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## Central Quote:

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## PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

*Prepare the student for understanding the Central One Idea by drawing upon his or her prior knowledge or experience.*

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1. Imagine living life on a ship at sea, away from your family, friends, and community. Now imagine you are in this place of exile permanently. How would you feel? What things and people would you yearn for? What kinds of dreams and hopes would sustain you?

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2. How would the vast ocean make you think or feel about life, eternity, and God? How would it shape your perspective about these realities?

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# GRAMMAR | Presentation

*The student is presented with and discovers essential facts, elements, and features of the poem.*

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## READING NOTES

1. **Anglo-Saxon lyrics** – Anglo-Saxon lyrics were composed primarily for simple memorization and recitation.
2. **lyric poem** – a poem that expresses the thoughts and feelings of a single speaker
3. **elegy** – a sustained, formal poem that mourns the loss of someone or something; a lament or sadly meditative poem on a solemn theme
4. **Anglo-Saxon lyrics contain these elements:**
  - **regular rhythms** in the lines, often with strong beats
  - **kennings** – A kenning is a two-word metaphoric word or phrase that takes the place of a noun. Example: "whale-road" for *sea*; "swan-boat" for *ship*.
  - **alliteration** – the repetition of consonant sounds in successive words
  - **assonance** – the repetition of vowel sounds in successive words
  - **caesuras** – The poetic device in Anglo-Saxon poetry that divides each line in the center into two half lines (more noticeable in the original Anglo-Saxon than in many modern English translations). Example: "Night after night || over the misty moor" (*Beowulf*)
5. **diction** – the particular words used in a work; word choice
6. **personification** – a figure of speech that gives human qualities to animals, inanimate objects, or ideas
7. **anaphora** – the repetition of a word or words at the beginning of two or more lines, phrases, or clauses
8. **oft** (l. 2) – often
9. **benumbed** (l. 5) – made numb, especially by the cold
10. **prow** (l. 6) – the bow; the front of a ship
11. **gannet** (l. 15) – a large seabird with mostly white plumage
12. **kittiwake** (l. 15) – a small gull that nests in colonies on sea cliffs. Its loud call sounds like "kittiwake"
13. **sea-mew** (l. 16) – a common seagull
14. **tern** (l. 17) – a seabird related to the gulls, somewhat smaller and more slender
15. **pinions** (l. 19) – the wings of a bird
16. **aught** (l. 37) – anything at all
17. **yore** (l. 64) – in the past; long ago
18. **sear** (l. 68) – dried up; withered

## WORDS TO BE DEFINED

### Definitions Bank

assigned; committed	has a strong inner feeling or notion that something bad will happen; foretells or predicts
complaining; grumbling; fretful	to praise enthusiastically; to exalt
dwelling places; residences	to pull, twist, or turn forcibly
great waves or surges of water	trivial; unimportant
someone or something that indicates what is to come; a forerunner	
stormy; turbulent	

1. 'Mid the terrible rolling of waves, **habitations** of sorrow. (l. 4)  
dwelling places; residences
2. Yet hotly were wailing the **querulous** sighs round my heart (l. 8)  
complaining; grumbling; fretful
3. Some hardship, some **trifling** adversity, proud and wine-flushed. (l. 22)  
trivial; unimportant
4. To test the the high streams, the salt waves in **tumultuous** play. (l. 27)  
stormy; turbulent
5. Nor in aught save the roll of the **billows**; but always a longing (l. 37)  
great waves or surges of water
6. Summer's **harbinger** sings, and forebodes to the heart bitter sorrow. (l. 44 )  
someone or something that indicates what is to come; a forerunner
7. Summer's harbinger sings, and **forebodes** to the heart bitter sorrow. (l. 44)  
has a strong inner feeling or notion that something bad will happen; foretells or predicts
8. **Wrench** the soul away, doomed to depart. This is praise from the living (l. 56)  
to pull, twist, or turn forcibly
9. 'Gainst the malice of fiends, and the devil; so men shall **extol** him (l. 59)  
to praise enthusiastically; to exalt
10. He has seen his old friends, sons of princes, **consigned** to the earth. (l. 71)  
assigned; committed



Read "The Seafarer," marking the text in key places according to the method taught in "How to Mark a Book."

