

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Donna Steele

KS3

KS3

Introduction

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' could be considered to be one of the most influential poems in the English language.

As a lyrical ballad it offers plenty of opportunity as an explorative text for KS3 drama, encouraging a focus on symbolism and semiotics, ensemble performance and voice work.

Lesson 1: 'You must hear my story'

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:

- ▶ How to use improvisation to explore the context of the poem
- ▶ How to extract the essence of a text to identify the main idea or concept within it
- ▶ The plot of the poem.

Warm-up: Yes, Let's (10 mins)

On the teacher's instruction students walk around the room. The teacher calls out an action (e.g.: 'Let's all hop on one leg' or 'Let's all skip'); all students must respond with 'Yes, let's', and then carry out that action. They continue to perform the action until another one is given.

Exploring the context of the poem (10 mins)

In pairs, students label themselves 'A' and '1'. Students stand facing each other and 1 should start by leading with a simple and slow movement. A should try and copy as though looking in a mirror. Swap who leads part way through the activity. Develop this a stage further by student 1 holding up their hand 12 inches from their partner's face. They start moving their hand slowly and their partner should follow it, trying to keep the exact distance. It should look like their hand is controlling their partner's movement. Swap who is leading the movement. Follow this up by looking at the quote, 'I hold him with my glittering eye'. How is this activity linked to this quote? Focus on the concept of being captivated by something.

Developing the context of the poem (10 mins)

Link the previous exercise to the context of a wedding and, as one group, create a whole class tableau of a wedding reception.

In pairs imagine being at a wedding reception and really wanting to tell one of the guests a story.

Pairs should improvise the following scenarios:

- ▶ Person A tells their story and Person B listens politely
- ▶ Person A tells their story, and Person B tries to make excuses to leave throughout
- ▶ Person A tells their story; Person B tries to physically leave and A blocks their path at each turn.

Follow this exercise by looking at the quote, 'You must hear my story.' How is this linked? What does it tell us about the person trying to tell their story?

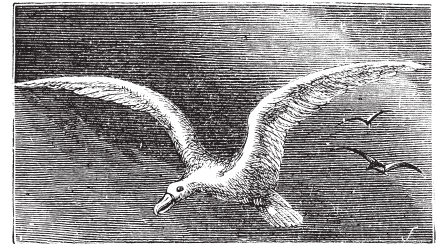
Link this for students to the opening of the poem.

Understanding the action of the poem (20 mins)

In groups give students copies of Gustave Doré's art prints of the poem. These should be mixed up and students need to try and order the sequence of the poem. This can be quite hard so be ready to clarify with them the correct order.

In order to consolidate and assess students' understanding of the poem, they then work in their groups to create the poem in five tableaux, then three tableaux and finally one tableau.

Donna Steele has taught drama for 14 years, starting as a head of department in an all boys' school in Chichester. She relocated to the Isle of Wight in 2007 and has recently taken on the challenge of building her own drama department from scratch in a new Free School.



Resources

- ▶ Photocopies of Gustave Doré's engravings of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'.

If any students are used to playing this game they should call out the actions for the rest of the class.

Using 'A' and '1' stops students opting out of going first - works quite well as a strategy. Try it if you haven't before.

The pictures can be found here: http://www.artsycreativity.com/dore_mariner.html

You can make this easier by grouping pictures together rather than having them all as separates.

Exit ticket (10 mins)

As students leave the room they must complete an exit ticket which answers, 'This is a poem about ...'.

Lesson 2: 'We could not speak, no more than if we had been choked with soot'

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:

- ▶ How to write in role in order to create character
- ▶ How to use improvisation to develop character
- ▶ How the sailors on the ship may have been feeling at different points in the poem.

Key objects (10 mins)

Students walk around the room and the teacher calls out various group sizes, which students get themselves into. Once in a group call out each of the following:

- ▶ A storm
- ▶ An albatross
- ▶ Dice
- ▶ The Mariner's Ship
- ▶ The Skeleton Ship.

It can be an effective exercise (and extension task) to create a transition in their groups between the Mariner's ship and the ship that brings Death.

