The Rime of the Ancient Mariner







Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Today we are going to deal with a poem which is considered my masterpiece.....

...The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,



WHAT IS A RIME?

- A «rime» is a ballad
- Ballads date back to the Middle Age
- Poems set on music
- Topics:
- 1. Magic
- 2. Love & death
- 3. Religion
- It is a popular genre
- 1. Catchy story
- 2. Simple language
- 3. Musicality(rhymes, repetitions, refrains, alliterations, dialogues)





My friend Wordsworth 's favourite theme was anature, while I believed in the power of......

THE «SUPERNATURAL»

For supernatural I don't mean horror!







The word comes from the Latin: super means above and naturo means nature.

The supernatural is beyond the grasp of the physical sensesit is immaterial, spiritual.

But you need IMAGINATION!



Coleridge's Imagination

Defines «Imagination» in his Biographia Literaria (1817)

PRIMARY IMAGINATION

It is the faculty by which we perceive the world around us. It belongs to us all.

SECONDARY IMAGINATION

The way our minds reconstruct events and situations in relationship to our own worlds and understandings of that world. It belongs to poets.

FANCY

The lowest form of imagination there is no creation involved; it is simply a reconfiguration of existing ideas. Figures of speech.



I wanted to give my readers a certain «suspension of disbelief»

It is the willingness to suspend one's critical faculties and believe the unbelievable; sacrifice of realism and logic for the sake of enjoyment

You must believe in poetry!!





«It is an Ancient Mariner...»



Part 1

It is an ancient (1)
Mariner,

And he stoppeth one of three. (2)

'By thy long grey beard and glittering (3) eye,

Now wherefore stopp'st thou me? (4)

- (1) timeless old
- (2) 3 young men
- (3) supenatural element, why?
- (4) rude tone
- Ballad elements:
- 1. Simple language
- 2. Dialogue
- 3. archaisms





- The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,(1)
- And I am next of kin(2);
- The guests are met, the feast is set:
- May'st hear the merry din.'

- (1) The three are going to attend a wedding. The speaker is called Wedding Guest.
- (2) Blood related Ballad features:
- 1. Dialogue
- 2. Simple language
- 3. Musicality

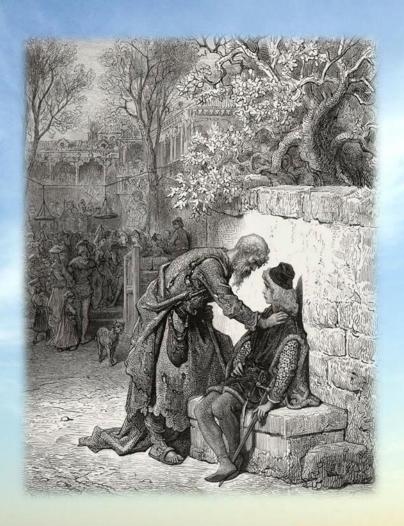


- He holds him with his skinny hand, (1)
- 'There was a ship,' quoth he.
- 'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'(2)
- Eftsoons his hand dropt he. (3)
- (1) Despite being thin and weak, he is able to hold the boy's hand tight to stop him
- (2) offensive tone
- (3) Reversed pattern of a sentence = immediately





- He holds him with his glittering eye—
- The Wedding-Guest stood still,
- And listens like a three years' child:
- The Mariner hath his will.
- The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
- · He cannot choose but hear;
- And thus spake on that ancient mariner,
- The bright-eyed Mariner.





The Wedding Guest's idea of life





The Wedding Guest's features

- He is young and his youth makes him arrogant.
- He despises the man who stopped him, because he is old, shabby and acts rudely.
- He is a man who has singled out materialistic values as his own.
- In a way, he represents us in our constant pursuing of those values.



The Ancient Mariner's Task

- The Ancient Mariner represents the poet.
- With his creative power/poetry he can produce that "suspension of disbelief" that makes everybody listen "like a three years' child".
- In that suspension, the young and the adult can meet, talk, interact.
- The Mariner /poet belongs to a timeless dimension, because art is eternal.
- That is why, he is «ancient».





