

'Renaissance'

The term 'Renaissance' means rebirth in French and has its origin in the Latin. The Renaissance period marked a break from the Middle Ages leading towards modern age and that the European people, during this period, became interested in the ideas and culture of ancient Greece and Rome and that is what affected their intellectual life and brought revolutionary changes in the history of Europe. The period marks the high water mark of English literary accomplishment. It is the age of William Shakespeare, John Milton, John Donne, and Katherine Philips. Renaissance poets and lovers produced love poetry in a huge variety of forms — ranging from sonnets and sonnet sequences, to lyrics, songs, ballads, elegies, and much more. Some of these forms were new to 16th-century England — such as sonnets, imported from Italy in the works of Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), and the numerous French and Italian poets influenced by him. Others, such as lyrics, formed an important part of English medieval literary and religious culture.

Sonnet

The sonnet is likely to be the first poetic form that comes to mind for many people when they think about Renaissance love poetry. Invented in Sicily in the 13th century, the sonnet rapidly became widely-used for describing love both erotic and spiritually-elevated (though not necessarily at the same time). Most influential among the Italian sonneteers was the 14th-century poet Petrarch, who composed several hundred sonnets and other lyrics. Sonnets were introduced into England and English in the 1530s, by the Courtier and Ambassador Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542), and the aristocrat Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517–1547).

A sonnet is a one-stanza poem of fourteen lines, written in iambic pentameter. One way to describe a verse line is to talk about how many stressed and unstressed syllables are in the line. A simple grouping of syllables, some stressed, some unstressed, is called a foot. The iambic foot is an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Pentameter means there are five feet in the line. "Iambic Pentameter," then, means a line of ten syllables, which alternates unstressed and stressed syllables according to the iambic rhythm.

The rhyme scheme of a sonnet refers to the pattern formed by the rhyming words at the end of each line. Each end-rhyme is assigned a letter, and the fourteen letters assigned to the sonnet describe the rhyme scheme. Different kinds of sonnets have different rhyme schemes.

The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet, named after the fourteenth century Italian poet Petrarch, has the rhyme scheme ABBAABBA CDECDE. The first eight lines, which all end in either rhyme A or B, form the octave. The last six lines, which end in C, D, or E, form the sestet. Variant rhyme schemes for the sestet also include CDCDCD and CDEDCE. There is usually a pause or break in thought between the octave and sestet called the volta, or turn.

The Shakespearean or English sonnet was actually developed in the sixteenth century by the Earl of Surrey, but is named after Shakespeare because of his great sonnet sequence. The Shakespearean sonnet has the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, forming three quatrains (four lines in a group) and a closing couplet (two rhymed lines).

The Spenserian sonnet is a variation of the English sonnet with the rhyme scheme ABAB BCBC CDCD EE, in which the quatrains are linked by a continuation of one end-rhyme from the previous quatrain. The Miltonic sonnet is a Petrarchan sonnet which omits the volta. Wordsworth often used the Petrarchan form, but changed the octave to ABBA ACCA because it is harder to find rhyming words in English than in Italian.

The traditional subject of the sonnet has primarily been Love. Petrarch wrote his great sonnet sequence to his beloved, Laura. Many of Shakespeare's sonnets are also about Love, but Shakespeare mocked the standard worshipful attitude of the Petrarchan sonnet in his famous "My Mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun."

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun (Sonnet 130)

William Shakespeare

About the poet

William Shakespeare was an English poet, playwright, and actor. He was born on 26 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. His father was a successful local businessman and his mother was the daughter of a landowner. Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. He is often called England's national poet and nicknamed the Bard of Avon. He wrote about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses, of which the authorship of some is uncertain. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare wrote 154 sonnets, first published in the 1609 quarto. They take the form of sequences, some of which seem to be addressed to a 'fair' young man and some being to a 'dark lady' as in this sonnet. To add to the mystery, Shakespeare also dedicated the publication to a 'Mr. WH' whose identity has never been confirmed. Around 1613, at the age of 49, he retired to Stratford, where he died three years later. Few records of Shakespeare's private life survive. He died on 23 April 1616, at the age of 52.

Shakespeare is mischievously presenting an alternative to typical RENAISSANCE love poetry, where women are often compared to nature, but then shown to outstrip it, (sun, coral, snow, roses, perfume, music, goddesses). This is where the 'goddess' idea comes from in more conventional sonnets. The narrator's lady love is frank; the honesty of the narrator leaves the reader feeling that this is a genuine relationship. The narrator's purpose is made clear in the final line: He is warning about the perils of empty praise – 'false compare'.

SUMMARY

Sonnet 130 is a parody of the Dark Lady, who falls too obviously short of fashionable beauty to be extolled in print. The poet, openly contemptuous of his weakness for the woman, expresses his infatuation for her in negative comparisons. For example, comparing her to natural objects, he notes that her eyes are "nothing like the sun," and the colors of her lips and breasts dull when compared to the red of coral and the whiteness of snow. Whereas conventional love sonnets by other poets make their women into goddesses, in Sonnet 130 the poet is merely amused by his own attempt to deify his dark mistress.

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun (Sonnet 130)

William Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Glossary

- Coral – a hard red, pink or white substance on the sea bed
- Dun – dull-grayish brown, dark
- Damasked – originally brought from Damaskus, of special sort
- reek – to smell unpleasant, to emit a smell
- Hath – has
- grant – to admit
- rare - special.
- she - woman.
- belie – to show that something is wrong, not true
- with false compare - i.e., by unbelievable, ridiculous comparisons.