Who is your character? (15 mins)

Students are asked to imagine they are one of the sailors on the ship. What is their name? What is their job on board the ship? Who are they leaving behind at home?

If you want to give your class a head start or prompts for this activity, create character cards beforehand that they can pick from. Or differentiate by a combination of free choice and character cards for those who need it.

On a piece of paper students should write the word 'SAILOR' down the side of their paper. Using this as an acrostic they should write a short monologue of their character saying goodbye to home before they board the ship.

Project an image of a ship. Students walk into the space and freeze as their character and deliver their monologue. Build this image up student by student until the whole class are in the space.

Time at sea (10 mins)

Still in the image from the previous exercise, look at the line, 'Water, water, every where, And all the boards did shrink; Water, water, every where, Nor any drop to drink.' Count slowly 1, 2, 3 and with each count students adjust their physical position to reflect how the sailors are feeling at sea with no water. Thought-track students in this new position. What are their thoughts on board the ship?

Coming back from the dead (15 mins)

Fill in the action for students of the sailors losing their lives one by one in a game of dice with the character of Death. Later in the poem they rise from the dead to sail the ship onwards. In groups, students start as the dead sailors on the floor. Create a group improvisation of the sailors rising from the dead. How might they react towards the Mariner, who lost them their lives? The improvisation should end with a tableau of the sailors returning to their jobs on board the ship.

Plenary (10 mins)

Ask students to compose a message in a bottle. What message would they write as one of the sailors from a moment in the poem? They must also write which moment in the poem their message comes from.

Resources

- ▶ Paper to write on
- ▶ Copies of message in a bottle sheet

See Resource 2, Message in a Bottle.

Lesson 3: Creating a physical performance

Learning objective

By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:

- ▶ How to work as an ensemble to create a physical performance.

Finding the rhythm (10 mins)

Ask the class to walk around the room. They must keep the space balanced at all times. They should respond appropriately to the commands of, 'Stop,' and, 'Go.' Once the class is focused, remove the teacher commands and without a signal the students should aim to come to a stop together and then be able to start again without anyone saying anything.

Discuss what the term 'ensemble' means.

Mariner's Coming (10 mins)

This works the same as Captain's Coming, but uses lines from the poem with appropriate gestures. Students walk around the room and respond in the following ways to the following lines:

- ▶ '*Mariner's coming*': Students run into the middle of the space and create a whole class tableau as sailors carrying out their jobs on board the ship. They could be swabbing the deck, climbing the rigging, etc.
- ▶ '*Nor any drop to drink*': Students fall to floor gasping for water.
- ▶ '*Cursed me with his eye*': Find a fixed point for students (could be fire exit sign, top of the whiteboard, you as the teacher). On this command they all turn to this point and walk towards it as if hypnotised until you clap to break the 'spell'.
- ▶ '*A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!*': Students stand where they are and point to their favourite part of the room as though they have seen something unbelievable.

Creating mime and movement (30 mins)

Focus on the part of the poem where the Mariner is playing dice with Death for the souls of the sailors. In groups, students are aiming to create a mime of this moment.

- ▶ Stage 1: Give them time to do this independently. Watch what they have created.
- ▶ Stage 2: Adjust students' focus to the dice in the scene. Each time the dice is rolled ask them to switch to slow motion. Watch and reflect on the effect that this creates.
- ▶ Stage 3: Add in the rule that students are only allowed 1 moment of complete stillness within the scene - where should this moment be (avoid putting it at the end), and for what effect.
- ▶ Stage 4: Add in music to accompany the scene.

Plenary (10 mins)

Using the dice handout (see Resource 3), students should evaluate their success in creating a physical scene.

Lesson 4

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:

- ▶ What 'semiotics' means
- ▶ How to use key props to communicate meaning to an audience.

This is not a chair (10 mins)

In pairs. With a chair between them, students have 1 minute to create 5 quick-fire improvisations where the chair is used as a different type of chair (a dentist's chair, a seat on an aeroplane, at the hairdressers, etc.). In this exercise it is the opening line to the improvisation that gives the clue for the scene.