- The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
- Merrily did we drop
- Below the kirk, below the hill,
- Below the lighthouse top. (1)
- The Sun came up upon the left,(2)
- Out of the sea came he!
- And he shone bright, and on the right
- Went down into the sea.
- Higher and higher every day,(3)
- Till over the mast at noon—'
- The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,

For he heard the loud bassoon. (4)

- (1) They are happy to sail and leave firm ground behind
- (2) They are sailing Southward
- (3) They are reaching the Equator
- (4) The Wedding Guest is under the spell of the Ancient Mariner and cannot move



- The bride hath paced into the hall,
- Red as a rose is she;
- Nodding their heads before her goes
- The merry minstrelsy. (1)
- The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
- Yet he cannot choose but hear; (2)
- And thus spake on that ancient man,
- The bright-eyed Mariner.
- And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
- Was tyrannous and strong:
- He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
- And chased us south along. (3)



- (1) The Mariner has not won the boy's heart yet.
- (2) The spell of the Mariner is powerful.
- (3) The storm took them to places they were not prepared to go.
- (4) Storm=fate



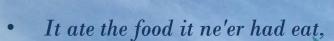
- With sloping masts and dipping prow,(1)
- As who pursued with yell and blow
- Still treads the shadow of his foe,
- And forward bends his head, (2)
- The ship drove fast, loud roared (3) the blast,
- And southward aye we fled.
- And now there came both mist (4) and snow,
- And it grew wondrous cold:
- And ice, mast-high, came floating by, (5)
- As green as emerald.

- (1) The quiet pace of the ballad is broken by a sestine.
- (2) Personification
- (3) Representation of the fear of the crew.
- (4) Symbol of confusion
- (5) They reached the South Pole



- And through the drifts the snowy cliffs
- Did send a dismal sheen:
- Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
- The ice was all between.
- The ice was here, the ice was there,
- The ice was all around(1)
- It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,(2)
- Like noises in a swound!(3)
- At length did cross an Albatross,
- Thorough the fog it came; (4)
- As if it had been a Christian soul,
- We hailed it in God's name.

- (1) The cannot find a way out
- (2) The noises refer to animals: dogs, lions, wolves.
- (3) Nightmare
- (4) Good omen. The coming of the Albatross makes a breach in the men's fear.



- And round and round it flew.
- The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
- The helmsman steered us through!(1)
- And a good south wind sprung up behind; (2)
- The Albatross did follow,
- And every day, for food or play,
- Came to the mariner's hollo! (3)
- In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
- It perched for vespers nine;
- Whiles all the night, through fogsmoke white,
- Glimmered the white Moon-shine. (4)

- (1) The sound of the ice splitting is still scary, but they seem to be more confident.
- (2)A wind which help them leave the land of ice.
- (3) The Albatross is a benign presence
- (4) Typical Gothic symbology which anticipates the climax in the following stanza





- 'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
- From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
- Why look'st thou so?" (1)—With my cross-bow (2)
- I shot the ALBATROSS. (3)



- (1) The Wedding Guest doesn't understand why the Mariner is so dramatic, after all it seems, everything ended well.
- (2) Christian symbol of sacrifice.
- (3) Albatross=Jesus Christ





Part 1: a Metaphor of Youth

- In this part the Mariner was as old as the Wedding Guest.
- The trip symbolizes teh journey of life.
- At first you start to glide on the tranquil waters near the harbour/ family.
- The adrenaline and the excitement grow, when for the first time you leave familiar places
- In time you grow confident enough to believe you'll be able to drive your boat wherever you want.
- When a storm comes.
- Then, you'll find yourself in strange, unfamiliar places, far away from where you had expected to be.





Why did The Ancient Mariner Kill the Albatross?

No reason, just to kill time

Typical of youth:

- 1. Living for the present
- 2. Avoiding thinking about the future consequences of actions
- 3. Taking everything for granted
- 4. Forgetting soon







The Albatross __ x



- Albatross were seen by sailors as omens of good luck.
- People believed that birds moved between the earthly and spiritual realms.
- This albatross in particular—with its habit of appearing from out of the fog-seems to be both natural and supernatural.
- Thus, the albatross symbolizes the connection between the natural and spiritual worlds
- The Albatross can be read as a symbol of Christ
- The Mariner as the betraying Judas
- The dead albatross, also, can be read more generally as a mark of sin.







