

## 2. Allusions to Events—Allusions to Quotes

According to **Chinese literary tradition**, allusions can be grouped into two categories:

1) **Allusions to events** (Shi Dian, 事典), allusions that involve a story or plot

**Examples in Chinese:** 三顾茅庐、毛遂自荐、朝三暮四、杯弓蛇影

**Examples in English:** Pandora's box, burn one's boat. These allusions usually originate from a myth, legend, fable, anecdotes of a historic figure, etc. Allusions to events can be very short and concise. The following is a detailed analysis of an example from the English language: *albatross around one's neck*:

Albatross is considered as the most legendary of all birds. It has been a tradition that when sailors caught the birds, they usually let them free again. The possible reason is that it was believed that albatrosses were often regarded as the souls of lost sailors and killing them was supposedly viewed as bringing bad luck.

The expressions “albatross around one's neck” alludes to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798). In the poem, an albatross starts to follow a ship, which is a good omen. However, a mariner shoots the albatross with a crossbow, and this brings curse to the ship — the ship is mysteriously sent to uncharted and becalmed waters:

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.  
Water, water, every where,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.

Even when they are too thirsty to speak, the sailors stare at the mariner, blaming his action for the curse. He feels as though the albatross is metaphorically hung around his neck. The symbolism used in the Coleridge poem is its highlight:

Ah! Well a day! What evil looks  
Had I from old and young!  
Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
About my neck was hung.

Then, the ship encounters a ghostly vessel, on whose board are a skeleton, Death, and a deathly-pale woman, the “Night-mare Life-in-Death”. They are playing dice for the souls of the crew. Death wins the lives of the crew members and Life-in-Death the life of the mariner. Her name implies that the mariner will endure a fate worse than death as a punishment for killing the albatross. Indeed, right