Poetry

UNIT 11

P.5 The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

1. Look at the picture carefully and answer the questions given below:



1. What can you see in the picture? Does the man look happy? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why does he have the bird hanging around his neck?
3. Have you heard of the expression-'having an albatross around your neck'? What do you think it means? Does it mean:
   a. something that you can always be proud of
   b. something that you have to do because you have no choice
   c. something that is with you all the time as a reminder that you have done something wrong?
4. What is an albatross?

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is one of the best known classical poems written in English, containing some very beautiful and memorable lines. You may find that it needs some work and attention from you to understand it, before you are in a position to appreciate and respond to the beauty of the language that it contains.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a ballad, i.e. it tells a story. Ballad poetry usually includes archaic words and spellings.

Since it is a long poem, only the first two parts have been included in this Unit. Your teacher will help you read the other five parts after you complete this Unit.

2. Listen carefully as the teacher reads out the first part of the poem to you or makes you listen to a recording of the poem.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Part I

It is an ancient **Mariner**[1],
And he stoppeth one of three.
'By thy long grey beard and **glittering**[2] eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of **kin**[3];
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**[4] he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard **loon**[5]!'
Eftsoons[6] 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**[7], below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

1 **Mariner -** sailor
2 **glittering -** shining brightly, with flashing points of light
3 **kin -** members of your family
4 **quoth -** said
5 **loon -** a mad person
6 **Eftsoons -** at once
7 **kirk -** church

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**[8].

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry **minstrelsy**[9].

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**[10] and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping **prow**[11],
As who **pursued**[12] with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his **foe**[13],
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**[14].

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8 **bassoon -** a musical instrument
9 **minstrelsy -** singers and musicians
10 **tyrannous** - cruel, severe, harsh
11 **prow** - the front part of a ship
12 **pursued** - chased
13 **foe -** enemy
14 **emerald -** a precious stone, which is clear and bright green

And through the **drifts**[15] the snowy **clifts**[16]
Did send a dismal **sheen**[17]:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we **ken**[18] -
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**[19]!

At length did cross an Albatross,
Through the fog it came;
As 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**[20] 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**[21] !

In mist or cloud, on mast or **shroud**[22],
It **perched**[23] for **vespers nine**[24],
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moonshine."

'God save thee, ancient Mariner,
From the fiends that **plague**[25] thee thus!-
Why look'st thou so?'-"With my **crossbow**[26]
I shot the Albatross."

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15 **drifts -** floating ice
16 **clifts -** steep sides of the ice-bergs
17 **Sheen -** a smooth and gentle brightness on the surface of something
18 **ken -** see
19 **swound -** a fainting fit
20 **helmsman -** the person steering the ship
21 **hollo -** shout, call
22 **shroud -** sail
23 **perched -** sat on the edge of something
24 **vespers nine -** a fixed time every day (the evening church service)
25 **plague -** to bother, trouble
26 **crossbow -** a very powerful bow and arrow, with a trigger

3. **The teacher will now assign roles and ask you to read the poem aloud to show how the poem has been written in the first person (the parts in quotation marks spoken by the Mariner) and in the third person (where the narrator comments about the events taking place)**

4. **Here are some of the archaic words used in the poem; can you match them with the words used in modern English language that mean the same? The first one has been done for you as an example:**

stoppeth	why
thy	entered
wherefore	stopped
stopp'st	you
thou	lunatic
may'st	at once
quoth	fainting fit
loon	has
eftsoons	can't you
dropt	stopping
hath	church
spake	enemy
kirk	yes
paced	see
foe	call
aye	trouble
ken	looking
swound	your
hollo	said
plague	dropped
look'st	spoke

5. Using the words given above rewrite PART I of the poem in your own words. The first stanza has been done as an example:

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?

An old sailor stopped one of the three people passing by, who asked: "Old man, with your long grey beard and glittering eye, why are you stopping me?"

6. Answer the following by choosing the right option from those given below:

a. The Ancient Mariner stopped one of the three wedding guests because……

i. he wanted to attend the wedding with him

ii. he wanted him to sit with him

iii. he wanted him to listen to his story

iv. he wanted to stop him from going to the wedding

b. The wedding guest remarked that he was 'next of kin' which means that ……..

i. he was a close relation of the bridegroom

ii. he was a close relation of the bride

iii. he was next in line to get married

iv. he had to stand next to the bridegroom during the wedding

c. 'He cannot choose but hear' means……

i. the mariner was forced to hear the story of the wedding guest

ii. the wedding guest was forced to hear the story of the mariner

iii. the mariner had the choice of not listening to the story of the wedding guest

iv. the wedding guest had the choice of not listening to the story of the mariner

d. 'The sun came up upon the left, /Out of the sea came he;'This line tells us that the ship……

i. was moving in the northern direction

ii. was moving eastwards

iii. was moving in the western direction

iv. was moving towards the south

e. The Wedding-Guest beat his breast because……

i. he could hear the sound of the bassoon

ii. he was forced to listen to the Mariner's tale when he wanted to attend the wedding

iii. the sound of the bassoon meant that the bride had arrived and the wedding ceremony was about to begin and he could not attend it.

iv. the sound of the bassoon announced the arrival of the bride and the start of the wedding ceremony

f. The storm blast has been described as being tyrannous because…….

i. it was so fierce that it frightened the sailors

ii. it took complete control of the ship

iii. the storm was very powerful

iv. the sailors were at its mercy

g. The sailors felt depressed on reaching the land of mist and snow because……

i. there was no sign of any living creature

ii. they felt they would die in that cold weather

iii. they were surrounded by icebergs and there seemed to be no sign of life

iv. everything was grey in colour and they felt very cold

h. The sailors were happy to see the albatross because……..

