Perfect Storm, The



0. Perfect Storm, The - Story Preface

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View of the Atlantic Ocean as the sun sinks below the horizon. Image online, courtesy NOAA.

I must go down to the seas again,
To the lonely sea and the sky

John Masefield
Sea Fever

Maybe it's the sight of the sky when the sun sinks low. Maybe it's the thrill of the sea when the sky is black. Maybe it's the call of the swordfish 1500 miles away. Whatever it is, men bound for the Grand Banks fishing grounds have been leaving Gloucester harbor for centuries. Some of them never return.

At sea for thirty days at a time, they have a way of life uniquely theirs. Often they cannot see land at all. When they can, they must be careful. Some of the islands in the North Atlantic are like icebergs: What you see above water is not all there is. Places like Sable Island, off the coast of Newfoundland, have a reputation: "Graveyard of the Atlantic."

The town of Gloucester keeps track of "men who go down to the sea in ships." Six names are on the 1991 list.

This story is about (and dedicated to) those six. It's especially about the ferocious storm that took their lives. The storm Bob Case of the National Weather Service called "The Perfect Storm" (which Sebastian Junger popularized in his terrific book of the same name).

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Perfect-Storm-The

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Perfect-Storm-The

Questions 2 Ponder

Is There Such a Thing as the "Call of the Sea?"

Being a fisherman can be dangerous, especially when unexpected storms erupt. Yet ... spending time on the water can be a beautiful way to live and work.

Fishermen sometimes say that they feel "the call of the sea." Do you think there could be such a thing? How can you explain such a calling?

Have you ever felt called to do something? Can you describe what that was like? How did you respond?

In his poem "Sea Fever," John Masefield (1878-1967)—who was Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom for 37 years—writes that he "must go down to the sea again." He says this three times:

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.

Do you think that Masefield is describing a "call of the sea?" Why, or why not?

An artist called Thomas Moran painted this seascape, known as "Sunset at Sea," around 1906. The work is now owned by the Brooklyn Museum. Do you think this painting reflects "the call of the sea?" Explain your answer.

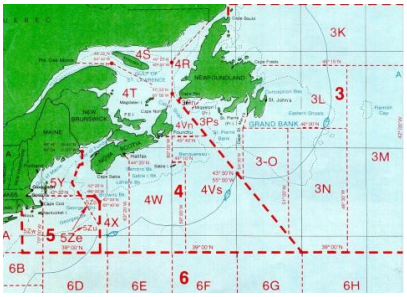
Media Stream



Sunset Over the Ocean
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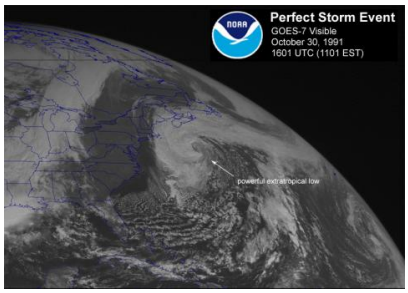
Sable Island - Map Locator

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1991 Victims of the Perfect Storm

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Perfect Storm Event - by NOAA

Image one, courtesy NOAA.
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Oceans - The Blue Planet, Part One

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