

# The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge



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# Notes

## **What is a literary classic and why are these classic works important to the world?**

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that has something important to say about life and/or the human condition and says it with great artistry. A classic, through its enduring presence, has withstood the test of time and is not bound by time, place, or customs. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to people one hundred or more years ago, and as forcefully as it will speak to people of future generations. For this reason, a classic is said to have universality.

The eighteenth century was a time of revolution; the French Revolution, especially, was supposed to usher in a new era of enlightenment, brotherhood, and individual freedom. The artistic movement that arose in Europe in reaction to the events of this time is called Romanticism, and it is characterized by a stressing of emotion and imagination, as opposed to the emphasis on classical forms that was important to previous artists. In England, the major Romantic poets were Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, William Wordsworth, and John Keats. These poets took up the revolutionary ideas of personal and spiritual emancipation through language that is often bold and simple, like the speech of the common people of England.

Romantic poetry frequently focuses on images of nature, which is viewed as a force that expresses sympathy with human beings.. Romanticism also features supernatural events and includes melancholy settings, such as deserted castles or monasteries on lonely hillsides.

A concern for human society also marks the early English Romantics. Blake describes a time when Albion (England) will be free from oppression and injustice, and all men will enter into a new age and a new heaven on earth. Wordsworth despises the ugliness of the expanding cities and urges a return to a spiritual home in nature. Later Romantic poets, though, especially Keats, focus more on the intense emotions and deep paradoxes of human existence.

Despite the variety of opinion and style within English Romantic poetry, one idea remains central to the movement: Individual experience is the primary source of truth and knowledge. In fact, some recent scholars have attributed the modern ideas of personality to the Romantic poets, whose focus on personal, emotional, and subjective experience may have given rise to our notions of individuality.

# Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

**The Romantic Movement** was a literary, artistic, and intellectual movement in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It began as a reaction against the rigid conventions—artistic, social, and political—of the Enlightenment and asserted the power and the value of the individual.

Romanticism stressed strong emotion and the individual imagination as the ultimate critical and moral authority. The Romantic poets, therefore, felt free to challenge traditional notions of *form*. They likewise found themselves abandoning social conventions, particularly the privileges of the aristocracy, which they believed to be detrimental to individual fulfillment.

Because Romanticism is, at its core, a rebellion *against* rigid standards of form, taste, and behavior, it is difficult to establish a set of standards to *define* Romanticism. It is possible, however, to point out some common motifs that offer an overview of what the Romantic poets believed and tried to accomplish in their poetry.

## **The politics of the Romantics:**

- The Romantics were, for the most part, disheartened liberals.
- The successful revolution of the American colonies against the oppressive British crown and the developing revolution in France were exciting to the Romantics.
- Blake, Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley all lost heart, however, because of the Reign of Terror in France and the rise of Napoleon as the French Emperor.
- The Romantic focus on the imagination was a direct response to eighteenth-century rationalism.

## **The psychology of the Romantics:**

- The nature of experience: its duality and fleeting quality were of great interest to the Romantics. Notice Blake's contrast between Innocence and Experience, the role of memory in Wordsworth's work, Shelley's lamenting the passing of an experience, and Keats' assertion that the *imagined* experience is better than the actual, in that it will never end.
- Beauty was to be found in Nature, not in man-made objects or concepts.
- The Romantics sought solitude in Nature, believing that the key to all emotional healing could be found in Nature.
- Nature imagery is the most predominant feature of Romantic literature.

- The concept of a pantheistic Nature (God exists in all things) became almost a religion for Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats.
- In the “religion” of the Romantics, virtue was exemplified by being true to one's nature while “sin” occurred when denying one's own nature or forcing someone else to conform to a foreign code of principles or behavior (in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake wrote: “One law for the Lion and Ox is oppression”).

### **The Romantic Sense of Beauty**

- While the literature of the Enlightenment focused on the hero and the high-ranking socialite, the Romantics celebrated the commoner, the laborer, and the “underprivileged.”
- Eighteenth-century esthetics had favored the highly ornate and artificial (as epitomized by Baroque music and architecture), but the Romantics strove to emphasize beauty in simplicity and plainness.