Repeat the exercise, but this time they have 2 minutes to create 5 quick-fire improvisations where the chair is anything but a chair (it could be a mobile phone, a handbag, etc.). In this version it is how the chair is used that tells the audience what it is. Link this to the term 'semiotics'.

Communicating meaning (15 mins)

Working in groups, give them either a stick or a sheet. They should create two tableaux (not linked to the poem at this point) where they use the stick/sheet as

Students are aiming to find the rhythm of the group and work with focus to feel what is happening around them. You can develop this exercise by adding in the exercise of getting the class to sit down together, again with no signal.

Resources

- ▶ Sticks (garden canes), sheets (white fabric or bed sheets)
- ▶ Copies of the poem: select verses you think will work well with your class (see Resource 4).

A pdf copy of the complete poem is available to download from <http://www.casa-arts.org/cms/lib/PA01925203/Centricity/Domain/50/The%20Rime%20of%20the%20Ancient%20Mariner%20with%20guides.pdf>

two different objects (it could be a golf club in one tableau and an umbrella in another for example). Watch back afterwards and discuss how students knew what the objects were that were being suggested.

Semiotics in a stanza (20 mins)

Give each group two stanzas from the poem. Using the idea of semiotics, students should look to stage the stanza using the stick and/or sheet in order to create key objects. Watch back students' work and look for clarity of meaning.

Plenary (15 mins)

Watch students' work and evaluate how clearly the objects were communicated to the audience. How could the meaning be strengthened if they were not clear?

The stick and sheet combined cleverly can create effective sails, the albatross, etc. The sheet on its own can be used for albatross wings, waves on the sea, etc.

Lesson 5: Working with voice

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson students will have learnt:

- ▶ How to create different effects in performance through the use of voice
- ▶ How to combine the use of voice and physical theatre to create a more polished performance.

Warming up the voice (15 mins)

You will have your own preferred way to do this, but here is a quick outline of exercises that you could carry out:

- ▶ Massaging the face: Starting with your cheeks rub in small circles up to the temples and onto the forehead and down again, concentrating on the jaw and under the chin.
- ▶ Pass the gum: Have students chew a piece of chewing gum. Exaggerate the chew to exercise and warm up the jaw. As the teacher, start with an imaginary piece of gum and chew; pull it from your mouth and stick it to a part of the student next to you. They are to mime pulling it off, putting it in their mouth, chewing and sticking it to the person next to them and so on until it has been round the whole circle.
- ▶ Licking ice cream: Imagine you have ice cream around your mouth. Stick your tongue out and put it on your chin. Keep your tongue stuck out and lick all the way around your mouth.
- ▶ Name and address: Keeping your tongue stuck out on your chin, say as clearly as you can your name and address.
- ▶ Yawn: Have students stretch their arms up and yawn. This should induce actual yawning if done properly!

Tongue Twisters are great for vocal warm ups. The following website has a useful list of examples:
<http://www.uebersetzung.at/twister/en.htm>

Choral speaking (10 mins)

With the two stanzas students had from the previous lesson, ask groups to create a choral performance where they all speak all of the lines and all of the words together. Listen to a couple and reflect on the overall effect.

Students should hear that a piece of choral speaking can have difficulties in finding an interesting rhythm and pace.

Finding the effect (15 mins)

Start with each member of the group underlining a line in their stanzas that they like, or where they like the sound of the words within it.

Repeat the exercise but this time one person in the group reads the whole of the two stanzas. When it gets to a line that has been underlined by a student, they echo the line after it has been read. Listen and reflect on the effect that this creates.

Combining the physical and the vocal (20 mins)

Using their work from the previous lesson and the voice work they have just completed, students should now combine the two to start rehearsing their final piece for assessment the following week.

Lesson 6: Performance and assessment

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson students will have:

- ▶ Performed their extract from 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'
- ▶ Evaluated their own performance
- ▶ Reflected on the performances of others.

Perform, reflect, evaluate

This lesson is freer in structure as the purpose of it is to perform and reflect.

I always give students some preparatory time in these lessons.

We then perform group by group, and I film it. As students watch other groups they have a focus for watching which they then reflect back to the group at the end.

If there is time in the lesson we watch the performances back and students evaluate their own work.

