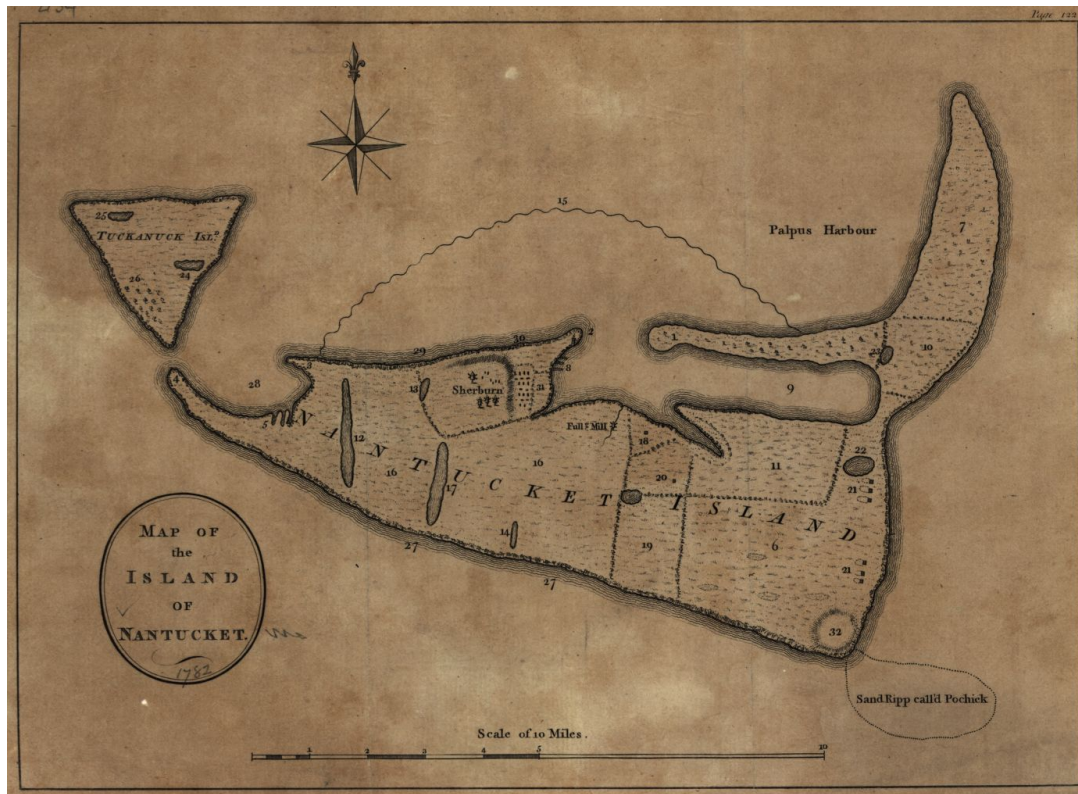
In the 18th century, the oil capital of the world was Nantucket.

It's not that the ground contained oil. Rather, sailing men of Nantucket left their offshore island on ships to hunt the most highly prized source of oil at the time: The oil contained in a sperm whale's body.

Especially valuable was the oil located in a sperm whale's gigantic head.

How much oil could whalers extract from a sperm whale? The head and body of a really large male could produce around 100 barrels of oil (at a time when each barrel held between 30-35 gallons).

A whaling ship, called the *Essex*, left this oil capital of the world in August of 1819. Onboard was a crew of 21 men, including seven African-Americans and a cabin boy.



Expecting to return home within 24 months, or so, the crew and their ship met a very different fate. The *Essex* happened to be a vessel which a great *cachalot* (an alternative name for a sperm whale) fatally rammed in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

In the heart of the sea, with too little drinkable water and too little edible food, the *Essex* crew endured the unimaginable.

Many of them did not survive.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/In-the-Heart-of-the-Sea-The-Tragedy-of-the-Whaleship-Essex>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/In-the-Heart-of-the-Sea-The-Tragedy-of-the-Whaleship-Essex>

## Media Stream

### Nantucket - 19th-Century Oil Capital of the World

In the 19th century, Nantucket was the oil capital of the world.

Whaling ships, based at Nantucket, plied the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, searching for whales ... especially sperm whales.

This map, circa 1782, depicts Nantucket. The island is located approximately 20 miles off the American coast (near today's state of Massachusetts).

Look closely at the island's harbor. What does it resemble? One could easily make the case that it looks like the head (and open jaw) of ... a sperm whale!

Click on the image for a much-better view.

Map included in "Letters from an American Farmer," by J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, 1782. Online via the Library of Congress. The Library has digitized a 1904 reprint of the original 1782 book which is available for online reading.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nantucket-19th-Century-Oil-Capital-of-the-World>





### Disasters at Sea Could Occur if a Whale Struck a Ship

Woodcut illustration - by an unnamed artist - included in *The Mariner's Chronicle of Shipwrecks, Fires, Famines, and other Disasters at Sea*, Volume 1 (Boston, 1835).

View this asset at:

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