



# The Piazza Tales: "A smile is the chosen vechile of all ambiguities."

*Herman Melville*

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Herman Melville's *The Piazza Tales* is a collection of six classic short stories first published together in 1856. The stories are mainly about sailing, exploration and adventures. "Benito Cereno," probably the author's favorite, is an account of a mutiny aboard a slave ship. It recounts the struggle between furious slaves who wish to redirect the ship and a crew led by Captain Cereno and Captain Delano. However, the critics' attention has been much more drawn by "The Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles" which is a narrative consisting of ten philosophical sketches related to the Galapagos Islands in the pacific ocean. The sketches describe the island, its fauna and flora and discuss the cruelty of life in such a desolate corner of the Earth. The anonymous narrator of the sketches presents his personal experiences with the sublime nature amid which he finds himself, revealing his extraordinary feelings, fears and musings. The remainder of the stories in this collection deal with similar themes of loss and isolation such as in "Bartelby the Scrivener," "The Lightning-Rod Man" and "The Bell Tower," while the story of the title, "The Piazza," takes the form of an introduction to Melville's poetic world of explorations and adventures.

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