

A Poem

The Ocean

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Opening Reflection

One of the amazing experiences of life itself is the way in which we, as we grow and evolve, are thrust forward into things previously unknown and very unexpected. From the moment we leave the womb, the journey never ends --- a journey that sees us catapulted into vistas and horizons over which we have no control. This is the way we learn about the world and about others we come to meet. And this experience is captured for us in a variety of ways and symbols, one of which is the ocean.

As we grow and develop, we learn so much about oceans and oceanic life in our science classes. We dissect the biology of it all for sure. And we should. But there is yet something more that happens to us when we stand at an ocean's edge. There is something that beckons us to a deeper sense of water's meaning than just its elements and molecules.

Over the course of my career, I have known well the experience of looking into the oceans all across the globe and studying their importance in myriad ways. But when I have been at the water's edge in all kinds of weather, it always feels like my whole self is looking, touching, diving, and plunging into things I never knew. Small wonder that artists work to capture the richness and depths of the oceans in vast and expansively rich ways. For in their artistic works, they invite us to remember that we not only are called to study the waters – but to plunge into meaning itself --- the meaning of Life --- the meaning of who we are, who we might dare to become, and what we might do to enrich our own lives as well as the lives of others that we meet in the course of our days.

The plunge continues. And it should. For that is how we come to “know the new!”

The Ocean

When I stand at land's end and gaze out upon the seas
I wonder at their vast extent;
the profundity of their depths in the Marianas;
the equator that transects them as it girds the earth and
the meridians of longitude that stretch from pole to pole;
the salubrious warmth of the Gulf Stream
and the stagnation of the Sargasso Sea;
their composition as two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen;
the property of water as a solvent
and the enormity of salts dissolved therein;
the sea's bounty that provides food for the world;
their inspiration to artists and poets;
their shifting colors from aqua marine to turquoise to navy;
the pull of the moon upon the waters of the earth and the resulting tides;
the flotsam and jetsam and sea wrack and ruin
they daily deposit upon the beaches of the world;
the winds and waves and storms at sea;
the abundance of treasure within the sea and
the shipwrecks and sturdy souls its waters entomb;
the soothing properties of sea water and
its similarity to human blood and human tears;
the origin of life within the sea and its profusion of plankton,
sessile animals, sea fans, sponges and anemones,
various species of fish and great marine mammals;
its role as a great highway for human commerce and
an arena for human conflict;
the toils of those who go down to the sea in ships;
the dangers they face and the families they leave behind.
All these things fill my mind.

Author Note

The author is solely responsible for the contents of this vignette. The contents do not necessarily reflect the position of the organizations and communities that he serves. The author has no financial conflicts of interest. This poem was originally published in the anthology, *On Viewless Wings III*, in 2010 (Ron Wiseman, ed. Queensland, Australia: Bower Bird Press.), but was written in 2007 when the author became very ill while commanding a hospital ship on a humanitarian mission. The occasion upon which this poem was originally authored promotes the call to newness that is at the heart of this edition. An individual's life experience propelled him into a new exploration of the self. And from that exploration, poetry was born in him. This points to the nature of poetry itself, namely the experience of being catapulted into the unforeseen, and the importance of that experience for the discovery of new talents and gifts.