

# The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

## How can GUILT enslave us?

The expression “like an albatross around my neck” stems from Coleridge’s famous poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” This expression is often used to describe feelings of guilt that weigh heavily on a person.

**QUICKWRITE** Think about a time when you felt ashamed about something you did. For example, maybe you lost your sister’s favorite CD or forgot your best friend’s birthday. Write about what you did, how you felt after doing it, and what you did as a result.

What I did: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

How I felt: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Poetic Form: Literary Ballad

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is a **literary ballad**: it is a poem written as an imitation of a traditional **folk ballad**, or story song. Like older ballads, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” features sensational subject matter—the perilous journey of an old sailor. It also contains other traditional elements:

- dialogue
- repetition of words and phrases
- strong patterns of rhyme and rhythm

However, there are aspects of the poem that are indicative of Coleridge’s own **romantic** writing style:

- supernatural events involving ghosts, spirits, and the unexplainable
- use of sound devices, such as **onomatopoeia** (the use of words whose sounds echo their meanings and **alliteration** (the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words)
- use of archaic language (language that is of an earlier historical period)

As you read “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” notice how Coleridge combines traditional elements of the ballad form with his romantic writing style to create a poem of rare beauty and complexity.

## Reading Strategy: Reading Narrative Poetry

“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is a **narrative poem**—a poem that tells a story. It has many of the elements of a prose story, including

- setting
- characters
- point of view
- plot and conflict
- theme

As you read the poem, record narrative elements in the chart below.

<b>“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”</b>
<b>Setting (Time/Place):</b>
<b>Characters:</b>
<b>Point of View:</b>
<b>Plot and Major Conflict:</b>
<b>Theme:</b>

As the story begins, the ancient sailor gets the attention of three men who are preparing to go to a wedding. As you read the story, focus on the tale the mariner tells about his voyage, not the framing tale about the wedding guest. The text annotations, which were added by Coleridge, can help you follow the plot development.

**SET A PURPOSE FOR READING**

Read this poem to learn what important lesson the mariner wants to teach others.

# THE RIME OF THE Ancient Mariner

Poem by **SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE**



**BACKGROUND** In this well-known poem, Samuel Taylor Coleridge presents supernatural characters and events, hoping to create a suspension of disbelief for readers. As you read, remember that the story is told through the eyes of the Mariner. The annotations—the text to the right of the poem—will further explain what you are reading.

**Argument**

*How a Ship, having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality killed a Seabird and how he was followed by many strange Judgments; and in what manner he came back to his own Country.*

**PART I**

It is an ancient Mariner,  
 And he stoppeth one of three.  
 “By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
 Now wherefore<sup>1</sup> stopp’st thou me?”

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

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.” **A**

**A LITERARY BALLAD**

Reread lines 5–8. This stanza follows the pattern of a **traditional ballad** stanza. Circle each pair of words that rhyme. What is the rhyme scheme of this stanza?

- abab
- abba
- abcb
- abac

How many lines are in the stanza?

---



---

1. **wherefore:** why.



He holds him with his skinny hand,  
10 “There was a ship,” quoth he.  
“Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!”  
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 is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.*

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

20 The bright-eyed Mariner. **PAUSE & REFLECT**

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

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

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—”<sup>4</sup>  
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon. **B**

The bride hath paced into the hall,  
Red as a rose is she;

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

---

2. **eftsoons:** quickly.  
3. **kirk:** church.  
4. **over . . . noon:** The ship has reached the equator, or “Line.”

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

Describe the interaction between the Wedding-Guest and the Mariner.

---

---

---

---

**B NARRATIVE POETRY**

This narrative is told using two different **points of view**. Reread lines 17–32. Circle the text that tells the framing story in which the mariner meets the Wedding-Guest. Draw a box around the text in which the mariner tells his story. Then tell which point of view is used for each.

The framing story: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

The mariner’s tale: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

**🕒 NARRATIVE POETRY**

Review lines 21–28 and 41–50. How has the **setting** of the poem changed? Record the information in the chart below.

**Setting of lines 21–28.**


**Setting of lines 41–50**


35 Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry minstrelsy.<sup>5</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.

*The ship driven by a storm  
toward the South Pole.*

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 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.