### **The Byronic Hero**

Taking into consideration the personal traits the Romantics found most admirable—passionate conviction, absolute individualism and independence, a disregard for restrictive authority and the outmoded or unjust laws it represents—it follows that the Romantic notion of the hero would be just such a person. Byron's most famous characters, *Manfred*, *Childe Harold*, and *Don Juan*, typify this type of hero, as did Byron himself. Thus, the Romantic hero came to be known as the Byronic Hero.

# Samuel Taylor Coleridge

“What if you slept, and what if in your sleep you dreamed, and what if in your dreams you went to heaven and there you plucked a strange and beautiful flower, and what if when you awoke you had the flower in your hand? Ah, what then?”

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge,  
*Biographia Literaria*

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born October 21, 1772, the son of a vicar. When Coleridge was nine, his father died, and his mother sent him away to boarding school, often not allowing him to return home for holidays and vacations. As an adult, Coleridge would idealize his father, but his relationship with his mother would always be strained.

He attended Jesus College at Cambridge University, but never completed a degree, one time leaving school to join the military to escape a woman who had rejected him. While at university, Coleridge became friends with Robert Southey, and the two developed plans to establish a utopian commune in Pennsylvania. Coleridge and Southey married sisters Edith and Sarah Fricker, but Coleridge's marriage was never truly happy.

In 1793, Coleridge met and became instant friends with William Wordsworth. With Wordsworth, he wrote and published *Lyrical Ballads*. While Wordsworth contributed a greater *number* of poems to the work, Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* received the most attention.

Throughout their friendship and careers, Wordsworth would always be the more productive poet, while Coleridge's work would gain the notice of critics and readers.

Coleridge allegedly suffered from a number of physical ailments, including facial neuralgia, and in 1796, he started using opium as a pain reliever. He would become addicted to the narcotic, and this would eventually affect his career as a poet and his friendship with Wordsworth.

His intensifying opium addiction, an unhappy marriage, and a growing estrangement from Wordsworth all contributed to a period of depression, which included a severe lack of confidence in his own poetic ability. He gradually spent more and more time alone, studying philosophy and traveling the Continent. Although considered by many to be a “giant among dwarfs,” Coleridge never quite regained his confidence.

In 1816, his addiction worsening, his spirits depressed, and his family alienated, Coleridge took up residence in Highgate, the home of physician James Gillman. Here he finished his major prose work, the *Biographia Literaria*, twenty-five chapters of autobiographical notes and discussions on various subjects, including literary theory and criticism.

Coleridge died of heart failure in Highgate on July 25, 1834.

# The Rime of the Ancient Mariner in Seven Parts

From *Lyrical Ballads*

Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit? et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quae loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in tabulâ, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernae vitae minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus. – T. Burnet, *Archaeol. Phil.*, p. 68

## Argument

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by Storms to the cold Country towards 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 Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.

## Part the First.

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
“By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stoppest thou me?”

“The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,<sup>(5)</sup>  
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,  
“There was a ship,” quoth he.<sup>(10)</sup>  
“Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!”  
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—  
The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years child:<sup>(15)</sup>  
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:  
He cannot choose but hear;  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,<sup>(20)</sup>  
Merrily did we drop

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

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

Below the kirk, below the hill,  
Below the light-house top.

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

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

The bride hath paced into the hall,  
Red as a rose is she;  
Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry minstrelsy.(35)

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot choose but hear;  
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 south along.

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

And now there came both mist and snow,(50)  
And it grew wondrous cold:  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen:(55)  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—  
The ice was all between.

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

*The Wedding-  
Guest heareth the  
bridal music; but the  
Mariner continueth his  
tale.*

*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.*

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around:  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,(60)  
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 hailed it in God's name.(65)

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 steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;(70)  
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 perched for vespers nine;(75)  
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.

“God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—  
Why look'st thou so?”—With my cross-bow(80)  
I shot the Albatross.

### **Part the Second.**

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.(85)

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!

And I had done an hellish thing,(90)  
And it would work 'em woe:  
For all averred, I had killed the bird

*Till a great sea-bird,  
called the Albatross,  
came through the  
snow-fog, and was  
received with great joy  
and hospitality.*

*And lo! the Albatross  
proveth a bird of good  
omen, and followeth  
the ship as it returned  
northward through fog  
and floating ice.*

*The ancient  
Mariner inhospitably  
killeth the pious  
bird of good omen.*

*His shipmates cry  
out against the  
ancient Mariner for  
killing the bird of*

That made the breeze to blow.

