

## **ELA 9 – Study Guide**

In this study guide, please read the Rime of the Ancient Mariner summary and meanings of difficult words.

Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a poem written by Taylor Coleridge.

### **Rime of The Ancient Mariner Summary: A Quick Look at the Poem**

The ancient Mariner stops one of the wedding-guests.

He basically feels like narrating his story to him and sharing his grief.

The Wedding-Guest does not have the time and is in a hurry as he has to attend the wedding party.

The bright-eyed Mariner makes the wedding guest weak.

He is left with no option but listen to his tale.

The old Mariner starts talking about his story.

Their ship had left the harbour happily.

There was a severe storm and it pushed them southwards.

Then the weather became very cold with both snow and mist.

The ship gets bordered by huge icebergs that are as high as the flagpole.

Then comes the albatross from the fog.

The sailors cheer it as a 'Christian Soul'.

The albatross's entry is considered auspicious as it brings a favourable south wind.

The sailors give food to it and it flies over the ship.

In an irrational fit, the ancient Mariner kills the albatross with his cross-bow.

The fellow mariners start cursing the old Mariner as he killed an innocent and auspicious bird.

The weather gets worse. The Mariners then change their opinion.

Now they think that the killing of the albatross was justified as it had brought mist and snow.

Sadness prevails all around.

The sun becomes too harsh and the ocean starts rotting.

The wind stops blowing and the sails get dropped down.

The ship gets stuck at one point and doesn't move ahead.

It looks like someone has painted a ship on a painted ocean.

There is water around but the sailors don't have a single drop of water to drink.

The sailors then see in their dreams that a spirit was cursing them.

### **Rime of the Ancient Mariner Summary**

The poem 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' is written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and is very different from the works of many other romantic poets. The poem that was published in 1798 is based on a dream of Coleridge's friend. It is written in a folk ballad style and is divided into seven parts. It has many scattering references to outdated beliefs and practices. It is also not only the mariner, who is ancient, but even his rhyme is old. There are many contradictory time elements and the poem hides its origins. The extensive use of archaic words makes it sound old.

Coleridge has intentionally used archaic language, ominous tones. Also, the 'loony' narrator is a stunning contrast to the lighter, pastoral works of Wordsworth and others. Mariner's shabby yet charming appearance reminds the reader subtly through the constant focus on his 'glittering eye' and 'long beard', that he is a spokesman of nature. The mariner's timelessness,

in direct contrast to the death of all crew members, also suggests that the eternity of nature of which he has become symbolic. In the end, the mariner regrets his sins and this refers to a Christian message, although his killing of the albatross is a crime against nature. The poem concentrates on the power and vengeance of the natural world. Nevertheless, it focuses on the line, "I killed an albatross." The moralistic content of the poem can be concluded in its message, "He prayeth best, who loveth best."

### **Rime of the Ancient Mariner: Meaning of Words**

stoppeth :stops

thy :your

thou :you

merry din :the happy noise of celebration

unhand :leave

glittering :shining

hath :has

paced :entered

Nodding :acknowledging good wishes

fled :moved fast

wondrous :surprisingly

dismal :dull and depressing

plagued :troubled

drought :parched and dry

kirk : an archaic word for church. It gives a flavour of a traditional ballad and produces an effect of distancing in time.

Vesper's Nine :Exact meaning of Vesper is Venus, which is visible in the evenings. Number nine is a magical number for Coleridge and he is enthralled by it. So, basically, Vesper's Nine means the evening prayers in churches.

yell and blow (para 12) is the noise and convection of the sea storm. It could also mean the commotion or the cries of the sailors.

### **Rime of the Ancient Mariner: Literary Devices**

#### **ALLITERATION**

By the long grey beard and glittering eye

furrow followed free

It would work' ear woe

down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew

#### **METAPHORS**

Merry Minstrelsy

Vespers Nine

snowy clefts

The Furrow

#### **REPETITION**

glittering eye

ice was here etc.

bright-eyed Mariner

water, water

### **PERSONIFICATION**

Sun – is personified as a Man

Storm – is also personified as a Man

Blast – also as a Bird (“overtaking wing”)

### **SIMILES**

Like a three year old child – wedding guest

Red as a rose – the Bride • As who pursued with yell and blow – the ship

Like noises in a sound –Thundering and growling sounds • As idle as a painted ship –ship as if it is painted

Like witch’s oils – ingredients used by witches to make their broth

### **Form**

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” has been purposely written in loose, short ballad stanzas that are either four or six lines long but, sometimes, they are as many as nine lines long. The meter is also rather loose, but most of the odd lines are tetrameter, and even lines are trimeter. Of course, there are exceptions: In a five-line stanza, for example, lines one, three, and four do have four accented syllables—tetrameter—whereas lines two and five have three accented syllables. The rhymes usually alternate in an ABAB or ABABAB scheme, although there are many exceptions: like the nine-line stanza in Part III rhymes AABCCBDDDB. Many stanzas have couplets in this order—five-line stanzas, for instance, are rhymed ABCCB, frequently with an internal rhyme in the first line, or ABAAB, that does not have any internal rhyme.

Commentary

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is quite different from Coleridge’s other important works. It is unique because of its length, bizarre scholarly notes printed in small type in the margins, strange moral narrative, thematic vagueness, and also the long Latin epigraph at the start about the huge number of unclassifiable “invisible creatures” that live in the world. It has peculiarities that make it fairly atypical of its era; it has very little in common with his other Romantic works.