

Summary of Christabel

Christabel, an unfinished narrative poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, written between 1797 and 1800 and published in 1816, is a gothic tale blending supernatural elements and psychological tension. Written in irregular meter with a ballad-like quality, the poem follows Christabel, a virtuous young woman, who encounters the mysterious Geraldine in a forest at midnight. Geraldine, who claims to be a distressed noblewoman, is invited into Christabel's castle, but her strange behavior and supernatural aura suggest a sinister, possibly vampiric nature. The poem explores Christabel's innocence under threat, her father's enchantment by Geraldine, and an ominous sense of evil, but it breaks off incomplete, leaving the resolution ambiguous. Coleridge's haunting imagery and rhythmic innovation create a chilling atmosphere.

The poem delves into themes of innocence versus corruption, the supernatural, and the ambiguity of evil, reflecting Romantic fascination with the sublime and the uncanny.

Christabel's unfinished state and gothic tone make it a compelling, enigmatic work in Coleridge's oeuvre.

Important Facts for *Christabel*

1. The poem, left incomplete in two parts, is notable for its gothic elements, influencing later works like Keats's *Lamia* and the vampire genre.
2. Coleridge uses a flexible meter, often accentual rather than strictly syllabic, to create a haunting, musical rhythm that enhances the poem's eerie tone.
3. Geraldine's ambiguous nature—possibly a supernatural being or seductress—symbolizes the corruption of innocence, a central Romantic concern.

Important Quotations for *Christabel*

1. "The night is chill; the forest bare; / Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?" (lines 43–44, setting the poem's gothic, foreboding atmosphere).
2. "Her silken robe, and inner vest, / Dropt to her feet, and full in view, / Behold! her bosom and half her side—" (lines 250–252, hinting at Geraldine's unsettling, possibly supernatural form).