



## THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

### PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"

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

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
10 "There was a ship," quoth he.  
"Hold off! unhand me, gray-beard loon!"<sup>1</sup>  
Eftsoons<sup>2</sup> his hand dropped he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—  
The Wedding Guest stood still,  
15 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 man,  
20 The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,  
Merrily did we drop  
Below the kirk,<sup>3</sup> below the hill,  
Below the lighthouse top.

25 The sun came up upon the left.  
Out of the sea came he!  
And he shone bright, and on the right  
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,  
30 Till over the mast at noon—"   
The Wedding Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,  
Red as a rose is she;  
35 Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry minstrelsy.<sup>4</sup>

The Wedding Guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot choose but hear;  
And thus spake on that ancient man.  
40 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. **A A**

45 With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
As who pursued with yell and blow  
Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
And forward bends his head,  
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
50 And southward aye<sup>5</sup> we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold:  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.

4. *minstrelsy*: "a troupe of minstrels" (AHD)  
5. *aye*: continually

**Ballad:** What characteristics of the ballad form have you encountered in the text so far? **A**

**Sound Devices:** What sound devices can you find in the previous stanzas? What do they add to the poem's overall effect so far? **A**

1. *loon*: "an ill-bred person" (OED)  
2. *Eftsoons*: immediately  
3. *kirk*: church

55 And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen:<sup>6</sup>  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—<sup>7</sup>  
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
60 The ice was all around:  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound!<sup>8</sup> **A**

At length did cross an Albatross:  
Thorough the fog it came;  
65 As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,  
And round and round it flew.  
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;  
70 The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;  
The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play,  
Came to the mariners' hollo!

75 In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,<sup>9</sup>  
It perched for vespers<sup>10</sup> nine;  
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmered the white moon-shine.”

“God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
80 From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—  
Why look'st thou so?”— With my crossbow  
I shot the Albatross. **R R**

## PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:  
Out of the sea came he,  
85 Still hid in mist, and on the left  
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,  
But no sweet bird did follow,  
Nor any day, for food or play,  
90 Came to the mariners' hollo!

6. *sheen*: shininess

7. *ken*: perceive

8. *swound*: swoon

9. *shroud*: a rope

10. *vespers*: an evening prayer service in formal church liturgies

**Imagery:** Identify some of the details the poet includes to describe this scene from nature (ll. 51–62). What sound device in line 61 contributes to this description? **A**

**Draw Conclusions:** What does the Albatross seem to symbolize for the sailors? Why do they think this? **R**

**Draw Conclusions:** What has the Mariner done? Why? How does he seem to feel about it? **R**

And I had done a hellish thing,  
And it would work 'em woe:  
For all averred, I had killed the bird  
That made the breeze to blow.  
95 Ah, wretch! said they, the bird to slay,  
That made the breeze to blow!



### VISUAL ANALYSIS

How does this engraving made by Gustave Doré to accompany the poem enhance the imagery and mood in lines 51–70?

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
 The glorious Sun uprist:<sup>11</sup>  
 Then all averred, I had killed the bird  
 100 That brought the fog and mist.  
 'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,  
 That bring the fog and mist.  
 The fair breeze<sup>12</sup> blew, the white foam flew.  
 The furrow followed free:  
 105 We were the first that ever burst  
 Into that silent sea.

Down dropped the breeze, the sails dropped  
 down,  
 'Twas sad as sad could be;  
 And we did speak only to break  
 110 The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,  
 The bloody Sun, at noon,  
 Right up above the mast did stand,  
 No bigger than the Moon.

115 Day after day, day after day,  
 We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
 As idle as a painted ship  
 Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,  
 120 And all the boards did shrink;  
 Water, water, everywhere,  
 Nor any drop to drink.

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

About, about, in reel and rout  
 The death-fires<sup>13</sup> danced at night;  
 The water, like a witch's oils,  
 130 Burnt green, and blue, and white. **A**

And some in dreams assuréd were  
 Of the spirit that plagued us so:  
 Nine fathom<sup>14</sup> deep he had followed us  
 From the land of mist and snow.

