

Peace and Quiet in Troubled Times

August 2026

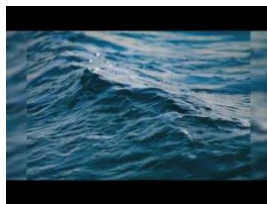
Welcome to this opportunity to give yourself time and space away from the daily tasks, worries and fears which put our minds in turmoil. You are invited to focus on the music, words and pictures. You may find it helpful to read the poems out loud and then to keep silences in between, entering into an oasis of calm, to engage in 'mindfulness'. Each month we explore a different theme, relevant to our common experiences of life and the world around us. We follow the pattern of the seasons of the Church year.

Please click on the underlined text beneath the images to hear the music via YouTube. Please do skip or close any adverts that appear.

Full tide and ebb tide
Let life rhythms flow
Ebb tide, full tide
How life's beat must go.
David Adam

"Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; [...] - then, I account it high time to get to the sea as soon as I can."

Herman Melville (Moby Dick)



The Sea (1st Movement) – Frank Bridges
https://youtu.be/G4W_nO_y1VM

The Sea

'What's the sea like?' Susie asked.
Her grandfather was hammering a shelf
Onto the living room wall -
He'd been a fisherman all his life.

'The sea's rough and the sea's cold,
The sea's grey and it's never calm.'
Susie's grandfather looked at her sternly,
And it wasn't at all what she'd hoped.

'What's the sea like?' Susie asked
Her auntie one evening at tea.
Aunt Fiona had run a little shop
On the sea front all her life.

'The sea's dirty and the sea's busy,
The sea's boring and it's always noisy.'
Susie's auntie looked at her sternly,
And it wasn't at all what she'd hoped.

'What's the sea like? Susie asked
Her friend Sonya who came from Jamaica.
Sonya smiled and her whole face
Was filled with beautiful light.

'The sea is blue and the sea is shining,
The sea is alive and always changing.'
Susie looked at her friend and nodded
For that was all she had hoped.

Kenneth Steven



maggie and milly and molly and may

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach (to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and



milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and



may came home with a smooth round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea
e e cummings

Sea Shell

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,
Sing me a song, Oh! Please!
A song of ships and pirate men,
And parrots, and tropical trees.
Of islands lost in the Spanish Main
Which no man ever may find again,
Of fishes and corals under the waves,
And sea-horses stabled in great green caves.
Sea Shell, Sea Shell,
Sing of the things you know so well.



Amy Lowell



Aquarium - Camille Saints-Saëns

<https://youtu.be/IyFpZ5MZ7kk>

Sea-Fever

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's
 shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls
 crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a
 whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

John Masefield



Island

I remember what it was like to barefoot that house:
Wood rooms bleached by light,
Days were new voyages, journeys,
Coming home, a pouring out of stories and of starfish.

The sun never died completely in the night.
The skies just turned luminous.
The wind tugged at the strings in the grass
Like a hand in a harp.

I did not sleep, too glad to listen by a window
to the sorrow sounds of the birds as they swept down in skeins
and rose again, celebrating all that was summer.
I did not sleep, the weight of school behind and before
too great to waste a grain of this.

One four in the morning at first lark-song I went west over the dunes,
Broke down running onto three miles of white shell sand and stood.
A wave curled its silk ashore in a single seamless breath.
I went naked into the water;
ran deep into a green through which I was translucent.
I rejoiced in something I could not name.
I celebrated a wonder too huge to hold.
I trailed home slow and golden, dried by the sunlight.
Kenneth Steven



Le Onde (The Wave) – Ludovico Einaudi
<https://youtu.be/3u-IMopPBa8>

Small boy

He picked up a pebble
and threw it into the sea.

And another, and another.
He couldn't stop.

He wasn't trying to fill the sea.
He wasn't trying to empty the beach.

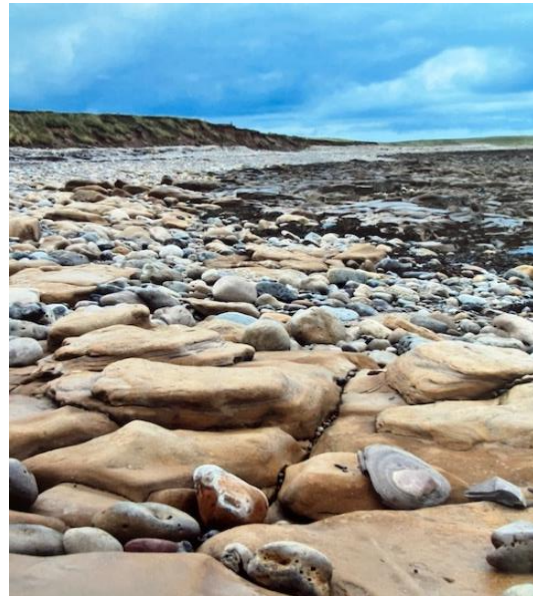
He was just throwing away,
nothing else but.

