



America was shaped by explorers racing to the New World, men-of-war plotting to catch or elude being caught, entrepreneurial crews of clipper ships rushing their cargos to port, and fishermen seeking to be the first to get their catch to market. Modern day sailboat racing reenacts those historical efforts to be the first. And then there is the magical allure of wind, water and sail and their affect on the human spirit. These are the reasons why, for centuries, sailing has been inextricably linked to American literature.

We have selected quotes from several authors - both American authors and those who influenced them - to highlight this connection. We have also chosen to open this exhibit with three quotes which provide a literary context.

*...over the breaking billows, with bellying sail,
and foaming break, like a flying bird...*

- Beowulf



But now a breeze came up for us astern—a canvas-bellying breeze, hale shipmate sent by the singing nymph with sun-bright hair; we made fast the braces, took our thwarts, and let the wind and steers-man work the ship with full sail spread all day above our coursing, till the sun dipped, and all the ways grew dark upon the fathomless unresting sea.

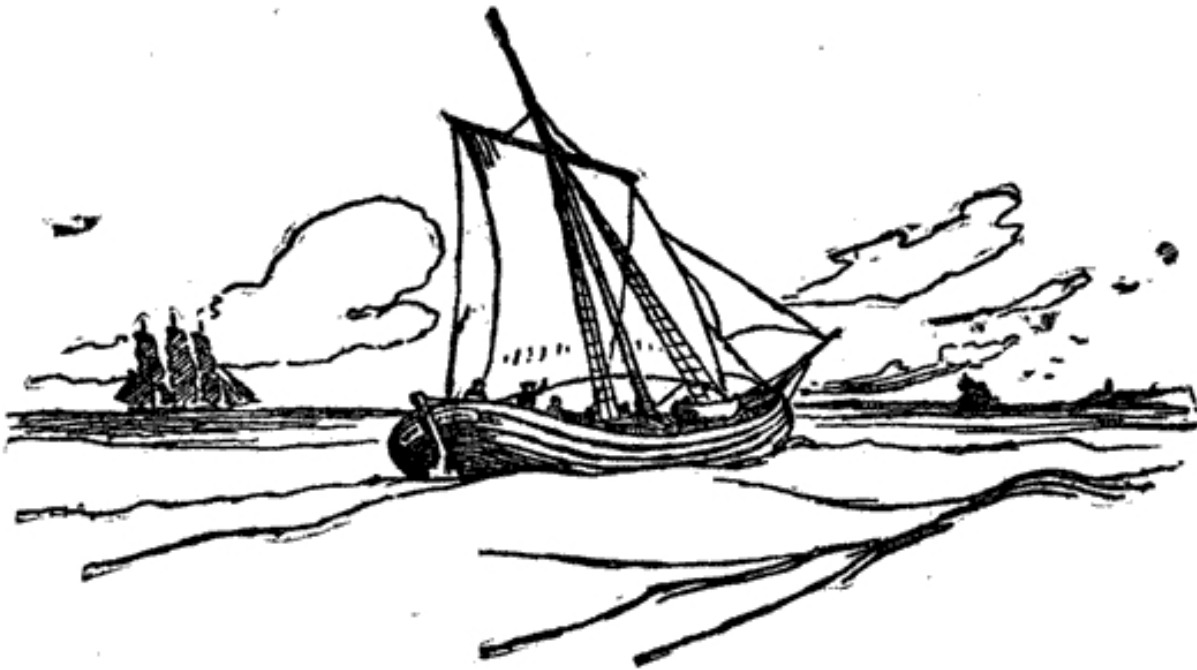
- Homer, from The Odyssey



*They that go down to the sea in ships
that do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord,
and his wonders in the deep.*

- [Psalm 107](#)





On looking to windward, he beheld the green masses of water that were rolling in towards the land, with violence that seemed irresistible, crowned with ridges of foam; and there were moments when the air appeared filled with sparkling gems, as rays of the rising sun fell upon the spray that was swept from wave to wave.

- [James Fenimore Cooper](#) , from *The Pilot*



We study the sailor, the man of his hands, man of all work; all eye, all finger, muscle, skill and endurance; a tailor, carpenter, cooper, stevedore, and clerk and astronomer besides. He is a great saver, and a great quiddle by the necessity of his situation.

- [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)



The sail, the play of its pulse so like our own lives: so thin and yet so full of life, so noiseless when it labors hardest, so noisy and impatient when least effective.

- Henry David Thoreau, from [A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers](#)



*My Soul is full of longing
For the secret of the sea
And the heart of the great ocean*

Sends a trilling pulse through me.