Part II «And I had done a hellish thing!!!»





- The Sun now rose upon the right:
- Out of the sea came he,
- Still hid in mist (1), and on the left
- Went down into the sea. (2)
- And the good south wind still blew behind,
- But no sweet bird did follow,
- Nor any day for food or play
- Came to the mariner's hollo!(3)

- (1) They are leaving the South Pole, but here is no sun. Sun = reason, light; mist= confusion/no light
- (2) Another day goes by
- (3) sad tone, which anticipates the theme of the following stanza.



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- (1) And I had done a hellish thing,
- And it would work 'em woe(2)
- For all averred, I had killed the bird
- That made the breeze to blow.
- Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
- That made the breeze to blow!(3)
- Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
- The glorious Sun uprist:
- Then all averred, I had killed the bird
- That brought the fog and mist.
- 'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
- That bring the fog and mist.(4)

- (1) Two sestines to point out the Mariner's sense of guilt and restlessness
- (2) As he had killed the bird of good luck
- (3) The mariners are decided against him
- (4)Then after the sun appearance they change their mind







The Mariner and the Crew

- The crew represents the Mariner's community of friends
- The seafarers at first blame the mariner for having killed the bird of good omen

But

• There is no moral condemnation. They are just superstitious.

But

- When the sun appears, they all agree, that the killing of the Albatross was rightly done
- HENCE: they all become accomplices to the Mariner.



The Herd Behaviour

- · Coleridge tells us how mutable human nature is
- The members of the crew change their minds according to the new situations and beliefs
- They move en masse.
- The killing of the Albatross places the Mariner in a condition of seclusion and solitude
- He is the only one who realizes the extent of what he had done when he says it was a "hellish thing", an action that "would work 'em woe".



- The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
- The furrow followed free;
- We were the first that ever burst(1)
- Into that silent sea. (2)
- Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down, (3)
- 'Twas and as and could be;
- And we did peak only to break
- The silence of the sea!
- All in a hot and copper sky,
- The **blood**y Sun, at noon,
- Right up above the mast did stand,
- No bigger than the Moon.



- (1) The wind starts to blow
- (2) Can the sea be silent if it is so windy?
- (3) Chiasm. The wind drops suddenly.









Day after day, day after day,

We stuck, nor breath nor motion;

As idle as a painted ship

Upon a painted ocean. (1)

Water, water, every where,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, every where,

Nor any drop to drink.



The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.(1)

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires (2) danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were Of the Spirit that plagued us so; Nine fathom deep he had followed us From the land of mist and snow. 1. Dehydration and the unbearable heat are the cause of allucinations

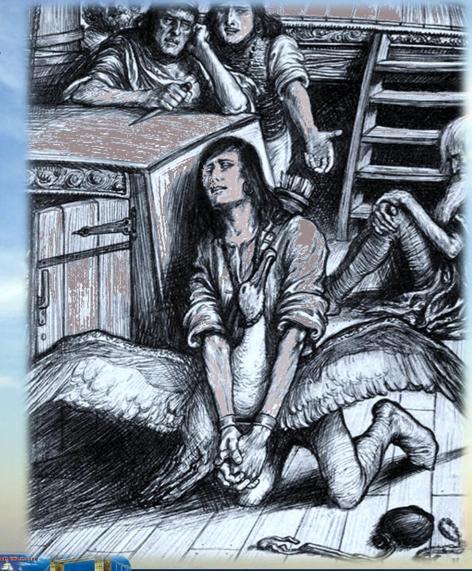
2. Mysterious lights
supposed to be seen
floating or flickering in the
air around a corpse, in a
graveyard, etc.; a
phosphorescent light
emitted by decaying
organic matter





And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.



