

# Lighthouse Poetry

As you read, mark points that you think are important, that are confusing, or that show figurative language.



## The Lighthouse

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The rocky ledge runs far into the sea,  
And on its outer point, some miles away,  
The Lighthouse lifts its massive masonry,  
A pillar of fire by night, of cloud by day.

Even at this distance I can see the tides,  
Upheaving, break unheard along its base,  
A speechless wrath, that rises and subsides  
In the white lip and tremor of the face.

And as the evening darkens, lo! how bright,  
Through the deep purple of the twilight air,  
Beams forth the sudden radiance of its light  
With strange, unearthly splendor in the glare!

Not one alone; from each projecting cape  
And perilous reef along the ocean's verge,  
Starts into life a dim, gigantic shape,  
Holding its lantern o'er the restless surge.

Like the great giant Christopher it stands  
Upon the brink of the tempestuous wave,  
Wading far out among the rocks and sands,  
The night-o'ertaken mariner to save.

And the great ships sail outward and return,  
Bending and bowing o'er the billowy swells,  
And ever joyful, as they see it burn,  
They wave their silent welcomes and farewells.

They come forth from the darkness, and their sails  
Gleam for a moment only in the blaze,  
And eager faces, as the light unveils,  
Gaze at the tower, and vanish while they gaze.

The mariner remembers when a child,  
On his first voyage, he saw it fade and sink;  
And when, returning from adventures wild,  
He saw it rise again o'er ocean's brink.

Steadfast, serene, immovable, the same  
Year after year, through all the silent night  
Burns on forevermore that quenchless flame,  
Shines on that inextinguishable light!

It sees the ocean to its bosom clasp  
The rocks and sea-sand with the kiss of peace;  
It sees the wild winds lift it in their grasp,  
And hold it up, and shake it like a fleece.

**What do you think the meaning of this poem is?**

The startled waves leap over it; the storm  
Smites it with all the scourges of the rain,  
And steadily against its solid form  
Press the great shoulders of the hurricane.

The sea-bird wheeling round it, with the din  
Of wings and winds and solitary cries,  
Blinded and maddened by the light within,  
Dashes himself against the glare, and dies.

A new Prometheus, chained upon the rock,  
Still grasping in his hand the fire of Jove,  
It does not hear the cry, nor heed the shock,  
But hails the mariner with words of love.

"Sail on!" it says, "sail on, ye stately ships!  
And with your floating bridge the ocean span;  
Be mine to guard this light from all eclipse,  
Be yours to bring man nearer unto man!"

**What do you think the meaning of this poem is?**

## The Lighthouse Keeper

by Helen Emma Maring

In the lonely twilight hour,  
Looking forth from his old tower,  
When the sunset glow has faded in the west,  
Then he sees the distant things  
Steeped in purple of the kings,  
While the breezes come to chill at night's behest.  
Then the color from the air  
Sinks to--God but knows just where,  
And the interval of deepened twilight grows;  
But the gleaming streaks of light  
From his tower of the night  
Send their word to every ship that comes or goes.

**What do you think the meaning of this poem is?**

## The Lighthouse

by CJ Heck

There's a lighthouse on an island  
built on boulders in the sea.  
A home to no one anymore,  
but it's beautiful to me.

The waves come crashing, sending spray,  
their salty drops rain down  
blessing me and other people  
and all the buildings in the town.

The lighthouse wakes at evening time  
and its beacon comes around  
protecting all the ships out there  
so they don't run aground.

I sit and send my wishes  
way up high on seagull wings  
and then pretend that they'll come true  
on notes the lighthouse sings.

That lighthouse must be magic ...  
I hear it call to me  
from its bed of boulders  
on an island in the sea

**What do you think the meaning of this poem is?**

## I'd Like to be a Lighthouse

by Rachel Lyman Field

I'd like to be a lighthouse  
All scrubbed and painted white.  
I'd like to be a lighthouse  
And stay awake all night  
To keep my eye on everything  
That sails my patch of sea;  
I'd like to be a lighthouse  
With the ships all watching me.

**What do you think the meaning of this poem is?**

## The Light-houses

by Lucy Larcom

Baker's Island

Two pale sisters, all alone,  
On an island bleak and bare,  
Listening to the breakers' moan,  
Shivering in the chilly air;  
Looking inland towards a hill,  
On whose top one aged tree  
Wrestles with the storm-wind's will,  
Rushing, wrathful, from the sea.  
Two dim ghosts at dusk they seem,  
Side by side, so white and tall,  
Sending one long, hopeless gleam  
Down the horizon's darkened wall.  
Spectres, strayed from plank or spar,  
With a tale none lives to tell,  
Grazing at the town afar,  
Where unconscious widows dwell.  
Two white angels of the sea,  
Guiding wave-worn wanderers home;  
Sentinels of hope they be,  
Drenched with sleet, and dashed with foam,  
Standing there in loneliness,  
Fireside joys for men to keep;  
Through the midnight slumberless  
That the quiet shore may sleep.  
Two bright eyes awake all night  
To the fierce moods of the sea;  
Eyes that only close when light  
Dawns on lonely hill and tree.  
O kind watchers! teach us, too,  
Steadfast courage, sufferance long!  
Where an eye is turned to you,  
Should a human heart grow strong.

**What do you think the meaning of this poem is?**

## The Lighthouse Lamp

By Margaret E. Sangster

The winds came howling down from the north,  
Like a hungry wolf for prey,  
And the bitter sleet went hurtling forth,  
In the pallid face of the day.  
And the snowflakes drifted near and far,  
Till the land was whitely fleeced,  
And the light-house lamp, a golden star,  
Flamed over the waves' white yeast.  
In the room at the foot of the light-house  
Lay mother and babe asleep,  
And little maid Gretchen was by them there,  
A resolute watch to keep.

There were only the three on the light-house isle,  
But father had trimmed the lamp,  
And set it burning a weary while  
In the morning's dusk and damp.  
"Long before night I'll be back," he said,  
And his white sail slipped away;  
Away and away to the mainland sped,  
But it came not home that day.  
The mother stirred on her pillow's space,  
And moaned in pain and fear,  
Then looked in her little daughter's face  
Through the blur of a starting tear.  
"Darling," she whispered, "it's piercing cold,  
And the tempest is rough and wild;  
And you are no laddie strong and bold,  
My poor little maiden child.

"But up aloft there's the lamp to feed,  
Or its flame will die in the dark,  
And the sailor lose in his utmost need  
The light of our islet's ark."  
"I'll go," said Gretchen, "a step at a time;  
Why, mother, I'm twelve years old,  
And steady, and never afraid to climb,  
And I've learned to do as I'm told."  
Then Gretchen up to the top of the tower,  
Up the icy, smooth-worn stair,  
Went slowly and surely that very hour,  
The sleet in her eyes and hair.  
She fed the lamp, and she trimmed it well,  
And its clear light glowed afar,  
To warn of reefs, and of rocks to tell,  
This mariner's guiding star.  
And once again when the world awoke  
In the dawn of a bright new day,  
There was joy in the hearts of the fisher folks  
Along the stormy bay.  
When the little boats came sailing in  
All safe and sound to the land,  
To the haven the light had helped them win,  
By the aid of a child's brave hand.

**What do you think the meaning of this poem is?**

Which of these poems did you enjoy? Why?

Which did you not enjoy? Why not?