Short Questions

- Who is the speaker (narrator) of this poem?
- 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun' - What does this line mean?
- 'If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun' - What does 'dun' mean?
- What is the rhyme scheme of this sonnet?
- Shakespeare uses several examples from nature. What is one?
- What does the speaker say about his mistress' breath?
- In Sonnet 130, despite all the bad qualities about this girl does he still love her?

- Why does the poet think his love is rare?
- What is the texture of her hair like?

Paragraph Questions

- What is the attitude of love expressed in this sonnet?
- Explain what the last two lines refer to in terms of “false appearances”
- How does the speaker use the notion of color in the first six lines to indicate how he feels about his mistress?
- Indicate how the speaker uses the sense of sound in this poem.
- Describe the speaker's "mistress" in this poem.

Essay Questions

- Give a critical appreciation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 130.
- Why does the speaker criticize his beloved in Sonnet?
- What are the strong feelings presented in "Sonnet 130" by Shakespeare?
- In Sonnet 130 how does Shakespeare describe his mistress?
- How is beauty treated in Sonnet 130?

Paraphrase

SONNET 130	PARAPHRASE
My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;	My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;	Coral is far more red than her lips;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;	If snow is white, then her breasts are a brownish gray;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.	If hairs are like wires, hers are black and not golden.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,	I have seen damask roses, red and white [streaked],
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;	But I do not see such colors in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight	And some perfumes give more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.	Than the horrid breath of my mistress.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know	I love to hear her speak, but I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;	That music has a more pleasing sound.
I grant I never saw a goddess go;	I've never seen a goddess walk;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:	But I know that my mistress walks only on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare	And yet I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.	As any woman who has been misrepresented by ridiculous comparisons.

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea (Sonnet 65)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?
O fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

GLOSSARY

- *Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea*, - *brass, stone*, are the examples of long lasting substances. *earth* and *boundless sea* are also long lasting, and superior in that they are of near unlimited level. These are all things which bought by their nature to be capable of holding out against mortality.
- *sad mortality* - mortality which causes sadness; serious, ugly, hideous mortality.
- *o'ersways their power* - has greater power than they have. *to over sway* is to be superior to one who already holds power.
- *rage* - is used to exemplify the blind fury of Time's destructiveness.
- *hold a plea* - hear a appeal, as in a court of law,
- *action* - The legal action undertaken by beauty to prevent destruction is no more effective than a flower attempting to stop the march of time.

- *summer's honey breath* = the pleasant, perfumed breezes of summer, the scent of flowers.
- *hold out* - an echo of *hold a plea* above.
- *wrackful* - bringing devastation, wreckage and ruin. Full of such disasters. Based on the word *wrack*, meaning ruin and devastation .
- *the wrackful siege of battering days* - the image is of siege warfare, and the battering ram, which was a large beam of wood swung with great violence against the gates of a city to batter them down . The end of a successful siege was the capture and destruction of the city.
- *rocks impregnable* - i.e. they are unconquerable to any human agency, but time can overpower them. *impregnable* - unassailable. A word often applied to fortresses and other strong military defence points.
- Nor . . . decays - Steel gates are not strong enough to withstand time's onslaught.
- alack: Alas.
- *Time's best jewel* - the most precious thing in the world; the beloved youth.
- *Time's chest* - the treasure chest in which Time stores all the things it steals. A coffin.
- *Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?* - spoliation, despoilment, disfigurement. 'Who can deny Time the enjoyment of his loot (spoil) and who can forbid the youth to be beautiful?
- *That in black ink my love may still shine bright.* = you, the beloved youth; my love for you. The blackness of the ink opposed to the shining brightness of the youth described in the sonnets is part of the miracle of his preservation.

Short Questions

- Why has Shakespeare chosen to mention brass, stone and sea?
- How is time personified throughout this poem?
- What does summer represent?
- Why is the word “jewel” effective?
- What is “Time’s chest”?

Paragraph Questions

- What does “jewel”, “spoil” and “chest” make you think about? What is the connection?
- Write briefly on the main idea of William Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 65”

Essay Questions

- Write a short paragraph on the theme of Since Brass, Nor Stone, Nor Earth, Nor Boundless Sea.
- Explain why “Wreckful siege of battering days”, “impregnable” and “gates of steal” are effective. Think about the meanings and what Shakespeare is trying to say.

Paraphrase

Sonnet 65	Paraphrase
Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,	Since brass and stone, earth and sea,
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,	Are subject to death,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea, Whose action is no stronger than a flower?	How can beauty withstand that destructive force, When its strength is similar only to a flower?
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out Against the wreckful siege of battering days, When rocks impregnable are not so stout, Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?	How will the honeyed breath of summer withstand The battering storm of time, When mortality even destroys Great rocks and gates made of iron?
O fearful meditation! where, alack, Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?	What a scary thought! For where alas, Shall time's best jewel (his lover), be hid from time's dark chest?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?	Or what strong hand can hold back the swift foot of Time?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?	Who can prevent Time from destroying beauty?
O, none, unless this miracle have might, That in black ink my love may still shine bright.	None, unless there is hope in the miracle of my verse, That it allows my love to shine eternally out of this black ink.

London

William Blake

About the poet

William Blake was a 19th century writer and artist who is regarded as a seminal figure of the Romantic Age. His writings have influenced countless writers and artists through the ages, and he has been deemed both a major poet and an original thinker. William Blake was born in London, England, on November 28, 1757, the second son of a mens' clothing merchant.

From his earliest years he saw visions. He would see trees full of angels or similar sights. If these were not true mystical visions, they were the result of the artist's intense spiritual understanding of the world. From his early teens Blake wrote poems, often setting them to melodies of his own composition.