11. *uprist*: uprose  
 12. *fair breeze*: trade winds  
 13. *death-fires*: phosphorescent gleams in the rigging, electrical in origin, regarded superstitiously by sailors  
 14. *Nine fathom*: about fifty-four feet

**Imagery:** List some of the concrete details Coleridge uses to paint his images in lines 107–30. What mood do these images convey? **A**

135 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  
 140 Had I from old and young!  
 Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
 About my neck was hung. **B**

### PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat  
 Was parched, and glazed each eye.  
 145 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,  
 150 And then it seemed a mist:  
 It moved, and moved, and took at last  
 A certain shape, I wist.<sup>15</sup>

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!  
 And still it neared and neared:  
 155 As if it dodged a water-sprite,<sup>16</sup>  
 It plunged and tacked<sup>17</sup> and veered.

With throats unslaked,<sup>18</sup> with black lips baked,  
 We could nor laugh nor wail;  
 Through utter drought all dumb we stood!  
 160 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,  
 And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
 Agape<sup>19</sup> they heard me call:  
 Gramercy!<sup>20</sup> they for joy did grin,  
 165 And all at once their breath drew in,  
 As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!  
 Hither to work us weal,—<sup>21</sup>  
 Without a breeze, without a tide,  
 170 She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame,  
 The day was well-nigh done!

15. *wist*: knew, detected  
 16. *water-sprite*: spirit  
 17. *tacked*: changed the set of its sails and hence its direction, zigzagging in the manner of sailing ships angling into a wind  
 18. *unslaked*: unsatisfied of thirst  
 19. *Agape*: with the mouth wide open as in wonder or awe  
 20. *Gramercy*: "an exclamation of surprise or sudden feeling" (OED)  
 21. *weal*: good

**Draw Conclusions:** What do the sailors mean by hanging the Albatross around the Mariner's neck? What does the Albatross symbolize now? **B**

Almost upon the western wave  
Rested the broad bright Sun;  
175 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,  
180 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 gossamers?<sup>22</sup>  
185 Are those her ribs through which the Sun  
Did peer, as through a grate?  
And is that Woman all her crew?  
Is that a Death?<sup>23</sup> and are there two?  
Is Death that Woman's mate?

190 Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold:  
Her skin was as white as leprosy,  
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,  
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

195 The naked hulk<sup>24</sup> alongside came,  
And the twain were casting dice;  
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"  
Quoth she, and whistles thrice. ❖

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

We listened and looked sideways up!  
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,  
205 My life-blood seemed to sip!  
The stars were dim, and thick the night,  
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;  
From the sails the dew did drip—  
Till clomb<sup>25</sup> above the eastern bar  
210 The hornéd Moon, with one bright star  
Within the nether<sup>26</sup> tip.

22. *gossamers*: floating films of cobweb

23. *Death*: death as represented by a skeleton figure

24. *hulk*: "a heavy, unwieldy ship" (*AHD*)

25. *clomb*: climbed

26. *nether*: lower

**Reading Check:** What is unusual about the ship that the Mariner sees coming? Which of its crew wins the dice toss? ❖



One after one, by the star-dogged<sup>27</sup> Moon.  
Too quick for groan or sigh,  
Each turned his face with a **ghastly** pang,  
215 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.  
220 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 crossbow!" **R**

#### PART IV

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!  
225 I fear thy skinny hand!  
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,  
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—  
230 Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding Guest!  
This body dropped not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
235 My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!  
And they all dead did lie:  
And a thousand thousand slimy things  
Lived on; and so did I.

240 I looked upon the rotting sea,  
And drew my eyes away:  
I looked upon the rotting deck,  
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to Heaven and tried to pray;  
245 But or ever a prayer had gushed  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them closed,  
And the balls like pulses beat;  
250 For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky  
Lay like a load on my weary eye,  
And the dead were at my feet.

<sup>27</sup> *star-dogged*: star-pursued

**ghastly** (găst'lē) *adj.* Causing shock, revulsion, or horror.

**Draw Conclusions:** What results from the dice game? What does the Mariner imply about these results by mentioning the sound of his crossbow? **R**

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
Nor rot nor **reek** did they:  
255 The look with which they looked on me  
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to Hell  
A spirit from on high;  
But oh! more horrible than that  
260 Is a curse in a dead man's eye!  
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,  
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,  
And nowhere did abide:  
265 Softly she was going up,  
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,  
Like April hoarfrost spread;<sup>28</sup>  
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
270 The charmed water burnt away  
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,  
I watched the water snakes:  
They moved in tracks of shining white,  
275 And when they reared, the elfish light  
Fell off in hoary flakes.

