



Crest of White Horses

Sometimes, when the sky is peaceful,
They trot quietly up the shore,
Meander towards the grassy dunes,
Cantering cautiously up the beach,
Gently nibbling at the sands
Softly gnawing the grains.
Back and forth, back and forth
Lazily grazing.
Their tiny white peaks a puff
Of whipped ice cream
Dissolving on your feet,
Tickling your toes.
Their icy cool splashes
A welcome shot of relief
from hot as coal beaches
and sizzling summer suns.
They circle round you
In swirls and eddies
As if dancing a dressage
Some trot towards you,
Leaping agile at ankles
Soaking rolled up trousers,
Nuzzling for attention.

On stormy nights, when the sun sinks
And the moon is caught in angry clouds,

Tossed like a ship in a tempest of inky black,
They return, restless and stomping.
Pounding up the beach,
Hurling themselves at the cliffs,
Sharp hooves dislodging debris
Hindquarters kicking up clods of rock
As they race to the finish,
Sinews straining, sweat pouring,
Their dripping wet flanks
Heaving and swelling with effort.
Stampeding towards you
They tower to dizzying heights,
As you cower by the promenade
The railing a poor protection
Against their mighty reach.
Tossing their snow-white manes
With reckless abandon
They roar past,
Pummelling the rocks in their wake,
Crashing down with a mighty explosion
Shells and stones are tossed
Carelessly aside or dragged
Relentlessly away from the shore
Drowned in the deeps
Treasures of the waves and their ruler.

The crest of white horses is
king.



It is said that Poseidon, King of the Sea, created the horse. Their manes can be seen in the crest of the waves, earning waves the name “crest of white horses”. The sound of the waves approaching and crashing, also sounds like the pounding of horses’ hooves as a herd thunder along the ground.

EXPLANATION FOCUS

1. Explain how the author’s choice of language at the end of stanza one shows the waves are interesting to watch.
2. How does the mood of the poem change in the second stanza? Use two examples from the text to help you explain.
3. The author uses a technique called “enjambment” a run-on-line where an idea snakes around the page. Find the example at the end of the poem and explain how this is an effective way to describe what the waves are doing to the beach materials.
4. In the two stanzas, the relationship of the sea horses to humans is very different. Explain this difference, using some examples from the text that show these two different moods.
5. The author ends the poem “the crest of white horses is king”. Explain what you think they mean by this.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

Why are waves referred to as a “crest of white horses”?

R

Who is said to have invented the horse?

V

On peaceful days the waves are gentle horses. Find and copy three powerful verbs or adverbs that tell you this.

R

To what are the peaks of gentle waves compared?

I

This poem is an extended metaphor: the sea is a herd of horses. Explain why this is an effective one.