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Alfred Lord Tennyson  
 “Break Break Break”

## Break, Break, Break

BY ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Break, break, break,  
 On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!  
 And I would that my tongue could utter  
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,  
 That he shouts with his sister at play!  
 O, well for the sailor lad,  
 That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on  
 To their haven under the hill;  
 But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,  
 And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break

At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me.

General Meaning: In this poem, Tennyson laments the sudden death of his friend named Arthur Hallam in 1833.

In the first stanza, Tennyson uses contrast. He commands the sea to 'break, break, break' upon the cold rocks at the coast; but in the second half of that first stanza, he contrasts this outward scene with the interior one, the struggle raging within his own heart: he cannot articulate his grief, the 'thoughts that arise', like the waves of the sea, within him. In the same stanza, the rhyme between 'Sea' and 'me' – made all the more prominent because the other two lines of the stanza do *not* rhyme – draws this comparison, one that Tennyson returns to in the final stanza. The sea goes on as it must; Tennyson, however, cannot go on with his life. Tennyson uses repetition when he repeats the word "break" three times in two different stanzas of the poem. Repetition is used for emphasis, and Tennyson is trying to emphasize the relentless way waves continually crash on a shore. They break, or crash, over and over again as his deep sadness continues because of the death of his mutual friend. This repeated word signifies that the poet's grief is long and overwhelming.

Elegy: a mournful, melancholy, or plaintive poem, especially a funeral song or a lament for the dead.

*Also, the poem* is an elegy written by Lord Tennyson on the death of his university friend Arthur Hallam. Here, the ever-breaking sea, the fisherman's boy, the stately ships, all show the permanence of the world around and yet they remain unaffected by the poet's personal grief. In this elegy, Nature serves as a mirror of poet's intense feelings of sorrow. The poem has reference to a watering place on the Bristol Channel where his

friend is buried. Simple and lucid, the poem regards the poet's intense grief which is shared by Nature. In the opening lines, the impression of an unpleasant face is being hammered into the poet's consciousness

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Life goes on as usual, once the poet is miserable and solitary and longs for his company of his dead friend. The stately ships of life are taking its voyage towards the domain of death- under the hill. Thus in the description of Nature there goes the image of deceased Arthur Hallam who has been silenced for ever by the hidden hand of death. He is missing his dear friend who was a source of comfort. ....

Intention: The poet can't get back to the "grace of a day" that happened before his close friend died. Things are different now and that time will never come back to him.