

# [What does the sea represent in "the seafarer"?](https://assignbuster.com/what-does-the-sea-represent-in-the-seafarer/)

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In “ The Seafarer,” the open ocean represents much more than just a body of water; it represents a malicious beauty that never falters to draw in the narrator. When out at sea, the narrator depicts a storm so horrific that “ No man sheltered on the quiet fairness of earth can feel how wretched I [the narrator] was…” However not is all lost to the desolation of the sea, as every time the narrator is at sea his heart “ Would begin to beat, knowing once more the salt waves tossing and the towering sea!” At once, the poem goes from a tale of misery to an inspiring work that explains the path to eternal joy. Classically, “ The Seafarer” is a poem depicting exile. The first part of the poem tells a tale of a narrator who has, for an unknown reason, been made to suffer “ in a hundred ships, in a thousand ports, and in me.

” This is enormously powerful because the reader realizes that the narrator does not only suffer due to the physical hardships he faces, but suffers internally as well because of the mental angst he has developed after years of being alone. According to the narrator, the years spent on the high seas took its toll in unimaginable ways. Side effects of sailing the sea, as the poem describes, are sailors losing their passion for women, gaining no rewards on sea, and among other things, gaining no worldly pleasures. The only emotion felt while on the high seas is a longing for home. Later in the poem, however, one must realize that home to the narrator is in fact on the sea.

Descriptions turn from those of fury and fear to those of desire and love for the ocean. The poem’s overall voice and emotion turns from bleak to content. The reader learns from the narrator that even though the sea is unforgiving in many ways, the only time his heart is satisfied is when his soul is able to “ roam with the sea…” He compares his soul to a bird, using words such as “ screaming” and “ excited” to show that the sea makes him feel truly alive. Although life on land may be lavish and comfortable, the narrator tells the reader “ the wealth of the world neither reaches to Heaven nor remains.” This statement means anything material cannot last, thus happiness and wealth must come from within oneself.

The narrator recognizes that the times of “ lordly magnificence” are over, and explains to the reader that God is the reason for our existence and carefully articulates that we wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for God. The final stanzas of “ The Seafarer” use the sea as a symbol of life rather than a place or experience. The narrator expands on his idea of finite wealth and the creations God by using examples from both the hardships and joys of the sea, using them to explain that life is much more than what you have, but rather what you gain from the experiences you have. The narrator tells us that within one’s life one must “ treat the world as it deserves, conquer and control one’s pride, be courageous and strong, live humbly, and most importantly give love or hate but never harm.” These ideals will provide the praise of God, giving oneself true eternal joy.

Interestingly enough, the narrator is able to convey these facts to us because his life has been devoted to using these principals on sea. For example, early in the poem the narrator explains that he had lost passion for women, however at the end of the poem he is able to find the path of eternal joy because chaste is another principal one must practice. According to the narrator, wealth is not measured by the amount of possessions one has, but the amount of things he has done right in the eyes of God. Thus we see, “ The Seafarer” is not just a poem recounting one man’s experience, but rather it serves as a symbol of guidance for those seeking the acceptance of God. However, “ The Seafarer” is malleable in the fact that it is not written to be an instruction to find the acceptance God, but a text showing one man’s spiritual journey and his realizations that one can benevolently grow from malevolent experiences.