

Example of essay on analyzing the two poems

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



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“ The Wanderer” and “ The seafarer”

“ The Wanderer” and “ The Seafarer” are poems whose authors are unknown. The setting of each poem is the sea and they are written in the period of the Anglo Saxon; the poems are written in figurative language; and they have very distinct elements

“ The Wanderer and “ The Seafarer” poems are usually studied together. However “ The Seafarer” is the more popular of the two and one of the best examples of melancholic poetry. Neither “ The Wanderer” nor “ The Seafarer” has a title, common practice among Anglo Saxon poetry, these titles are attributed to them at a later date, making them easier to recognize. Both poems are published in The Exeter Anthology of English Literature; and as with their titles they are not dated.

In “ The Wanderer,” the poem begins: with the wanderer telling his story how he lost everyone, family, lord, clan, and family. He alone is spared the slaughter and is forced into exile to save his own life. “ The Wanderer” begins: “ The lonely traveler longs for grace/ For the mercy of God, grief

hangs on/ his heart and follows the frost-cold foam/ He cuts in the sea,/ sailing endlessly/ Aimlessly in exile”(lines 1-5). The Seafarer in “ The Seafarer” introduces himself in émigré as a form of penance. He thinks that as a Christian, life has been easy; therefore throwing himself into hardship is a fitting way to make him into a better Christian. “ This tale is true and mine. It tells/How the sea took me, swept me back/And forth in sorrow and fear and pain Showed me suffering in a hundred ships/In a thousand ports and in me”(lines 1-5). These two exiles are experiencing the same predicament, only one is self-inflicted.

Richard Marsden (2004) says that “ The Seafarer” is more of a didactic poem than an elegiac poem. It is a metaphor showing the challenges of the committed Christian who exiles himself and inflicts extreme hardship on himself, a kind of penance that will make him worthy of the complacent life he has led. The Seafarer is an avid believer in the old adage, “ No pain no gain.” He believes that he can truly become someone commendable for God’s blessing by self- punishment; his belief is mythical he is vigorously buying his salvation (221). Both “ The Seafarer and “ The Wanderer” are poems steep in Christianity and paganism. The two poems express the importance of family and clan a heroic trait of the Anglo Saxon culture. It is the belief of the Anglo Saxon that every warrior should display courage and strength, characteristics they proudly identified in these men that hailed them heroes. The plight of these two men is not viewed by the Anglo Saxon as dire but as a situation where heroic bravery is demonstrated.

Alliteration is a commonly used language in the Anglo Saxon poetry; it maintains the tempo of the elegiac poetry as it is chanted at social gatherings. These poems are usually preserved from generation to generation and by word of mouth. Examples of alliteration. In "The Wanderer," "To whom my heart would hurry, hot/Weary with winter I wandered out (lines 10, 24)." "The Seafarer""How wretched I was, drifting through winter/When wonderful things were worked among them (lines 14, 85). Alliteration is the fitting language for these poems; they lend to the wailing effect of the speakers. Even with the use of alliteration, the poems differ in the way the travelers express their loneliness. One poem describes his sorrow by complaining about the life he has lost, how he is made to wander in exile; while the other almost glorifies in his quandary. Alliteration is one of the main characteristic that makes these poems elegiac.

The structure of both poems is distinct and there are some similarities as well as differences beginning with the point of view. First person narrative is the point of view in "The Seafarer." Whereas in "The Wanderer" it begins with the third person and changes to the first person. First line: "This lonely traveler longs for grace," and in the tenth line the first person takes control and continues throughout: "I've drunk too many lonely dawns." The point of view has its effect on the mood of the poems; "The Seafarer" who reports totally in the first person is somewhat passive, and in "The Wanderer" it is active. It seems that since the wanderer is thrust into exile he must find a way to set himself free. In the following lines the wanderer decides to exercise patience, since wisdom comes with age. Somehow as he becomes

wiser, he will be liberated. “ Wisdom is slow and comes/ but late. He who has it is patient” (lines 64, 65)

Richard Ellman(2006) says:

Once the narrator of *The Seafarer* has been established as a person

perceptive of both himself and the natural world (and the metaphorical connection contained therein), it is then possible to survey his insights into the nature of other men and women mentioned in the poem.

Through examining the nature of humanity, the speaker of the poem comes to a moral (and Christian) conclusion toward the end of the

poem, which serves as a summary and final assessment of the various external experiences with which *The Seafarer* is concerned.

The tone of both poems is distinctive and both speakers almost being the same. The wanderer is a poem full of lamentations; he is constantly looking back, he would imagine that he sees his lord and his family; and when he is not reminiscing he would wallow in self-pity. Even the speaker admits that he is spending his days feeling sorry for himself. “ In this brief world I cannot wander/ That my mind is set on melancholy/ Because I never forget the fate/ Of men robbed of riches, suddenly/ looted by death-the doom of earth” (lines 58-62). The seafarer whose name may have an underlying meaning is not like the wanderer. The seafarer remembers times when he enjoyed the good life but he is not sorrowful. He is simply saying that he has experienced the better things of life, he has been to many cities, however, he chooses to return to sea and give up all the comforts of the big cities. “ And who could

believe, knowing but/ The passion of cities, swelled proud with wine/ and no taste of misfortune, how often, how wearily/ I put myself back on the paths of the sea” (lines 28-30).

