

The Inchcape Rock: imagery of opposites

A lot of narrative poetry includes very vivid images; if you've read 'The Highwayman' you'll know that there is a lot of colour in the poem which reflects the passion and violence of the poem. 'The Inchcape Rock' is full of the imagery of opposites to illustrate the theme of good and bad that permeates (goes through) the poem.

Can you think of any opposites in the poem? Below are some that I've thought of with quotations from the poem, to get you started. See if you can add some quotations from the poem to the opposites I've suggested:

Good and Bad	Atmosphere (time of day and weather)
<p>The Abbot of Aberbrothok and Sir Ralph the Rover: Sailors 'blest' the Abbot but the pirate wants to 'plague' the Abbot.</p>	<p>At the beginning of the poem 'The sun in the heaven was shining gold' but when the Rover is returning 'So dark it is they see no land'.</p>
Noise and Silence	Movement and Stillness
<p>At the beginning of the poem 'Without a sign or sound of their shock, / The waves flow'd over the Inchcape Rock' but at the end of the poem when the pirate's ship is sinking he hears 'The Devil below was ringing his knell.'</p>	<p>The first line of the poem is, 'No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,' but at the end of the poem, 'The waves rush in on every side,'</p>

Why do you think Southey, the poet, has included so many images of opposites in the poem? As you are telling the story, what message do you think he is trying to give the reader?