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

55 And through the drifts the snowy clifts<sup>6</sup>  
Did send a dismal sheen:  
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:

---

5. **minstrelsy:** group of musicians.  
6. **clifts:** cliffs.  
7. **ken:** perceive.



It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound!<sup>8</sup>

At length did cross an Albatross,<sup>9</sup>  
Thorough the fog it came;

65 As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hailed it in God's name.

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

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!<sup>10</sup>

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

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

75 In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,<sup>11</sup>  
It perched for vespers nine;<sup>12</sup>  
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmered the white moonshine."

"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. **D**

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

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

Pause at line 74. What two good things happen after the albatross appears?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**D NARRATIVE POETRY**

Review lines 79–82. Underline the important **plot** development in this stanza. What **conflicts** might arise because of this event?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

8. **swound**: swoon; fainting fit.

9. **Albatross** (ăĭ' bə-trô's'): a large web-footed ocean bird common in the Southern Hemisphere.

10. **hollo** (hă'lô): call.

11. **shroud**: one of the ropes that support a ship's mast.

12. **vespers nine**: nine evenings.

## PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:<sup>13</sup>

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!

*His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck.*

And I had done a hellish thing,

And it would work'em woe:

For all averred<sup>14</sup> 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!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,

The glorious Sun uprist:<sup>15</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.

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

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,

The furrow followed free;

- 105 We were the first that ever burst

Into that silent sea. **PAUSE & REFLECT**

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

### PAUSE & REFLECT

How do Coleridge's annotations help you understand how the shipmates' feelings about the killing of the bird have changed?

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

13. **The Sun . . . right:** The rising of the sun on the right indicates that the ship is now heading northward.

14. **averred** (ə-vûrd'): declared; asserted.

15. **uprist:** rose.



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!

*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,  
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.

*And the Albatross begins to  
be avenged.*

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

About, about, in reel and rout<sup>16</sup>  
The death-fires<sup>17</sup> danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
130 Burnt green, and blue, and white.

*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.*

And some in dreams assuréd were  
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;

**E LITERARY BALLAD**

Reread lines 123–126. Circle each word that is an example of **onomatopoeia**—words whose sounds echo their meanings. How do these words affect the mood of the scene?

---

---

---

---

---

---

16. **in reel and rout:** with dizzying, unpredictable motion.

17. **death-fires:** dim flamelike lights reportedly seen above decomposing matter.







With throats unslaked, 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!

*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:  
Gramercy!<sup>22</sup> they for joy did grin,  
165 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—<sup>23</sup>  
Without a breeze, without a tide,  
170 She steadies with upright keel!

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

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

What details suggest that the ship the mariner sees will not help him and his shipmates?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

The western wave was all aflame,<sup>24</sup>  
The day was wellnigh done!  
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<sup>25</sup> send us grace!),  
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered

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

180 With broad and burning face. **PAUSE & REFLECT**

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)  
How fast she nears and nears!

---

22. **gramercy** (grə-mûr'sē): an exclamation of gratitude.  
23. **hither to work us weal**: in this direction to help us.  
24. **The western wave was all aflame**: The water to the west was reflecting the light of the setting sun.  
25. **Heaven's Mother**: the Virgin Mary.

Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,  
Like restless gossameres?<sup>26</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? and are there two?  
Is Death that Woman's mate?

*And its ribs are seen  
as bars on the face of  
the setting Sun. The  
Specter-Woman and  
her Deathmate, and  
no other on board the  
skeleton ship.*

- 190 Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold:  
Her skin was as white as leprosy,<sup>27</sup>  
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,  
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

*Like vessel, like crew!*

- 195 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.

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

- 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 spectre-bark.<sup>28</sup>

*No twilight within  
the courts of the Sun.*

We listened and looked sideways up!  
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,

*At the rising of the  
Moon,*

- 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—

### LITERARY BALLAD

Reread lines 185–202. These lines contain an emphasis on the **supernatural**. Circle the ghostly character named in line 193. Underline details that describe her in lines 190–192.

26. **gossameres** (gɒs'ə-mērz'): cobwebs floating in the air.

27. **leprosy** (ləp'rə-sē): a disease marked by spreading patches of discoloration on the skin and by deformities of the limbs and other parts of the body.