i. it was the first sign of life and therefore gave them hope that they might survive

ii. it split the icebergs around the ship and helped the ship move forward.

iii. it was a messenger from God and it lifted the fog and mist.

iv. it gave them hope of survival by splitting the icebergs.

i. The two things that happened after the arrival of the albatross were ……

i. the icebergs split and the albatross became friendly with the sailors

ii. the icebergs split and a strong breeze started blowing

iii. the ship was pushed out of the land of mist and the ice melted.

iv. the albatross started playing with the mariners and ate the food they offered.

j. 'It perched for vespers nine' means……

i. the ship stopped sailing at nine o'clock every day

ii. the albatross would appear at a fixed time everyday.

iii. the albatross would sit on the sail or the mast everyday

iv. the albatross was a holy creature

k. 'God save thee, ancient Mariner, /From the fiends that plague thee thus!- Why look'st thou so?' means…….

i. the mariner wanted to know why the wedding guest was looking so tormented

ii. the wedding guest wanted to know why the mariner was looking so tormented

iii. the wedding guest wanted to know whether some creatures were troubling the ancient mariner

iv. the ancient mariner wanted to know whether something was troubling the wedding guest

7. Answer the following questions briefly

a. How did the ancient mariner stop the wedding guest?

b. Was the wedding guest happy to be stopped? Give reasons for your answer.

c. Describe the ancient mariner

d. How does the mariner describe the movement of the ship as it sails away from the land?

e. What kind of weather did the sailors enjoy at the beginning of their journey? How has it been expressed in the poem?

f. How did the sailors reach the land of mist and snow?

g. How does the mariner express the fact that the ship was completely surrounded by icebergs?

h. How do we know that the albatross was not afraid of the humans? Why did the sailors hail it in God's name?

i. What was the terrible deed done by the Mariner? Why do you think he did it ?

8. There are a number of literary devices used in the poem. Some of them have been listed below. Choose the right ones and write them down in the table as shown in the example. In each of the cases explain what they mean.

simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification. hyperbole, repetition,

1. The Wedding-Guest stood still, And listens like a three years' child:	Simile; the wedding guest was completely under the control of the mariner
2. Below the kirk, below the hill, Below the lighthouse top	
3. The sun came up upon the left, Out of the sea came he	
4. The bride hath paced into the hall, Red as a rose is she	
5. And now the storm-blast came, and he was tyrannous and strong:	
6. With sloping masts and dipping prow, As who pursued with yell and blow Still treads the shadow of his foe	
7. The ice was here, the ice was there, The ice was all around	

9. In groups of four discuss what you think happens next in the poem. Share your views with the rest of the class.

10. The teacher will now read out the second part of the poem or assign parts to you and ask you to read the poem to the class.

Part II

83 "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.

87 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!

91 And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work' **em**[27] **woe**[28] :

27 em - them
28 woe - great unhappiness and sorrow

For all **averred**[29], 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**[30]:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to **slay**[31],
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 dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

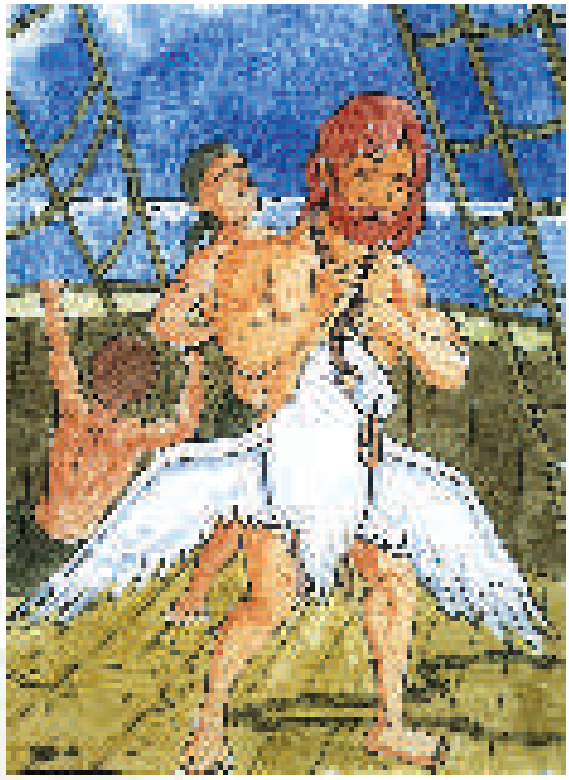
All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

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**[32] did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

29 **averred** said firmly
30 **uprist** rose up
31 **slay** to kill
32 **deep** ocean



About, about, in **reel and rout**[33]
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine **fathom**[34] 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."

11. Answer the following questions briefly

a. In which direction did the ship start moving? How can you say?

b. Why does the mariner say that 'no sweet bird did follow'?

c. How did the other mariners behave towards the Ancient Mariner at first? How many times did they change their mind about the Ancient Mariner? What does this tell us about their character?

d. How did the sailing conditions change after the ship had moved out of the land of mist and snow? What or who did the mariners blame for this change?

e. What is indicated by the line 'The bloody sun, at noon,/Right up above the mast did stand,/No bigger than the moon'?

f. How does the mariner describe the fact that they were completely motionless in the middle of the sea?

g. What is the irony in the ninth stanza? Explain it in your own words.

h. What is the narrator trying to convey through the description of the situation in the tenth and eleventh stanza?

i. What or who did the mariners feel was responsible for their suffering?

33 **reel and rout -** types of dance
34 **fathom -** a measurement of depth