*good luck.*

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
The glorious Sun uprist:(95)  
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.

*But when the fog  
cleared off, they  
justify the same,  
and thus make  
themselves accom-  
plishes in the crime.*

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow followed free:  
We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea.

*The fair breeze  
continues; the ship  
enters the Pacific  
Ocean, and sails  
northward, even till  
it reaches the Line.*

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be;(105)  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the sea!

*The ship hath been  
suddenly becalmed.*

All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,(110)  
No bigger than the Moon.

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

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

*And the Albatross  
begins to be avenged.*

The very deep did rot: O Christ!(120)  
That ever this should be!  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea.

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

And some in dreams assured were  
Of the spirit that plagued us so:  
Nine fathom deep he had followed us<sup>(130)</sup>  
From the land of mist and snow.

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.<sup>(135)</sup>

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

### **Part the Third.**

There passed a weary time. Each throat<sup>(140)</sup>  
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.<sup>(145)</sup>

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!<sup>(150)</sup>  
And still it neared and neared;  
As if it dodged a water-sprite,  
It plunged and tacked and veered.

*A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.*

*The shipmates in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.*

*The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.*

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
We could not laugh nor wail;  
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!  
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,  
And cried, A sail! a sail!

*At its nearer  
approach, it seemeth  
him to be a ship; and  
at a dear ransom he  
freeth his speech from  
the bonds of thirst.*

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
Agape they heard me call:(160)  
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,  
And all at once their breath drew in,  
As they were drinking all.

*A flash of joy;*

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!  
Hither to work us weal;(165)  
Without a breeze, without a tide,  
She steadies with upright keel!

*And horror follows.  
For can it be a ship  
that comes onward  
without wind or tide?*

The western wave was all a-flame  
The day was well nigh done!  
Almost upon the western wave(170)  
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!)(175)  
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered,  
With broad and burning face.

*It seemeth him but the  
skeleton of a ship.*

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)  
How fast she nears and nears!  
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,(180)  
Like restless gossameres!

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? and are there two?(185)  
Is DEATH that woman's mate?

*And its ribs are seen  
as bars on the face of  
the setting Sun. The  
Spectre-Woman and  
her Death-mate, and  
no other on board the  
skeleton ship. Like ves  
sel, like crew!*

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,(190)  
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,  
And the twain were casting dice;  
“The game is done! I've won! I've won!”  
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.(195)

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 listened and looked sideways up!(200)  
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,  
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—(205)  
Till clombe above the eastern bar  
The hornéd Moon, with one bright star  
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon  
Too quick for groan or sigh,(210)  
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,(215)  
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 whiz of my cross-bow!(220)

#### **Part the Fourth.**

“I fear thee, ancient Mariner!  
I fear thy skinny hand!  
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,

*Death and Life-in-  
Death have diced for  
the ship's crew, and she  
(the latter) winneth  
the ancient Mariner.*

*No twilight within the  
courts of the Sun.*

*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 Wedding-Guest  
feareth that a spirit is  
talking to him;*

As is the ribbed sea-sand.

“I fear thee and thy glittering eye,(225)  
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!(230)  
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(235)  
Lived on—and so did I.

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

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

I closed my lids, and kept them close,(245)  
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,(250)  
Nor rot nor reek did they:  
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;(255)  
But oh! more horrible than that  
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!  
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,  
And yet I could not die.

*But the ancient  
Mariner assureth him  
of his bodily life, and  
proceedeth to relate  
his horrible penance.*

*He despiseth the crea-  
tures of the calm.*

*And envieth that they  
should live, and so  
many lie dead.*

*But the curse liveth for  
him in the eye of the  
dead men.*

The moving Moon went up the sky,(260)  
And no where did abide:  
Softly she was going up,  
And a star or two beside.