28. **spectre-bark**: ghost ship.



Till clomb<sup>29</sup> above the eastern bar  
210 The hornéd Moon,<sup>30</sup> with one bright star  
Within the nether tip.

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

*One after another,*

Four times fifty living men  
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan),  
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,  
They dropped down one by one.

*His shipmates drop  
down dead.*

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!

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

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

Why might the mariner have been the only one on his ship to survive?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

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.

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

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.

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

Alone, alone, all, all alone  
Alone on a wide, wide sea!

---

29. **clomb** (klōm): climbed.  
30. **hornéd Moon**: crescent moon.

**H LITERARY BALLAD**

Reread lines 232–235. Circle each word that is repeated. What ideas does the poet emphasize by this repetition?

---

---

---

---

---

**I NARRATIVE POETRY**

Reread lines 244–247. Underline the words that tell what the mariner is unable to do. What does this suggest about his character?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

And never a saint took pity on  
235 My soul in agony. **H**

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

*He despiseth the  
creatures of the calm,*

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

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

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**

I closed my lids, and kept them close,  
And the balls<sup>31</sup> like pulses beat;  
250 But 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:  
255 The look with which they looked on me  
Had never passed away.

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

An orphan's curse would drag to hell  
A spirit from on high;  
But oh! more horrible than that

---

31. **balls:** eyeballs.







That were so thin and sere.<sup>36</sup>  
 The upper air burst into life;  
 And a hundred fire-flags sheen;<sup>37</sup>  
 315 To and fro they were hurried about!  
 And to and fro, and in and out,  
 The wan<sup>38</sup> stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,  
 And the sails did sigh like sedge;<sup>39</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,  
 325 The lightning fell with never a jag,  
 A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,  
 Yet now the ship moved on! **K**  
 Beneath the lightning and the Moon  
 330 The dead men gave a groan.

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

36. **sere** (sĕr): dry.

37. **fire-flags**: probably the aurora australis, or southern lights—waving bands of light in the night sky; sheen: bright.

38. **wan**: pale.

39. **sedge**: tall grasslike plants that make a rustling sound when blown by the wind.

**K NARRATIVE POETRY**

Reread lines 292–328. Underline three significant plot events. Write them in the chart.

Plot Events	
•	_____
	_____
	_____
•	_____
	_____
	_____
•	_____
	_____
	_____







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.

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.

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. **M**

Then like a pawing horse let go,

390 She made a sudden bound:  
It flung the blood into my head,

**M LITERARY BALLAD**

Reread lines 377–388. Circle the stanza in which Coleridge introduces another **supernatural** element. What does this unearthly force do?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

And I fell down in a swoond.  
 How long in that same fit I lay,  
 I have not<sup>43</sup> to declare;

395 But ere my living life returned,  
 I heard, and in my soul discerned  
 Two voices in the air.

*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.*

“Is it he?” quoth one, “is this the man?  
 By Him who died on cross,<sup>44</sup>

400 With his cruel bow he laid full low  
 The harmless Albatross.

The Spirit who bideth 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<sup>45</sup> done,  
 And penance more will do.”

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

What penance has the mariner done already, and what penance might he do in the future?

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

## 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;

43. **have not:** am not able.

44. **Him who died on cross:** Jesus Christ.

45. **penance** (pĕn'əns): suffering in repayment for a sin.



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.”

*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:  
For slow and slow that ship will go,  
When the Mariner’s trance is abated.” **N**

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 fitter:<sup>46</sup>  
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:

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

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

**N LITERARY BALLAD**

Review lines 410–429. Underline the dialogue of the First Voice. Circle the dialogue of the Second Voice. What key information does the dialogue present?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

46. For . . . fitter: more suitable for a burial vault.

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

*The curse is finally  
expiated.*

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<sup>47</sup>  
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. ●

O 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?

*And the ancient  
Mariner beholdeth  
his native country.*

● LITERARY BALLAD

Read aloud lines 460–463.  
Underline examples of  
**alliteration**—the repetition  
of consonant sounds at the  
beginning of words. What effect  
does this technique create?

---



---



---



---



---



---

47. **fiend**: demon.







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>54</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>55</sup> is heavy with snow,  
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,  
That cats the she-wolf’s young.”

“Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—  
(The Pilot made reply)

540 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 stirred;

The boat came close beneath the ship,

545 And straight a sound was heard.

*Approacheth the ship  
with wonder.*

### LITERARY BALLAD

Review lines 476–507. Write the number of lines in each stanza beside it. Then review lines 508–541 and write the number of lines in each stanza beside it. What is the effect of the differing numbers of lines in the second set of stanzas? Check one.

The irregular stanzas:

- make the poem difficult to read and hard to understand
- break the mood created by the regular stanzas
- mirror the uneven rhythm of waves on the ocean

54. **trow**: believe.

55. **tod**: clump.





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.

*The ship suddenly sinketh.*

550 Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,  
Which sky and ocean smote,<sup>56</sup>  
Like one that hath been seven days drowned  
My body lay afloat;  
But swift as dreams, myself I found

*The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat.*

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 of<sup>57</sup> 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. **R**

**R** **LITERARY BALLAD**  
Reread lines 564–573. Circle examples of **archaic language**. What effect do these expressions help to create?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

56. **smote:** struck.

57. **telling of:** echoing.



“O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!”

575 The Hermit crossed his brow.<sup>58</sup>

“Say quick,” quoth he, “I bid thee say—  
What manner of man art thou?”

Forthwith 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.

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 bride-maids singing are:

595 And hark, the little vesper bell,  
Which biddeth me to prayer! **S**

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.

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

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

**S NARRATIVE POETRY**

Review lines 582–596. Circle the lines that explain why the mariner must tell his tale. Then underline the lines that tell how the Mariner chooses his listeners. Why might the mariner have chosen to tell his tale to the Wedding-Guest?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

58. **crossed his brow:** made the sign of the cross on his forehead.

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<sup>59</sup> 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.

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

**T NARRATIVE POETRY**

Reread lines 612–617. What **theme** is expressed in these lines?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

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. **T**

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
Whose beard with age is hoar,<sup>60</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:  
A sadder and a wiser man

625 He rose the morrow morn.

---

59. **his great Father:** God.

60. **hoar:** gray.

### Text Analysis: Literary Ballad

Most **literary ballads** contain the major elements of traditional ballads; these are listed in the chart below. Find an example of each element in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” Write these examples in the second column of the chart.

Elements of Traditional Ballads	
Elements	Examples from “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”
Sensational Subject Matter	
Dialogue	
Repetition	
Rhyme and Rhythm	
Supernatural Events	
Sound Devices	
Archaic Language	

Review the notes you made while reading and the completed chart above. What is one quality that distinguishes “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” from traditional ballads?

