



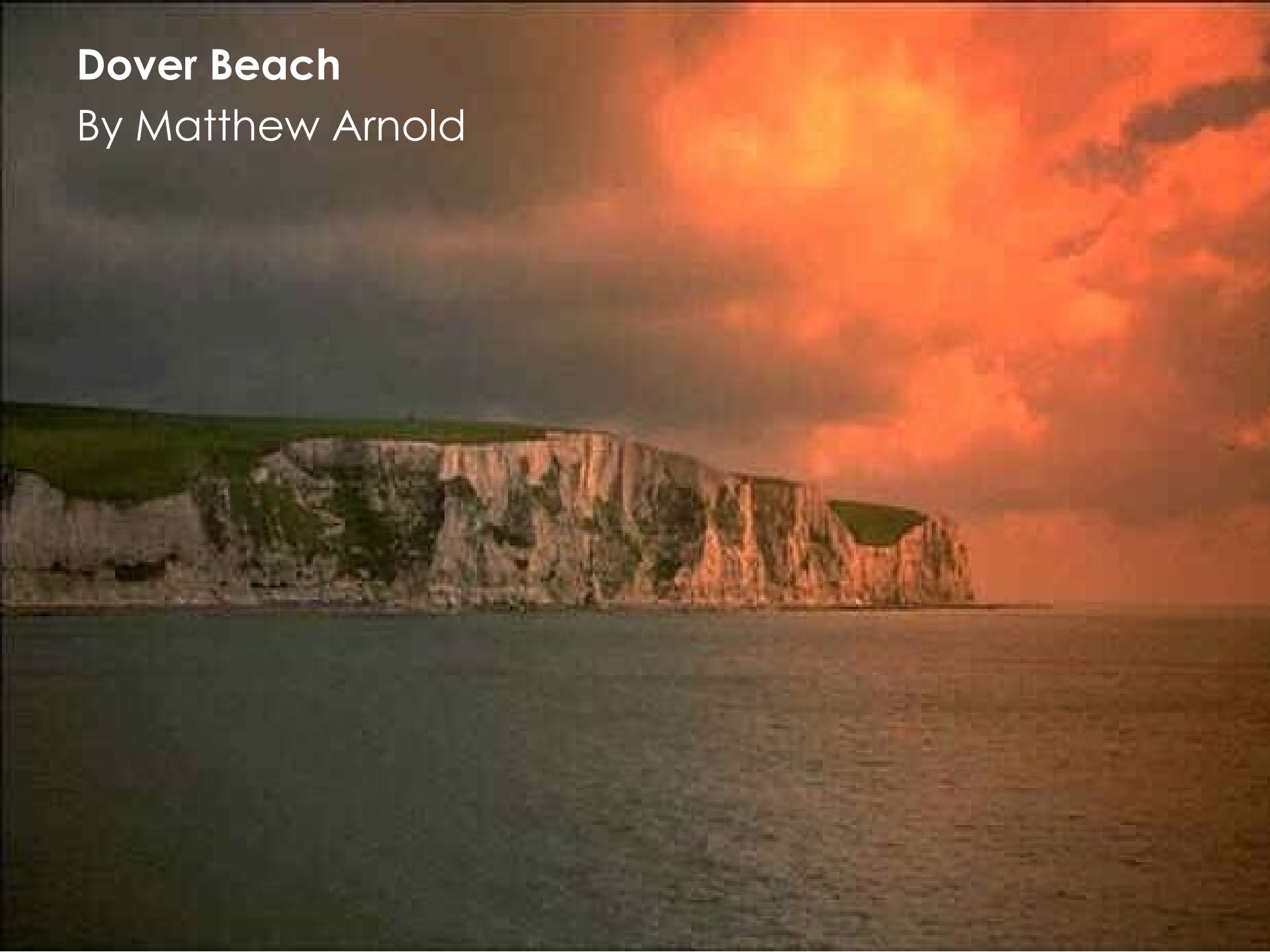
# DOVER BEACH

## MATTHEW ARNOLD

I. Antonyrajasree  
Asst. Prof.  
Dept of Eng  
IMA, BL

# Dover Beach

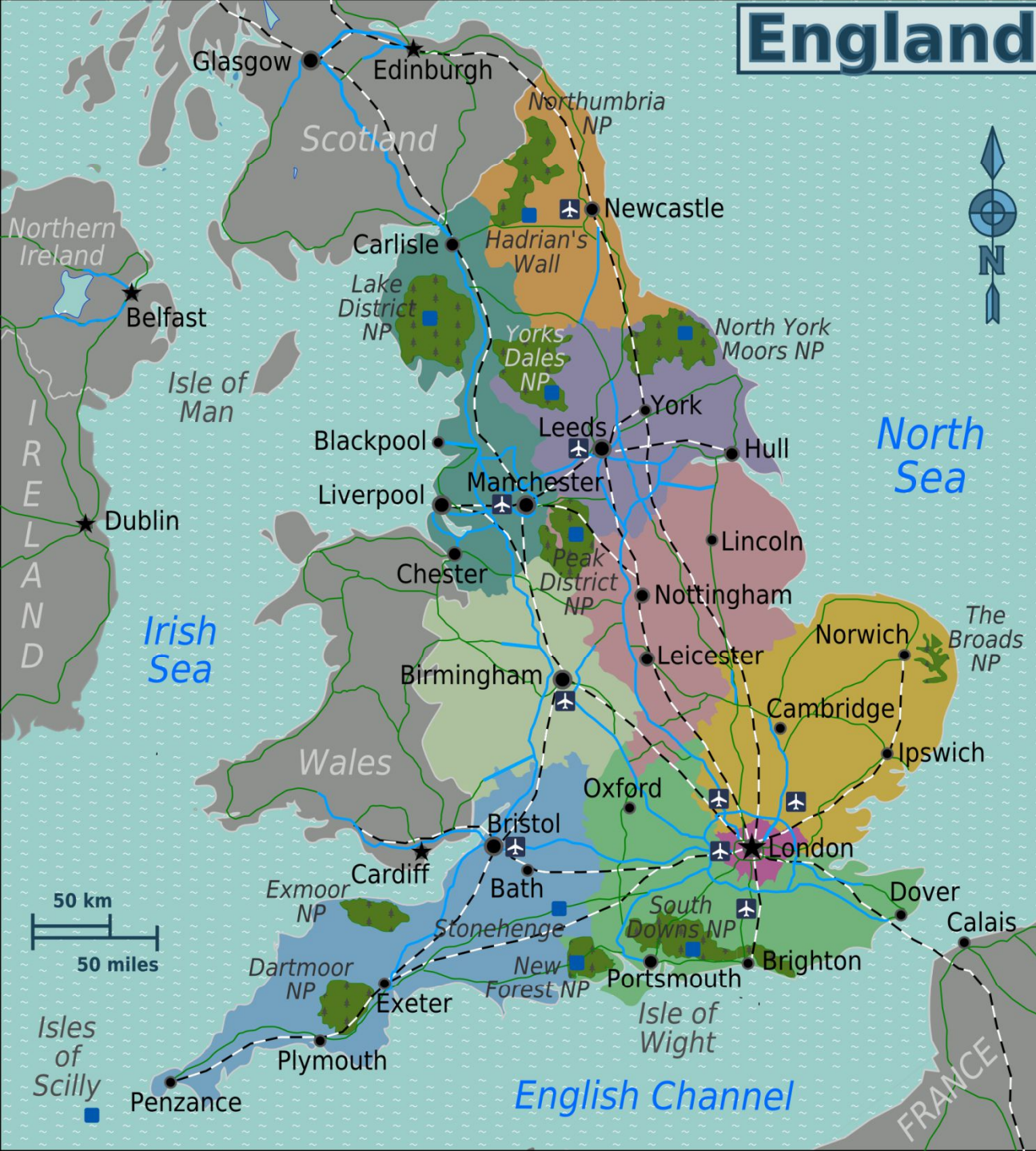
By Matthew Arnold



Arnold composed this poem in 1851, the year he was married, while on one of two trips to the Dover region of England with his wife. He did not publish the poem until 1867.



