



THE INDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL, KOCHI

GRADE 12-ISC

SUBJECT- ENGLISH
DOVER BEACH- MATHEW ARNOLD

[Dear students, I thought of starting your classes with the poem, Dover Beach, page 26 of your text. I will today explain the first stanza and ask relevant questions from it. I have not stopped using difficult words because I want you to be eventually using them, however, I have given the meanings of the difficult words/phrases underlined, in blue print]

BACKGROUND-

In this poem the poet laments [complains] the loss of faith in the world with resultant [which results in] cruelty, uncertainty, and violence.

Mathew Arnold is supposed to be the educator of the Victorian era [1837 to 1901-Queen Victoria's rule in UK] This period was characterized by many scientific inventions and discoveries which even included Charles Darwin's theories. Thus this period led to a stirred mind-set [confused] of the people . There were a lot of agnostics [questions the existence of God] and freethinkers [people who reject accepted norms esp in religion] in England. With all the new found scientific knowledge people started losing faith in religion . Though Mathew Arnold was one such freethinker who did not hate religion but concentrated on the argument that it was not necessary to believe in God to behave in moral fashion. Thus the poem speaks about the eroding [losing] of faith and man's role in this universe.

POEM

This poem can be taken as a **dramatic monologue**.

What is a dramatic monologue ?

It is a form of poem where there is a silent listener to the poet who is the speaker. Here also we have the poet speaking but in line 6, for example he says, " Come to the window----" So he is talking to someone who is silent in the poem.

Also we find the 'sea' as the main theme in the poem. So look out for sea and words related to sea as you read the poem.

EXPLANATION [the yellow lines are the lines from the poem]

The poet begins by describing the calm sea- The sea is calm tonight.

It is full tide and the moon is shining brightly- the moon shines on the straits [a narrow passage of water connecting two seas] The poet is staying near the English channel and looking across the English channel, the speaker sees the lights of the French coast fade away, [on the French Coast the light gleams and is gone] while the cliffs of the English coast stand tall and bright, and the bay seems calm. [tranquil bay]

Then he asks his lover [the silent listener] to come to the window because the night air is very sweet. But still the poet senses that something is not quite right, and describes the spray where the water meets the moonlit land. It is where the water meets the land on which moon has been shining.

Next stanza -tomorrow.

Questions

1. Who wrote the poem, Dover Beach ?
2. Give the circumstances under which the poem was written.
3. What is a dramatic monologue?
4. Give an example from the poem to justify the presence of a silent listener.
5. Explain how the poet starts the poem. [first 3 lines]
6. What does the poet say about French coast ? How is he able to see it?
7. What does he say about the cliffs and bays of England?
8. Which word in the poem tells us that he is contrasting the French coast with the cliffs and bay of England?