In 1787 Blake produced *Songs of Innocence* (1789) as the first major work in his new process, followed by *Songs of Experience* (1794). The magnificent lyrics in these two collections carefully compare the openness of innocence with the bitterness of experience. They are a milestone because they are a rare instance of the successful union of two art forms by one man. Blake had become a political sympathizer with the American and French Revolutions. He composed *The Four Zoas* as a mystical story predicting the future showing how evil is rooted in man's basic faculties—reason, passion, instinct, and imagination. He did some significant work, including his designs for Milton's poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (1816) and the writing of his own poem *The Everlasting Gospel* (c. 1818). His last six years of life were spent at Fountain Court surrounded by a group of admiring young artists. Blake did some of his best pictorial work: the illustrations to the *Book of Job* and his unfinished *Dante*. In 1824 his health began to weaken, and he died singing in London, England, on August 12, 1827.

Summary

In the poem, Blake expresses his thoughts and observations on London through a symbolic character he creates to narrate social and political tribulations afflicting the city. The world the speaker observes is a fallen world where pessimism, anger, frustration, and desolation are prevalent. Common people are the hapless victims of exploitation. Their collective misery is given voice in the poem- which in turn, suggests Blake's distressed view of London. The speaker expresses his experiences while walking around London at midnight, the time which associates the negative aspects of wandering with confusion and sin. The city life has taken away the freedom and vitality of the common people. Even, the poor children are not free to enjoy childhood; instead they are forced into excruciating labour and harlotry, their innocence has been tainted.

London

WILLIAM BLAKE

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

Glossary

1. charter'd - The streets are described as being "charter'd" in order to reinforce the intended meaning of confinement, as well as to describe a physical barrier that the people of London are unable to overcome. This is seen again in the line that follows, when the Thames is described as also being "charter'd" within the city.
2. mind-forg'd manacles - self oppression or confining ourselves in the prison that we create in our own mind
3. Harlots - prostitute or people born to low status
4. blights with plaguesMarriage hearse - the "youthful Harlot's curse" not only "blasts the

new born infant's tear," but also "blights with plagues the Marriage hearse." The unusual, emotional connection of "marriage" with "hearse" brings the mood of hopelessness to a peak; as a result of sexually spread diseases, marriage and sex are now connected with death, not life.

Short Questions

- What does London represent?
- What problems does William Blake describe in this poem?
- What is a "*mind-forg'd manacle*".
- How does Blake picture himself at the start of the poem?
- What details of the city does he focus on?
- Which words or phrases struck you most vividly as you read the poem?
- What were the conditions for children in London like when the poem was written.

Paragraph Questions

- How would you describe the feelings Blake expresses in the poem?
- Why do you think Blake describes the streets and even the River Thames as 'chartered'?
- What does he see and hear as he walks
- 'The mind-forged manacles I hear.' What is Blake saying about the society he is observing?

Essay Questions

- What does Blake hear in the 'midnight streets'? What is his comment on this?
- How does Blake present people in London?
- Describe the London of William Blake.
- How can William Blake's poem "London" be related to the 21st century?

The Garden of Love

WILLIAM BLAKE

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not. writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.

Summary

'The Garden of Love' was first published in 1794 and was one of the series of poems in William Blake's collection, Songs of Experience. These short poems explore the harsh realities of late 18th and early 19th Century life during the time of King George III, known as the Romantic Era. Each poem in the Songs of Experience category is matched by an idealistic portrayal in Songs of Innocence. The contrast is Blake's method of social protest. 'The Garden of Love' is a poem of erotic frustration that directly challenges the role of organized religion in dictating the expression of human desires.

Blake's speaker goes into the Garden of Love and finds a chapel built on the spot where he used to play as a child. The gates of the chapel are shut, and commandments and prohibitions are written over the door. The garden has become a graveyard, its flowers replaced by tombstones. This idea of love starting out as a land of liberty and promise but ending up a world of death and restriction is expressed very powerfully through the image of the garden.

Vocabulary

1. the green - a common or public park
2. shalt - shall, will
3. binding - restricting
4. briars - thorny branches

Short Questions

1. Where is the garden?
2. What do we understand from the title of the poem?
3. What kind of love is presented in this poem?
4. Why can the speaker not enter the 'Chapel'?
5. How does the speaker feel about the presence of this chapel?
6. What has replaced the flowers in the 'Garden of Love'?
7. What do you understand by the expression 'walking their rounds'?

Paragraph Questions

1. How does the word, 'Garden' create an expectation in the mind of the reader?
2. How do we know that the speaker had positive memories of the place the poem describes?
3. The speaker seems to paint a negative picture of what the garden has become. Without changing the 'facts', discuss how a different impression could have been created.

Essay Questions

1. Comment on the effectiveness of the description 'binding with briars'. What
2. What changes take place in the garden? Are those changes good or bad (give reasons for your opinions)?
3. What is a critical analysis of the poem "Garden of Love" by Blake?

On His Blindness

John Milton

About the poet

John Milton (9 December 1608 – 8 November 1674) was an English poet, polemicist, a scholarly man of letters, and a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under Oliver Cromwell. He wrote at a time of religious flux and political upheaval, and is best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Milton's poetry and prose reflect deep personal convictions, a passion for freedom and self-determination, and the urgent issues and political turbulence of his day. Writing in English, Latin, and Italian, he achieved international renown within his lifetime. He also wrote some great plays which include 'Comus', 'Samson Agonistes' and 'Arcades'. Milton's achievements are all the more impressive when one takes into account that by the time he crafted these works, he was blind. His blindness was so advanced that he would compose his poetry but then had to rely on others to write down the words he dictated. The sonnet "On His Blindness" reveals some of Milton's struggle to come to terms with the loss of his vision.

