Before you Read

Make the Connection – Crime and Confession: Have you ever done something on impulse, knowing that even while you were doing it that you would regret it forever? The Ancient Mariner's strange tale turns on just such an action. And the dreadful consequences of his impulsive deed are as hypnotizing to us as they are to the Mariner's spellbound listener. As you read, pay attention to your own responses to the Mariner's story. When do you feel sympathy for the Mariner – or sorrow or horror or fear? When do you feel his story is true, and when is it hopelessly distorted by his own guilt?

Elements of Literature – The Literary Ballad: A literary ballad, a songlike poem that tells a story, is written in imitation of the folk ballad, which springs from a genuine oral tradition. Coleridge's literary ballad imitates the traditional folk ballad in both subject matter and form. Like the old folk ballads, his sensational narrative blends real with supernatural events. Coleridge was a skilled poet, and to avoid monotony, he often varies his meter and rhyme scheme. He also uses sophisticated sound devices like internal rhyme (“The guests are met, the feast is set”) and assonance (“’Tis sweeter far to me”). To give his ballad an archaic sound, he uses language that was even old-fashioned in his own time.

Background: Coleridge wrote The Rime of the Ancient Mariner as part of the collaboration with Wordsworth in 1797–1798 that culminated in Lyrical Ballads. Twenty years later, in the Biographia Literaria, Coleridge recalled that he and Wordsworth made a poetic division of labor based on their interest in the two powers of poetry: (1) to represent ordinary events and objects in an unfamiliar way so as to make them fresh and interesting and (2) to make believable the unfamiliar and strange.

Coleridge's task was to write about “persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so far as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.” “With this view,” he said, “I wrote the Ancient Mariner.” The poem was the first item in the 1798 edition of Lyrical Ballads. But partly because of Wordsworth’s discomfort with the incongruity between it and the rest of the poems in the volume, Coleridge modernized many of the deliberately old-fashioned words he had used. The marginal notes were added in 1817 and need to be viewed as “modern” and rational comments on the Mariner's tale.

Coleridge’s poem no doubt reflects his avid reading of travelers’ accounts of strange lands. It was apparently Wordsworth who suggested the use of the albatross. It is helpful in reading this hypnotic narrative to keep in mind three things. First, there is no explanation for the killing of the albatross. Second, the moral of the story, pronounced by the Mariner at the end, is, as Coleridge later observed, too much and too little; that is, it is too obtrusive and yet not adequate. Finally, the poem must be seen in the light of Coleridge’s own more settled religious convictions, which contrast with the spiritual despair of the Mariner: “Alone on a wide wide sea; / So lonely ‘twas, that God himself / Scarce seemed there to be.”
Argument

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country toward the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancient Mariner came back to his own Country.

ELA 9 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner - Themes

Sin, Punishment, and Penance

The Mariner's penance is what drives the story—if he wasn't compelled to share his experience and what he's learned, he would never have stopped the Wedding Guest in the first place. When he shoots the Albatross, the Mariner sins against both nature and God. He did not appreciate the innocent beauty found in the Albatross so he kills it without even knowing why he did so. This act leads to his punishment—thirst and starvation, the death of his crew members, deprivation and isolation—until he realizes and appreciates the grandeur of the natural and supernatural world that the Albatross embodied.

He is not fully absolved of his crime though, as he is still called upon to do penance by relating his story to a person who seems to be magically chosen as needing to hear his tale. His deprivations and torment may be ended temporarily while on the ship, but his drive to confess is compelled by some otherworldly urge (spiritual or supernatural is up to interpretation). With Life-in-Death having won his soul, we can assume that the Mariner is doomed to live forever telling his story without respite or face unbearable agony.

In addition, the idea of never-ending penance is not a new one. There are many stories that deal with punishment and absolution, including that of the Wandering Jew, who reportedly taunts Jesus on the way to his crucifixion and then must wander Earth until the second coming, and the Flying Dutchman, a ghost ship that sails forever and is never able to dock in a port. Coleridge draws upon the common theme to lend his Ancient Mariner the pain and gravitas present in literary and folklore history. The Mariner's sin was the work of a moment, but his penance is eternal.