Crime and Punishment

- The pervading euphoria doesn't last long.
- Suddenly they stop "as if we were a panted ship upon a painted ocean".
- The heat and thirst are unbearable and they have hallucinations.
- There is no way out again and the rage of the crew/herd vents on the Mariner, because it is his fault: HE had killed the Albatross.
- The herd does not feel responsible for his action.
- The chosen punishment is in the Puritan style.
- The dead body of the bird is tied round the Mariner's neck as mark of his sin and memory for the whole community.
- The dead albatross is his badge of shame.











There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.

A weary time! a weary time!

How glazed each weary eye,

When looking westward, I beheld A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little **speck**,

And then it seemed a **mist**;

It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain **shape**, I wist.





A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!

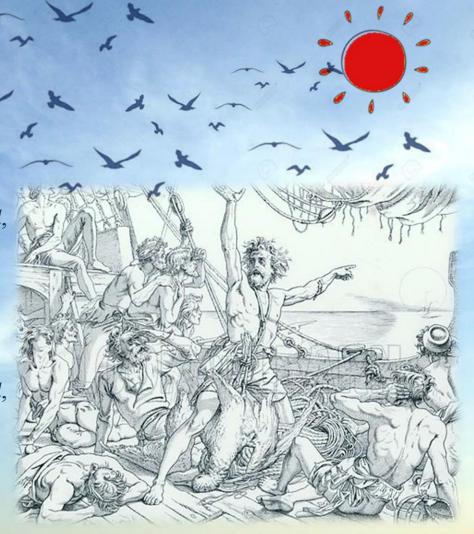
And still it neared and neared:

As if it dodged a water-sprite,

It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in.
As they were drinking all.





«I bit my arm and sucked the blood»;

- The pace of the ballad often changes (couplets, five line stanzas, quatrains etc.)
- The inconstant rhythm marks the growing anxiety and loss of control of the crew.
- Out of the blue something seems to approach,



BUT

How can it be that something moves while the ship is stuck in the middle of the ocean?

• The Mariner wets his lips sucking his blood to tell the crew the good news

WHY?

To redeem himself at the eyes of the crew.



See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)

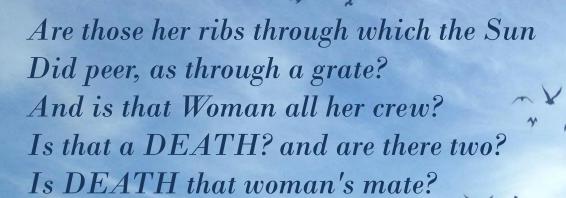
How fast she nears and nears!

Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,

Like restless gossameres?















Death and Life in Death

- Life in Death accompanies Death whenever he comes to claim souls.
- Life in Death is far worse than Death himself because Death abides by the laws and sends souls either to Heaven or Hell.
- Life in Death seems to have her own malicious agenda to doom souls away from their final destination.
- She is, in essence, the physical representation of suffer

HENCE

- Death and Life-in-Death are allegorical figures who represent the potential fates of the men on board the ship.
- Death represents the straightforward physical termination of life, while Life-in-Death represents spiritual death.

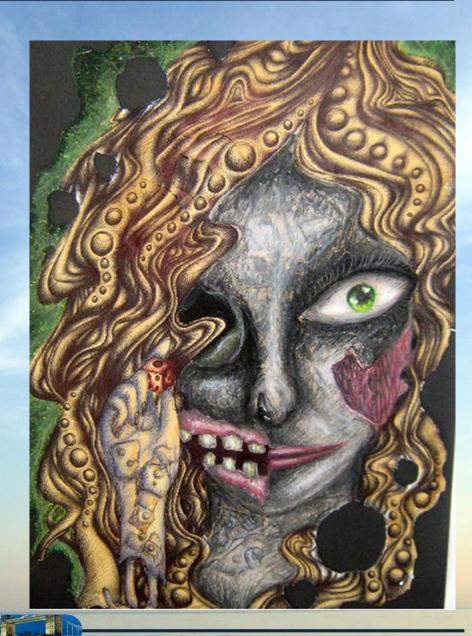




Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH
was she,

Who thicks man's blood with cold







The Dark Lady

- · Life in Death is by far worse than Death.
- Life in Death delights in human misery, making her a sociopath, sadist and tyrant.
- Its a common theme in ancient tales that the villainesses especially the Dark Ladies are far more evil than their male counterparts and this is no exception with Life in Death.
- Compared to her, Death looks like a nice sympathetic old fellow.