Summary

In "On His Blindness," Milton writes of his experience of blindness. He asks if God wants him to keep working!, in spite of the fact that his job caused him to lose his sight. Personified patience tells him that God rewards even those who stand and wait to be of service. Milton went blind working! For the English 'Republic. His service to the! Government often required that he stay up late reading! And writing!. This caused him to lose his sight. The poem takes the form of a Petrarchan sonnet. Petrarchan sonnets traditionally focus on love and romance, but Milton subverts this in order to explore his relationship with God. Milton fears that his blindness will prevent him from doing! God's work. Patience tells him that even his idleness is useful to God if he continues to have faith. The sonnet is written in Petrarchan style comprising an octave and a sestet with the rhyme scheme abba/abba/cde/cde. The sonnet differs from Petrarchan sonnet in the sense that Petrarchan sonnet deals with the theme of love, whereas, this sonnet deals with spiritual issue.

On His Blindness

John Milton

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
E're half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodg'd with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, least he returning chide,
Doth God exact day-labour, light deny'd,
I fondly ask; But patience to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts, who best
Bear his milde yoaik, they serve him best, his State
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o're Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and waite.

Glossary

- Ere: before
- Dark world: he is blind
- Wide world: in darkness everything seems endless
- Talent: that which is precious to him and God
- Dear: precious, valuable
- Lodged: he is stuck with this talent

- Soul more bent: his soul now seems determined to use this talent.
- Maker: God
- and present: he wants to give to God something.
- returning chide: God will return. He is afraid God will scold him for not proving what he has
done with his talent.
- Patience: Patience is personified. It becomes a person.
- prevent: Patience wants to stop the complaint from reaching God to protect
the poet.
- mild yoke: The poet's yoke is his blindness. If he accepts his blindness and copes with it,
he serves God well.
- Thousands at his bidding: there are thousands of people that do what God
commands.

Short Questions

- What does "light spent" mean?
- What type of sonnet is "On His blindness"?
- What does Milton mean by "era half of my days"?
- What does Milton's soul wish?
- How does one serve God best?
- Who are the thousands at God's bidding?
- 'Who best bear His mild yoke' What is the 'mild yoke'?
- According to the poem "On his Blindness," who serves God best?

Paragraph Questions

- What is a summary of "On His Blindness" by Milton?
- What is the attitude of the speaker in Milton's poem "On His Blindness"?
- "They also serve who only stand and wait". Explain.
- How does Milton express his philosophy of life through the poem On His Blindness?

Essay Questions

- How does Milton make up his mind to serve his maker in his sonnet "On His Blindness"? Analysis of the Sonnet "On His Blindness":
- Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem On His Blindness

Ode To Autumn

John Keats

About the Poet

John Keats (31 October 1795 – 23 February 1821) was an English Romantic poet. He was one of the main figures of the second generation of Romantic poets along with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, despite his work only having been in publication for four years before his death. Although his poems were not generally well received by critics during his life, his reputation grew after his death, so that by the end of the 19th century he had become one of the most beloved of all English poets. He had a significant influence on a diverse range of poets and writers. The poetry of Keats is characterised by sensual imagery, most notably in the series of odes. Today his poems and letters are some of the most popular and most analysed in English literature.

Summary

Keats, a wonderful romantic, personifies Autumn in conveying the message that the beauty of autumn is ought to be enjoyed though it be transitory and short lived. Keats sees autumn separate from winter, a season of fog associated with sadness and sorrow. The poet appears to profess the need to enjoy the beauty though it be for present hour, though it may soon be followed with greater grief, winter. The description of the landscape is perfect. The poet has used extensive imagery to create the sensual experience even more enrapturing. Actually, Keats was impressed by the beautiful imagery of the autumn period which inspired him to write this poem. The poem begins with the concrete images of autumn and ends on the images of approaching winter.

Ode To Autumn

John Keats

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;

Conspiring with him how to load and bless

With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;

To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,

And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;

To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells

With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,

And still more, later flowers for the bees,

Until they think warm days will never cease,

For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;

Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,

Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook

Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:

And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep

Steady thy laden head across a brook;

Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,

Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Glossary

- Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness – Autumn season
- Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun – Autumn and Summer are friends because autumn is followed by summer.
- Conspiring with him – Making secret plans with the Summer
- Who hath not seen thee – All have seen you
- Oft – Often
- Amid thy store – In the storehouse
- Seek – Search
- Abroad – Outside/away
- Thy hair – Your hair (What is the hair of the autumn? The grass-blades)
- Soft-lifted – Softly lifted and shaken
- Winnowing wind – The wind from the winnowing machine
- Half-reaped furrow – A stretch of wheat/rice that has not been fully reaped by reapers
- Sound asleep – Peacefully asleep
- Thou hast thy music too – You have your own music (that you are not aware of)
- Barred clouds – Dark clouds
- The soft-dying day

- Stubble-plains
- Wailful choir – A loud cry
- Small gnats – Small insects
- Mourn – Cry
- River sallows – River birds
- Borne aloft – Flying above

Short Questions

- Why is the autumn called the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness?
- Why is the sun said to be 'maturing?' What is the season of the maturing sun?
- Who is the close bosom friend of the maturing sun?
- What are the autumn and spring conspiring?
- Where do the vine run?
- Why do bees think that warm days will never cease?
- Why is the Autumn said to be sitting amid its store?
- What does the Autumn do on a half reaped furrow?
- Who is a gleaner? Why is the gleaner's head said to be laden?
- What does the Autumn watch by a cider-press?
- Why is the Autumn said to be very careless?

