



***READING AND WRITING SKILLS FOR STUDENTS OF
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH: THE VICTORIAN PERIOD***

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3.2. Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach” (published 1867)

Reading Skills

Section 1 (lines 1-14)

1. How many people are there in this section?
2. Who is speaking, and to whom?
3. Where are they?
4. What can they hear from their window, and how does it make them (or the speaker, at least) feel?
5. Compare the significance of the references to France (line 3) and England (line 4).
6. What does the sea do in the first section? Does this movement have any symbolic meaning?

Section 2 (lines 15-21)

1. What and who are compared in this section?

Section 3 (lines 22-29)

1. What does the sea symbolise? What particular properties of the sea make it a useful symbol for Arnold?

Section 4 (lines 30-38)

1. Why must they be true to one another?
2. Is the world what it seems?
3. What is the world really like?
4. What is the meaning of life, according to the poem?
5. Compare the beginning and the end of the poem. How are they different?
6. What do you consider—if anything—to be typically Victorian about the poem?
7. What is Arnold’s message?

Writing Skills

1. Is Arnold’s “Dover Beach” a conventionally Christian poem?