In your own schools you will have your own structures and processes for doing this but I have included some templates that you could use if you wanted to (see Resources 6, 7 and 8).

Resources

- ▶ Your school success criteria
- ▶ Evaluation feedback sheets (see Resource 6, 7 and 8).

RESOURCES

Resource 1: Plot summary

At a wedding, a mariner (sailor), grabs hold of a wedding guest, desperate for someone to hear his story. The wedding guest tries to get away but ends up staying to hear the story.

On board a ship the mariner and his sailors set sail. The ship sails into a storm and once the storm calms, they find themselves surrounded by icebergs.

In the sky they see an albatross (a bird like a large eagle). The bird follows the ship for nine days and the crew feed it and look after it.

The mariner shoots the albatross.

The sailors believed the bird to be their lucky charm but the mist clears around the ship, making them think maybe it was lucky to shoot the albatross.

They sail on and the wind drops. The ship cannot sail and it is getting hot. Their water is running out and so they begin to ration it.

Finally their water runs out and the sailors begin to see things.

The sailors hang the albatross around the neck of the mariner.

In the distance they see a ship approaching and on the ship are death and life in death. They play a game of dice for the souls of the sailors.

On the last roll of the dice, life in death, wins the soul of the mariner.

The mariner is all alone with two hundred dead. He tries to pray but cannot. In the water he sees slimy snakes. The albatross falls from his neck into the sea. The mariner sleeps.

When the mariner wakes up, the sailors rise up and begin to sail the ship. The ship moves even though there is no wind.

Angels surround the ship and it is they who have bought the sailors back to life. The ship begins to move faster than possible and the mariner faints.