Paragraph Questions

- Why does the poet ask the Autumn not to think of the songs of Spring?
- How do you understand the song of the Autumn?
- What are barred clouds? What do they do?
- Why, do you think, are the gnats mourning in a wailful choir?
- How do the soft wind affect the river sallows?

Essay Questions

- How does John Keats personify autumn in the poem "To Autumn?"
- What is the message of the poem "To Autumn" by John Keats?
- Where does one see the Autumn sitting? What does the autumn do at each of these places?
- What does the Autumn spare in a mood of laziness? Why?
- How is nature presented in "To Autumn" by John Keats?

The Lady of Shalott

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

About the poet

He was born August 6th, 1809, at Somersby, Lincolnshire; he was the fourth of twelve children. Alfred Tennyson became the most popular poet of the Victorian age. With royal patronage, his poetry helped define an era. In the Twentieth Century his influence waned. However, he ranked second in the list of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, after Shakespeare. Despite having wealthy relatives, the Tennyson's lived in relative poverty. His family had a long history of minor mental illnesses. Several brothers had epilepsy, which in Victorian times was feared because it was difficult to treat. Tennyson excelled at penning short lyrics, such as "Break, Break, Break", "The Charge of the Light Brigade", "Tears, Idle Tears" and "Crossing the Bar". Much of his verse was based on classical mythological themes, such as Ulysses, although *In Memoriam A.H.H.* was written to commemorate his best friend Arthur Hallam, a fellow poet and fellow student at Trinity College, Cambridge, who was engaged to Tennyson's sister, but died from a brain haemorrhage before they could marry. Tennyson also wrote some notable blank verse including *Idylls of the King*, "Ulysses", and "Tithonus". Tennyson died on October 6, 1892, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Summary

"The Lady of Shalott" tells the story of a woman who lives in a tower in Shalott, which is an island on a river that runs, along with the road beside it, to Camelot, the setting of the legends about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Every day, the woman weaves a tapestry picture of the landscape that is visible from her window, including Camelot. There is, however, a curse on her; the woman does not know the cause of the curse, but she knows that she cannot look directly out of the window, so she views the subjects of her artwork through a mirror that is beside her. The woman is happy to weave, but is tired of looking at life only as a reflection. One day, Sir Lancelot rides by, looking bold and handsome in his shining armor, and singing. The woman goes to the window to look directly out of it, and the moment she does, she knows that the curse is upon her. So she leaves the tower, finds a boat at the side of the river, writes "The Lady of Shalott" on the side of the boat, and floats off down the river toward Camelot. As she drifts along, singing and observing all of the sights that were forbidden to her before, she dies. The boat floats past Camelot, and all of the knights make the sign of the cross upon seeing a corpse go by, but Lancelot, seeing her for the first time, notes, "She has a lovely face."

The Lady of Shalott

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Part I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
The yellow-leaved waterlily
The green-sheathed daffodilly
Tremble in the water chilly
 Round about Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens shiver.
The sunbeam showers break and quiver
In the stream that runneth ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

Underneath the bearded barley,
The reaper, reaping late and early,
Hears her ever chanting cheerly,

Like an angel, singing clearly,
O'er the stream of Camelot.
Piling the sheaves in furrows airy,
Beneath the moon, the reaper weary
Listening whispers, ' 'Tis the fairy,
Lady of Shalott.'

The little isle is all inrail'd
With a rose-fence, and overtrail'd
With roses: by the marge unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken sail'd,
Skimming down to Camelot.
A pearl garland winds her head:
She leaneth on a velvet bed,
Full royally apparelled,
The Lady of Shalott.

Part II

No time hath she to sport and play:
A charmed web she weaves away.
A curse is on her, if she stay
Her weaving, either night or day,
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be;
Therefore she weaveth steadily,

Therefore no other care hath she,

The Lady of Shalott.

She lives with little joy or fear.

Over the water, running near,

The sheepbell tinkles in her ear.

Before her hangs a mirror clear,

Reflecting tower'd Camelot.

And as the mazy web she whirls,

She sees the surly village churls,

And the red cloaks of market girls

Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,

An abbot on an ambling pad,

Sometimes a curly shepherd lad,

Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,

Goes by to tower'd Camelot:

And sometimes thro' the mirror blue

The knights come riding two and two:

She hath no loyal knight and true,

The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights

To weave the mirror's magic sights,

For often thro' the silent nights

A funeral, with plumes and lights

And music, came from Camelot:

Or when the moon was overhead
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said

The Lady of Shalott.

Part III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flam'd upon the brazen greaves

Of bold Sir Lancelot.

A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,

Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.

The bridle bells rang merrily

As he rode down from Camelot:

And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,

Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,

The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down from Camelot.

As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over green Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down from Camelot.

From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra, tirra lirra:'
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom
She made three paces thro' the room
She saw the water-flower bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.

Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining

Over tower'd Camelot;

Outside the isle a shallow boat

Beneath a willow lay afloat,

Below the carven stern she wrote,

The Lady of Shalott.

A cloud white crown of pearl she dight,

All raimented in snowy white

That loosely flew (her zone in sight

Clasp'd with one blinding diamond bright)

Her wide eyes fix'd on Camelot,

Though the squally east-wind keenly

Blew, with folded arms serenely

By the water stood the queenly

Lady of Shalott.

With a steady stony glance—

Like some bold seer in a trance,

Beholding all his own mischance,

Mute, with a glassy countenance—

She look'd down to Camelot.

