

Arnold's "Dover Beach presents the reader with a virtual journey through time. Lamenting the transition from an age of certainty into an era of erosion of tradition-Modernism-is the backbone of all four stanzas of the poem, brought together in our imagination by the nostalgic image of the sea."Misery", "sadness" and "melancholy" reign most of the poem, yet the author chooses to conclude it with an emotional appeal for honesty: "Ah, love, let us be true/to one another" – as it is the only true certainty left as the world around collapses under "struggle" and "fight". The poet's attitude towards the subject of the poem is revealed through key words, which are also references to a number of themes in the poem. The most obvious one of these is "the sea" with its nostalgic nature and ability to represent time and timelessness simultaneously. "Sadness", "misery", "melancholy", "pain" accompany this effect and reveal the overall sense of regret and helplessness the author feels before the powers of time and inevitable change.

The tone of the piece is determined by the constant presence of "melancholy" and "misery" in the poem that stretch on into the distance with a "long withdrawing roar". The calmness of the narrative voice with which the piece is set to work ("the sea is calm to-night /The tide is full, the moon lies far.") is essential for the descriptive nature of the first stanza. Yet, later on its role is to emphasize the negativity in the tone of the poem: "But now I only hear /Its melancholy.....", "Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow/of human misery..." The end of the piece, however, implies that the alteration of the things around us is something inevitable. The tone changes in the last verse of the poem in the sense that it now not simply resents mutability, but is also a tone pleading with the reader to realize nothing is as stable and reliable as one perceives it, not to take the world for granted, and to stay "true/to one another".

The fundamental issues of the poem are not only obvious in its conclusion. The theme of Time is being discussed in the second verse, where Sophocles - an essential historic figure – is referred to. The mentioning of England and France at the beginning of the first verse can also be considered a historic reference and therefore –part of the theme of Time as history is a natural subject of it. Time here is represented by the image of the sea- with its vastness evoking powerful admiration. The theme of mutability follows closely because of the sea's unreliable nature. It is presented as something inevitable and insecure and, in its turn, leads on to the theme of human staying true and honest to one another- this involving love for each other- as the only way to remain together, "for the world, which seems/ to lie before us like a land of dreams/ Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light."

The structure of the poem gives the immediate impression of being inconsistent and built upon no particular rules. There are four verses, none of which are alike, with no particular rhythm or rhyme pattern. Yet its tremendous effect on the reader is wittily based upon the impression of sharing the author's thoughts as we read – it seems easy to identify with the subject matter Just as the latter synchronize with the sea's waves. The verses lead onto one another by theme although they appear to be quite unconventionally structured. Thus the end of the first stanza – occupied with sadness - brings on the "misery" of stanza two; then the image of sea and insecurity of the end of the second verse invites the beginning of the following and ending verse. The unity of the poem is in this way complete and its impact on the reader stretches far beyond the lines.