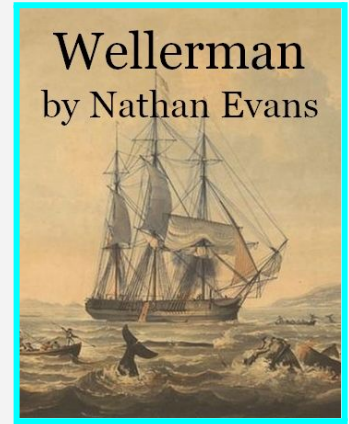


A Wellerman was an employee of the Weller Brothers Shipping Company who sailed the waters of the South Pacific around 200 years ago. In the 1820's and 1830's whaling was the biggest export industry in Australia and the Weller Brothers were looking to expand. They set up the first permanent white settlement in New Zealand at Dunedin to catch whales, so they could supply the demand for whale oil and candle wax. At this time, before electricity, the oil was used to fill lamps for lighting people's homes. The Wellerman had other duties besides catching whales. The company also made money by supplying products such as sugar and tea and rum to the new settlements.



Many of the young Weller men were a long way from home, often spending months on their boat at sea. Many felt lonely and they faced the possibility of death in the rough southern seas. It was not uncommon to be lashed by terrible storms and many men and ships were lost to the ocean. To lift their spirits the Wellermen would often sing cheerful, high energy songs called sea shanties that had a hopeful outlook on life.

The Wellerman shanty survived and is now sung by a whole new group of people. During the lockdown of 2020 there were almost 30,000 downloads of the shanty each day.

Questions (look in the text for highlight clues!)

- 1) What was the biggest export market?
 - a) Founding new settlements.
 - b) The whale industry.
 - c) Selling supplies.
- 2) Why did the Wellerman sing sea shanties?
- 3) What were three of the products that were supplied to the new settlements?
- 4) What are two uses for whale products?
- 5) What was a common cause of death of the young sailors on the boats?
- 6) Why do you think that the Wellerman sea shanty became very popular again during the Covid19 lockdown?

Origins, voyaging and adaptation

Produced by Paul Tucker@Orewa College (2022)

New Words (look in the text for highlight clues!)

“...lashed by terrible storms...” What does lashed mean in this sentence?

- 1) Being hit repeatedly.
- 2) Having their eyelashes pulled out.
- 3) Being struck by a whip.

Describing Words (Adjectives)

For each sentence find the describing word. This is the word that describes Kupe.

- 1) Wellermen felt lonely at times.
- 2) The terrible sea took many men.
- 3) Humpback whales were often caught.

Have a go!

As you may know, the Wellerman sea shanty became popular with people during Covid 19 times. Use the search terms to find a clip of ‘The Wellerman’ being sung.

Youtube - The Wellerman - TikTok - Sea Shanty

