

# SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

## LIFE (1772 - 1834)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in Devon in 1772. A precocious and brilliant schoolboy, he went to Cambridge in 1791. In 1794 he left Cambridge without a degree. In 1797 he met the poet William Wordsworth with whom he began a close friendship and an intensive creative partnership which culminated in the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. In the same year they travelled to Germany where Coleridge studied the poets of German Romanticism. On their return, he moved to the Lake District to be near Wordsworth. Coleridge had been afflicted with severe rheumatism since childhood and over the years he had become addicted to opium. From 1804 to 1806 he settled in Malta, in the vain hope of recovering his health. Back from Malta he devoted himself to lecturing. He died in 1834.

## ACHIEVEMENT

Samuel Coleridge is another major figure of the so-called “**first-generation Romantics**”. He is the poet who pursued the Romantic spirit of wonder by introducing supernatural or fantastic events into poetry. 1797 and 1798 are regarded as Coleridge’s golden period as a poet, the time when he wrote his masterpiece, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (included in *Lyrical Ballads*) and the unfinished poems *Kubla Khan* and *Christabel*.

## THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

This poem is a literary ballad. The ballad is a traditional form of early folk poetry that was transmitted orally from generation to generation. It deals with comedies and tragedies of life: love, death, heroic or supernatural events. Coleridge’s use of this form reflects the Romantics’ interest in the Medieval period as opposed to the 18<sup>th</sup> century writer’s interest in the themes and forms of the classics.

This ballad is the story of a crime and its punishment told by the protagonist himself, an old mariner condemned to expiate his crime by travelling constantly from land to land telling his story and teaching, through his example, love and reverence for all God’s creatures.