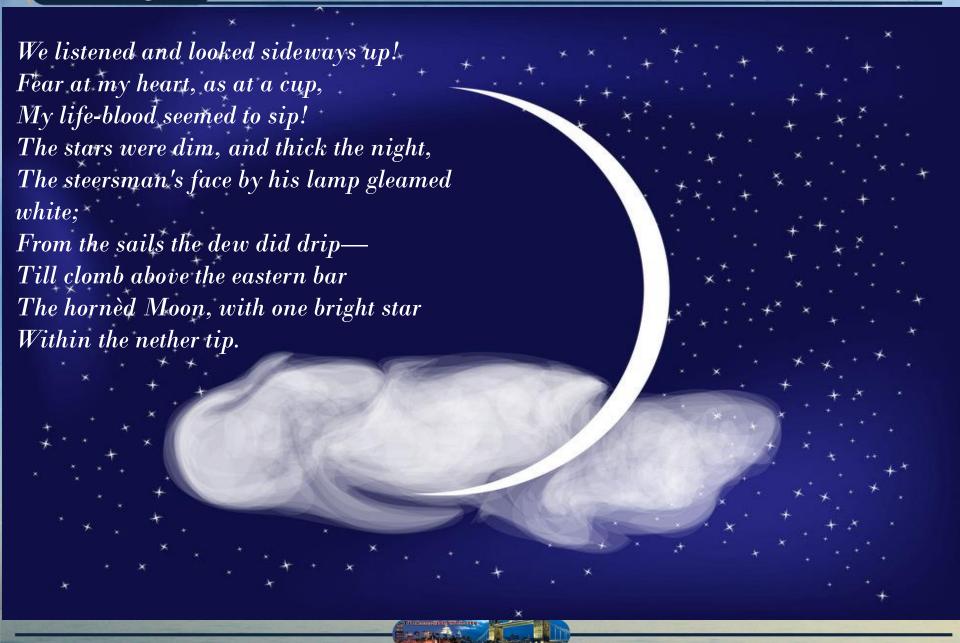
The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'(1)
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

1. Death and Life-in-Death are gambling with dice for the Ancient Mariner's soul

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out; At one stride comes the dark; With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea, Off shot the spectre-bark.







Time goes by...



- This stanza represents the length of the time perceived (nine line stanza=very long) by the mariners.
- The real passing of time is marked by the dew dropping, hence, very short.
- Sense of suspension and fear.
- Images of light and darkness increase the sense of fear



One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,

(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)

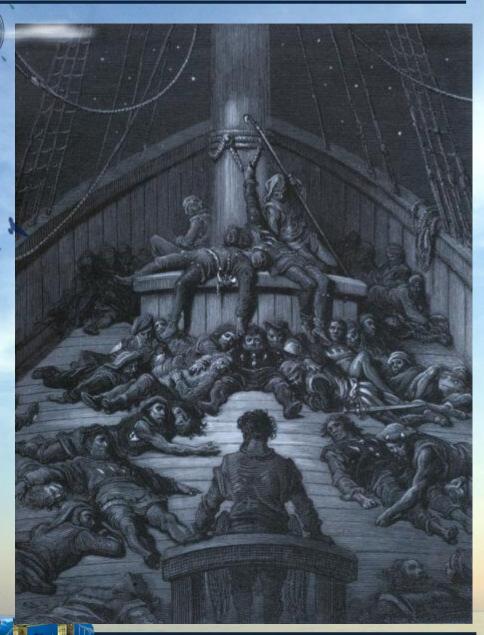
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,

They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!

And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow! (1)

(1) each sailor's soul zooms out of his body like the arrow he shot at the Albatross.



