

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Parts 1 and 2 of 7

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, 1834

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 I

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

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

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'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:
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,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

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,
Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

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

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 us south along.

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,
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.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
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 cracked and growled, and roared and
howled,
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.

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;
The Albatross did follow,

And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
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
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 mariner's
hollo!

And I had done a hellish
thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed
the bird
That made the breeze to
blow.
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 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.

The fair breeze blew, the
white foam flew,
The furrow followed 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.

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

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

The very deep did rot: O
Christ!
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
assurèd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us
so;
Nine fathom deep he had
followed us
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.

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