It was the closing of the day:

She loos'd the chain, and down she lay;

The broad stream bore her far away,

The Lady of Shalott.

As when to sailors while they roam,

By creeks and outfalls far from home,

Rising and dropping with the foam,

From dying swans wild warblings come,

Blown shoreward; so to Camelot

Still as the boat head wound along

The willowy hills and fields among,

They heard her chanting her death song,

The Lady of Shalott.

A long drawn carol, mournful, holy,

She chanted loudly, chanted lowly,

Till her eyes were darken'd wholly,

And her smooth face sharpen'd slowly,

Turn'd to tower'd Camelot:

For ere she reach'd upon the tide

The first house by the water-side,

Singing in her song she died,

The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,

By garden wall and gallery,

A pale, pale corpse she floated by,

Deadcold, between the houses high,

Dead into tower'd Camelot.

Knight and burgher, lord and dame,

To the planked wharfage came:

Below the stern they read her name,

The Lady of Shalott.

They cross'd themselves, their stars they blest,

Knight, minstrel, abbot, squire, and guest.

There lay a parchment on her breast,

That puzzled more than all the rest,

The wellfed wits at Camelot.

'The web was woven curiously,

The charm is broken utterly,

Draw near and fear not,—this is I,

The Lady of Shalott.'

Glossary

1. Lady of Shalott : Young woman confined to a building on the Island of Shalott in a river flowing
2. That clothe the wold - The moor, or any large open wild fields
3. Willows whiten, aspens - An aspen is another kind of tree
4. And the silent isle imbowers - Surrounds in a shady, leafy shelter or garden
5. The reaper - A farmer harvesting crops
6. Piling the sheaves – Bundles
7. in furrows - Lines of crops
8. The little isle is all inrail'd - Enclosed or surrounded
9. With roses: by the marge - A poetic way to say the margin or the edge
10. The shallop - A small sailboat
11. flitteth - Flits, or moves lightly and rapidly
12. A pearl garland - A circular decoration usually made from flowers
13. Full royally appparelled - Clothed

14. Surly (adjective) - rude or bad-tempered
15. village churls - Farm workers
16. An abbot - A monk
17. an ambling Amble (verb) - to walk or move at a slow, relaxed pace
18. pad - Path, lane, or road
19. long-hair'd page - A page is an assistant to a knight
20. A bow-shot - The distance to which a bow can send an arrow
21. from her bower-eaves - "Bower" refers to a lady's bedroom in a medieval castle, and "eaves" refers to the overhang of a roof.
22. And flam'd upon the brazen - Made of brass
23. greaves - A piece of armor that protects the shins
24. Of bold Sir Lancelot - Sir Lancelot was King Arthur's best knight: strong, handsome, brave, and chivalrous.
25. And from his blazon'd - Decorated with traditional symbols and coats of arms
26. Baldric - A wide sash or belt for carrying a sword
27. A mighty silver bugle - A bugle is a miniature trumpet
28. Tirra lirra, tirra lirra - "Tirra-lirra" is a phrase from Shakespeare's play *The Winter's Tale*, used to describe the sound of a lark singing cheerfully in the background while a conman named Autolycus thieves and canoodles with various women.
29. The pale yellow woods were waning - to get smaller; to diminish
30. Below the carven - Carved
31. Stern - The front of a boat
32. A cloud white crown of pearl she dight - An archaic word for "equipped"
33. All raimented - Clothed
34. Though the squally - Stormy, dangerous, and unsteady
35. like some bold seer - A psychic who can see into the future
36. Mute, with a glassy countenance - Countenance (noun) : facial expression
37. From dying swans wild warblings - Songs with trills or unsteady voices
38. Knight and burgher - Townspeople, especially the rich and respectable residents
39. To the planked wharf age - The wharf or pier at the water's edge where ships can be tied up.
40. Sir Lancelot: Knight of the Round Table. After he passes Shalott, the lady makes a decision to escape her confines.

Short Questions

1. What is the young lady weaving?
2. When does the weather in the poem change? Does the change reflect a key development?

3. What will happen to the Lady of Shalott, if she performs the action which has been forbidden to her?
4. Which object does the Lady of Shalott use to glimpses of the world without looking directly at it?
5. What grows on either side of the river that flows around the island wherein her castle is located?
6. How does the Lady of Shalott die?
7. What did Sir Lancelot say, when he saw the Lady of Shalott?
8. Which knight caused the Lady of Shalott to forget the curse when she caught a glimpse of him?
9. What is in the fields next to the river?
10. Name two trees that grow on the river bank.
11. What does the Lady of Shalott do all day?
12. Why can she not go out or look out the window?
13. What pictures does she weave in her web?

Paragraph Questions

1. How does the theme of isolation appear in "The Lady of Shalott"?
2. Why was the Lady of Shalott forbidden to look down on Camelot?
3. How does Tennyson show how the emotions of the Lady of Shalott change throughout the ballad?
4. Describe the last journey of the Lady as described in the poem The Lady of Shallot.

Essay

1. In "The Lady of Shalott," why does the lady risk her life to look outside the walls of her tower?
2. What does Sir Lancelot say at the end of the poem? How is his reaction different to that of the other knights?
3. Do you think the Lady of Shalott escapes her isolation by the end of the poem?

