EDSITEment!
THE BEST OF THE HUMANITIES ON THE WEB

Worksheet 2. Ishmael and the Fates

Name: _____   Date: _____

Teacher: _____   Class: _____

Reread the excerpt from chapter 1 of *Moby-Dick*, below. Be sure to take note of the explanations of the terms in bold. Then answer the questions that follow.

> Though I cannot tell why it was exactly that those stage managers, **the Fates**, put me down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage, when others were set down for magnificent parts in **high tragedies**, and short and easy parts in **genteel** comedies, and jolly parts in **farces**—though I cannot tell why this was exactly; yet, now that I recall all the circumstances, I think I can see a little into the springs and motives which being cunningly presented to me under various disguises, induced me to set about performing the part I did, besides **cajoling** me into the **delusion** that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased freewill and discriminating judgment.

the Fates: mythological figures that control the destiny of every man's life from birth to death,

high tragedies: A tragedy was originally a play in which the protagonist did not achieve his goal. A high tragedy follows a typical pattern that would have informed the audience of the time that the protagonist would fail.

genteel: polite and refined, often in a way that is designed to attract attention.

farce: a comedic play that generally makes fun of the times in which it is written by setting up improbable situations that provide slapstick humor.

cajoling: flattering someone in order to get them to do what you want.

delusion: a belief someone holds that goes against reality.

Questions:

1. What does Ishmael's comparison of the Fates to stage managers emphasize about the Fates?

2. What does Ishmael compare to the three types of drama—high tragedies, genteel comedies, and farces? What effect does this comparison have?

3. What does Ishmael realize about his part in the whaling voyage that he did not when he decided to join?