**QUESTION:** As we can see in “The Seafarer” and the poems below, poets have long been moved by and attracted to the sea, especially its fierceness and austerity. Poems about the sea usually reflect on the big questions—life and death, eternity, beauty, adventure, meaning, fear. As Ishmael, the narrator of *Moby Dick* observes, “meditation and water are wedded forever.”

Thinking particularly about “The Seafarer,” but also considering poems in the “sea tradition,” write a short paragraph in your reading journal commenting on the attractive power of the sea. Why *does* the speaker of “The Seafarer” feel attracted to the sea despite the harshness of life at sea?

**Apostrophe to the Ocean**

BY GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll!

Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;

Man marks the earth with ruin; his control

Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain

The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain

A shadow of man’s ravage, save his own,

When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,

He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,

Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

**Sea-Fever**

BY JOHN MASEFIELD

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,

And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;

And the wheel’s kick and the wind’s song and the white sail’s shaking,

And a grey mist on the sea’s face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide

Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;

And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,

And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,

To the gull’s way and the whale’s way where the wind’s like a whetted knife;

And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,

And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick’s over.

**From the Shore**

BY CARL SANDBURG

A lone gray bird,

Dim-dipping, far-flying,

Alone in the shadows and grandeurs and tumults

Of night and the sea

And the stars and storms.

Out over the darkness it wavers and hovers,

Out into the gloom it swings and batters,

Out into the wind and the rain and the vast,

Out into the pit of a great black world,

Where fogs are at battle, sky-driven, sea-blown,

Love of mist and rapture of flight,

Glories of chance and hazards of death

On its eager and palpitant wings.

Out into the deep of the great dark world,

Beyond the long borders where foam and drift

Of the sundering waves are lost and gone

On the tides that plunge and rear and crumble.