The Moon And The Yew Tree

Sylvia Plath

About the Poet

Sylvia Plath was born on October 27, 1932, in Boston, Massachusetts. Her father, Otto Emil Plath, was a professor of biology at the Boston University. Has been hailed as one of the most renowned and influential poets of the twentieth century. Born in the United States of America in the early 1930s, she has been credited with advancing the genre of confessional poetry. She was also equally famous for her short stories and novel. She started writing early in her life and had her first poem published at the age of eight, her first national publication at the age of eighteen, and was selected a guest editor of 'Mademoiselle' at twenty. However, she failed to accept rejections in a healthy way and at the age of twenty-three unsuccessfully tried to commit suicide. Nonetheless, she successfully completed her studies and went to England, where he met and married Ted Hughes. They first lived in the US, but later returned to England, where she continued to write. She had her first book of poems published at the age of twenty-eight. On February 11, 1963 Plath committed suicide using her gas oven. Her posthumously published collection of poems, *The Collected Poems* won Plath the Pulitzer Prize making her the first poet to win the prize after death.

Summary

The poem seems to describe the atmosphere that causes the persona to feel empty and lost through her surroundings. This hence involves the comparison between the yew tree and the moon and also includes the presence of a church. The bleak descriptions of the surroundings show that the persona feels hopeless and lost. The moon is generally known as a feminine metaphor and in this case symbolises the mother of the persona who she feels she is detached from. The yew tree symbolises the father who only carries 'the message of blackness'. Hence the persona feels that she has no sense of direction and sense of self. She also cannot bring herself to turn to God as 'The Moon sees nothing of this.' Hence she is lost and this causes her to preserve her wanting death, therefore alluding to the 'blackness and silence.'

The Moon And The Yew Tree

Sylvia Plath

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary
The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.
The grasses unload their griefs on my feet as if I were God
Prickling my ankles and murmuring of their humility
Fummy, spiritous mists inhabit this place.
Separated from my house by a row of headstones.
I simply cannot see where there is to get to.

The moon is no door. It is a face in its own right,
White as a knuckle and terribly upset.
It drags the sea after it like a dark crime; it is quiet
With the O-gape of complete despair. I live here.
Twice on Sunday, the bells startle the sky ----
Eight great tongues affirming the Resurrection
At the end, they soberly **** out their names.

The yew tree points up, it has a Gothic shape.
The eyes lift after it and find the moon.
The moon is my mother. She is not sweet like Mary.
Her blue garments unloose small bats and owls.
How I would like to believe in tenderness ----
The face of the effigy, gentled by candles,
Bending, on me in particular, its mild eyes.

I have fallen a long way. Clouds are flowering

Blue and mystical over the face of the stars

Inside the church, the saints will all be blue,

Floating on their delicate feet over the cold pews,

Their hands and faces stiff with holiness.

The moon sees nothing of this. She is bald and wild.

And the message of the yew tree is blackness -- blackness and silence

Glossary

- Title : The moon is used as both a female principle and a Gothic symbol, and the yew symbolizes a paradoxical existence of life in death or death in life.
- Planetary - Resembling a planet or erratic wandering
- Fummy - emitting or full of fumes; fumelike.
- Spiritous - like spirit; refined; defecated; pure
- O-gape - to open the mouth wide
- Resurrection – Rebirth
- Soberly - seriously
- Effigy - An image of a person/A dummy or other crude representation of a person.
- Headstones - grave stones/ grave marker
- Knuckle - kneejoint/mechanical joint
- Pews - one of the long benches in a church

Short Questions

1. How does the poet describe the light of the mind?
2. What does the poet feel when the grasses touch her feet?
3. What does the expression “a gape of complete despair” mean?
4. How does the moon appear in the poem?
5. What is the condition of the saints inside the church according to the poet?

Paragraph Questions

1. Write a note on the use of different shades of colours in the poem.
2. Write a note on the imageries used in the poem to contrast light and darkness.
3. Bring out the elements in the poem that speaks of religious concerns of the poet.
4. Describe the depiction of “Yew Tree” in the poem.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. The poem, "Moon and Yew Tree" speaks about poet's loss of hope and faith in Nature – Explain.
2. Bring out the autobiographical elements in the poem, "The Moon and the Yew Tree".
3. Write the summary of the poem, "The Moon and the Yew Tree" with critical analysis.

SUMMARY FOR POEMS

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

by William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare turns romanticism on its ear with his Sonnet 130, "My Mistress' Eyes are Nothing like the Sun." Instead of praising the beauty of the woman like most romantic poetry, he portrays it realistically, instead focusing on the woman's personality as the reason she is wonderful.

The sun, red coral, snow, roses, perfumes, music, and a goddess all bring to mind beautiful images, but the speaker's mistress' eyes, lips, breasts, cheeks, breath, voice, and walk are all contrasted with the descriptions of loveliness. Her eyes do not shine, her lips are not red, her breasts are not white, her cheeks are pale, her breath stinks, she does not have a pleasant voice, and she does not walk gracefully as a goddess would. The speaker seems to be viewing his mistress disdainfully, as if he is not attracted to her. Even though the speaker has just brought attention to the many shortcomings of his love, he not only loves her, but he loves her and thinks more highly of her than any woman who has ever been described favorably by the previously mentioned qualities. Also, the word false suggests that the women who have been described in terms such as their eyes shining like the sun have not been accurately described. No woman's body parts really look like the beautiful images that have been described, so the speaker is being truthful rather than using the flowery language common during Shakespeare's time. Also, beauty should not be the reason that one loves someone. The speaker seems to be credible because he recognizes that his mistress is not perfect; in fact, she seems imperfect in every way. Yet, he still loves her more than anyone else. He also suggests that other writers who hold their loves to impossible standards are not being truthful. Perhaps true love is accepting that a person has faults and loving them anyway.