# England

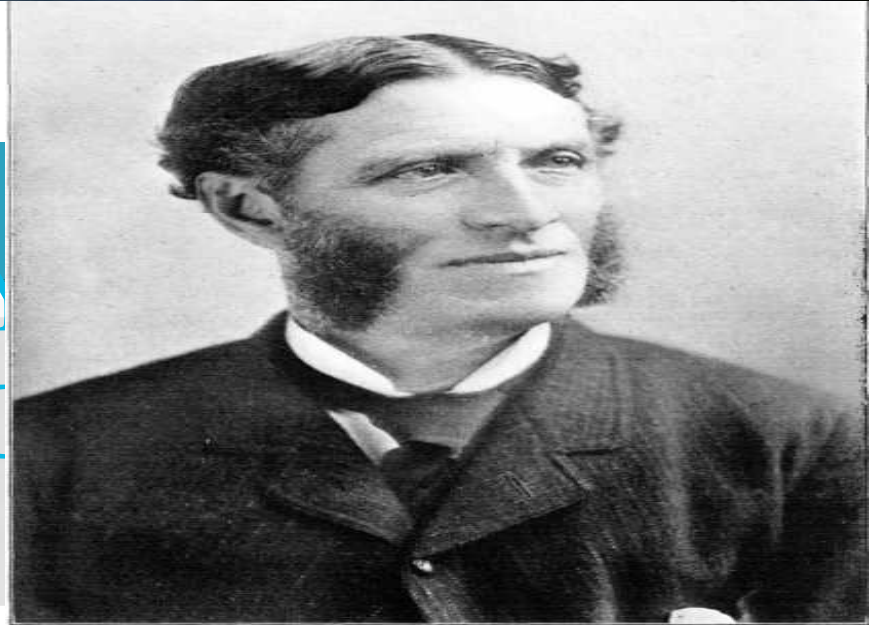


Charles Darwin released his theory of evolution, *The Origin of the Species* in 1859

