

## Your Response

1. Do you agree that "Fate is stronger . . . than any man's mind"? Why or why not?

## Recalling

2. What are three images the poet uses in the first stanza to convey his sense of isolation?
3. (a) What happens to "fools who forget their God"? (b) What happens to those who "live humbly"?

## Interpreting

4. How might you explain the mixed feelings about the sea that the poet seems to feel?
5. Pagans in Anglo-Saxon England—that is, non-Christians—felt themselves at the mercy of forces utterly beyond their control, whereas Christians put their trust in salvation and heaven. In what way do lines 39 through 43 show the influence of both beliefs?
6. Explain lines 66 and 67: "The wealth / Of the world neither reaches to Heaven nor remains."
7. "The Seafarer" is a poem of contrasts. What contrast is implied in lines 80 through 102?
8. What does the poet mean by the word *home* in line 117?

## Applying

9. Explain how a person can dislike something as much as the sailor dislikes life at sea and yet keep going back to it.

## ANALYZING LITERATURE

### Understanding Anglo-Saxon Poetry

A **lyric poem** is one that expresses intense personal emotions. "The Seafarer" mixes pagan with Christian beliefs and expresses sorrow for something lost or past. At times the poet's feelings seem to border on despair.

1. What deep personal feelings does the poet express in the first part of "The Seafarer" that show this to be a lyric poem?
2. "The Seafarer" has two distinct parts, the second of which begins at line 64. What are some of the strong emotions expressed in the second part of the poem?

## Comparing and Contrasting Attitudes

To **compare** two ideas or attitudes is to point out similarities. To **contrast** them is to point out differences.

Explain what accounts for the poet's state of mind at the beginning of the poem and at the end.

## THINKING AND WRITING

### Writing About Anglo-Saxon Beliefs

"The Seafarer" is not an easy poem to understand. One critic has said that almost any theory can explain its meaning. What is *your* theory? What main idea do you think the poet intends to convey? In your prewriting, list the various thoughts and feelings the poet expresses in the poem. Use these notes as the basis for a thesis statement in which you summarize what you think is the main idea of the poem. In writing a first draft, support your thesis statement with evidence from the poem. When you revise, be sure you have made clear the reasons for your conclusion.

## LEARNING OPTION

**Language.** Old English is the English language as it existed from about the year 500 to about 1150. Our language has changed so much since then that Anglo-Saxon poems like "The Seafarer" must be translated, just as if they were written in a foreign language. Here are lines 42 and 43 from "The Seafarer" in Old English:

þæt he a his sæfore   sorge næbbe.  
to hwon hine Dryhten   gedon wille.

Some Old English words such as *tree*, *sleep*, and *winter* are still in common use. Others appear in dictionaries but are seldom used anymore. Find the meanings of the following words: *churl*, *thane*, *tor*, *yare*, *yclept*. Then write a sentence using each word and try to make the meaning of the word clear in context.

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