The Sublime

The idea of the sublime is one of the tenets of the Romantic Period. When we think of a thing as sublime, we believe it to be of great excellence or beauty, but the Romantics had a different definition. To Coleridge and his contemporaries, the sublime represents something both magnificent and terrible, something awe-inspiring and majestic usually associated with nature. Coleridge possessed an even narrower view of what constituted sublime spaces, believing that the limitlessness of the sea and sky and desert to be the only natural landscapes to truly fit this ideal.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is full of these instances. The storm that drives the ship to the South Pole, and the glaciers, ice, and mist that surround the ship once they get there, are described as being beautiful, powerful, dangerous, and terrifying. They inspire awe as much as they inspire fear. The sea serpents they view when the ship is calmed are all described negatively. The Mariner and his crew only seem to see the storms, ice, and creatures of the deep in negative ways, forgetting that they too are created by God and are part of the natural world. These things may be awful, but they are also awe-full. By only focusing on the one and not the other, the Mariner detaches himself from the natural world and God's creation, leaving him open to the sin of unnecessarily killing the Albatross.

When the Mariner finally does see and accept the beauty of the sea snakes that surround the ship, he is accepting the sublime. It is in that moment of clarity that he both accepts the beauty of nature and God's hand in creating them. He understands his place in the natural and spiritual order, beginning to understand the connections between. The Mariner is suddenly able to pray and, for a time, the curse is broken. When he next feels unable to pray after seeing the dead men once again staring at him, he remembers the sublime beauty of God's hand in nature, and the feeling passes. As long as he remembers to accept the presence of the sublime, the Mariner reaffirms his connection to both nature and God.
Nature and Spirit

The Romantic period is defined by an appreciation and glorification of nature, something we see in Coleridge's poem. But The Rime of the Ancient Mariner walks a balanced line between the natural world and the spiritual one. The Wedding Guest is supposed to attend the marriage of his kinsman, a spiritual bonding beneath the eyes of God, but he's interrupted by the Mariner, a seafarer with a closer bond with the natural world.

The story the Mariner tells blends aspects of the natural world and the spiritual. The power of the storms, the eerie beauty of the ice, and the physical presence of the serpents are all dangers of the natural world. The elements that buffet the ship, the lack of wind that strands it, and the lack of water that threatens their lives are all natural in their origin. But the spirit that follows them from the South Pole, the dead men rising to pilot the ship, and the ghostly ship are elements of the spiritual and supernatural worlds. The Albatross flies between them, linking the Mariner's natural world with the supernatural.

The Mariner shooting and killing the Albatross is the inciting incident of the poem. For whatever reason (the Mariner never gives one for why he killed the bird), the Mariner's actions bring about the spiritual consequences of his actions. He could have been demonstrating man's power over nature, and as such, God's own creations. Regardless of why, the Mariner illustrates that this is not the proper way to engage the natural world.

He loses the ability to pray and to interact with the spiritual world on his own behalf. Instead he and the crew are at the mercy of the spirit of the South Pole and Death and Life-in-Death. He cannot communicate with these beings or with God because he's lost the power of speech and prayer. It is only when he begins to value the natural world that he regains his ability to communicate and to confess, and this manifests in the help of the Moon and the angelic possession of the crew to sail him home. Even the spirit of the South Pole, so angry at the death of the Albatross, is helping guide the ship. The natural world and the spiritual work in harmony because the Mariner realizes his ties to both and that they are never truly separate.

The Mariner's first audience is the Hermit, a holy man who sits, prays, and thinks on God. The Mariner is confessing his sin, not just to God but to appease the natural order that he upset when he killed the Albatross. The spiritual and the natural world combine in the character of the Hermit: "He kneels at morn and noon and eve— / He hath a cushion plump: / It is the moss that wholly hides / The rotted old oak stump." He prays to God, but he is removed from mankind, choosing to do so in a natural setting. He is the man that the Mariner believes can give him absolution, being in touch with both worlds.

The Mariner leaves the Wedding Guest with a moral and a warning for how to behave in order to avoid the Mariner's fate. He counsels to both love God and His creatures, to be one with the sublime and the Divine, and to accept the power of both for greater happiness. Coleridge's belief that these two ideas are bound together, that one can reach a deeper spiritual feeling through the interaction and appreciation of the natural world, is expressed to us as much as to the Wedding Guest via the Mariner's story.

How does this story explore penance and redemption?

A dream by Coleridge's friend, John Cruikshank, was the inspiration for “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” Coleridge and poet William Wordsworth discussed Cruikshank's dream, with Wordsworth suggesting that Coleridge incorporate elements of the dream into a poem based on a crime committed on a ship at sea. The crime, Wordsworth suggested, should be the heart of the narrative, driving the development of plot, character, and theme. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” reflects Wordsworth's suggestions, but the poem is more complex than a tale of crime and punishment. The Mariner's crime is committed against God, not man, and the narrative develops as an examination of sin, penance, and redemption. Moreover, the nature of the Mariner's crime underscores the darkest aspect of human nature—the desire to destroy simply for the love of destruction.

