

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" Literary Devices

Writer: Samuel Taylor Coleridge | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Albatross: In the poem, the Albatross is a very important symbol. The Albatross stands for the beauty and power of nature. At first, sailors think it brings good luck, especially when the wind starts blowing after it arrives. The bird seems both real and magical. The bird is a link between nature and the spirit world. When the Mariner kills the bird, it becomes a symbol of sin and also reminds people of Christ, because the innocent bird is killed unfairly.

The Sun and Moon: The Sun and Moon show how nature, God, and life's lessons are all connected. In the poem, the Sun and Moon show two different powers that affect the Mariner's journey. The Sun is linked to heat, thirst, and the hard, painful parts of nature. The Moon stands for magic and God's power over nature, like controlling the tides.

Water: Water symbolizes both the life-giving and life-threatening aspects of nature. It surrounds the ship and serves as a source of suffering for the crew, highlighting the unpredictable and dangerous nature of the sea.

The Wedding Guest: The Wedding Guest represents the rational, everyday world. He is drawn into the mariner's supernatural tale, symbolizing the reader's engagement with the story and the power of storytelling itself.

The Skeleton Ship: The ghostly, spectral ship that appears toward the poem's end symbolizes death and the afterlife. It serves as a reminder of the consequences of the mariner's actions.

The Hermit: The hermit who rescues the mariner represents redemption, forgiveness, and the possibility of spiritual renewal. His prayers help absolve the mariner of his sins.

Figures of Speech

Imagery: Coleridge uses vivid and detailed imagery to depict the mariner's harrowing journey and the natural world. For example, describing the "slimy things" in the sea and the "rotting sea" conveys a sense of decay and horror.

Symbolism: The poem is filled with symbolic elements, such as the Albatross, representing both a burden and a curse. It serves as a symbol of guilt and redemption throughout the poem.

Alliteration: Coleridge employs alliteration, the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words, to create a musical and rhythmic quality in the poem. An example is "water, water, everywhere."

Assonance: This device involves the repetition of vowel sounds within words or phrases, contributing to the poem's musicality. For instance, "And the dead were at my feet."

Irony: The poem contains dramatic irony, especially when the mariner is surrounded by water but is dying of thirst. This contrast adds to the poem's sense of suffering and despair.

Metaphor: Coleridge uses metaphors to compare the mariner's suffering to various supernatural forces. For example, he describes the ship as "a skeleton ship" and the moon as a "ghostly galleon."

Personification: The poem personifies natural elements and supernatural forces. The ship is described as having a "speaking eye" and the ocean as a "witch's oils" - attributing human qualities to them.