

The rime of the  
ancient mariner by  
samuel taylor  
coleridge



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Samuel Taylor Coleridge was an English Poet of the Romantic Movement, best recognized for “ The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”. In this poem, Coleridge uses symbolic dialect to prompt his own religious thoughts and deep religious realities to the readers (Jasper, 2012). The poem defines the life of an Ancient Mariner, who had committed a sin by murdering a sea bird, Albatross, which is considered to be a symbol of good luck. The Albatross hung around the Mariner’s neck as a curse for the wickedness which he had committed (Coburn, 1967). It fell from his neck, when he regrets for his sin and prays for mercy (Jasper, 2012). The passage is a figurative representation of the Mariner’s life, his route towards sin and his ensuing remorse. This paper goals to explore the deep religious symbolisms in this poem, which reveals the universal message that Selfish Pride will lead us towards sin and Self Repentance will keep us away from sin.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s use of symbolism in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner lends the work to adults as a complex web of representation, rather than a simple story about a sailor. The author uses the story of a sailor and his adventures to reveal aspects of life (Barbeau, 2011). This tale follows the Mariner and his crew as they travel between the equator and the South Pole, and then back to England. Without the symbols, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner would be simply a poem about an old mariner who is telling a story about killing a bird to a guest at a wedding (Morris, 2005). Of course, anyone who reads the poem can see that there is more to it than just a simple telling of a story.

Religious symbolism is an art, which supports the writers to express the collective message of a faith by using symbols in their writings (Coburn, <https://assignbuster.com/the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner-by-samuel-taylor-coleridge/>

1967). Coleridge in his honest narrative poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" uses the symbolic depiction of the Christian religion to educate the readers, the moral laws of God. It gives the readers the multifaceted messages by its rich imagery. It is not a direct religious homily. But there are many symbols of the biblical understandings such as sin, punishment and regret, which can be seen through the poem. Coleridge shelters a large part of this poem on the root of sin.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is an extremely symbolic poem, written in the form of a ballad, dealing with certain emotional state of a sailor, his sun, and redemption. Yet, the poem involves an irony, for the wedding ceremony represents the start of a new life of the two joint souls, but the Mariner has grasped the end of his life when nothing remains for him except the past remembrances of sorrow, sin, and repentance. If the Mariner's journey is regarded as a symbolic journey of life (Fried, 2006), we see that he also started it happily like the newlyweds. The storm at seas sends the ship to the land of mist. The 'mist' symbolizes moral confusion which the Mariner and other sailors were suffering (Morris, 2005). Some critics have described the bird itself as Jesus Christ. Therefore, the slaughter of the bird by the Mariner signifies the sin of crucifixion, permitting the bird to hold the death of a martyr, though his act of murder, the Mariner has become a sinner, appealing the inevitable sorrows of life.

The poem initiates, as the Mariner stops a wedding guest with his commanding glittering eyes and makes him listen to a story in which he slays an Albatross during a voyage he makes with other sailors in the sea.

The voyage is a symbolic image of Mariner's life and his path to sin.

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Albatross here symbolically refers to Christ (Fried, 2006). In Christianity, Christ was directed by God to save t mankind. The same thing transpires here as the Albatross was sent to save the ship. Nevertheless, the Ancient Mariner kills the Albatross with his cross and bow and so, he abolishes the belief of Christians (Fried, 2006).

Coleridge discovers the poem with deep religious views. He discloses to the readers that the Mariner, who slays the bird, which is a symbol of a good sign is now feeling guilty and cursed. Obliviousness and pride lead the Mariner to commit the sin. He wants forgiveness for the sin, which he has committed. On or after here we can comprehend the religious belief of Christians that God should punish everyone who commits a sin and should forgive those who repent for their past sin (Morris, 2005). A sinner has the guilt or weight on his soul for the erroneous deed he did. The Ancient Mariner and the ship have been cursed due to the offense of the Mariner (Bentley, 2007). As a chastisement for his act, the sailors hung the lifeless Albatross around his neck. The ocean becomes denser and the sailor's lips are dry by heat and dehydration. The curse plagues everyone in the ship.

At that time, a ship came there with two mystical beings. One is Death and the additional is Life-in-Death. The Mariner has two choices, whether to live or to die. Life-in-Death symbolically refers to punishment (Bentley, 2007). Death deceives the sailors in its trap and all of them die. Life-in-Death win the Mariner as it specifies the punishment that he must undergo penance throughout his life and he must pursue people to tell his story, except his soul will plague him until he delivers the story. He feels remorseful and carries the burden on his soul for the offense that he committed (Bentley, <https://assignbuster.com/the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner-by-samuel-taylor-coleridge/>

2007). He wants to seek refuge from God and try to implore. But he is prohibited by a wicked whisper. At last, the Moon rises, shimmering the shadow of the ship across the sea. The sea snakes move at will in the sea and the Mariner's heart is filled with full love and indebtedness for them. He blesses the stunning creatures. At that minute, the Mariner finds himself praying, and the lifeless Albatross fell from his neck and sank into the sea. From this act, Coleridge states that God has created every creature in this world and we must love them all.