"Within the shadow of the ship  
I watched their rich attire:  
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,  
280 They coiled and swam; and every track  
Was a flash of golden fire.

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

The selfsame moment I could pray;  
And from my neck so free  
290 The Albatross fell off, and sank  
Like lead into the sea. **R**

<sup>28</sup> *Her . . . spread*: The moonbeams paradoxically look like a spring morning's frosted dew spread over the warm sea.

**reek** (rĕk) *intr.v.* To give off a strong unpleasant odor.

**Draw Conclusions:** Summarize the Mariner's development in Part IV. Symbolically, why does the Albatross fall off his neck? **R**

**VISUAL ANALYSIS**

What important moment from the poem does this engraving depict? Do you think Doré captured the emotion and theme of the scene properly?



## PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,  
Beloved from pole to pole!  
To Mary Queen the praise be given!  
295 She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,  
That slid into my soul.  
The silly<sup>29</sup> buckets on the deck,  
That had so long remained,  
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;  
300 And when I awoke, it rained.  
My lips were wet, my throat was cold,  
My garments all were dank;  
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,  
And still my body drank.  
305 I moved, and could not feel my limbs.  
I was so light—almost  
I thought that I had died in sleep,  
And was a blessed ghost.  
And soon I heard a roaring wind:  
310 It did not come anear;  
But with its sound it shook the sails  
That were so thin and sere.<sup>30</sup>  
The upper air burst into life!  
And a hundred fire-flags<sup>31</sup> sheen,  
315 To and fro they were hurried about;  
And to and fro, and in and out,  
The wan<sup>32</sup> stars danced between.  
And the coming wind did roar more loud,  
And the sails did sigh like sedge;<sup>33</sup>  
320 And the rain poured down from one black cloud;  
The Moon was at its edge.  
The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
The Moon was at its side:  
Like waters shot from some high crag,<sup>34</sup>  
325 The lightning fell with never a jag,  
A river steep and wide. **E**  
The loud wind never reached the ship,  
Yet now the ship moved on!  
Beneath the lightning and the Moon  
330 The dead men gave a groan.

29. *silly*: futile

30. *sere*: withered; dry

31. *fire-flags*: probably the aurora australis (i.e., the southern lights)

32. *wan*: "lacking light, or lustre" (OED)

33. *sedge*: stiff, grasslike plants, whose hollow-stemmed leaves rustle in the wind

34. *crag*: "a steep or precipitous rugged rock" (OED)

**dank** (dāngk) *adj.* Disagreeably damp or humid.

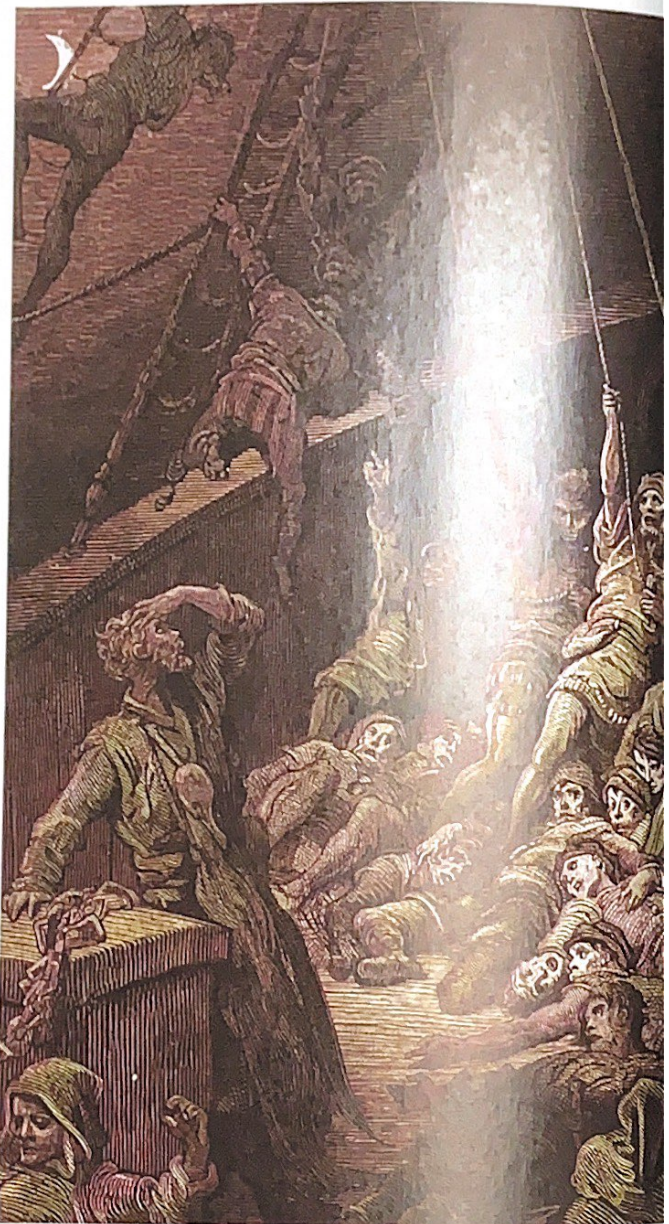
**Romanticism:** Why does the Mariner's natural environment suddenly change? **E**