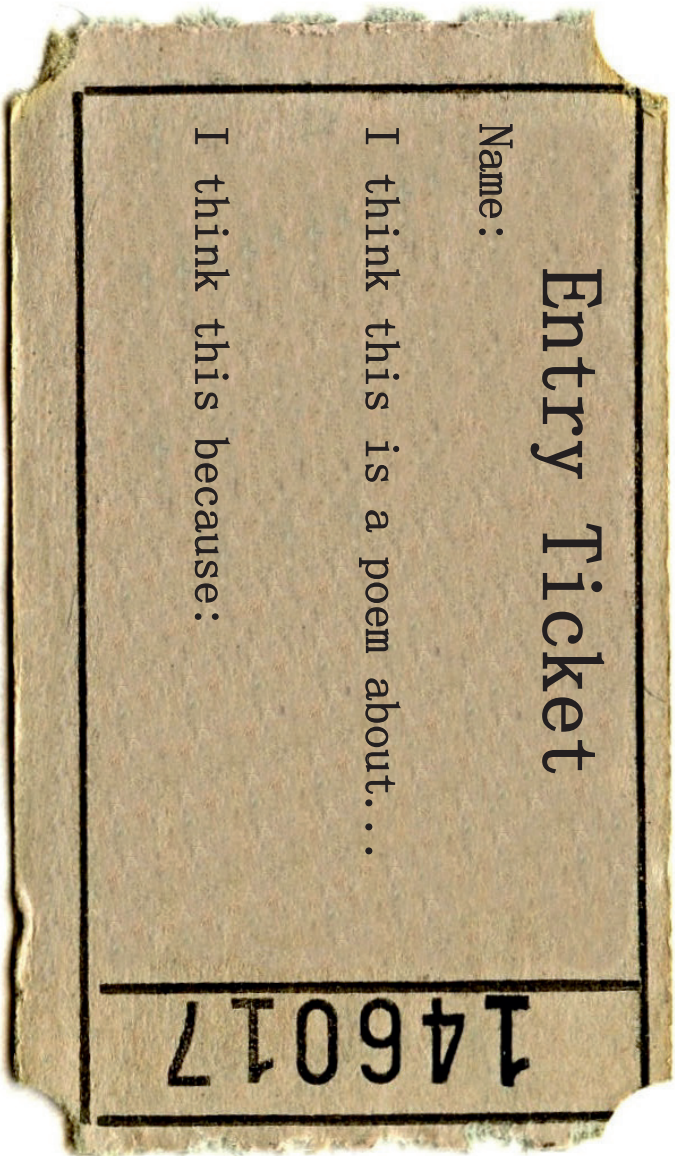
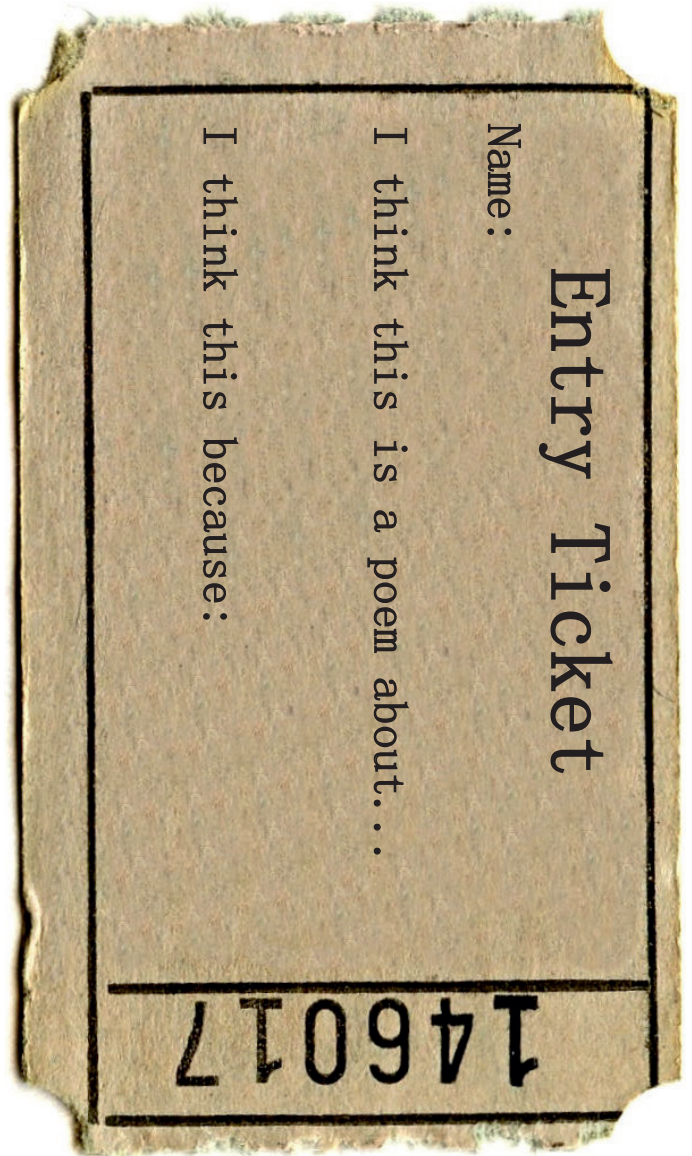
When he wakes up the dead sailors are still sailing the ship and he sees land and the ship drifts into the harbour.

The angels leave the sailors and they drop down dead.

