

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner - ALBATROSS

DO NOT read what is in [Square Brackets] or in italics *If the instructions, settings or stage directions [in brackets] apply to you they will be in BLUE*

Pay attention to those Blue Lines – they may tell you WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING and how you should be acting. OR what you should be getting ready for.

YOUR LINES will appear in RED ---

Your script will include the PAGES THAT YOU APPEAR AND ONE PAGE BEFORE – BE READY AND KNOW WHAT YOUR UPCOMING STAGE DIRECTIONS ARE!

Stage Directions or Instructions for the Teacher or Others will appear in Black or in Green. You can ignore those.

PART I

[AT WEDDING]

(An ancient Mariner meets a wedding guest bidden to a wedding-feast, and detains him.)

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long 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.

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

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.

[AT SHIP]

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, 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.

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--'

[AT WEDDING]

The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast, [Wedding Guest beat your breast]
 For he heard the loud bassoon.
The Wedding-Guest hears the bridal music ; but the Mariner continues his tale.
 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.

[AT SHIP]

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole.
 '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,
 The 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.
 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 !
Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality.
 At length did cross an Albatross, [Approach the ship – fly around it like a bird – keep your wings straight, they glide more than flap]
 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, [Eat the food they throw]
 And round and round it flew.
 The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;
 The helmsman steered us through !
And lo ! the Albatross proves a bird of good omen, and follows the ship as it returned northward through fog and floating ice. [Follow the ship]
 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 ; [Perch on the mast]
 Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
 Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

[AT WEDDING]

'God save thee, ancient Mariner !
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus !--
 Why look'st thou so ?'--With my cross-bow

[AT SHIP]

The ancient Mariner inhospitably kills the pious bird of good omen. [The Ancient Mariner shoots you – have a violent and sad death as the arrow pierces your heart -BE DEAD on the ship until further notice]

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 mariners' hollo !
His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck.
 And I had done an 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 !
But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime.
 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, [ALL the Mariners should here cheer and applaud – Hurray]
 That bring the fog and mist.
The fair breeze continues ; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line.

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

The ship is suddenly becalmed – and stops moving [Mariners act like there was a sudden stop].

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, [Sun come out looking bloody]

Right up above the mast did stand,

No bigger than the Moon. [Quickly, Sun you are now the Moon]

Day after day, day after day,

We stuck, nor breath nor motion ;

As idle as a painted ship

Upon a painted ocean. [Mariners should all be still, like the ship is not moving – starting to grumble]

And the Albatross begins to be avenged.

Water, water, every where,

And all the boards did shrink ;

Water, water, every where,

Nor any drop to drink. [Mariners should all act very thirsty]

The very deep did rot : O Christ !

That ever this should be ! [Slimy things should enter – wiggle about looking as slimy & disgusting as possible]

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. [Slimy things exit]

A Spirit had followed them

And some in dreams assuréd were [Spirit enter and throw curses and plagues at the ship]

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. [Spirit exit]

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. [Let the Mariners hang you (in whatever way you feel comfortable - you don't have to have contact with the Ancient Mariner if that makes you uncomfortable) around the Ancient Mariner's neck. You are going to be there for a LONG time so get comfortable.]

Ah ! well a-day ! what evil looks

Had I from old and young !

Instead of the cross, the Albatross

About my neck was hung. [Mariners all hang the albatross around the Mariner's neck]

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat

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.

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

[At this point, Specter Woman and Death Mate start approaching, very slowly – sit on ground and slowly scooch towards the ship from as far away as you can – time yourself to be on the ship when you arrive]

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 !
 And still it neared and neared :
 As if it dodged a water-sprite,
 It plunged and tacked and veered.

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

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
 We could nor laugh nor wail ;
 Through utter drought all dumb we stood !
 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, [Bite arm and suck blood before saying the following]
 And cried, A sail ! a sail !

[A flash of joy]

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
 Agape they heard me call :
 Gramercy ! they for joy did grin, [Mariners hear him, see the sail and start acting joyful]
 And all at once their breath drew in,
 As they were drinking all.

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

See ! see ! (I cried) she tacks no more !
 Hither to work us weal ;
 Without a breeze, without a tide,
 She steadies with upright keel !
 The western wave was all a-flame.
 The day was well nigh done !
 Almost upon the western wave
 Rested the broad bright Sun ;
 When that strange shape drove suddenly [Sun, get behind Death Mate and Spectre Woman]
 Betwixt us and the Sun.

[It seems to him but the skeleton of a ship]

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
 (Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
 As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
 With broad and burning face.

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun.

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

The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on board the skeleton ship.

And 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 ?

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,

Who thickens man's blood with cold.

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

The naked hulk alongside came, [By now Death Mate and Spectre Woman should be at the ship]

And the twain were casting dice ; [DM and SW should be casting dice, as though betting]

'The game is done ! I've won ! I've won !' [Spectre Woman Says this line]

Quoth she, and whistles thrice. [Spectre Woman whistle]

[No twilight within the courts of the Sun]

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. [Spectre Woman and Death Mate scoot quickly off]

[At the rising of the Moon]

We listened and looked sideways up !

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--

Till clomb above the eastern bar

The hornéd Moon, with one bright star [Moon appear with horns]

Within the nether tip.

[One after another]

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon, [Mariners start dropping dead – ONE by ONE – as you drop silently curse him and remain staring at him even after you lie dead on the ground.]

Too quick for groan or sigh,

Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,

And cursed me with his eye.

[His shipmates drop down dead.]

Four times fifty living men,

(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)

With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,

They dropped down one by one.

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

The souls did from their bodies fly,-- [Spirit, here you will act as the mens' spirits flying from their bodies]

They fled to bliss or woe !

And every soul, it passed me by,

Like the whizz of my cross-bow !

[Back at the Wedding]

PART IV

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

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner !
 I fear thy skinny hand !
 And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
 As is the ribbed sea-sand.
 I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
 And thy skinny hand, so brown.'--
 Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest !
 This body dropt not down.

But the ancient Mariner assures him of his bodily life, and proceeds to relate his horrible penance.

[Back at SHIP]

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
 Alone on a wide wide sea !
 And never a saint took pity on
 My soul in agony.

[He despises the creatures of the calm]

The many men, so beautiful ! [Mariners look particularly beautiful]
 And they all dead did lie : [Slimy Things – enter and start squiggling about – the slimier you are the better]
 And a thousand thousand slimy things
 Lived on ; and so did I.

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

I looked upon the rotting sea,
 And drew my eyes away ;
 I looked upon the rotting deck,
 And there the dead men lay.
 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,
 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. [Slimy things exit]

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

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
 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 ;
 But oh ! more horrible than that
 Is the curse in a dead man's eye !
 Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
 And yet I could not die.

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

The moving Moon went up the sky, [Moon, do your stuff]
 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 ;
 But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
 The charmed water burnt away
 A still and awful red. [Water snakes enter and be snaky in the water – with big smiles]
By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.
 Beyond the shadow of the ship,
 I watched the water-snakes :
 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 : [Water snakes keep being snaky but regal also]
 Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
 They coiled and swam ; and every track
 Was a flash of golden fire.
Their beauty and their happiness.
He blesseth them in his heart.
 O happy living things ! no tongue
 Their beauty might declare :
 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 spell begins to break. [Albatross GET READY]
 The self-same moment I could pray ;
 And from my neck so free
 The Albatross fell off, and sank [Albatross release his neck and slowly float back to audience]
 Like lead into the sea.