“ The Wanderer” and “ The Seafarer” are poems that depict the Anglo Saxon Era; despite their differences and similarities in the in the manner in which they accept their plight, they are nonetheless, elegiac poems; measuring up to the hero of the Anglo Saxon.

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ANGLO-SAXON POETRY

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THE WANDERER

[The Wanderer is an elegy uttered by one who had formerly known happiness and honour in his lord's hall. Now his lord is dead, and he has lost his post. He has become a wanderer who knows that 'sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.']

OFTEN the solitary man prays for favour, for the mercy of the Lord, though, sad at heart, he must needs stir with his hands for a weary while the icy sea across the watery ways, must journey the paths of exile; settled in truth is fate! So spoke the wanderer, mindful of hardships, of cruel slaughters, of the fall of kinsmen:

'Often I must bewail my sorrows in my loneliness at the dawn of each day; there is none of living men now to whom I dare speak my heart openly. I know for a truth that it is a noble custom for a man to bind fast the thoughts of his heart, to treasure his broodings, let him think as he will. Nor can the weary in mood resist fate, nor does the fierce thought avail anything.

Wherefore those eager for glory often bind fast in their secret hearts a sad thought. So I, sundered from my native land, far from noble kinsmen, often sad at heart, had to fetter my mind, when in years gone by the darkness of the earth covered my gold-friend, and I went thence in wretchedness with wintry care upon me over the frozen waves, gloomily sought the hall of a treasure-giver wherever I could find him far or near, who might know me in the mead hall or comfort me, left without friends, treat me with kindness. He knows who puts it to the test how cruel a comrade is sorrow for him who has few dear protectors; his is the path of exile, in no wise the twisted gold; a chill body, in no wise the riches of the earth; he thinks of retainers in hall and the receiving of treasure, of how in his youth his gold-friend was kind to him at the feast. The joy has all perished. Wherefore he knows this who must long forgo the counsels of his dear lord and friend, when sorrow and sleep together often bind the poor solitary man; it seems to him in his mind that he clasps and kisses his lord and lays hands and head on his knee, as when

erstwhile in past days he was near the gift-throne; then the friendless man wakes again, sees before him the dark waves, the sea-birds bathing, spreading their feathers; frost and snow falling mingled with hail. Then heavier are the wounds in his heart, sore for his beloved; sorrow is renewed. Then the memory of kinsmen crosses his mind; he greets them with songs; he gazes on them eagerly. The companions of warriors swim away again; the souls of sailors bring there not many known songs. 1 Care is renewed in him who must needs send very often his weary mind over the frozen waves.

And thus I cannot think why in this world my mind becomes not overcast when I consider all the life of earls, how of a sudden they have given up hall, courageous retainers. So this world each day passes and falls; for a man cannot become wise till he has his share of years in the world. A wise man must be patient, not over-passionate, nor over-hasty of speech, nor over-weak or rash in war, nor overfearful, nor over-glad, nor over-covetous, never over-eager to boast ere he has full knowledge. A man must bide his time, when he boasts in his speech, until he knows well in his pride whither the thoughts of the mind will turn. A wise man must see how dreary it will be when all the riches of this world stand waste, as in different places throughout this world walls stand, blown upon by winds, hung with frost, the dwellings in ruins. The wine halls crumble; the rulers lie low, bereft of joy; the mighty warriors have all fallen in their pride by the wall; war carried off some, bore them on far paths; one the raven bore away over the high sea; one the grey wolf gave over to death; one an earl with sad face hid in the earth-cave. Thus did the Creator of men lay waste this earth till the old work of giants stood empty, free from the revel of castle-dwellers. Then he who

has thought wisely of the foundation of things and who deeply ponders this dark life, wise in his heart, often turns his thoughts to the many slaughters of the past, and speaks these words:

" Whither has gone the horse? Whither has gone the man? Whither has gone the giver of treasure? Whither has gone the place of feasting? 'Where are the joys of hall? Alas, the bright cup! Alas, the warrior in his corslet! Alas, the glory of the prince! How that time has passed away, has grown dark under the shadow of night, as if it had never been! Now in the place of the dear warriors stands a wall, wondrous high, covered with serpent shapes; the might of the ash-wood spears has carried off the earls, the weapon greedy for slaughter -- a glorious fate; and storms beat upon these rocky slopes; the falling storm binds the earth, the terror of winter. Then comes darkness, the night! Include your highlights.

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Shadow casts gloom, sends from the north fierce hailstorms to the terror of men. Everything is full of hardship in the kingdom of earth; the decree of fate changes the world under the heavens. Here possessions are transient, here

friends are transient, here man is transient, here woman is transient; all this firm-set earth becomes empty." '

So spoke the wise man in his heart, and sat apart in thought. Good is he who holds his faith; nor shall a man ever show forth too quickly the sorrow of his breast, except he, the earl, first know how to work its cure bravely. Well is it for him who seeks mercy, comfort from the Father in heaven, where for us all security stands.