The Mariner's killing the albatross serves no apparent purpose. The bird poses no threat to him or to his shipmates; the albatross, in fact, seems to have brought the men luck after a violent storm had driven their ship off course, sending it into the icy realm of the South Pole. Coming out of the snow and fog, the bird escorts the ship away from the South Pole and flies nearby as it follows the ship north into fair weather. The albatross comes when the men call it “for food or play,” and it rests on the ship at night, perching on the mast and rigging. The
“sweet bird” remains with the ship day after day, a faithful companion, until the Mariner shoots it with his crossbow, committing a deliberate act of destruction with no purpose at all, except to exercise his will.

Much suffering ensues before the Mariner realizes that in destroying the albatross, he has committed a grievous sin against God; recalling the act many years later, he tells the wedding guest, “I had done a hellish thing.” It is only when he finds himself alone on the ship, surrounded by the dead, becalmed on a “rotting sea,” and unable to pray that his selfish pride is broken and he recognizes his place in creation. Looking beyond the shadow of the ship, he sees in the moonlight the beauty of God’s handiwork in the water snakes that “coiled and swam” in the sea, “every track ... a flash of golden fire.” Overwhelmed with love for the “happy living things” too beautiful to describe, he blesses them and takes a first step on a long road toward redemption.

When the wedding guest encounters the Mariner, now so old he is “ancient,” the Mariner will not be denied the opportunity to tell his story yet again, reliving the experience while sharing the truth it imparted to him. Many years after killing the albatross, the gravity of his sin still haunts him; when the “agony returns,” he must confess his sin once more by telling his “ghastly tale.” He continues to do penance for his sin by traveling “from land to land” to find men who most need to learn what he has to teach them, the spiritual truth summarized at the poem’s conclusion:

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

Through great suffering, the ancient Mariner had learned the true nature of mankind’s relationship to God and to God’s creation. He understands that senseless destruction is born of pride, humility is born of suffering, love is born of humility, and only in love can salvation be found.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner – Samuel Coleridge

PART I

An ancient Mariner meeteth three gallants bidden to a wedding feast, and detaineth one.

He holds him with his skinny hand, 'There was a ship, 'quoth he, 'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!' Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line.

Higher and higher every day, Till over the mast at noon——'

The ship drawn by a storm toward the South Pole.

'The land of ice, and of fearful sounds, where no living thing was to be seen.

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:  
It crack'd and growl'd, and roar'd and howl'd,  
Like noises in a swound!

At length did cross an Albatross,  
Thorough the fog it came;  
As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hail'd 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;  
The helmsman steer'd 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!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,  
It perch'd for vespers nine;  
While's all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmer'd the white moonshine.'

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

PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:  
Out of the sea came he,  
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  
Came to the mariners' hollo!

His shipmates  
cry out against  
the ancient Mariner  
for killing the bird of good omen.

And I had done an hellish thing,  
And it would work 'em woe:  
For all aver'd, I had kill'd the bird  
That made the breeze to blow.

Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,  
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
The glorious Sun uprist:  
Then all aver'd, I had kill'd the bird  
That brought the fog and mist.

'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,  
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow follow'd free;  
We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be;  
And we did speak only to break  
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.
A flash of joy; And horror follows. Can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?

Agape they heard me call: Gramercy! they for joy did grin, And all at once their breath drew in, As they were drinking all.

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

The western wave was all aflame, The day was wellnigh done! Almost upon the western wave Rested the broad, bright Sun; When that strange shape drove suddenly Between us and the Sun.

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.

Death and Life-in-Death have died for the ship’s crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner. No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

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.

We listen’d and look’d sideways up! Fear at my heart, as at a cup, My life-blood seem’d to sip! The stars were dim, and thick the night, The steersman’s face by his lamp gleam’d white; From the sails the dew did drip—

At the rising of the Moon, One after another, His shipmates drop down dead.

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly— They fled to bliss or woe! And every soul, it pass’d me by Like the whizz of my crossbow!

PART IV

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!' I fear thy skinny hand! And thou art long, and lank, and brown, As is the ribb’d sea-sand. I fear thee and thy glittering eye, And thy skinny hand so brown.’—

'Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!' This body dropt not down. Alone, alone, all, all alone, Alone on a wide, wide sea! And never a saint took pity on 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.

I look’d upon the rotting sea, And drew my eyes away; I look’d upon the rotting deck, And there the dead men lay.

I look’d to heaven, and tried to pray; But or ever a prayer had gush’d, A wicked whisper came, and made My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close, And the balls like pulses beat; 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.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs, Nor rot nor reek did they; The look with which they look’d on me Had never pass’d away.

