Protagonist: Ambroise Bourdages
Ambroise is a fisherman who lives with his mother in a small port town. He has his own crew and fishing boat. Ambroise is in love with a woman named Gabrielle. He is trusting of others and does not lie or deceive people. For example, he believes that Clovis, banker’s son, can be trusted and would never lie to others, so Ambroise invites Clovis with him to catch another whale. Ambroise also has integrity and doesn’t want people to think he himself is a liar, so when the town doesn’t believe him, he decides to redo his feat. His determination in risking his life to repeat his whale-catching success also shows that he doesn’t give up in what he believes in. Ambroise is a dynamic character because by the end of the story, he is willing to lie in order to agree with Gabrielle, even though he was initially very concerned about honesty.

Antagonist: Clovis, the banker’s son
Clovis is described as “prissy” and “affected” (187). He is also a gossip, as he listens to gossip and tells Ambroise about the whale-catching rumours circulating in the villages along the coast. Clovis is also untrustworthy and a liar. He assures Ambroise he doesn’t tell lies because he would never want to disgrace his father, a banker. However, once Ambroise needs him to confirm the successful whale-catching expedition, Clovis lies about what really happened. Clovis looks out for himself because he lies in order to make Ambroise appear inferior in front of the girl they both love. He then admits this to Ambroise, which makes Clovis mean-spirited for making Ambroise feel terrible. Clovis is a static character because he remains the same throughout the entire story.

Plot Summary
In the story “The Whale,” by Yves Theriault, Ambroise Bourdages catches a whale with a cod-fishing hook. Unfortunately, the whale escapes before he can return to the port. No one believes his story, and as it spreads through the towns, the tale begins to take on a life of its own. The banker’s son, Clovis, tells Ambroise that the latest version is that Ambroise caught the whale with his bare hands and almost got it into the boat before the whale evaded capture. Ambroise wants to impress a girl named Gabrielle, but is worried she thinks he’s a liar. So for the start of the rising action in the plot, Ambroise invites Clovis to go fishing with him so that he can have an iron-clad witness. Since Clovis is a banker’s son, Ambroise feels the town will take his word for it.

The two men go out on the water the next morning. After some struggle, Ambroise catches a whale with his cod-fishing hook and tow it back to the town. When they are almost back at the port, the whale spits out the hook and escapes. Ambroise is optimistic, though, because he has a witness. When they disembark at the port, Gabrielle and about fifty other people are there to wait for the results. Ambroise tells everyone he caught a whale again, but it escaped a mile from the port. When he turns to Clovis for confirmation, Clovis betrays him and calls him a liar. Ambroise is devastated and leaves the scene. In the climax, Ambroise later confronts Clovis about the betrayal. Clovis tells him he, too, is interested in Gabrielle, which is why he lied; Clovis doesn’t want Ambroise to impress Gabrielle.

Ambroise dejectedly returns home and to his surprise, he finds Gabrielle in his kitchen, talking to his mother. In the resolution of the story, Gabrielle tells him that she was “disgusted” by his repeated lying until she realised he was just trying to impress her, no matter what the entire town thought of him (190). Ambroise improvises and confesses that he knew she would only notice him if the tale was “grand enough” (190). He then takes her hand and they both walk around town so that he can show everyone he has won her love.
Setting
The story is set in Port-Savoie, a small fishing town by the sea. The time period appears to be sometime in the past because news seems to spread mostly by word-of-mouth, over a period of a few days. Instead of minutes or hours, it takes some time before Clovis tells Ambroise that everyone in a neighbouring town thinks he caught a whale by hand. There isn’t any mention of modern devices such as telephones. Also, the language-use appears to be from the past. When Ambroise confronts Clovis about his lies, he calls his enemy a “perjurer” and uses the phrase “snake in the grass” (189), terms which aren’t commonly used today.

Conflict
The conflict in the story is primarily Person vs. Person. Ambroise and Clovis both compete for the love of the same girl, Gabrielle. Ambroise hopes that she will be impressed with how he can catch a whale. However, Clovis lies so that Ambroise does not succeed in impressing the girl. Ambroise confronts him about the lie, but gives up the fight for the girl. There is also Person vs. Environment because Ambroise catches and loses a whale, twice. Near the end, Person vs. Self also appears briefly. Ambroise decides to lie to Gabrielle because he realises he has won her affection.

Theme
Several possible themes:

*Love is unpredictable. / One can’t predict what makes a person fall in love with another.*

The theme of “The Whale” is that one can’t predict why people fall in love. Throughout the story, Ambroise tries to prove to Gabrielle, the woman he loves that he can catch a whale with his fishing hook. He has no proof of his initial success, so he risks his life to repeat the accomplishment with a witness present. Unfortunately, he fails to provide proof because the whale escapes, and his witness betrays him, so he is called a liar. Ambroise thinks he has failed in winning Gabrielle’s love, so he gives up on her. But in the end, it turns out she is impressed by how he supposedly defied everyone in sticking to his ‘lie,’ and so he wins her love when he doesn’t correct her error.

*Be yourself in the pursuit of love.*

- Ambroise was adamant about proving he can catch a whale;
- He risked his life to catch a whale twice;
- Everyone laughed at him and thought he was a liar, including the woman he loved;
- His reputation was ruined;
- In the end, she falls in love with him anyway (for his determination);

(Example response for Story Chart) Point of View
The point of view is Limited Omniscient because the reader only knows Ambroise’s feelings and thoughts.

(Example response for Story Chart) Irony / Symbolism
Dramatic Irony: This happens when Clovis tells the town that Ambroise lied about catching a whale while they were out on the water. The reader knows Ambroise really did catch a whale and that Clovis is the liar.

Verbal Irony: This occurs at the end, when Ambroise says to Gabrielle that he knew he needed a grand enough lie for her to notice him. Ambroise thought he needed Gabrielle to believe he really caught a whale. Instead, she was impressed by how he went against everyone to impress her.

Situational Irony: The reader doesn’t expect Ambroise to win Gabrielle’s love since he feels he failed against Clovis in the fight for her heart. Instead, Gabrielle becomes interested in him because she believes he has told a huge lie to get her attention.