



The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Think of how nature repeats its cycles over and over again: Summer turns to winter and returns again; day follows night and returns again; the tide rises and falls and rises again. Then, think of individual human lives. Are our lives like these endlessly repeated cycles of the natural world, or is a human life different?

Read the entire poem aloud to hear how the rise and fall of its rhythm mimics the rise and fall of the tide.

Paraphrase each line:

The tide rises, the tide falls,
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
Along the sea-sands damp and brown
The traveler hastens toward the town,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,
Efface the footprints in the sands,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;
The day returns, but nevermore
Returns the traveler to the shore,
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

curlew: large, brownish shorebird

efface: wipe out; erase

hostler: person who takes care of horses

Paraphrasing: One way to better understand the meaning of a text is to paraphrase, or restate its ideas in your own words. Here is an example of how a line from the poem can be paraphrased.

| Original Line | Possible Paraphrase |
|---|---|
| <i>The twilight darkens, the curlew calls</i> | <i>Night is falling. A shorebird cries out.</i> |

As you read the poem, pause after each stanza. Paraphrase each line in the stanza, using your own words. Your paraphrase should include the important details expressed in each stanza.

Rhythm: Circle the title of the poem each time it appears. In what way does its rhythm help convey meaning?

Analysis: Answer questions 1-5 on a separate sheet of paper. Answer #6 in the chart attached. Answer #7 on the chart below.

1. Look closely at each stanza. What does each stanza tell you about the passage of time?
2. “Footsteps on the sands of time” is a common expression referring to the passage of time. In the second stanza a similar image appears. What does this image suggest has happened to the traveler?
3. What words in the third stanza hint at the traveler’s fate? How does the image of the lively horses contrast with what probably has happened to the traveler?
4. In the second stanza the poet personifies the sea and the waves—that is, he gives the sea and the waves attributes of a human being. What words personify the sea and the waves? Do these images create a disturbing effect or a gentle, comforting feeling? Explain.
5. At the end of the poem, the tide continues to rise and fall, although the human traveler does not return. How does this contrast reveal the poem’s theme—its central insight into the relationship between human life and nature?
6. Do the attached paraphrasing worksheet.
7. Review Longfellow’s “The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls.” In the chart below, list TWO characteristics of Romantic writing found in the poem. Then, for each characteristic, find a quote that reflects that characteristic. Finally, explain how that quote reflects the characteristic you have identified.

| <i>Characteristics of Romantic Writing</i> BE SPECIFIC! | <i>Corresponding Quote from “The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls”</i> | <i>Explain the connection of the quote to the characteristic</i> |
|--|---|---|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |

*****Be sure you CLEARLY explain how each quote reflects the Romantic writing characteristic you have identified.**