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. When was "The Seafarer" probably composed?

in the early 8th century

2. "The Seafarer" reminds us that the Anglo-Saxons were originally \_\_\_\_\_ Vikings \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
and their daily lives were vitally connected with the \_\_\_\_\_ sea \_\_\_\_\_ .

3. This poem, along with passages from "The Wanderer" and voyages in *Beowulf*, is the  
beginning in England of a \_\_\_\_\_ literature of the sea \_\_\_\_\_ .

4. Who is the **speaker** in the poem? \_\_\_\_\_ the seafarer \_\_\_\_\_

5. In the opening five lines, how does the speaker describe his voyages? List five **descriptive words** or phrases that he uses to describe his voyages.

Answers will vary. He tells how harrowing his voyages are. "laborious days"; "wearisome

hours"; "I have suffered"; "have borne tribulations"; "the terrible rolling of waves";

"habitations of sorrow"; "benumbed by the cold"; "comfortless night-watch"

6. Quote the line that contains an instance of **personification** in lines 8-11.

"And **hunger** within me, sea-wearied, **made havoc of courage.**" (l. 9)

7. Consider the **diction** in line 11. What particular word signals a broader theme for the poem?

exile

8. What important **contrast** does the speaker present in lines 10-11?

He makes a contrast between a comfortable land-dweller and himself on the ice-cold sea.

9. In lines 11-13, what evidence do you find that the seafarer's pain is more than physical?

He mentions that in his "wretchedness" he is "robbed of my kinsman." Both of these terms,

especially "robbed of my kinsman," reveal the emotional and mental pain that he feels from

being separated from his family and community.

10. What elements of **setting** does the seafarer mention to help convey his desolate, exiled state? Quote at least three words or phrases.

He says "the shadows of night became darker"; "it snowed from the North"; "The world was enchained by frost"; "hail fell upon the earth"

11. What **transition word** signals the first important **shift** in the speaker's perspective about the sea? Quote the line or two that contains the shift, and underline the transition word.

"Yet the thoughts of my heart now are throbbing / To test the high streams ..." (ll. 26-27)

12. What change does this **shift** bring in the speaker's perspective? Quote a line that you think best expresses his change in perspective.

His heart now throbs to get out on the sea. He says, "Desire in my heart ever urges my spirit to wander / To seek out the home of the stranger in lands far off" (ll. 28-29).

13. What kinds of things does the seafarer choose to live without in favor of the "roll of the billows"?

He chooses to live without music (harp), treasure, a wife, and other worldly pleasures.

14. Identify two **kennings** from anywhere between line 22 and the end Part I. The kennings in this translation may have more than two words.

Answers will vary. "sea-way" (l. 23); "high streams" (l. 27); "home of the whale" (l. 48);

"whale-path" (l. 51)

15. Part II presents another major **shift** in the poem. What do you think has caused the seafarer's changed perspective?

The seafarer realizes his life of exile is painful, desolate, and fleeting. It causes him to hope for something better. He says, "The delights of the Lord are far dearer to me than this dead, / Fleeting life upon earth, for I can not believe that earth's riches / For ever endure" (ll. 52-54).

16. What three things make life so uncertain and "wrench the soul away"?

violence, age, and disease

17. In the first ten lines of Part II, the seafarer is primarily concerned with:

- |                                |                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. the angels                  | d. violence, age, and disease |
| b. the earth and its pleasures | e. enduring hardships         |
| c. the afterlife               |                               |

18. Quote the line that contains the use of **anaphora**.

"There now are no kings, no emperors now, no gold-givers" (l. 63)

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19. The seafarer presents another **shift** in the last section of the poem. Where does his attention or focus now turn? Include a line or a phrase from these lines in your answer.

The seafarer now focuses primarily on God, and on believing in Him and fearing Him. "Great is the fear of the Lord; the earth trembles before it" (ll. 80-81); "God doth establish the soul that believes in His might" (l. 85).

