

# The rime of the ancient mariner

Literature



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The Rime of the Ancient Mariner Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the celebrated British poets of the romantic era. In 1798, he collaborated with William Wordsworth on a volume of poems that they called The Lyrical Ballads. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is part of this collection.

In this poem there are two aspects of love that the poet dwells on - the love of God for all the creatures of the earth and the poet's own love of the beauty that he sees in nature. Coleridge emphasizes the love that God has for all His creatures. He says God loves all creatures equally. A man who loves all God's creatures equally " who loveth well Both man and bird and beast.... all things great and small" (Coleridge, Part VII) is most loved by God and this is an indication of the path to salvation. The mariner himself feels free of the curse of having slain the albatross that had loved him, " A spring of love gushed from my heart, And I blessed them unaware:" (Coleridge, Part IV) only when he is able to feel love in his heart for the snakes and other creatures that surround him in the sea. The love of nature that the romantic poets of this era were so carried away by also finds an echo in this poem. Coleridge, a nature lover cannot resist the urge to express his delight in the sweetness of the birdsong that comforts the mariner who is alone in a vast and lonely ocean; " I heard the sky-lark sing; Sometimes all little birds that are, How they seemed to fill the sea and air With their sweet jargoning!" (Coleridge, Part V) The lovely image of a shady bower in the woods with a tinkling stream flowing nearby, that the poet conjures up is another example of this love of nature. " A hidden brook in the leafy month of June. That to the sleeping woods all night Singeth a quiet tune." (Coleridge, Part V)

I think the mariner's punishment fits his crime because he killed the albatross that loved him and was his constant companion. The albatross was

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an innocent and had nothing to do with the change of fortunes that the ship faced, but the mariner blamed the bird for something that was beyond his control. However, the mariner is able to gain a deeper knowledge of God and his love for all his creations through this punishment, and gets the chance to pass on this knowledge to others. Coleridge symbolizes death and death-in-life through the specters that appear playing a game of dice. The mariner's fate hangs in the balance depending on who wins the game. The significance of the game of dice is that the mariner's fate lies entirely in the hands of others. The people playing the game decide his fate and the mariner himself is a helpless bystander having no say in the matter. The theme of crime and punishment is one that is eternal. In every society arguments abound about how certain criminals should be punished. In this poem it is like the fate of a criminal who stands in the dock awaiting a judgment that he is helpless to change. I think I would prefer death, because it is an end in itself whereas death in life means living with the weight and recriminations of one's guilt for the rest of one's days.