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,  
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;  
It had been strange, even in a dream,  
To have seen those dead men rise.

335 The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;  
Yet never a breeze up-blew;  
The mariners all 'gan work<sup>35</sup> the ropes,  
Where they were wont<sup>36</sup> to do;  
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—  
340 We were a ghastly crew.

35. *all 'gan work*: all began to work

36. *wont*: accustomed



### VISUAL ANALYSIS

How did Doré evoke a subtle sense of wrongness in his depiction of the sailors working here?

The body of my brother's son  
Stood by me, knee to knee:  
The body and I pulled at one rope,  
But he said naught to me.

345 "I fear thee ancient Mariner!"  
Be calm, thou Wedding Guest!  
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,  
Which to their corses<sup>37</sup> came again,  
But a troop of spirits blest:

350 For when it dawned—they dropped their arms  
And clustered round the mast;  
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,  
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,  
355 Then darted to the Sun;  
Slowly the sounds came back again,  
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky  
I heard the skylark sing;  
360 Sometimes all little birds that are,  
How they seemed to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning!<sup>38</sup>

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute;  
365 And now it is an angel's song,  
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on  
A pleasant noise till noon,  
A noise like of a hidden brook  
370 In the leafy month of June,  
That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune. **A**

Till noon we quietly sailed on,  
Yet never a breeze did breathe:  
375 Slowly and smoothly went the ship  
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,  
From the land of mist and snow,  
The spirit slid: and it was he  
380 That made the ship to go.  
The sails at noon left off their tune,  
And the ship stood still also.

37. *corses*: corpses

38. *jargoning*: chattering; singing

The sun, right up above the mast,  
Had fixed her to the ocean:  
385 But in a minute she 'gan stir,  
With a short uneasy motion—  
Backwards and forwards half her length  
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,  
390 She made a sudden bound;  
It flung the blood into my head,  
And I fell down in a swoond.

How long in that same fit I lay,  
I have not to declare;  
395 But ere my living life returned,  
I heard and in my soul discerned  
Two voices in the air.

"Is it he?" quoth one "Is this the man?  
By him who died on cross,  
400 With his cruel bow he laid full low,  
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth<sup>39</sup> by himself  
In the land of mist and snow,  
He loved the bird that loved the man  
405 Who shot him with his bow."

The other was a softer voice,  
As soft as honey-dew:  
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,  
And penance more will do." **B**

## PART VI

### FIRST VOICE

410 "But tell me, tell me! speak again,  
Thy soft response renewing—  
What makes that ship drive on so fast?  
What is the Ocean doing?"

### SECOND VOICE

"Still as a slave before his lord,  
415 The Ocean hath no blast;  
His great bright eye most silently  
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;  
For she guides him smooth or grim  
420 See, brother, see! how graciously  
She looketh down on him."

39. *bideth*: abideth

**Imagery:** What kind of imagery does Coleridge use to convey the pleasantness of the spirits' singing in lines 354–72? **A**

**Romanticism:** What sin does the Mariner need to do "penance" for, according to Coleridge? How does this idea differ from the biblical narrative of the Fall and Redemption? **B**

FIRST VOICE

"But why drives on that ship so fast  
Without or wave or wind?"