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,  
Like April hoar-frost spread;(265)  
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
The charmed water burnt alway  
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,  
I watched the water-snakes;(270)  
They moved in tracks of shining white,  
And when they reared, the elfish light  
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship  
I watched their rich attire;(275)  
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,  
They coiled and swam; and every track  
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue  
Their beauty might declare;(280)  
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 selfsame moment I could pray;(285)  
And from my neck so free  
The Albatross fell off, and sank

*In his loneliness and  
fixedness he yearneth  
towards the journeying  
Moon, and the stars  
that still sojourn, yet  
still move onward; and  
everywhere the blue  
sky belongs to them,  
and is their appointed  
rest and their native  
country and their own  
natural homes, which  
they enter unan-  
nounced, as lords that  
are certainly expected,  
and yet there is a  
silent joy at their  
arrival.*

*By the light of the  
Moon he beholdeth  
God's creatures of the  
great calm.*

*Their beauty and their  
happiness.*

*He blesseth them in  
his heart.*

*The spell begins to  
break.*

Like lead into the sea.

**Part the Fifth.**

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,  
Beloved from pole to pole!(290)  
To Mary Queen the praise be given!  
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,  
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,  
That had so long remained,(295)  
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;  
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,(300)  
And still my body drank.

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.(305)

And soon I heard a roaring wind:  
It did not come anear;  
But with its sound it shook the sails,  
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!(310)  
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,  
To and fro they were hurried about!  
And to and fro, and in and out,  
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,(315)  
And the sails did sigh like sedge;  
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:(320)  
Like waters shot from some high crag,  
The lightning fell with never a jag,  
A river steep and wide.

*By grace of the holy  
Mother, the ancient  
Mariner is refreshed  
with rain.*

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

*The bodies of the ship's  
crew are inspired, and*

The loud wind never reached the ship,  
Yet now the ship moved on!(325)  
Beneath the lightning and the Moon  
The dead men gave a groan.

*the ship moves on;*

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,  
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;  
It had been strange, even in a dream,(330)  
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;  
Yet never a breeze up-blew;

The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,  
Where they were wont to do:(335)  
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—  
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son,  
Stood by me, knee to knee:  
The body and I pulled at one rope,(340)  
But he said nought to me.

“I fear thee, ancient Mariner!”  
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!  
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,  
Which to their corpses came again,(345)  
But a troop of spirits blest:

*But not by the souls  
of the men, nor by  
demons of earth or  
middle air, but by a  
blessed troop of  
angelic spirits, sent  
down by the invoca-  
tion of the guardian  
saint.*

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.(350)

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

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky(355)  
I heard the sky-lark sing;  
Sometimes all little birds that are,  
How they seemed to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargon!

And now 'twas like all instruments,(360)  
Now like a lonely flute;  
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,(365)  
A noise like of a hidden brook  
In the leafy month of June,  
That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,(370)  
Yet never a breeze did breathe:  
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,  
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,  
From the land of mist and snow,(375)  
The spirit slid: and it was he  
That made the ship to go.  
The sails at noon left off their tune,  
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,(380)  
Had fixed her to the ocean:  
But in a minute she 'gan stir,  
With a short uneasy motion—  
Backwards and forwards half her length  
With a short uneasy motion.(385)

Then like a pawing horse let go,  
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,(390)  
I have not to declare;  
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?(395)  
By him who died on cross,  
With his cruel bow he laid full low,  
The harmless Albatross.

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

*The Polar Spirit's  
fellow-demons, the  
invisible inhabitants of  
the element, take part  
in his wrong; and two  
of them relate, one to  
the other, that penance*

*long and heavy for  
the ancient Mariner  
hath been accorded to  
the Polar Spirit, who  
returneth southward.*

“The spirit who bideth by himself  
In the land of mist and snow,<sup>(400)</sup>  
He loved the bird that loved the man  
Who shot him with his bow.”

The other was a softer voice,  
As soft as honey-dew:  
Quoth he, “The man hath penance done,<sup>(405)</sup>  
And penance more will do.”

### **Part the Sixth.**

#### **FIRST VOICE.**

But tell me, tell me! speak again,  
Thy soft response renewing—  
What makes that ship drive on so fast?  
What is the Ocean doing?<sup>(410)</sup>

#### **SECOND VOICE.**

Still as a slave before his lord,  
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;<sup>(415)</sup>  
For she guides him smooth or grim  
See, brother, see! how graciously  
She looketh down on him.

