Name _____   Period _____

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner Reading Guide
by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

ANSWER *ALL* QUESTIONS ON LINED, NOTEBOOK PAPER!

Introductory Notes

- As you read this narrative poem, be sure that you can identify the following: characters, setting, speaker(s), conflicts, and themes.
- This is ***also*** a ***literary ballad***: it is a poem written as an imitation of a traditional ***folk ballad***, or story song. Like older ballads, this poem features sensational subject matter—the perilous journey of an old sailor. It also contains other traditional elements:
    - Dialogue
    - Repetition of words and phrases
    - Strong patterns of rhyme and rhythm
- It also contains aspects of poetry that are more indicative of Coleridge's own ***romantic*** writing style:
    - Supernatural events involving ghosts, spirits, and the unexplainable
    - Use of sound devices such as ***onomatopoeia*** and ***alliteration***
    - Use of archaic language
- As you read the poem, note how Coleridge combines traditional elements of the ballad form with his romantic writing style to create a poem of rare beauty and complexity.

Page One

1. Re-read lines 5-8. List each pair of words that rhyme. What is the rhyme scheme? How many lines are in each stanza?
2. Describe the interaction between the mariner and the wedding guest.
3. This narrative unfolds using two points of view. List (by line numbers) the text that tells the framing story in which the mariner meets the wedding guest. List the text in which the mariner tells his story.
4. Review lines 21-28 and 41-50. What is the setting in each group of lines? How does the setting change?

Page Two

5. Pause at line 74. List two good things that happen after the albatross appears.
6. Review lines 79-82. What is the important plot development in this stanza? Predict what conflicts may arise because of this event.
7. Early in Part II, how do Coleridge's annotations help you understand the change of the shipmates' feelings?

Page Three

8. (Line 123 is actually the last line on page two) Reread lines 123-126. List each example of onomatopoeia. How does the use of this device affect the mood of this scene?
9. How do the mariner's shipmates punish him for killing the albatross?
10. Reread lines 143-156. List repeated words and phrases.
11. After "And horror follows…" read the rest of Part III, and list the details that suggest the ship the mariner sees will not help him and his shipmates.

Page Four

12. (lines 185-189 are at the bottom of page three) Reread lines 185-202. These lines contain an emphasis on the supernatural. Who is the ghostly character from line 193? List descriptive details about her from lines 190-192.

13. At lines 216-223, pause and reflect: Why might the mariner have been the *only* one on his ship to survive?

14. Reread lines 232-235. List each repeated word. What ideas does Coleridge emphasize through this repetition?

15. Reread lines 244-247. List the words that tell what the mariner is unable to do. What does this suggest about his character?

Page Five

16. How does the description of the water-snakes contrast with the mariner's dead crewmates?

17. Reread lines 272-291(end of Part IV). Why is the spell beginning to break? What does this event suggest about the relationship among human beings, nature, and the supernatural?

18. Reread the stanzas of Part V on this page (lines 292-328). List three important plot events in these lines.

Page Six

19. In a narrative, the climax is the moment of greatest interest and intensity. Review lines 331-344 (lines 331-335 are at the bottom of page five). What shocking discovery does the mariner make in these lines? Why might this be the climax of the poem?

20. Reread lines 377-388 (top of right column on page six). Which stanza introduces another supernatural element? What does this unearthly force do?

21. Pause and reflect at the close of Part V. What penance has the mariner done already, and what form of penance might he do in the future?

Page Seven

22. Review lines 410-429. What key information does this conversation present?

23. Reread lines 460-463. View examples of alliteration—the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words. What effect does the use of this technique create at this point in the poem?

24. Pause and reflect at line 471 ("Or let me sleep away"). What change comes over the mariner once the spell is broken?

25. Reread lines 484-499 (lines 497-499 are at the top of page eight). What details describe what the mariner sees on the bodies of the dead men? How does this sight make him feel, and why?

Page Eight

26. Review lines 476-507 (Sorry, but you must go back to page seven—line 476 begins with "The rock shone bright, the kirk no less"). Notice the number of lines in stanzas from these lines compared with the number of lines in stanzas in lines 508-541. After doing that, answer this question: what is the effect of the differing numbers of lines in the second set of stanzas?

27. Reread lines 564-573 (ends with "And scarcely he could stand."'). Note examples of archaic language. What is the effect of this diction here?

Page Nine

28. Review lines 582-596. Identify the lines that explain why the mariner must tell his tale. Then identify the lines that tell how the Mariner chooses his listeners. Based on this information, why might the mariner have chosen to tell his tale to that particular wedding-guest?

29. Reread lines 612-617 (ends with "He made and loveth all."). What theme is expressed in these lines?

30. Final thought #1: what effect does guilt have on us? Think of a story or movie character that became overwhelmed by guilt. What was the source of his/her guilt? What effect did it have on him/her? How did he or she deal with it—or does he or she not deal with it? What is the effect of dealing with the guilt/not dealing with the guilt?

31. Final thought #2: What observations (themes) can be discovered in this poem regarding the following:

   a. Nature

   b. Pride

   c. Suffering

   d. Isolation

   e. Transformation

   f. The Supernatural

   g. Impulsiveness