- [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, from "The Secret of the Sea "](#)



*This is the ship of pearl, which poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main,-
The venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its purple wings.*

- [Oliver Wendell Holmes, from "The Chambered Nautilus "](#)



If you have never been at sea in a heavy gale, you can form no idea of the confusion of mind occasioned by wind and spray together. They blind, deafen, and strangle you, and take away all power of action or reflection.

- [Edgar Allen Poe](#)



*When, staunchly entering port,
After long ventures, hauling up, worn and old,
Better'd by sea and wind, torn by many a fight,
With original sailing on all gone, replaced or mended,
I only saw at last, the beauty of the ship...*

- [Walt Whitman, "The Beauty of the Ship"](#)



The profound calm which only apparently precedes and prophesies of the storm, is perhaps more awful than the storm itself; for indeed, the calm is but the wrapper and envelop of the storm, and contains it in itself, as the seemingly harmless rifle holds the fatal powder, and the ball, and the explosion.

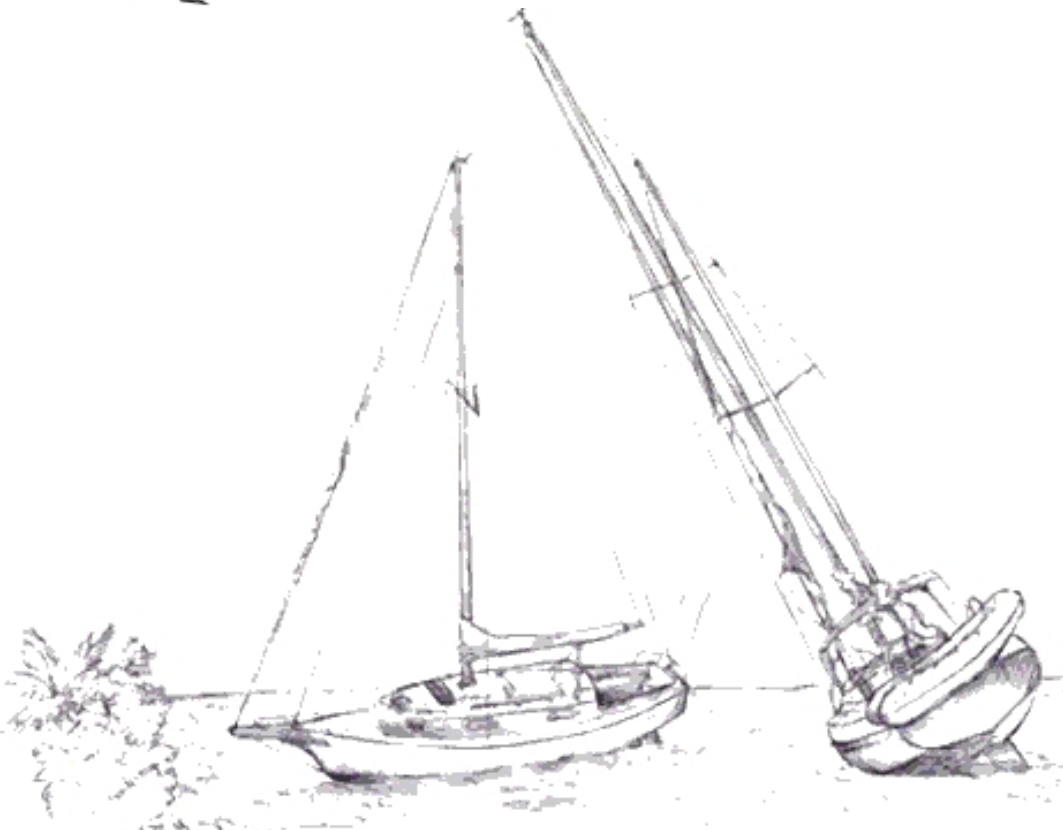
- [Herman Melville, from Moby Dick](#)



...with the wind, the wind is the only friend you have on sea.

...like a sea or a me)

...the wind is the only friend you have on sea.



...with the wind, the wind is the only friend you have on sea.

...the wind is the only friend you have on sea.

...the wind is the only friend you have on sea.

...of a grounded ship, one must sometimes go forward by going back.

...the wind is the only friend you have on sea.

...the wind is the only friend you have on sea.

...the wind is the only friend you have on sea.



~~How do you know if you're a sailor? Well, you know if you're a sailor if you can sail a ship. And if you can sail a ship, you know you're a sailor.~~

~~I'm not a sailor, for I'm learning how to sail my ship.~~

~~And if you're a sailor, you know you're a sailor because you can sail a ship. And if you can sail a ship, you know you're a sailor.~~