

It is very likely that on the AP exam you will be required to carefully scrutinize a poem for not just its meaning, but also for the methods by which the poet constructs meaning. Preparing for this type of analysis requires regular exposure to challenging poems and practice. Then more practice.

The basics of a poetic response includes 2 parts

1. The dominant feature of the poem. This is often a thematic component (significance of [feature]... relationships between ideas/characters/images...connections to society...).
2. The physical components of the poem and their function. This is how the literary devices, metrical features, and other details contribute to meaning. This part of the prompt often expects you to consider where (and how) a poem shifts - this is not always mentioned in the prompt, but should be assumed to have prominence!

For this poem, I want you to write a thoughtful response that identifies a dominant feature of the poem and analyzes how the components of the poem function to create that dominant feature.

### **Dover Beach**

BY MATTHEW ARNOLD

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.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Ægean, 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.