The color of the whale in Moby-Dick is a symbol that can be interpreted differently. The whiteness of the whale can have obvious meanings, such as innocence, purity, and cleanliness. However, to some people the color white can be symbolic of death, solitude, strength, power, and a god-like appearance.
To Ahab,

The whale is not only the beast that removed his leg - he also becomes a **symbol of evil** and **injustice**. Because the whale has removed Ahab’s leg, Melville shows that Moby-Dick is capable of great violence.
Ahab views God as filled with both good and evil; he \textbf{wants revenge on God & feels God allows / puts forth injustice in the world}. To Captain Ahab, the whale symbolizes all that is \textbf{evil in the universe}, and he assumes a personal vengeance against the whale to kill it.
Moby-Dick is symbolic of nature.

- Graceful and **peaceful** in its natural habitat
- When an outside force interrupts the true course of nature, it can result in **violence** and unexpected actions of either of the two.

**Bound by natural laws** - **powerful** and **immortal**, at the same time, temperate and **peaceful**

[Image: Yin-Yang symbol and ocean waves]
Whiteness

- Whiteness – lack of color and sum of all colors (paradox)
  - Tranquility / good
  - Terror / evil
  - Ambiguity of nature

- This shows the contradiction of the whiteness of the whale because Melville emphasizes that white can mean tranquility and good, as well as terror and evil. Ishmael calls the indefinite whiteness, “... a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink.” The universe offers nothingness and seeking meaning, as does Ahab, will lead to misery -as it does for Ahab.
The Characters in Moby-Dick

- **Ishmael** sees the whale as a representation of nature in all aspects, from its beauty and wonders to the terror and fear that it can bring. He accepts the nothingness of our existence.

- **Ahab** views the whale as being similar to nature in that it is destructive. He sees it as the representation of God’s injustice.

- **Starbuck** seems to relate Moby-Dick to nature because of its ability to nourish - what the whale has to offer, such as the oil and money he will obtain in killing it.
- The whiteness of the whale in the novel symbolizes that the whale can be both tranquil and evil.
- beauty of the world, or as all that is evil and destructive
- In this way, Moby-Dick is similar to nature – from sunshine and a gentle breeze to a hurricane or blizzard.
- In the end, nature is indifferent (apathetic) to human existence
Themes

- Ahab – hubris, excessive pride, (defies God)
- Whale – undefeatable
- Whale – indefinable (cannot be understood)
- Civilized and Pagan societies are equal
Lost leg to Moby Dick / ivory leg – irony
Obsessed with killing the whale, “footprints of his one unsleeping, ever pacing thought.”
Mysterious scar down face / neck – (lightening)
Compared to bronze statue (hard / unyielding)
• Possessed beyond reason (logic) - Ahab
• Offers gold to make the hunt a contest
• Will chase the whale through perdition’s flame = holy mission
• Starbuck = reason / calls vengeance of mission, “blasphemous”
• In the end, Ahab, his ship, and the crew are all Destroyed by Moby Dick - only Ishmael survives, clinging to Queequeg’s coffin-turned-life buoy