Like a kitten playing
he was practising for the future

when there'll be so many things
he'll want to throw away

if only his finger will unclench
and let them go.

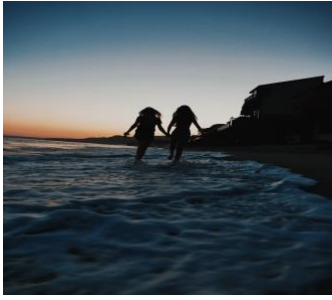
Norman MacCaig



Day Trip

Two women, seventies, hold hands
on the edge of Essex,
hair in strong nets,
shrieked laughter echoing gulls
as shingle sucks from under feet
easing in brine.





There must be an unspoken point
when the sea feels like
their future. No longer paddling,
ankles submerge in lace,
in satin ripple.
Dress hems darken.

They do not risk their balance
for the shimmering of ships
at the horizon's sweep
as, thigh deep, they inch on
fingers splayed, wrists bent,
learning to walk again.

Carole Satyamurti



Tide-turn

Grief.
Desolate emptiness;
A muddy estuary
Haunted with
Melancholy cries.

A year on,
And imperceptibly
The channels have
Filled with water.

Sunlight dances.

My spirit,
Stirring with the shifting tide
Takes up the journey.

Ann Lewin





A few minutes of the waves

<https://youtu.be/5nl8EyKMo2E>

Dover Beach

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; - on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Matthew Arnold



The Other

There are nights that are so still
that I can hear the small owl calling
far off and a fox barking
miles away. It is then that I lie
in the lean hours awake listening
to the swell born somewhere in the Atlantic
rising and falling, rising and falling
wave on wave on the long shore
by the village, that is without light
and companionless. And the thought comes
of that other being who is awake, too,
letting our prayers break on him,
not like this for a few hours,
but for days, years, for eternity.

R.S Thomas



Resolution

And suddenly the sun broke through the sky
And I was home, a broad Atlantic
Stumbled over rocks and creamed in rage
A tug of storm hung low across the shores
Water colour blue and broken green.

How did I lose my way or once believe
That there were riches bigger than this simplicity
Or that any other tide could speak, or heal
The wounds of searching deeper cut than pain
Where here I stood by heaven hearing God?

Kenneth Steven (on returning to Iona)





<https://youtu.be/fi5Uwwk5kog>

The Sea



Hebrides Overture (Fingal's Cave) - Mendelssohn

https://youtu.be/P4qxb_DytXQ

To celebrate the Year of the Coast and to encourage the nation to share its love for the coast, in 2015 the National Trust commissioned Dr John Cooper Clarke to write a poem. After publication of the Dr Clarke's initial verses, the public contributed more than 11,500 coastal thoughts, memories and images, which helped to inspire the finished work - 'Nation's Ode to the Coast'.

Nation's Ode to the Coast

A big fat sky and a thousand shrieks
The tide arrives and the timber creaks
A world away from the working week
Ou est la vie nautique?
That's where the sea comes in...

Dishevelled shells and shovelled sands,
Architecture all unplanned
A spade n bucket wonderland
A golden space, a Frisbee and
The kids and dogs can run and run
And not run in to anyone
Way Out! Real gone!
That's where the sea comes in

Impervious to human speech, idle time and tidal reach
Some memories you can't impeach
A nice cuppa splosh and a round of toast
A cursory glance at the morning post
A pointless walk along the coast
That's what floats my boat the most
That's where the sea comes in

Now voyager - once resigned
Go forth to seek and find
The hazy days you left behind
Right there in the back of your mind
Where lucid dreams begin
With rolling dunes and rattling shale
The shoreline then a swollen sail

Picked out by a shimmering halo
That's where the sea comes in

Could this be luck by chance?
Eternity in a second glance
A universe beyond romance
That's where the sea comes in...
Yeah that's where the sea comes in...

Dr John Cooper Clarke

