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❁ THE LITERATURE OF ❁ THE WARRIOR

The Seafarer

PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

Prepare to think about the poem and its Central One Idea by drawing upon your prior knowledge, experience, or interests.

1. Imagine living life on a ship at sea, away from your family, friends, and community. Now imagine you are in this place of exile permanently. How would you feel? What things and people would you yearn for? What kinds of dreams and hopes would sustain you?
2. How would the vast ocean make you think or feel about life, eternity, and God? How would it shape your perspective about these realities?

GRAMMAR | Presentation

Discover essential facts, elements, and features of the poem through the Reading Notes, Words to Be Defined, and Comprehension Questions.

READING NOTES

1. **Anglo-Saxon lyrics** – Anglo-Saxon lyrics were composed primarily for simple memorization and recitation.
2. **lyric poem** – a poem that expresses the thoughts and feelings of a single speaker
3. **elegy** – a sustained, formal poem that mourns the loss of someone or something; a lament or sadly meditative poem on a solemn theme

4. **Anglo-Saxon lyrics contain these elements:**

- **regular rhythms** in the lines, often with strong beats
 - **kennings** – A kenning is a two-word metaphoric word or phrase that takes the place of a noun. Example: "whale-road" for *sea*; "swan-boat" for *ship*.
 - **alliteration** – the repetition of consonant sounds in successive words
 - **assonance** – the repetition of vowel sounds in successive words
 - **caesuras** – The poetic device in Anglo-Saxon poetry that divides each line in the center into two half lines (more noticeable in the original Anglo-Saxon than in many modern English translations). Example: "Night after night || over the misty moor" (*Beowulf*)
5. **diction** – the particular words used in a work; word choice
 6. **personification** – a figure of speech that gives human qualities to animals, inanimate objects, or ideas
 7. **anaphora** – the repetition of a word or words at the beginning of two or more lines, phrases, or clauses
 8. **oft** (l. 2) – often
 9. **benumbed** (l. 5) – made numb, especially by the cold
 10. **prow** (l. 6) – the bow; the front of a ship
 11. **gannet** (l. 15) – a large seabird with mostly white plumage
 12. **kittiwake** (l. 15) – a small gull that nests in colonies on sea cliffs; its loud call sounds like "kittiwake"
 13. **sea-mew** (l. 16) – a common seagull
 14. **tern** (l. 17) – a seabird related to the gulls, somewhat smaller and more slender
 15. **pinions** (l. 19) – the wings of a bird
 16. **ought** (l. 37) – anything at all
 17. **yore** (l. 64) – in the past; long ago
 18. **sear** (l. 68) – dried up; withered

WORDS TO BE DEFINED

Definitions Bank

assigned; committed	has a strong inner feeling or notion that something bad will happen; foretells or predicts
complaining; grumbling; fretful	to praise enthusiastically; to exalt
dwelling places; residences	to pull, twist, or turn forcibly
great waves or surges of water	trivial; unimportant
someone or something that indicates what is to come; a forerunner	
stormy; turbulent	

1. 'Mid the terrible rolling of waves, **habitations** of sorrow. (l. 4)
2. Yet hotly were wailing the **querulous** sighs round my heart (l. 8)
3. Some hardship, some **trifling** adversity, proud and wine-flushed. (l. 22)
4. To test the the high streams, the salt waves in **tumultuous** play. (l. 27)
5. Nor in aught save the roll of the **billows**; but always a longing (l. 37)
6. Summer's **harbinger** sings, and forebodes to the heart bitter sorrow. (l. 44)
7. Summer's harbinger sings, and **forebodes** to the heart bitter sorrow. (l. 44)
8. **Wrench** the soul away, doomed to depart. This is praise from the living (l. 56)
9. 'Gainst the malice of fiends, and the devil; so men shall **extol** him (l. 59)
10. He has seen his old friends, sons of princes, **consigned** to the earth. (l. 71)



Read "The Seafarer," marking the text in key places according to the method taught in "How to Mark a Book."

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. When was "The Seafarer" probably composed?
2. "The Seafarer" reminds us that the Anglo-Saxons were originally ____, and their daily lives were vitally connected with the ____.
3. This poem, along with passages from "The Wanderer" and voyages in *Beowulf*, is the beginning in England of a ____.
4. Who is the **speaker** in the poem?
5. In the opening five lines, how does the speaker describe his voyages? List five **descriptive words** or phrases that he uses to describe his voyages.
6. Quote the line that contains an instance of **personification** in lines 8-11.
7. Consider the **diction** in line 11. What particular word signals a broader **theme** for the poem?
8. What important **contrast** does the speaker present in lines 10-11?
9. In lines 11-13, what evidence do you find that the seafarer's pain is more than physical?
10. What elements of **setting** does the seafarer mention to help convey his desolate, exiled state? Quote at least three words or phrases.
11. What **transition word** signals the first important **shift** in the speaker's perspective about the sea? Quote the line or two that contains the shift, and underline the transition word.
12. What change does this **shift** bring in the speaker's perspective? Quote a line that you think best expresses his change in perspective.
13. What kinds of things does the seafarer choose to live without in favor of the "roll of the billows"?
14. Identify two **kennings** from anywhere between line 22 and the end of Part I. The kennings in this translation may have more than two words.
15. Part II presents another major **shift** in the poem. What do you think has caused the seafarer's changed perspective?