An orphan’s curse would drag to hell A spirit from on high; But oh! more horrible than that Is the 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; Softly she was going up, And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemock’d the sultry main, Like April hoar-frost spread; But where the ship’s huge shadow lay, The charmed water burnt alway A still and awful red.
By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain.

The bodies of the ship’s crew are inspired, and the ship moves on;

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element.

The lonesome Spirit from the South Pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still

The Sun, right up above the mast,
And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And look’d far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—
Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turn’d round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
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,
In ripple or in shade.
It raised my hair, it fann’d my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.
Swifly, swifly flew the ship,
Yet she sail’d softly too;
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.
O dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?
We drifted o’er the harbour-bar,
And I with sob did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.
The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.
The rock shone bright, the kirk no less
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steep’d in silentness
The steady weathercock.
And the bay was white with silent light
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.
A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turn’d my eyes upon the deck—
O Christ! what saw I there!
Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there sto’d:
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.
The rock shone bright, the kirk no less
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steep’d in silentness
The steady weathercock.
And the bay was white with silent light
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.
A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turn’d my eyes upon the deck—
O Christ! what saw I there!
Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
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,
Each one a lovely light;
This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but O, the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turn'd perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
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!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

PART VII
'This Hermit good lives in that wood
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—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat near'd: I heard them talk,
"Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?"

"Strange, by my faith!" the Hermit said—
"And they answer'd not our cheer!
The planks looked warp'd! a strange, I trow!
That mists is heavy with snow,
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod 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)
I am a-fear'd"—"'Push on, push on!"
Said the Hermit cheerily.

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

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reach'd the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunn'd by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drown'd
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
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 of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shriek'd
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And pray'd where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laugh'd 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."

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

"O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!"
The Hermit cross'd his brow.
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?"

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrench'd
With a woful agony,
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,
What manner of man art thou?

I pass, like night, from land to land;
This heart within me burns.
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 bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddest me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God Himself
Scarcely seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—
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!
Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest! He prayeth well, who loveth well
and reverence to all things that God made and loveth.

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,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turn’d from the bridegroom’s door.

He went like one that hath been stunn’d,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn.
Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Iron Maiden

Hear the rime of the ancient mariner
See his eye as he stops one of three
Mesmerises one of the wedding guests
Stay here and listen to the nightmares of the sea.

And the music plays on, as the bride passes by
Caught by his spell and the mariner tells his tale.

Driven south to the land of the snow and ice
To a place where nobody’s been
Through the snow fog flies on the albatross
Hailed in God’s name, hoping good luck it brings.

And the ship sails on, back to the North
Through the fog and ice and the albatross follows on.

The mariner kills the bird of good omen
His shipmates cry against what he’s done
But when the fog clears, they justify him
And make themselves a part of the crime.

Sailing on and on and north across the sea
Sailing on and on and north ’til all is calm.

The albatross begins with its vengeance
A terrible curse a thirst has begun
His shipmates blame bad luck on the mariner
About his neck, the dead bird is hung.

And the curse goes on and on AND ON at sea
And the thirst goes on and on for them and me.

"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 and
all the boards did shrink
Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink."

There calls the mariner
There comes a ship over the line
But how can she sail with no wind in her sails and no tide.

See...onward she comes
Onward she nears out of the sun
See, she has no crew
She has no life, wait but there’s two.

Death and she Life in Death,
They throw their dice for the crew
She wins the mariner and he belongs to her now.
Then...crew one by one
they drop down dead, two hundred men
She...she, Life in Death.
She lets him live, her chosen one.

"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 curse it lives on in their eyes
The mariner he wished he’d die
Along with the sea creatures
But they lived on, so did he.

And by the light of the moon
He prays for their beauty not doom
With heart he blesses them
God’s creatures all of them too.

Then the spell starts to break
The albatross falls from his neck
Sinks down like lead into the sea
Then down in falls comes the rain.

Hear the groans of the long dead seamen
See them stir and they start to rise
Bodies lifted by good spirits
None of them speak and they’re lifeless in their eyes

And revenge is still sought, penance starts again
Cast into a trance and the nightmare carries on.

Now the curse is finally lifted
And the mariner sights his home
spirits go from the long dead bodies
Form their own light and the mariner's left alone.

And then a boat came sailing towards him
It was a joy he could not believe
The pilot’s boat, his son and the hermit,
Penance of life will fall onto him.

And the ship it sinks like lead into the sea
And the hermit shrives the mariner of his sins.

The mariner’s bound to tell of his story
To tell this tale wherever he goes
To teach God’s word by his own example
That we must love all things that God made.

And the wedding guest’s a sad and wiser man
And the tale goes on and on and on.