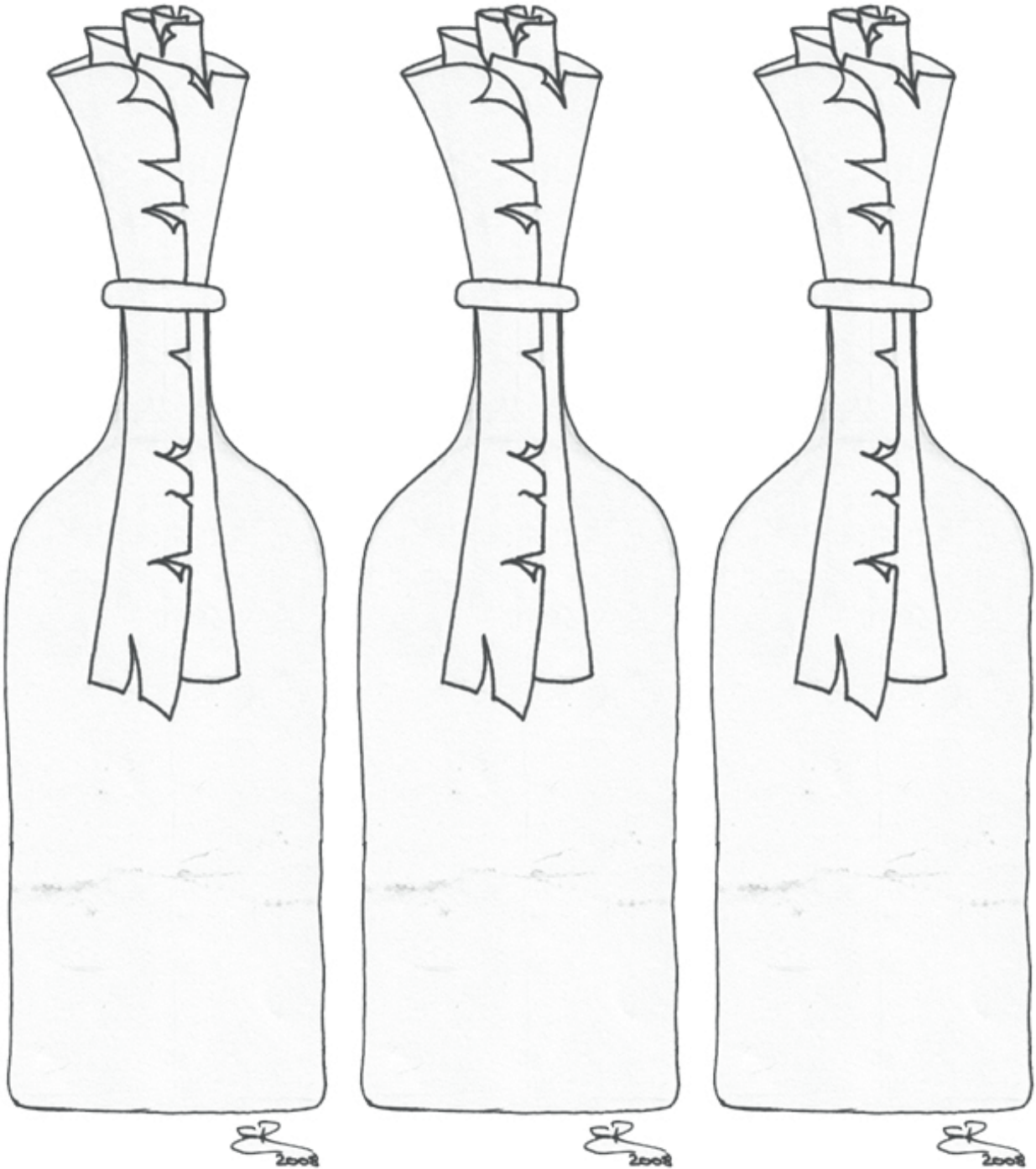
Approaching the ship is a boat. The mariner's ship splits in two but he is saved by the pilot of the boat.

So the mariner feels he must tell his story as he travels from land to land.

