

'The Kraken'

Loud, resounding noise (threatening).

"Kraken" = vast sea monsters (legend). Allegedly dwell off the coast of Norway / Greenland. Word derives from Norwegian / Swedish languages, which refers to an unhealthy animal / something twisted. In German it means octopus. Origin: arguably from sightings of giant squid (rumoured to reach 60+ ft in size). Written 1830.

Indicates the creature's gender.

"Far far" – repetition emphasises depth. Could you argue that there are fairy tale associations with this phrase?

Below the thunders of the upper deep;
Far far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee
About his shadowy sides; above him swell
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;
And far away into the sickly light,

"abysmal" = immeasurably deep / great or extremely bad / severe.

"ancient" = great age / very old / antiquated.
"dreamless" = not troubled by dreams.

"sleepeth" – what is capable of waking The Kraken?

Personification of the sun – absorbs all goodness / light.

"millennial" = span of 1000 years.

Sibilance. What does the repetition of the 's' sound show?

The creature has grown to a vast size over many years. Does it have an immortal quality?

"sponges" = aquatic invertebrate animals, with porous skeleton. Also, sponges are used to wipe out / erase.

"sickly" = causing revulsion / nausea or faint / feeble.

What could the creature's dominion be a metaphor for?

"wondrous" = remarkable / extraordinary / wonderful.

"grot" = small cave.

"cell" = small room / prison. Perhaps it has biological significance.
"polypi" = cylindrical body and oral opening usually surrounded by tentacles.

Countless and innumerable proportions.

"winnow" = separate.

Anthropomorphism – tentacles depicted as human limbs.

Colour imagery.

"seaworms" = often small / insignificant. Some are parasitic. What does this imply?

Is this a metaphor for devouring ships on the sea's surface? Are the ships the invasive monsters?

"latter" = near to the end.

Examine the rhyme scheme. The poem is in the Petrarchan sonnet form. But it is irregular, because it has 15 lines, not 14. Why?

Witnessed by humans / spiritual beings.

Structure – one stanza.

"battening" = thrive / prosper – especially at another's expense.

"roaring" = long, prolonged cry. Link back to "thunders" in line 1.

From many a wondrous grot and secret cell
Unnumber'd and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.
There hath he lain for ages, and will lie
Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep,
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
Then once by man and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.