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## LOGIC | Dialectic

*The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the poem, and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea.*

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### SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What sounds of society does the seafarer imagine hearing, and what sounds does he actually hear? How does this **contrast** contribute to the overall **mood**?

He imagines hearing the "laughter of men" (l. 16). He actually hears the "gannet's cry," "the kittiwakes chatter," and "the call of the sea-mews" (ll. 15-16). The contrast contributes to the agony and pain he feels in exile; he wishes he could hear the former, but he only hears the latter.

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2. Quote the 2-3 lines where the seafarer reiterates and **amplifies** the **contrast** between a city-dweller and himself. What important words or expressions does he use to convey how he feels about those people?

"of this little he knows / Who possesses the pleasures of life, who has felt in the city / Some hardship, some trifling adversity, proud and wine-flushed" (ll. 20-22). He says that they have "trifling adversities" and that they are "proud and wine-flushed."

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3. *But that he has always a longing, a sea-faring passion  
For what the Lord God shall bestow, be it honor or death.* (ll. 33-34)

These lines bring together the desire for the sea and the will of God. **Summarize** and explain these lines. What important idea is conveyed?

He seems to say that the passion and desire for the sea exists, and along with that comes a belief in whatever (fate or destiny) God chooses to bestow upon the seafarer—be it honor or death.

4. How does the seafarer describe nature in lines 39ff.? Include a line or phrase from his **description** in your answer. What effect does this nature have on the seafarer?

He speaks of nature in descriptive terms—it is full of life and vitality: "The woodlands are captured by blossoms, the hamlets grow fair, / Broad meadows are beautiful, earth again bursts into life" (ll. 39-40). It stirs his heart to journey out on the "pathway of tides."

5. *This garment of flesh has no power, when the spirit escapes,  
To drink in the sweet nor to taste of the bitter; it then  
Has no power to stretch forth the hands or to think with the mind.* (ll. 72-74)

**Summarize** these lines. In your answer, identify and explain the **metaphor**. What is the main topic the seafarer is speaking of?

The main topic the seafarer is speaking about is death. The metaphor "garment of flesh" refers to the body, which has no power upon death "when the spirit escapes." The "garment of flesh" can no longer drink or taste or move the hands or think with the mind.

6. In the last section of the poem, the seafarer is concerned with not only the object of our belief, but in how we should \_\_\_\_\_ live \_\_\_\_\_ .

# RHETORIC | Expression

*The student explains in his or her own words the Central One Idea with supporting details.*

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## 1 CENTRAL ONE IDEA

1. In a few sentences, **summarize** "The Seafarer."

In Part I, the seafarer reveals the agony, hardship, and pain of living a life of exile on the sea. And yet he also conveys that when he is not at sea, he longs to be there. In Part II, the seafarer conveys knowing God is far more precious than this fleeting life, especially his miserable life of exile at sea. He concludes the poem by stating how important it is to fear the Lord and to live in a right manner before Him.

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2. Write the **Central One Idea** of the poem in a complete sentence.

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3. List two or three points that support your determination of the Central One Idea.

The poem's theme expands and develops from the hardships of a life in exile at sea to the longing and yearning for that life, to a realization that nothing in this fleeting life matters compared to God, to the culmination of the theme in the Central One Idea: fear the Lord, live rightly, and press forward unto heavenly joy.

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4. Choose 1-3 lines from the poem that you think best embody the Central One Idea – and with good penmanship, write it in the Central Quote section at the beginning of this lesson.

## 1 CENTRAL ONE IDEA (as expressed by the teacher)

Fear the Lord, live a right manner of life, and press forward unto heavenly joy everlasting.

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## ESSAY OPTION

Can people find a manner of life or a place in life where they are fully happy? Or, like the seafarer, will they always have a yearning for another place? Are we all, figuratively speaking, "seafarers"? Develop a clear thesis that presents your point of view and support it with a well-reasoned argument. Though most of the essay will be your own ideas and supporting evidence, make some effort to reference "The Seafarer" in your essay. For example, you may find that the seafarer and/or his story work well as an analogy or metaphor in your argument, or in a certain part of your argument. You may find it useful to quote a line from the poem in your essay — one time or even a few times.