The Theme of Imprisonment

- The Ancient Mariner is doomed to be trapped in a state of deathlike life.
- · His own immortal body is his prison.
- By sinning on impulse, the Ancient Mariner ruins his chances at salvation, and is condemned to the eternal limbo of Life-in-Death.
- Hence, every time a person sins, he destroys his relationship with Christ and his chances of reaching heaven, and must redeem himself through acts of atonement.



Part IV: «And I Blessed Them Unaware»





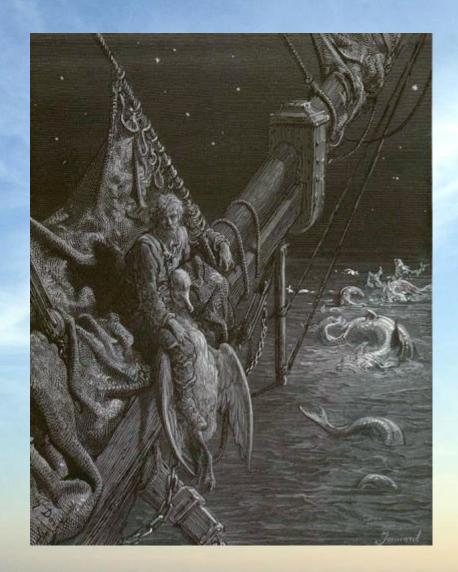
Part 4 Summary

- Of course the Wedding Guest is disturbed by the Mariner's tale (
 'I fear thee, ancient Mariner! I fear thy skinny hand!), but the
 Mariner continues.
- He is alone on the sea with the dead bodies of his crew and the monsters in the water.
- · He tries to pray, but finds himself unable to do so.
- The bodies do not rot, and they all stare at the Mariner still with a curse in their eyes.
- For seven days and nights the Mariner is aboard the ship with his dead crew, who are unable to die.
- As he watches the sea serpents in the ocean, the Mariner admires their beauty and blesses them silently.
- At this moment the Albatross falls from his neck and sinks into the water.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same mament I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.





Part IV Analysis

- The Mariner's isolation, trapped on a ship surrounded by the dead bodies of his crew, is part of his punishment.
- He can't even pray.
- The dead men continue to stare at him, even seeming to follow the Mariner when he closes his eyes.
- The bodies do not decay, and the Mariner does not die of thirst or hunger or exposure.
- The sun does not appear. He sails in a never-ending sort of night, his only company: those horrible creatures he so hated earlier.
- But after these seven days, the Mariner begins to notice the beauty in the sea serpents swimming beside the ship.
- This acceptance of the supernatural and natural worlds unlocks the Mariner and he is able to pray.
- By embracing the Romantic ideal that these creatures are natural, beautiful, and beings created by God just as he is, the Albatross slips from his neck.

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"They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose"





Part V Summary

- The Mariner falls asleep and wakes to find it raining.
- A storm blows up around him, and the ship moves on despite the wind not reaching it.
- The dead crew rise up and began to take their posts and sail the ship.
- When the Wedding Guest expresses his fear of the tale, the Mariner assures him that these were good spirits inhabiting the bodies of his crew.
- The Mariner believes it was the spirit of the Albatross that caused the ship to move without wind or waves.
- The ship stops, then makes a sudden lurch that causes the Mariner to faint.
- · He hears two voices discussing his fate.
- The first voice says that the spirit that lived in the Arctic lands loved the Albatross that the Mariner killed.
- The second voice says the Mariner must serve his penance for his actions.



Analysis

- This breakthrough gives the Mariner respite through sleep and rain, allowing him to quench his thirst.
- But his penance is not complete. The natural world is still in upheaval, as evidenced by the violent storm that follows.
- The storm, however, never reaches the ship, due in part to another appearance of the supernatural.
- All of the dead sailors return to their duties on the ship and sail it.
- These men are not possessed by demonic forces, but by angels (called seraphs).
- The Mariner has performed penance but it is still not finished.
- The Mariner understands a bit better what he did and what is going to be expected of him.
- This ties in with the story of the Wandering Jew.