The Albatross symbolizes many things in Coleridge's poem. In maritime lore these birds were seen by sailors both as a sign of good luck and as bad luck (Bentley, 2007). Sailors often thought the albatross carried the spirits of dead sailors that would shield the ship or bring good winds, but just (Pechey, 2012) as frequently they thought the bird to be a death sign, a sign that a sailor would soon perish. It is this differed belief in what the albatross represents that roots the crewmen to be livid with the Mariner, then be pleased that he killed it.

The Albatross signifies the sublime. It is an ordinary creature with a mystical. It associates the two worlds since its death is the provoking event that sets the Mariner on his route to both Romantic enlightenment and hopeful absolution (Morris, 2005). Since the Mariner did not appreciate the Albatross, he was disciplined by being incapable to connect to the spiritual world through prayer. When he finally distinguishes the power and beauty of the sublime in the form of the sea snakes, the Mariner regains the power of prayer and the Albatross drops from around his neck to sink into the sea.

The Sun and Moon are symbols for the forces contrasting in the Mariner's voyage. The Sun and Moon clash, the symbols of the mystical and the real world. When the Mariner and his men are in distress after he has shot the Albatross, the images are completely of the Sun and sunlight. The men fear deadly conditions such as heat, thirst, and famine (Bentley, 2007). The Sun is a part of the natural world, something breathtaking and terrifying, an instance of the sublime. When 'Life-in-Death's' mystery ship appears, the imageries related with that scene are complete with mentions of the Sun.

The Moon is often linked with the mystical and the mysterious bond between it and the sea. The Moon controls the tides, and its impact helps the Mariner get back home. When the Mariner's punishment really begins, the Moon has risen and the language changes from severe imagery to almost comforting passages (Morris, 2005). When the Mariner faints and hears the two voices, one makes mention of the Moon looking down on him, almost like it is observing out for the Mariner as it helps to lead him home. He reaches the harbor underneath the shadow of the Moon, appropriate since the voyage began under the light of the Sun. The sequence is complete.

If the Sun shows what is apparent, the Moon shows what is unseen. The Sun and the Moon are contrasting forces, but they must cohabit (Fried, 2006). They rise and fall in a daily cycle, in accord if not inevitably in congruence. The Mariner's cycle of sin and penance reflect this cycle as well.

In conclusion, Coleridge wrote this poem as an intermediate to express his own religious views and the fundamental religious truths. He uses the Sun and the Moon as an important symbol in this poem (Morris, 2005). The Sun

specifies the wrath of God as most of the predicaments happens to the Mariner during the day. While the Moon represents the quality of compassion, as the mariner free from his curse and return home during the company of moonlight. Therefore, the poem with its ironic symbolism carries an collective message that whoever disobeys God's law will be punished and those who show remorse and repent for his sins will be forgiven by God (Morris, 2005).

I've questioned why the mariner chose to tell his story to the wedding guest. I've come to believe that it is for the reason that the wedding guest is exhibiting the same coldness of heart that was in the mariner. The mariner perceives this and chooses the guest. Similarly, the guest identifies the mariner's past iciness exist within himself, which adds to the distress that he senses as the mariner reveals his tale. A noteworthy theme in Samuel Coleridge's " Rime of the Ancient Mariner," is Christianity, which is depicted through the Mariner's impressive voyage. This text is set between the corporal world and the spiritual world, comparable to religious teachings initiated in the bible (Pechey, 2012). With the use of intense descriptions and solid language in this ballad, moral lessons seem to connect both man and God in order to discover an essential bond and understanding. Though this story is overpoweringly strange and dark, the moral teachings taught are in line with fundamental aspects of both the romantic period and the Christian religion. In Coleridge's ballad, " Rime of the Ancient Mariner," many Christian principles are represented through the dangerous journey of the Mariner, such as sin, forgiveness, and prayer (Barbeau, 2011).

It is to be noted that Coleridge's constantly use of bright and somber, colors of silence and noise of pleasure and grief of light and gloom etc. symbolizes his own interpretation of light which is a combination of the opposite (Pechey, 2012). With the engagement of all these symbols, the lyricist has given a new sense to the epitome pattern of the main fall and his remorse, leading to limited redemption (Barbeau, 2011).

Lastly, the mariner knows that unless he recreates his experience through the reiterating of his tale, he is at jeopardy of returning to his cold, callous state. The frost over one's heart and soul forms speedily and inaudibly. It is only by revealing the darker areas of one's memory to the light that one can avoid the freezing over of emotions.

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