

# The Wanderer

This lonely traveler longs for grace,  
For the mercy of God; grief hangs on  
His heart and follows the frost-cold foam  
He cuts in the sea, sailing endlessly,  
5 Aimlessly, in exile. Fate has opened  
A single port: memory. He sees  
His kinsmen slaughtered again, and cries:  
    “I’ve drunk too many lonely dawns,  
    Grey with mourning. Once there were men  
10 To whom my heart could hurry, hot  
    With open longing. They’re long since dead.  
My heart has closed on itself, quietly  
Learning that silence is noble and sorrow  
Nothing that speech can cure. Sadness  
15 Has never driven sadness off;  
Fate blows hardest on a bleeding heart.  
So those who thirst for glory smother  
Secret weakness and longing, neither  
Weep nor sigh nor listen to the sickness  
20 In their souls. So I, lost and homeless,  
Forced to flee the darkness that fell  
On the earth and my lord. **F**  
    Leaving everything,  
Weary with winter I wandered out  
On the frozen waves, hoping to find  
25 A place, a people, a lord to replace  
My lost ones. No one knew me, now,  
No one offered comfort, allowed  
Me feasting or joy. How cruel a journey  
I’ve traveled, sharing my bread with sorrow  
30 Alone, an exile in every land,  
Could only be told by telling my footsteps.  
For who can hear: “friendless and poor,”  
And know what I’ve known since the long cheerful nights  
When, young and yearning, with my lord I yet feasted  
35 Most welcome of all. That warmth is dead.  
He only knows who needs his lord  
As I do, eager for long-missing aid;  
He only knows who never sleeps

COMMON CORE L 4b

## Language Coach

**Roots and Affixes** Added to an adjective, the suffix *-ly* forms an adverb (like *endlessly* or *aimlessly*, lines 4–5). Added to a noun, *-ly* means “relating to” and forms an adjective. How is the suffix used in *ghostly* and *worldly* (lines 71–72)?

## **F** MONITOR

What has happened to the speaker, and what is his state of mind?

31 **telling**: counting.



This earth, crushing our callow mirth.  
85 And the work of old giants stands withered and still.” **H**

He who these ruins rightly sees,  
And deeply considers this dark twisted life,  
Who sagely remembers the endless slaughters  
Of a bloody past, is bound to proclaim:  
90 “Where is the war-steed? Where is the warrior?  
Where is his war-lord?  
Where now the feasting-places? Where now the mead-hall  
pleasures?  
Alas, bright cup! Alas, brave knight!  
Alas, you glorious princes! All gone,  
Lost in the night, as you never had lived.  
95 And all that survives you a serpentine wall,  
Wondrously high, worked in strange ways.  
Mighty spears have slain these men,  
Greedy weapons have framed their fate.  
These rocky slopes are beaten by storms,  
100 This earth pinned down by driving snow,  
By the horror of winter, smothering warmth  
In the shadows of night. And the north angrily  
Hurls its hailstorms at our helpless heads.  
Everything earthly is evilly born,  
105 Firmly clutched by a fickle Fate.  
Fortune vanishes, friendship vanishes,  
Man is fleeting, woman is fleeting,  
And all this earth rolls into emptiness.”

So says the sage in his heart, sitting alone with His  
thought.  
110 It’s good to guard your faith, nor let your grief come forth  
Until it cannot call for help, nor help but heed  
The path you’ve placed before it. It’s good to find your grace  
In God, the heavenly rock where rests our every hope. **I**

*Translated by Burton Raffel*

84 **callow** (kăl’ō) **mirth**: childish joy.

**H IMAGERY**

What ideas about earthly life do you get from the images in lines 74–85? Note that “work of old giants” refers to old ruins and burial mounds.

95 **serpentine** (sûr’pən-tên’): winding or twisting, like a snake.

**I MONITOR**

Reread lines 110–113. Is the wanderer speaking, or is someone else? What advice is offered in these lines?

## Text Analysis

1. **Compare** How does the wanderer’s present life compare with his former life?
2. **Summarize** What does a wise man understand, according to the wanderer?