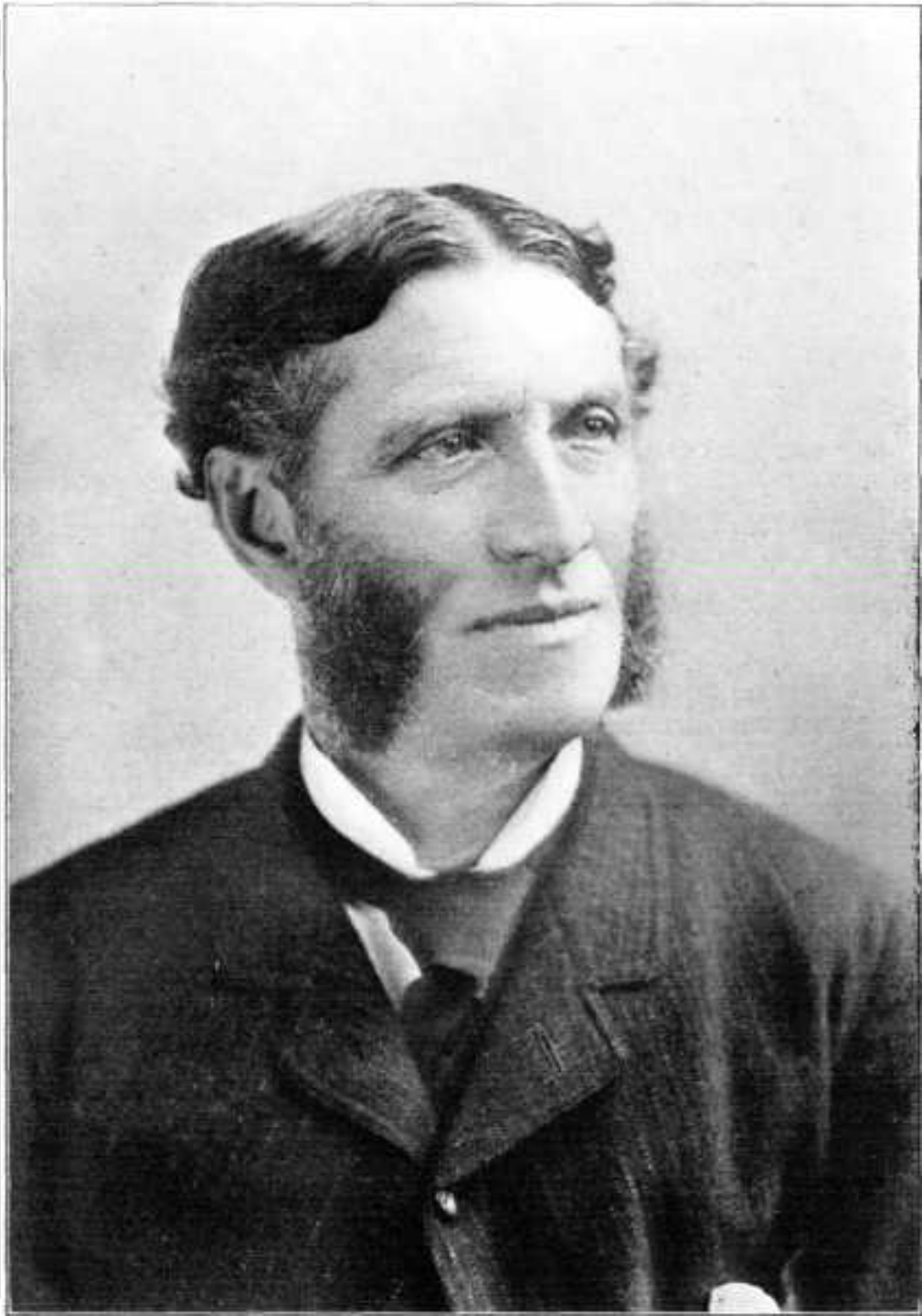




“DOVER BEACH” BY  
MATTHEW ARNOLD  
PREREADING



G. K. Chesterton said  
that Arnold was  
"perhaps the most  
serious man alive."



# INTRODUCTION

- Mathew Arnold (1822-1888)
  - Wrote Dover Beach during or shortly after a visit he and his wife made to the Dover Region of Southeastern England
  - Setting of the poem is in 1851
  - He married his wife earlier that year in 1851
- The town of Dover is closer to France (port city in England).
- The body of water separating the coastline of the town from the coast of France is the strait of Dover., North of the English Channel and South of the north Sea.

# BIOGRAPHY

- Began his career as a poet, winning early recognition as a student at the Rugby School
- His father was a strict and innovative headmaster.
- Studied at Balliol College and Oxford University.
- After marrying in 1851, Arnold began work as a government school inspector, a grueling position which nonetheless afforded him the opportunity to travel throughout England and the Continent
- Throughout his thirty-five years in this position Arnold developed an interest in education, an interest which fed into both his critical works and his poetry



# BIOGRAPHY

- Empedocles on Etna (1852) and Poems (1853) established Arnold's reputation as a poet and in 1857 he was offered a position, which he accepted and held until 1867, as Professor of Poetry at Oxford.
- Arnold became the first professor to lecture in English rather than Latin.
- Matthew Arnold died in Liverpool in 1888



# STRUCTURE

- Dover beach is a lyric poem
- Lyric means- subjective poetry with a rhyme scheme and meter which reveals the poet's thoughts and feelings to create a single unique impression
- Uses iambic pentameter
- rhyme scheme
  - ABACDBDCEFCGFGHIIHJIKELMENMLOPPOAQQAA

# STRUCTURE

- Four stanzas, 37 lines
  - 1st stanza consists of 14 lines
  - 2nd stanza consists of 6 lines (sestet)
  - 3rd stanza consists of 8 lines (octet)
    - 4th stanza consists of 9 lines

What feelings does this poem evoke? What creates this feeling?





# THEME

- In Arnold's world of the mid-1800's, the pillar of faith supporting society was crumbling under the weight of scientific thinkers, such as the evolutionary theory of English physician Erasmus Darwin and French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. The stance of God and Christian beliefs were being doubted . Arnold, who was deeply religious, lamented the dying of the light of faith, as symbolized by the light he sees in "Dover Beach" on the coast of France, which gleams one moment and is gone the next.