---



---



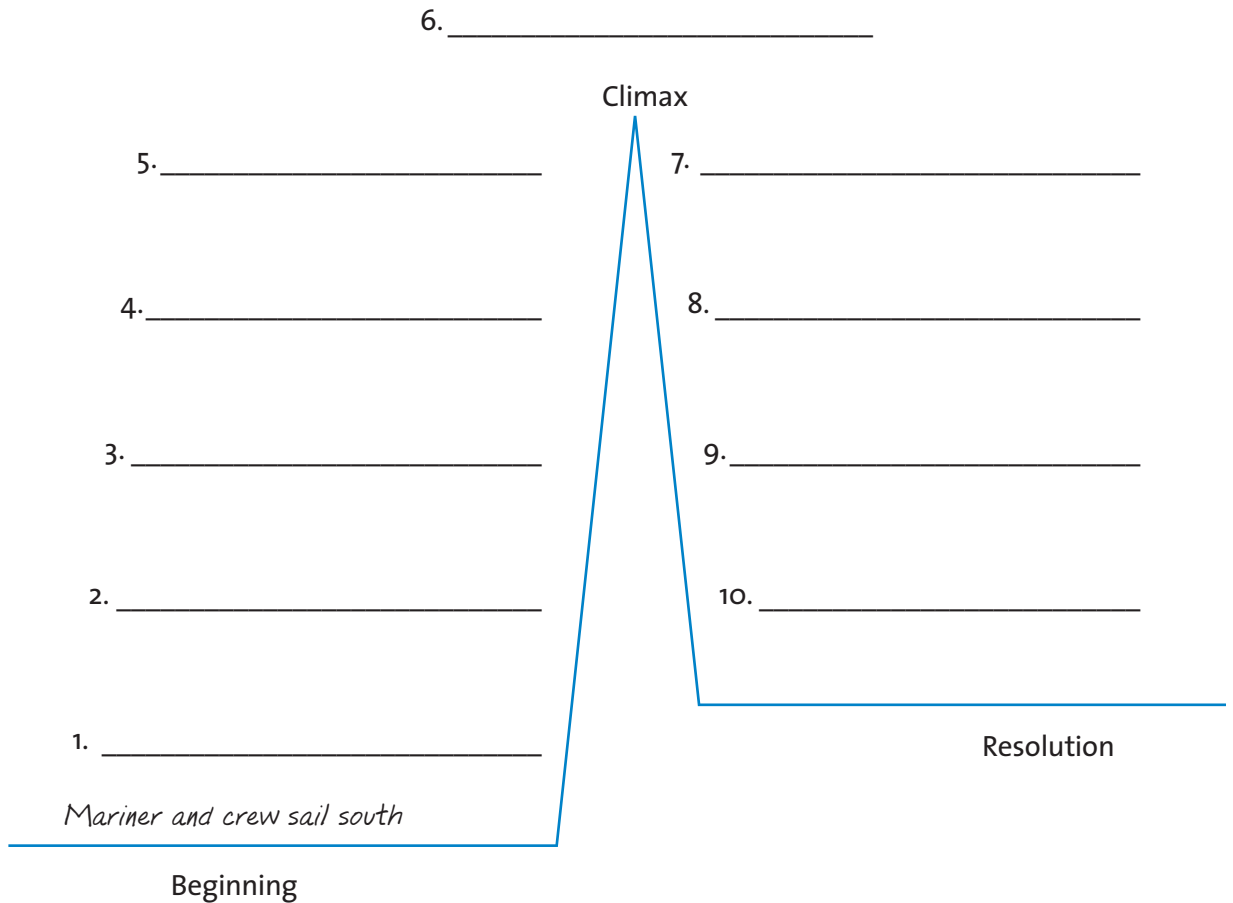
---



---

### Reading Strategy: Reading Narrative Poetry

Use your notes about the plot and major conflict in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” to help you complete the plot diagram below.



### How can GUILT enslave us?

Reread the reflections you made about guilt on page 244. Guilt is a feeling of self-reproach that can dominate a person’s thoughts. Think of a story or movie character that became overwhelmed by guilt. Why did this character feel guilty? How did he or she deal with this guilt?

---

---

---

---

---

## Academic Vocabulary in Speaking

device

differentiate

function

inherent

technique

**TURN AND TALK** With a partner, discuss what you most enjoyed and what you least enjoyed in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” Include in your discussion Coleridge’s use of narrative **techniques** and sound **devices**. Use at least two of the Academic Vocabulary words in your discussion. Definitions of the words are on page 215.

### Assessment Practice

**DIRECTIONS** Use “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” to answer questions 1–6.

- Which is a characteristic of most literary ballads?
  - archaic language
  - sound devices
  - supernatural elements
  - dialogue
- The albatross’s arrival seems to affect the ship’s voyage by —
  - causing the ice to split and a good wind to blow
  - bringing a fierce curse upon the ship and crew
  - changing the south wind to a north wind
  - acting like a pet to amuse the sailors
- The albatross eventually falls from the mariner’s neck when he —
  - becomes dead-in-life
  - defeats the Polar Spirit
  - shows love for God’s creatures
  - apologizes for killing it
- What character trait does the mariner develop during the voyage?
  - compassion
  - honesty
  - courage
  - curiosity
- The climax of the poem occurs when the —
  - mariner shoots the albatross and a curse falls on the ship
  - mariner admires the water-snakes and blesses them unaware
  - mariner sees spirits inhabit the bodies of the dead crew members
  - Polar Spirit begins rocking the boat and the mariner falls down in a faint
- What theme about guilt does the poem convey?
  - The more guilt a person feels, the worse he or she behaves.
  - No one should let guilt dominate his or her thoughts.
  - Guilty people are often visited by ghosts and spirits.
  - Release from guilt comes when a person seeks redemption.