

# *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 1

1. Why does the mariner stop “one of the three”—in other words, that particular wedding guest?
2. Why does the Mariner prevent a man from attending a wedding? Is it a comment being made on a wedding celebration in comparison with some other experience? (Note: The wedding can't be ignored, because it forms the frame of the story and intrudes in the middle.)
3. Why does the Mariner shoot the albatross? Is his act premeditated? Is it caused in any way?

## Part 2

4. Why do the sailors change their mind about the value of the bird?
5. Why the stasis and the death imagery?
6. What does the Mariner's inability to speak signify? (Later, he will not be able to pray; then he will; then he won't; then he'll have to tell his story forever.)
7. Why does the crew hang the albatross around the Mariner's neck? What does the bird have to do with the cross? Why should it be related to the cross?

## Part 3

8. What is the “specter-bark”? Who is on it? Is it really there? How do you know? Who else sees it? How do you know?
9. What does the act of rolling dice to determine fate mean about the nature of justice in the Mariner's universe? Or, if you believe the scene is a hallucination, what does rolling dice mean about the nature of justice in the Mariner's mind?

10. What about this justice anyway? What have the sailors done to deserve their fate?

11. Why does the Mariner get the punishment he does?

#### **Part 4**

12. Why is the Mariner made to suffer in the particular way described? How is his suffering related to his shooting of the bird?

13. Why does he compare himself to the snakes he describes?

14. Why can't he pray? (Recall earlier that he couldn't speak.)

15. What causes his change of perception of the snakes?

16. Why does a spring of love gush from his heart? What does it mean that he blessed the water snakes "unawares"? How can he be unaware when performing what is by definition an intentional act? How and why does his saint get involved in this act?

17. Why can he now pray?

#### **Part 5**

18. Why can the Mariner now sleep? Is he forgiven?

19. What is the religious significance of the water imagery?

20. Why does the Mariner feel like a ghost?

21. Why do the men arise from the dead? Are they forgiven?

22. What does the spirit's loving the bird who loved the man have to do with anything?

23. Why will the Mariner do more penance? Does the continued penance mean more than that the spirit cannot be repaid for his loss?

## Part 6

24. Why hasn't the curse died away?

25. Why do the men die again? Did they ever change? Speaking of death and rebirth, where's the bird?

26. What is the hermit's role? Should he shrive the Mariner?

## Part 7

27. Why does the ship go down like lead? Recall, that's how the albatross's sinking was described. Are these events associated?

28. Why does the Mariner have to tell his tale before he is relieved? Or is *forgiven* a better word?

29. Why does the need to tell his tale return? Why does the need come on spontaneously ("at an uncertain hour")?

30. Why is it sweeter for the Mariner to pray with the congregation than to attend a wedding feast?

31. Why is the wedding guest now sadder but wiser? What in fact has he learned?

32. If the moral is as beautifully simple as "He prayeth best who loveth well," what's this poor guy doing wandering the earth unforgiven, forever? Why hasn't he been forgiven? Is he wrong about his moral if his life doesn't confirm it? Is he wrong about other things too?