



The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket

By Edgar Allan Poe



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The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838) is the only complete novel written by American writer Edgar Allan Poe. The work relates the tale of the young Arthur Gordon Pym, who stows away aboard a whaling ship called the *Grampus*. Various adventures and misadventures befall Pym, including shipwreck, mutiny, and cannibalism, before he is saved by the crew of the *Jane Guy*. Aboard this vessel, Pym and a sailor named Dirk Peters continue their adventures further south. Docking on land, they encounter hostile black-skinned natives before escaping back to the ocean. The novel ends abruptly as Pym and Peters continue toward the South Pole. The story starts out as a fairly conventional adventure at sea, but it becomes increasingly strange and hard to classify. Poe, who intended to present a realistic story, was inspired by several real-life accounts of sea voyages, and drew heavily from Jeremiah N. Reynolds and referenced the Hollow Earth theory. He also drew from his own experiences at sea. Analyses of the novel often focus on the potential autobiographical elements as well as hints of racism and the symbolism in the final lines of the work. Difficulty in finding literary success early in his short story-writing career inspired Poe to pursue writing a longer work. A few serialized installments of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* were first published in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, though never completed. The full novel was published in July 1838 in two volumes. Some critics responded negatively to the work for being too gruesome and for cribbing heavily from other works, while others praised its exciting adventures. Poe himself later called it "a very silly book". Nevertheless, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* became an influential work, notably for Herman Melville and Jules Verne.

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