*The Mariner hath  
been cast into a  
trance; for the angelic  
power causeth the ves-  
sel to drive northward  
faster than human life  
could endure.*

#### **FIRST VOICE.**

But why drives on that ship so fast,  
Without or wave or wind?<sup>(420)</sup>

#### **SECOND VOICE.**

The air is cut away before,  
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high  
Or we shall be belated:  
For slow and slow that ship will go,(425)  
When the Mariner's trance is abated.

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.(430)

All stood together on the deck,  
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:  
All fixed on me their stony eyes,  
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,(435)  
Had never passed away:  
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,  
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more  
I viewed the ocean green.(440)  
And looked 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 turned round walks on,(445)  
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:(450)  
Its path was not upon the sea,  
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,(455)  
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,  
Yet she sailed softly too:  
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—  
On me alone it blew.(460)

*The supernatural  
motion is retarded; the  
Mariner awakes, and  
his penance begins  
anew.*

*The curse is finally  
expiated.*

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed  
The light-house top I see?  
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?  
Is this mine own countree!

*And the ancient  
Mariner beholdeth his  
native country.*

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,<sup>(465)</sup>  
And I with sobs did pray—  
O let me be awake, my God!  
Or let me sleep away.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,  
So smoothly it was strewn!<sup>(470)</sup>  
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 steeped in silentness<sup>(475)</sup>  
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.<sup>(480)</sup>

*The angelic spirits  
leave the dead bodies,*

A little distance from the prow  
Those crimson shadows were:  
I turned my eyes upon the deck—  
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

*And appear in their  
own forms of light.*

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,<sup>(485)</sup>  
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!<sup>(490)</sup>  
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 oh! the silence sank<sup>(495)</sup>  
Like music on my heart.

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.(500)

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:(505)  
It is the Hermit good!  
He singeth loud his godly hymns  
That he makes in the wood.  
He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away  
The Albatross's blood.(510)

### Part the Seventh.

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 marineres  
That come from a far countree.(515)

*The Hermit of the  
Wood.*

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 neared: I heard them talk,(520)  
“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 answered not our cheer!(525)  
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,  
How thin they are and sere!  
I never saw aught like to them,  
Unless perchance it were

*Approacheth the ship  
with wonder.*

“Brown skeletons of leaves that lag(530)  
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—(535)  
(The Pilot made reply)  
I am a-feared”—“Push on, push on!”

Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,  
But I nor spake nor stirred;(540)  
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 reached the ship, it split the bay;(545)  
The ship went down like lead.

*The ship suddenly  
sinketh.*

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,  
Which sky and ocean smote,  
Like one that hath been seven days drowned  
My body lay afloat;(550)  
But swift as dreams, myself I found  
Within the Pilot's boat.

*The ancient Mariner  
is saved in 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(555)  
Was telling of the sound.

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.(560)

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,  
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,(565)  
The Devil knows how to row.”

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.(570)

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

*The ancient Mariner  
earnestly entreateth  
the Hermit to shrieve  
him; and the penance  
of life falls on him.*

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched<sup>(575)</sup>  
With a woeful agony,  
Which forced me to begin my tale;  
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,  
That agony returns;<sup>(580)</sup>  
And till my ghastly tale is told,  
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;  
I have strange power of speech;  
That moment that his face I see,<sup>(585)</sup>  
I know the man that must hear me:  
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<sup>(590)</sup>  
And bride-maids singing are:  
And hark the little vesper bell,  
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been  
Alone on a wide wide sea:<sup>(595)</sup>  
So lonely 'twas, that God himself  
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,  
'Tis sweeter far to me,  
To walk together to the kirk<sup>(600)</sup>  
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,<sup>(605)</sup>  
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell  
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!  
He prayeth well, who loveth well  
Both man and bird and beast.<sup>(610)</sup>

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

*And ever and anon  
throughout his future  
life an agony con-  
straineth him to travel  
from land to land;*

*And to teach, by his  
own example, love  
and reverence to all  
things that God made  
and loveth.*

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,<sup>(615)</sup>  
Whose beard with age is hoar,  
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>(620)</sup>  
A sadder and a wiser man,  
He rose the morrow morn.