

LITERATURE, ETHICS, AND AUTHORITY
15.269

Class #2: Monday 12 February 2001

Read:

Herman Melville, Billy Budd

Study Questions:

1. Why does Melville make so much of the notion of "the handsome sailor"? What bearing does this concept have on the question of leadership in Billy Budd?
2. Why is Captain Vere in such a hurry to arrive at a decision about Budd's fate? Do the circumstances under which he and the other officers are operating warrant such haste?
3. Have you encountered people like Claggart in your work experience? Do you accept Melville's analysis of the roots of their behavior?