Resource 2: Exit Tickets



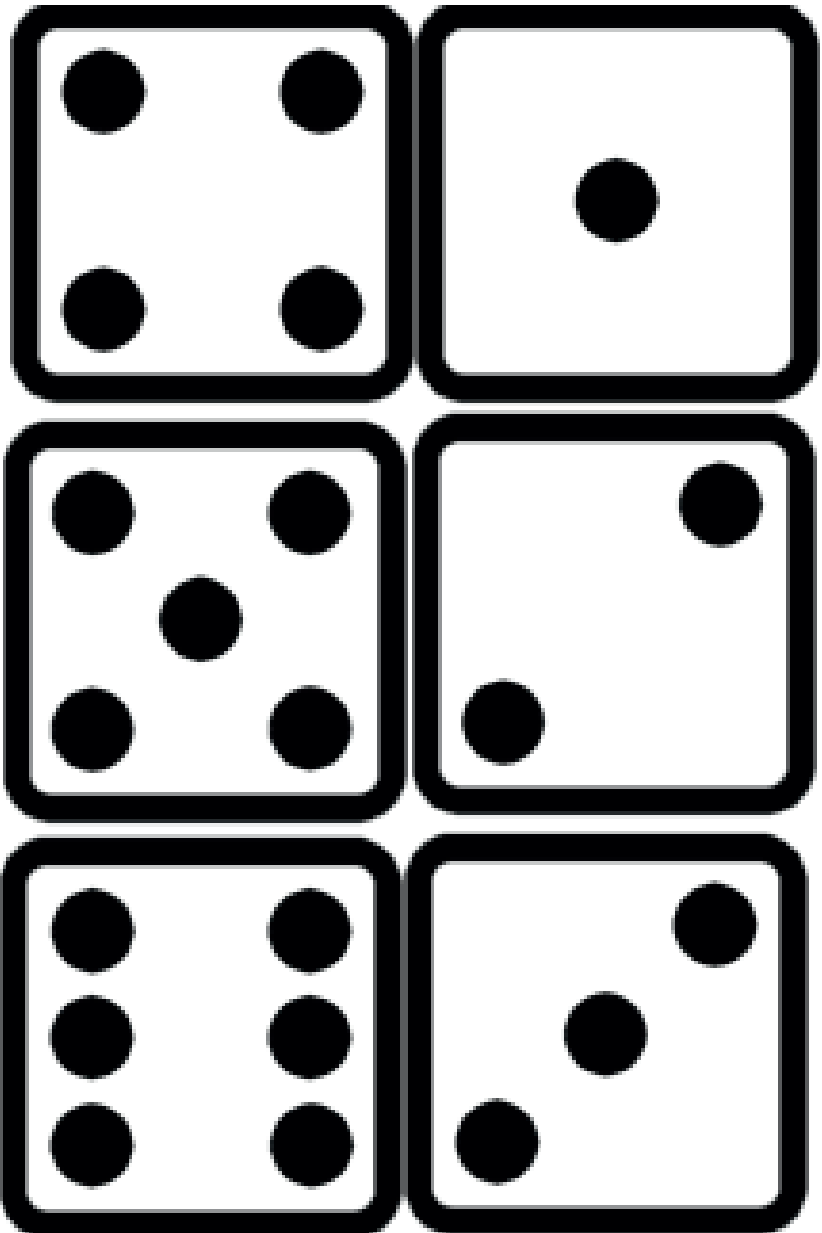
Resource 3: Message in a Bottle



Resource 4: Dice Evaluation

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner Dice Evaluation

Using the dice numbers below where 1= ineffective and 6= highly effective, colour the dice that best represents how effective your physical performance was.
Label the one you colour to say why you think this is the number you achieved.



Resource 5: Suggested stanzas

GROUP ONE

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!

At length did cross an Albatross, Through fog it came; As if it had been a Christian soul, We hailed it in God's name.

GROUP TWO

Day after day, day after day, We stuck, nor breath nor motion; As idle as a painted ship Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere, And all the boards did shrink; Water, water everywhere, Nor any drop to drink.

GROUP THREE

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist! And still it neared and neared As if it dodged a water-sprite, It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unsealed, with black lips baked, We could not laugh nor wail; Through utter drought all dumb we stood! I bit my arm, I sucked the blood, And cried, A sail! A sail!

GROUP FOUR

One after one, by the star-dogged moon, Too quick for groan or sigh, Each turned his face with a ghastly pang, And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men, (And I heard nor sigh or groan) With heavy thump, a lifeless lump, They dropped down one by one.

GROUP FIVE

Within the shadow of the ship I watched their rich attire: Blue, glossy green, and velvet black, Then coiled and swam; and every track Was a flash of golden fire.

The self same moment I could pray; And from my neck so free The albatross fell off, and sank Like lead into the sea.

GROUP SIX

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose, Nor spake, nor moved their eyes; It had been strange, even in a dream, To have seen those dead men rise.

The body of my brother's son Stood by me, knee to knee: The body and I pulled at one rope, But he said nought to me.

GROUP SEVEN

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship, Yet she sailed softly too: Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze— On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed The light-house top I see? Is this the hill? is this the kirk? Is this mine own countree?