SECOND VOICE

"The air is cut away before,  
425 And closes from behind.  
Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!  
Or we shall be belated:<sup>40</sup>  
For slow and slow that ship will go,  
When the Mariner's trance is abated."<sup>41</sup>  
430 I woke, and we were sailing on  
As in a gentle weather:  
'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high;  
The dead men stood together.  
All stood together on the deck,  
435 For a charnel-dungeon<sup>42</sup> fitter:  
All fixed on me their stony eyes  
That in the Moon did glitter.  
The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
Had never passed away:  
440 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,  
Nor turn them up to pray.  
And now this spell was snapped: once more  
I viewed the Ocean green,  
And looked far forth, yet little saw  
445 Of what had else been seen—  
Like one that on a lonesome road  
Doth walk in fear and dread,  
And having once turned round, walks on,  
And turns no more his head;  
450 Because he knows a frightful fiend  
Doth close behind him tread.  
But soon there breathed a wind on me,  
Nor sound nor motion made:  
Its path was not upon the sea,  
455 In ripple or in shade.  
It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek  
Like a meadow-gale of spring—  
It mingled strangely with my fears,  
Yet it felt like a welcoming.  
460 Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,  
Yet she sailed softly too:  
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—  
On me alone it blew.

40. *belated*: left behind

41. *abated*: diminished

42. *charnel-dungeon*: crypt, underground vault for burial

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed  
465 The lighthouse top I see?  
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?  
Is this mine own countree?  
We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,<sup>43</sup>  
And I with sobs did pray—  
470 O let me be awake, my God!  
Or let me sleep alway.  
The harbor-bay was clear as glass,  
So smoothly it was strewn!<sup>44</sup>  
And on the bay the moonlight lay,  
475 And the shadow of the Moon.  
The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,  
That stands above the rock:  
The moonlight steeped<sup>45</sup> in silentness  
The steady weathercock. **A**  
480 And the bay was white with silent light,  
Till rising from the same,  
Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
In crimson colors came.  
A little distance from the prow  
485 Those crimson shadows were:  
I turned my eyes upon the deck—  
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!  
Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,  
And, by the holy rood!<sup>46</sup>  
490 A man all light, a seraph-man,  
On every corse there stood.  
This seraph-band, each waved his hand:  
It was a heavenly sight!  
They stood as signals to the land,  
495 Each one a lovely light;  
This seraph-band, each waved his hand;  
No voice did they impart—  
No voice; but oh! the silence sank  
Like music on my heart.  
500 But soon I heard the dash of oars,  
I heard the Pilot's cheer;  
My head was turned perforce away,  
And I saw a boat appear.

43. *harbor-bar*: sandbar at the mouth of the harbor

44. *strewn*: spread

45. *steeped*: soaked, saturated

46. *rood*: cross

**Sound Devices:** What sound devices can you find in lines 452–79? How do they support the content of this passage? **A**



**VISION ANALYSIS**  
How does Pore create a sense of high drama in this engraving? How does the image's composition emphasize the men in the boat as the Mariner's saviors?



The Pilot,<sup>47</sup> and the Pilot's boy  
505 I heard them coming fast:  
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy  
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:  
It is the Hermit good!  
510 He singeth loud his godly hymns  
That he makes in the wood.  
He'll shrive<sup>48</sup> my soul, he'll wash away  
The Albatross's blood.

### Part VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood  
515 Which slopes down to the sea:  
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!  
He loves to talk with mariners  
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—  
520 He hath a cushion plump:  
It is the moss that wholly hides  
The rotted old oak-stump.


“The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,  
“Why this is strange, I trow!<sup>49</sup>  
525 Where are those lights so many and fair,  
That signal made but now?”

“Strange, by my faith!” the Hermit said—  
“And they answered not our cheer!  
The planks look warped! and see those sails  
530 How thin they are and sere!  
I never saw aught like to them,  
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag  
My forest brook along;  
535 When the ivy-tod<sup>50</sup> is heavy with snow,  
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below  
That eats the she-wolf's young.”

“Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—  
(The Pilot made reply)  
540 I am a-feared”—“Push on, push on!”  
Said the Hermit cheerily.

47. *Pilot*: someone who guided ships through hazardous port waters  
48. *shrieve*: to hear the confession of and give absolution to (a penitent)  
49. *trow*: am sure  
50. *ivy-tod*: ivy-bush

**Romanticism:** Reread lines 508–37. What does the Mariner hope for from the Hermit? What kind of imagery is associated with this man? 

The boat came closer to the ship,  
But I nor spake nor stirred;  
The boat came close beneath the ship,  
545 And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,  
Still louder and more dread:  
It reached the ship, it split the bay;  
The ship went down like lead.  
550 Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,  
Which sky and ocean smote,  
Like one that hath been seven days drowned  
My body lay afloat;  
But swift as dreams, myself I found  
555 Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,  
The boat spun round and round:  
And all was still, save that the hill  
Was telling<sup>51</sup> of the sound.

560 I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked  
And fell down in a fit;  
The Holy Hermit raised his eyes  
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,  
565 Who now doth crazy go,  
Laughed loud and long, and all the while  
His eyes went to and fro.  
“Ha! ha!” quoth he, “full plain I see,  
The Devil knows how to row.”

570 And now, all in my own countree,  
I stood on the firm land!  
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,  
And scarcely he could stand.

“O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!”  
575 The Hermit crossed his brow.  
“Say quick,” quoth he, “I bid thee say—  
What manner of man art thou?”

Forthwith<sup>52</sup> this frame of mine was wrenched  
With a woeful agony,  
580 Which forced me to begin my tale:  
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,  
That agony returns;  
And till my ghastly tale is told,  
585 This heart within me burns.

51. *telling*: echoing  
52. *forthwith*: right away

I pass, like night, from land to land;  
I have strange power of speech;  
That moment that his face I see,  
I know the man that must hear me:

590 To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!  
The Wedding Guests are there:  
But in the garden bower the bride  
And bridesmaids singing are;  
595 And hark the little vesper bell,<sup>53</sup>  
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding Guest! this soul hath been  
Alone on a wide wide sea:  
So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
600 Scarce seeméd there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage feast,  
'Tis sweeter far to me,  
To walk together to the kirk  
With a goodly company!—

605 To walk together to the kirk,  
And all together pray,  
While each to his great Father bends,  
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,  
And youths and maidens gay!

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

53. *vesper bell*: a bell that summons worshipers to a worship service

**Romanticism:** Is this moral biblically correct? What do you think Coleridge meant by it? **R**



He prayeth best, who loveth best  
615 All things both great and small;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all. **R**  
The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
Whose beard with age is hoar,<sup>54</sup>  
620 Is gone: and now the Wedding Guest  
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,  
And is of sense forlorn:<sup>55</sup>  
A sadder and a wiser man,  
625 He rose the morrow morn. **R**

54. *hoar*: white

55. *forlorn*: deprived

**Draw Conclusions:** Would you call the Wedding Guest a static or dynamic character? **R**

## THINK AND DISCUSS

1. Briefly summarize the Mariner's story. What sin does he commit and what punishments does he receive?
2. Who narrates the frame tale? Who narrates the rest of the story?
3. Choose a stanza and mark where its form qualifies as ballad stanza. Cite an example of one other way in which the poem mimics old ballads.
4. Define *alliteration*, *onomatopoeia*, *internal rhyme*, *assonance*, and *consonance*. Cite an example of each from the poem.
5. Select a passage depicting a striking image from nature. List the sensory details used to construct the image.
6. Briefly describe what you know of both main characters. Explain whether each is static or dynamic, supporting your answer from the text.
7. What theme does Coleridge develop in the Mariner's tale? How does the listener help convey this moral?
8. What does the Albatross symbolize within the story? Support your answer with textual details.
9. How does Coleridge's constant use of sound devices (rhyme, alliteration, etc.) and rhythm (ballad stanza) add to the poem's effects on readers?
10. Besides referencing the distant with ballad form, what romantic traits (p. 455) does Coleridge's poem reflect? Describe three, supporting your answer from the text.
11. How does Coleridge's romantic version of a human's moral fall and redemption conform to or deviate from biblical truths about sin, guilt, and redemption?