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# The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

**Samuel Taylor Coleridge** · *1798, revised later · original English text*

It is an ancient Mariner, and he stoppeth one of three. Coleridge's ballad in seven parts, in the revised text hosted here, is a wedding-guest detained, a crime at sea, a rotting calm, and a blessing that begins to undo a curse. The typography is exact: every where, two words.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

## What does a thoughtless killing at sea cost a soul, and who can pray again after blessing what he did not love?

*"It is an ancient Mariner, And he stoppeth one of three."*
Part the First, the opening

The hosted text is the revised Rime in seven parts (PG #151; first published 1798, revised 1800–1834). The opening is exact, including "stoppeth" and "stopp'st." "Water, water, every where" is two words, not "everywhere." The moral close is also exact: "He prayeth well, who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast." A short narrative poem, Christian in its frame of crime, curse, blessing, and penance, for a wide older band. Teach the killing of the bird and the later rotting calm with gravity, not as a mere spooky tale.

KEY CHARACTERS

**the ancient Mariner**
*The teller, who stoppeth one of three, and whose penance is the tale.*

**the Wedding-Guest**
*The one who must hear, and who leaves sadder and wiser.*

**the ship's company**
*The mates who share, and suffer, the voyage after the killing.*

**the bird, and the creatures of the calm**
*The slain albatross, and the later living things the Mariner learns to bless.*

HE PRAYETH WELL

> *"He prayeth well, who loveth well Both man and bird and beast."*
> The close

Grades 8–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

### He Stoppeth One of Three

PART THE FIRST, THE OPENING

*A wedding guest is stopped by an ancient Mariner with a long grey beard and glittering eye. The feast goes on without him.*

- The first two lines are exact in this text.
- The wedding is the frame, not a decoration.
- The Mariner's will to tell is already a penance.

> *"It is an ancient Mariner, And he stoppeth one of three."*
> Part the First

02

### A Crime at Sea

THE EARLY PARTS

*A voyage, ice, a bird, and a crossbow. The killing is sudden, and the weather of the poem changes.*

- The albatross must be taught as a moral act, not as a trophy.
- The shipmates' changing judgment is part of the guilt.
- Keep this edition's spelling and apostrophes (stopp'st, etc.).

03

### Every Where, and Not a Drop

THE CALM

*Water, water, every where, nor any drop to drink. The boards shrink; the deep rots. The curse is a stillness.*

- The line is exact: 'every where,' two words.
- O Christ! in this stanza is the poem's own cry; teach it as such.
- The calm is the poem's hell, not a travel delay.

04

### A Blessing, and a Change

THE TURNING

*The Mariner looks on the creatures of the calm and can bless them. Prayer, which had been stuck, begins to move.*

- The blessing is the moral hinge, not a trick of plot.
- The bird falls from the neck in the poem's own time.
- Grace here arrives as a change of looking.

05

### He Prayeth Well

THE CLOSE

*The tale is told; the wedding guest is a sadder and a wiser man. The last counsel is to love well both man and bird and beast, for the dear God who loveth us made and loveth all.*

- 'He prayeth well, who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast' is exact.
- The poem is a Christian ballad of crime and penance; teach it so.
- A short, complete narrative in this revised seven-part text, for a wide older band.

A Crime and a Curse | The Sea | A Blessing | Penance | Love of Living Things

## What to watch for as you read

GRADES 8–12

1. The hosted text is Coleridge's revised Rime in seven parts (Project Gutenberg #151; first published 1798, revised 1800–1834). The opening is exact: "It is an ancient Mariner, / And he stoppeth one of three." "Water, water, every where" is two words, not "everywhere." "He prayeth well, who loveth well / Both man and bird and beast" is the close counsel. Quote this typography.
2. A short Christian narrative of a killing, a curse, a blessing, and a told penance. Teach it with gravity, not as a mere spooky tale. For a wide older band.
3. The site EPUB and the Gutenberg file are close in length; quote stretches that appear in both.

**Quotations** are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #151: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (revised text, in seven parts), the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.