"All fixed on me their stony eyes"





Part VI Summary

- The voices are still speaking about the ship and how it moves with wind or water.
- The Mariner wakes to find it is night-time and the crew is gathered on the deck, staring at him.
- The ship sails on until it reaches a lighthouse in a harbor.
- When the Mariner turns around, he sees the crew once more as dead bodies.
- · This time he sees seraphs collecting the spirits of the crew.
- · The Mariner hears the approaching Pilot and his son.
- He also hears a Hermit singing and thinks that the Hermit will be able to help him expiate his sin of killing the Albatross.



Analysis

The Voices continue their explanation, stating that the Moon and ocean are working together (along with the spirit) to steer the ship to port.

Hence

- Nature is working in harmony to get the Mariner where he needs to go to fulfil the next phase of his penance.
- When the Mariner wakes from his trance and once again sees the dead men staring at him, he loses the ability to pray again.
- He manages to break the spell by observing the sublime beauty of nature surrounding him.

Hence

Nature's beauty protects and elevates him, a uniquely Romantic idea, and he is able to pray once more.

- The spiritual spell ends with the angels departing the bodies and the natural world reasserts itself fully when the Pilot, the Pilot's Boy, and the Hermit approach the ship in a small boat.
- His desire for confession, to "shrive" his soul (that is, to shrive, or confess one's sins in order to be forgiven), marks the next phase of his penance.



«A Sadder and Wiser Man...»





Part VII Summary



- The ship sinks and the Mariner is hauled into the Pilot's boat.
- The Pilot thinks him dead, so he is surprised when the Mariner takes up the oars to row.
- When the Mariner reaches the shore of his own country, he asks the Hermit for absolution.
- The Mariner tells the Hermit his tale—he feels a compulsion to do so, and he is relieved when he is finished.
- The Mariner tells the Wedding Guest that it has been this way since that night: he feels horribly compelled to tell his tale and must do so or suffer great pain.

Hence

The Mariner is bound to travel from place to place to find the next person he must tell his tale to.



Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

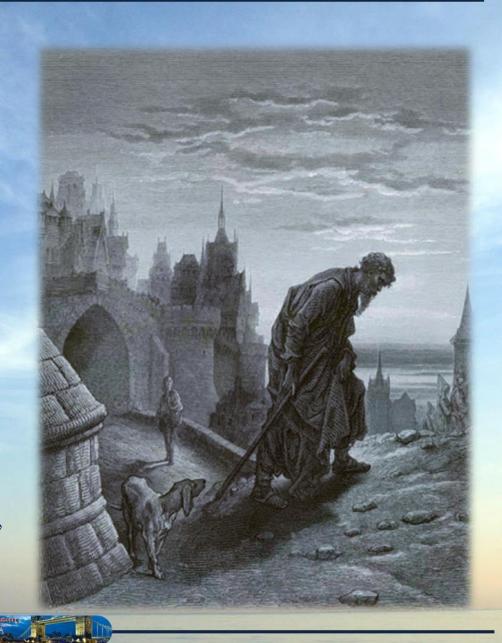
He prayeth best, who loveth best All things both great and small; For the dear God who loveth us, He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Legane: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned, And is of sense forlorn:

A sadder and a wiser man,

He rose the morrow morn.





Analysis 2

- Another supernatural element of his cursed penance is that he claims to always know the man with whom he must share his story.
- The final component of the penance is his imparting of the moral to the proper audience.

HENCE

- The Mariner is caught in an endless cycle of sin and redemption, of penance and absolution.
- The Mariner has lost his innocent state by killing the Albatross.





The Moral

- The Mariner finally leaves the Wedding Guest with the moral of this tale:
- 1. The best way to connect with the Divine is through the sublime(rather than material things).
- 2. The Mariner believes that the best way to connect with God is through the appreciation and love of nature, thus developing an almost spiritual relationship with the natural world.
- The power of the Mariner's story has deeply affected him, and he wakes to find himself changed in fundamental ways
- The Mariner, as storyteller, is capable of transformation; likewise, so is Coleridge in his role as poet.



I hope you have enjoyed my poem

Trying to be aware of the beauty that surrounds you...

..and thinking twice before acting are just good advice that will make you grow wiser and avoid disappointments, when possible