# THEME OF THE POEM

- The underlying theme of the poem is the hollowness of human lives, how everything looks beautiful at face value but is far from it in reality
- The superficial calm prevailing in the world is brought out

# DOVER BEACH

THE SEA IS CALM TO-NIGHT.

THE TIDE IS FULL, THE MOON LIES  
FAIR  
UPON THE STRAITS; —ON THE FRENCH  
COAST THE LIGHT  
GLEAMS AND IS GONE; THE CLIFFS OF  
ENGLAND STAND,  
GLIMMERING AND VAST, OUT IN THE  
TRANQUIL BAY.

COME TO THE WINDOW, SWEET IS THE  
NIGHT-AIR!

ONLY, FROM THE LONG LINE OF SPRAY  
WHERE THE SEA MEETS THE MOON-  
BLANCHED LAND,

LISTEN! YOU HEAR THE GRATING ROAR  
OF PEBBLES WHICH THE WAVES DRAW  
BACK, AND FLING,

AT THEIR RETURN, UP THE HIGH  
STRAND,

BEGIN, AND CEASE, AND THEN AGAIN  
BEGIN,

WITH TREMULOUS CADENCE SLOW, AND  
BRING

THE ETERNAL NOTE OF SADNESS IN.

SOPHOCLES LONG AGO

HEARD IT ON THE AEGEAN, AND IT  
BROUGHT

INTO HIS MIND THE TURBID EBB AND  
FLOW

OF HUMAN MISERY; WE

FIND ALSO IN THE SOUND A THOUGHT,  
HEARING IT BY THIS DISTANT

NORTHERN SEA.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath

Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true

To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,

So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

# ANALYSIS

The water reflects the image of the moon. Referring to the Strait of Dover .

This clause represents a sense of rhythm on how the light blinks on and off, and also emphasizes on the theme of the dying faith.

Introduces conflict between and the sea and the land, between long held beliefs and the challenges against them.

The sea is calm tonight,  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; - on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! You hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

The white cliffs are made out of chalk and erode easily, connecting to the eroding of the faith.



Refers to a an ancient Greek play  
Antigone written by Sophocles, in  
which he says that gods can bring  
ruin upon people from one  
generation to then next

“the eternal note of sadness”

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and **it** brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea

The in the sound  
of the sea the  
poet hears a  
thought that  
disturbs him just as  
the one heard by  
Sophocles.

Turbid: muddy; cloudy  
Ebb: tide movement

Refers to the dying faith  
as seen in the theme.

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Girdle: sash, belt; anything that surrounds or encircles  
Shingles: pebbled beaches

Addresses his wife telling they should stay faithful and persevere in the faith.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night

Refers to the condition of earth and how there's nothing good left to guide us toward that goodness.

Allusion to the battle of Epipolae (413 B.C.), a walled fortress near the of Syracuse on the island of Sicily. In this fight, Athenians fought an army of Syracusans at night. Killing each other in the night.

Darkling: dark, obscure, dim; occurring in darkness; menacing, threatening, dangerous, ominous

# LITERARY DEVICES

- Assonance: tide, lies;
- Paradox and Hyperbole: grating roar of pebbles
- Metaphor: The Sea of Faith (comparison of faith to water making up an ocean)
- Simile: The Sea of Faith . . . lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled (use of like to compare the sea to a girdle)
- Metaphor: breath of the night-wind (comparison of the wind to a living thing)
- Simile: the world, which seems / To lie before us like a land of dreams (use of like to compare the world to a land of dreams)
- Anaphora: So various, so beautiful, so new (repetition of so), nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain (repetition of nor)



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1. What type of poem is "Dover Beach"?
  2. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?
  3. What was the overall theme?
  4. What year did Arnold marry his wife?
  5. What battle does this poem allude to?
  6. What connection do the white cliffs have to the theme?
1. What play does the poem allude to?
  2. In the poem the sea is described through which of its characteristics?
  3. Give one example of alliteration in this poem.
  4. What does Arnold mainly describe in the poem?