Sonnet 65: Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea

By William Shakespeare

In his "**Sonnet 65**", William Shakespeare presents 'time' as a great 'destroyer' and 'creator' and; 'mortality' as a 'powerful giant' who exists in all human and natural thing including brass, stone, the earth and even the sea and make them vanished with course of time.

According to the poet, time is the powerful destructive force which spoils everything. Nothing can resist the attack of time. Time devours youth and beauty mercilessly. They have no power to protect themselves from the attack of time as they are so soft and delicate like flowers. The poet is extremely afraid of looking at the actions being done by time against the human beings and the natural things. The stones and steels which are often considered as the strongest of all objects are too unable to protect themselves from the fearful attack of time. The poet is greatly desperate thinking how his beloved could survive in this situation where every strong, powerful things are unable to keep standing in front of time. "How, how could my dear live?", being worried the poet questions himself. He feels no one can resist from this giant and it will force to decay everything. There is no strong hand that can hold back the swift foot of time and nobody is in the whole Universe who can forbid the time's spoil of beauty. Thus the poet is caught by an intense despair and it leads him to a nostalgic feeling.

ON HIS BLINDNESS By John Milton

When Milton became blind. He began to think about his fate. He felt very sad that he became blind even before he could complete half of his life. The world became dark and wide. What pained him most is that his talent as a poet could not be used. As he became blind, it was difficult for him to read and write. He had hoped write many poems, but the chance was lost. On the day of judgment, when all the souls will meet God. Milton wishes to present all his work to God and prove that he has made the best use of the talent that God had given him. But blindness denied him that chance. In agony and anger, Milton questions God - if He wanted Milton to use his talent of writing poetry, why did He take away his sight ???

After sometime, the Goddess of patience answered his question. She said, God doesn't want man's work or his gifts. The people who accept God and His decisions willingly and cheerfully, they are the best servants to God. God has many angles to serve Him: man and his work are nothing before Him. Only those who stand and wait patiently, who bear their problems without any murmuring, they serve God the best.

That the world is not as it seems on the surface. It is so artificial and unpleasant if you get a chance to see it below the surface.

London

By William Blake

Blake focuses his attention on the condition of London, England, the capital not only of the country but also of “culture,” yet, as the four stanzas make abundantly clear, Blake does not share the opinion that this city sets a positive example. Each stanza of “London” points out ways in which the British monarchy and English laws cause human suffering. The narrator wanders through London and finds even the streets and the river suffering under political oppression. In everyone he passes, he sees signs of misery and moral weakness. In fact, the narrator doesn’t just see the misery of the sweep, the soldier, the prostitute or the baby, he also hears it in their cries, sighs, curses and tears. He visualises the cry of the chimney-sweep covering the churches like a pall draped over a coffin, and the last breath of the dying soldier running like blood down the walls of the royal palace. In the depths of night the ‘Harlot’s curse’ (venereal disease) blinds the new-born baby and turns love itself into a disease-infested shortcut to death.

Garden of Love

William Blake

"The Garden of Love" is a poem written by William Blake. This poem is perhaps a look into Blake's life on how he saw it. He was in a place where one would hope there to be love. He thought he could see a beautiful chapel, beautiful flowers, and have fun playing everywhere. However, sadly, the chapel was locked, the flowers were tombstones, and there were thorny bushes everywhere.

The narrator tells of his visit to the Garden of Love and of the chapel standing where he played as a child. Instead of welcoming him in, the chapel has the negative ‘Thou shalt not’ of the Ten Commandments written over the door. The narrator sees that this negative morality has blighted the garden as well, reducing the ‘sweet flowers’ to graves and tombstones. The mechanical ritual of the priests ‘walking their rounds’ threatens to choke out the narrator’s life itself.

ODE TO AUTUMN

By John Keats

The *Ode to Autumn* ranks among the finest poems of Keats. The treatment of the subject is perfectly objective or impersonal. The poet keeps himself completely out of the picture. He only describes certain sights and sounds without expressing his personal reaction to these sights and sounds. The poem is a perfect Nature-lyric. No human sentiment finds expression; only the

beauty and bounty of Nature during autumn are described. Here is a poem in which a season has been personified and made to live. In the first stanza, the poet describes the fruits of autumn, the fruits coming to maturity in readiness for harvesting. In the second stanza, autumn is personified as a woman present at the various operations of the harvest and at cider-pressing. In the last stanza, the end of the year is associated with sunset; the songs of spring are over and night is falling, but there is no feeling of sadness because autumn has its own songs. The close of the ode, though solemn, breathes the spirit of hope.

The Lady of Shalott

by Alfred Tennyson

"The Lady of Shalott" tells the story of a woman who lives in a tower in Shalott, which is an island on a river that runs, along with the road beside it, to Camelot, the setting of the legends about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Every day, the woman weaves a tapestry picture of the landscape that is visible from her window, including Camelot. There is, however, a curse on her; the woman does not know the cause of the curse, but she knows that she cannot look directly out of the window, so she views the subjects of her artwork through a mirror that is beside her. The woman is happy to weave, but is tired of looking at life only as a reflection. One day, Sir Lancelot rides by, looking bold and handsome in his shining armor, and singing. The woman goes to the window to look directly out of it, and the moment she does, she knows that the curse is upon her. So she leaves the tower, finds a boat at the side of the river, writes "The Lady of Shalott" on the side of the boat, and floats off down the river toward Camelot. As she drifts along, singing and observing all of the sights that were forbidden to her before, she dies. The boat floats past Camelot, and all of the knights make the sign of the cross upon seeing a corpse go by, but Lancelot, seeing her for the first time, notes, "She has a lovely face."

