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"Dover Beach" is the most celebrated poem by Matthew Arnold, a writer and educator of the Victorian era. The poem expresses a crisis of faith, with the speaker acknowledging the diminished standing of Christianity, which the speaker sees as being unable to withstand the rising tide of scientific discovery. New research and intellectual inquiry cast doubt on humankind's central and special role in the universe.

The speaker in the poem senses this change almost subconsciously, seeing and hearing it in the sea that the speaker is looking out upon. In its expression of alienation, doubt, and melancholy, the poem is often interpreted as a remarkably forward-thinking precursor to 20th century crises of faith—like Existentialism and Absurdism. In essence, the poem is an inquiry into what it means to be alive.

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Popularity of “Dover Beach”: Matthew Arnold, a famous poet, and critic wrote Dover Beach, a famous dramatic monologue. It was first published in 1867. The poem describes a distinct clash between religion and the modern world. It also illustrates how the beauty of the world is corroded with the loss of faith.



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“Dover Beach” Criticism on the World: The poem presents two things: the reality of the new world and loss of faith. The poet argues that the world is no more beautiful as it used to be. At first, standing on the cliffs of Dover Beach, he records his feelings about the tranquil sea. He also calls his love to enjoy this majesty of nature, glimmering lighthouse, famous white cliffs of Dover and the sound of waves, hitting at the seashore. This enchanting scene reminds him of the Greek dramatics, Sophocles and his tragic plays. He states that in the past people had faith in the past, and the world was a good place. But, now it has become hollow without any joy, happiness, and faith. Also, people are unable to differentiate between reality and illusion. So, faith is slipping away. The poem conveys a message that it is only through love people can find the lost faith.

Major themes in “Dover Beach”: Man, the natural world and loss of faith are the major themes in the poem. He laments the loss of faith in the world with resultant cruelty, uncertainty, and violence. Although the world appears as a land of mesmerizing dreams, in reality, humanity is standing on the verge of chaos; perplex, confused and empty from inside. Therefore, he urges his beloved and himself to be true to one another to survive in this land.

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Discussion On The Sub.-matter of the Poem, 'Dover Beach'

Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," published in 1867, is about how the world is losing faith in God, and how love, comfort, and loyalty are the only things that can fill the void that faith once filled.

Arnold was known for finding darkness in the light. So, the poem is generally melancholic. In the beginning, the speaker makes it clear that only a slight attention given to details will reveal something pessimistic. Even on "calm" nights, there is "misery." He believes that there is a constant and "eternal" serious tone to life. Furthermore, the use of waves as a symbol of life's miseries indicates that one is never free of life's struggles, because there is always a wave of misery waiting.

The speaker possibly compares himself to Sophocles, and reiterates the thought that human misery is "eternal" by pointing out that him and his lover are not the first ones to experience these emotions, because they are universal just as human sadness is. The speaker further is reminiscent of a time in human history when there was more faith than misery. We wonder has he and his lover experienced a break in faith that has caused him to be thinking this way?



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But it appears that he really is relying on the relationship to sustain him throughout his life. There is loyalty in the relationship. However, it does appear that he is more worried about society in general. The tone of the poem is gloomily reflective. Arnold conveys that perseverance requires love to be true in the face of eternal struggles and sadness.

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