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Directions: Read the following poem. Annotate the stanzas as you read and work your way through it. When you have a grasp of the poem, use specific lines and ideas to connect it to *Fahrenheit 451*. This should be written in paragraph form and utilize MLA formatted citations.

**Dover Beach**   
 By Matthew Arnold

The sea is calm to-night.    
The tide is full, the **moon lies fair**   
**Upon the straits**; on the French coast the **light**   
**Gleams and is gone**; the **cliffs of England stand;**   
**Glimmering and vast**, out in the tranquil bay.    
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!    
Only, from the long line of spray    
Where the sea meets the **moon-blanched** land,    
Listen! you hear the **grating roar**   
**Of pebbles** which the waves draw back, and fling,   
At their return, up the high **strand**,    
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,   
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring   
The eternal note of sadness in.

**Sophocles long ago**   
Heard **it** on the **Aegean**, and it brought    
Into his mind the **turbid** ebb and flow   
Of human misery; we   
**Find also in the sound a thought**,   
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The **Sea of Faith**   
**Was once, too, at the full**, and round earth's shore   
Lay like the folds of a bright **girdle** furled.   
But now **I only hear**   
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,   
Retreating, to the breath   
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear   
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true   
To one another! for the world, which seems   
To lie before us like a land of dreams,   
So various, so beautiful, so new,   
Hath really **neither joy, nor love, nor light,**   
**Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain**;   
And we are here as on a **darkling** plain   
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,   
**Where ignorant armies clash by night**.

Notes, Stanza 1

**moon . . . straits**: The water reflects the image of the moon. A strait is a narrow body of water that connects two larger bodies of water. In this poem, *straits* refers to the Strait of Dover (French: *Pas de Calais*), which connects the English Channel on the south to the North Sea on the north. The distance between the port cities of Dover, England, and Calais, France, is about 21 miles via the Strait of Dover.    
**light . . . gone**: This clause establishes a sense of rhythm in that the light blinks on and off. In addition, the clause foreshadows the message of later lines--that the light of faith in God and religion, once strong, now flickers. Whether an observer at Dover can actually see a light at Calais depends on the height of the lighthouse and the altitude at which the observer sees the light (because of the curvature of the earth), on the brightness of the light, and on the weather conditions.    
**cliffs . . . vast**: These are white cliffs, composed of chalk, a limestone that easily erodes. Like the light from France, they glimmer, further developing the theme of a weakening of the light of faith. The fact that they easily erode supports this theme.   
**moon-blanched**: whitened by the light of the moon.   
**grating . . . .pebbles**: Here, *grating* (meaning *rasping, grinding*, or *scraping*) introduces conflict between the sea and the land and, symbolically, between long-held religious beliefs and the challenges against them. However, it may be an exaggeration that that pebbles cause a *grating roar*.    
**strand**: shoreline

Notes, Stanza 2

**Sophocles . . . Aegean**: Arnold alludes here to a passage in the ancient Greek play *Antigone*, by Sophocles, in which Sophocles says the gods can visit ruin on people from one generation to the next, like a swelling tide driven by winds.    
**it**: "the eternal note of sadness" (Line 14).   
**Aegean**: The sea between Greece and Turkey. In the time of Sophocles, the land occupied by Turkey was known as Anatolia.   
**turbid**: muddy, cloudy   
**Find . . . thought**: In the sound of the sea, the poet "hears" a thought that disturbs him as did the one heard by Sophocles.

Notes, Stanza 3

**Sea . . . full**: See theme, above, for an explanation.    
**girdle**: sash, belt; anything that surrounds or encircles   
**I only hear**: I alone hear   
**shingles**: gravel on the beach

*Interpretation*

There was a time when faith in God was strong and comforting. This faith wrapped itself around us, protecting us from doubt and despair, as the sea wraps itself around the continents and islands of the world. Now, however, the sea of faith has become a sea of doubt. Science challenges the precepts of theology and religion; human misery makes people feel abandoned, lonely. People place their faith in material things.

Notes, Stanza 4

**neither . . . pain**: The world has become a selfish, cynical, amoral, materialistic battlefield; there is much hatred and pain, but there is no guiding light.    
**darkling**: dark, obscure, dim; occurring in darkness; menacing, threatening, dangerous, ominous.   
**Where . . . night**: E.K. Brown and J.O. Bailey suggest that this line is an allusion to Greek historian Thucydides' account of the Battle of Epipolae (413 B.C.), a walled fortress near the city of Syracuse on the island of Sicily. In that battle, Athenians fought an army of Syracusans at night. In the darkness, the combatants lashed out blindly at one another. Brown and Bailey further observe that the line "suggests the confusion of mid-Victorian values of all kinds . . . " (Brown, E.K, and J.O. Bailey, eds. Victorian Poetry. 2nd ed. New York: Ronald Press, 1962, Page 831).

*Interpretation*

Let us at least be true to each other in our marriage, in our moral standards, in the way we thnk; for the world will not be true to us. Although it presents itself to us as a dreamland, it is a sham. It offers nothing to ease our journey through life.