GROUP EIGHT

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat, And, by the holy rood! A man all light, a seraph-man, On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand: It was a heavenly sight! They stood as signals to the land, Each one a lovely light;

GROUP NINE

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked And fell down in a fit; The holy Hermit raised his eyes, And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy, Who now doth crazy go, Laughed loud and long, and all the while His eyes went to and fro.

GROUP TEN

Since then, at an uncertain hour, That agony returns: And till my ghastly tale is told, This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land; I have strange power of speech; That moment that his face I see, I know the man that must hear me: To him my tale I teach.

Running the activity

Start by walking around the space, trying to find an even and regular pace as a group. Try to cover all the space and leave equal gaps between everyone. Practise stopping all together on the word 'Stop' and starting together on 'Go' – finding a sense of working as one, being really aware of each other.

Add in the following instruction/responses – so that when you say the line from the poem, the group responds with the corresponding action/image. Emphasise the importance of responding in unison. Give the instruction 'go' after each response – or ask the group to sense the right time to start walking around the room again.

You: *'Alone on a wide wide sea'*

Response: Individually create an image of the Mariner alone on the ship looking to sea.

You: *'Each cursed me with his eye'*

Response: All look towards me (teacher/leader) as if I am the mariner and you are the dead sailors, slowly walk towards me until I clap.

You: *'He cannot choose but hear'*

Response: The group follow your slow actions as precisely as they can – it can be as simple as lifting a hand – as if they are mesmerized.

You: *'There was a ship'*

Response: 'Unhand me you bearded loon!' (Say this angrily to the nearest person to you with a gesture.)

You: *'Nor any drop to drink'*

Response: Create image of the sailors on board the ship with no water.

Resource 6: Final Evaluation and Assessment

Year 7 Final Evaluation and Assessment The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Teacher:

Class:

Unit:

Term:

Student name:

Target Grade:

Lesson Date:

You should use the words of the assessment criteria for the unit in your feedback.

Assessment Criteria:

Ø Targets may be group based or individual.
Targets and comments may refer to

Self Assessment:
What went well?

✓

✓

Next Steps (focus your evaluation on skills that you can apply to your next piece of work):

➤

Teacher feedback:

Reflection

How do you feel about the feedback and level of your work?

Effort Grade:

Final Level:

Resource 7: Mid-unit Assessment

Year 7 Mid Unit Assessment The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Teacher:

Class:

Term:

Student name:

Target Grade:

You should use the words of the assessment criteria for the unit in your feedback.

Assessment Criteria:

Lesson Date:

∅ Targets may be group based or individual.

What have you achieved? (Tick the ones you think you have achieved)

I understand what is happening in the two stanzas my group are performing

I am using my voice to create different effects and an appropriate atmosphere in my piece

I am using movement to create an ensemble performance

What do you need to do next?

Next Steps:



Teacher Target:

Reflection

Explain you are going to do to meet your teacher target? What are your ideas for the next step?

Effort Grade:

Current Working Level:

Resource 8: Objectives and marking criteria

Year 7 Drama The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Objectives

- To explore a lyrical ballad from the 18th Century.
- To use physical and vocal skills to create a performance of a section of the poem.
- To understand and be able to communicate meaning to an audience. Using semiotics

Keywords

- *Semiotics*
- *Ensemble*
- *Choral Speaking*
- *Rhythm*

Always thinking about and applying the skills of performing in all of your work:

- Facial Expression
- Body Language
- Gesture
- Voice- pace, pitch, pause, volume, tone, expression

Marking Criteria

The Grid says...	What that means....
<p>Level 5 - I use <u>multiple drama techniques</u> in a performance. I <u>perform confidently</u> and know how to <u>use the performance space</u>. I am <u>aware of the audience</u>.</p>	<p><i>I can use my props as well as tableau, as well as choral speaking as well as slow motion. I can put these together in my performance. I face the audience when I need to.</i></p>
<p>Level 4- I can hold the <u>attention of the audience</u> when performing. My piece has a clear beginning, middle and end. (I freeze to show I have finished and the story makes sense)</p>	<p><i>I have thought about what happens in my performance. How it starts is clear and so is how it ends.</i></p>

What do I think I am going to be doing in this unit?:

What am I looking forward to most?

What do I think is going to be hard?

My personal target for this work is: