

The lady of shalott essay sample



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The Lady of Shalott by Alfred Lord Tennyson was published in 1833. Although this poem was written almost 200 years ago, The Lady of Shalott is still fascinating and mysterious for readers. The reason for this is that Tennyson writes this poem in such a way that it makes readers think. This poem was written in a manner that still has a meaning for us today, and possibly many years to come. Often, in good literature and poetry there is no easy, correct interpretation of the author's intent.

It is this intentional vagueness that allows multiple interpretations and keeps a work relevant through the ages. The poet's writing language and techniques is another feature contributing greatly to the fascination of the poem. The structure of this poem is very appealing. It is divided into four parts. Part one sets a scene for the story. "Willows whiten, aspen quiver," This quote suggests the scene is set in winter time, "willows whiten" illustrates that the trees are covered in snow, and the aspens "quiver" creates a cold atmosphere.

Throughout part one, stanza one to four, there are many imagery used to help create a clear vision for the readers. For example, a metaphor, such as, "Long fields of barley and of rye, that clothe the wold and meet the sky" suggests that the fields cover their world. It creates a wonderful image. This section of the poem also deals what the Lady of Shalott appears to the outer world. It shows that the Lady is isolated with the rest of the world by "four grey walls, and four grey towers", and the "silent isle" indicates that the island is cut off from everyone else.

We aren't informed about what she does or thinks about. " Or is she known in all lands" this question is later answer, telling us in the third stanza that only the reapers hear her sing and recognizes her existence. Hence, readers, just like the rest of the people in the poem, do not know anything about her internal world. In part two of the tale starts to portray the Lady's world. This part is four stanzas long, from stanza five to nine. It introduces the curse. " A curse is on her if she stay to look down to Camelot".

She knows about the curse but " knows not what the curse may be". This section also tells us about her view of her world and the rest of the world. This quote, " She hath no loyal Knight and true", is hinting to us that she wishes to have her knight and later Lancelot answer her wish. Part three focuses on Sir Lancelot and how he captures the Lady's attention. The fifth line of every other stanza ends with " Camelot", but the fifth line in the 9th stanza (the first stanza of part three) ends with " Lancelot". This could be implying that her life has taken a turn.

Although Tennyson included lots of magnificent visual features of Lancelot, for example, " Thick-jewell'd shone", " gemmy bridle", and " his coal-black curls"; the aspect that catches the Lady's attention is the sound. When Lancelot sings " Tirra lira", she immediately moved, " She left the web, she left the loom, she made three paces through the room. " The curse was broken and led to her doom. Part five starts off with a significant change of mood. In the previous parts, the descriptions were colorful with " red cloaks", " the mirror blue", and " the purple night".

In stanza 14, these happy colors were replaced with the words like “ stormy” and “ pale”. The “ the blue unclouded weather” in part three was substituted with “ low sky raining”. Again, the poem’s perspective goes back to the view of the outside world, like in part one. The poems ends with a tragic note which leaves the readers sad but wanting to know more. This makes the readers look back on the poem to analyze and discuss the poem. Even though The Lady of Shalott was written in the Victorian ages, the story was set in an earlier time, in the middle ages or the medieval period.

Tennyson loosely based the poem on the Arthurian legend of Elaine of Astolat. Elaine of Astolat is about a young lady in the royal family who dies of unrequited love for Lancelot. This is similar to what happened to the Lady of Shalott. An idea I had is that “ the curse” in the story is actually love. When she meets Lancelot she falls in love. However, just like Elaine of Astolat, her love was not returned and ends up dying of heartbreak. In other words, the curse, love, kills her. Another theme of this poem could be bravery.

In the story, the Lady knew she could not look directly out the window or go out the tower. “ She knows not what the curse may be”, although she wasn’t sure what the consequences of breaking the curse were, she knew that if she does breaks it, eventually she would have to pay for her actions. There’s a price to pay for everything. Nevertheless, she leaves her seclusion, determined to seek the love that has been missing in her life. The Lady ignores the curse and goes out to face the outer world just to find her love, Lancelot.

Her life can be related to my life and most other teenager's life. The curse could be represented as the rules and boundaries authorities, like our parents, make us follow. By breaking the "curse" or rules, we will have to face the punishments. Sometime, we, teenagers, will be willing to face the consequences if it means pleasing our desires. I admire The Lady of Shalott's courage and determination to find what she wants, to embrace her destinies in life, even though her destiny ends in a tragic death. In the 19th century, women were regarded as delicate and passive.

They had few rights and weren't treated fairly. In this poem, Tennyson might be expressing the unequal treatment women received during that period of time. The Lady of Shalott was locked up in a tower and has no power or control over her life. She had to accept her fate and doesn't question who cursed her and why, "And so she weaveth steadily, and little other care hath she". By saying this, Tennyson may be telling us that at that time, women were forced to accept their fates and not question the inequalities of their life.

In some parts of the world today, the injustice towards women still exist and this may connect to some readers. In my opinion, one of Tennyson's main intentions of writing this story is to convey the idea of being an artist (writer, painter, performer, etc). The Lady looking at the world in a mirror, closed off in a tower and weaving is basically the allegory of the life of an artist. The mirror symbolizes the different perspectives artists look at the world compared the normal people. Artists like the Lady of Shalott, basically watches and observes the world instead of taking part of it.

Being an artist can make you isolated from the ordinary world, like being locked up in a tower. The weaving is a piece of art, for Tennyson, weaving could be just like writing. The line, “‘ I am half sick of shadows’ said the Lady of Shalott”, this is probably telling us that Tennyson feels this way about being a writer. Artists can be torn between reality and his world and is divided about making the right choice. We can only be a part of one world; the choice is for artists and Lady of Shalott to make.

There are both positive and negative sides of each decision. But in her web she still delights to weave the mirror’s magic sights” this quote shows that the Lady enjoys weaving and creating her art. In spite of this, she, like most people, wants to be connected to the real world. Eventually, she makes her choice which was to abandon her art and join the world. The curse in this interpretation is the loss of her creative perception of the world. When she faces reality by looking out the window to Lancelot, “ out flew the web and floated wide; the mirror crack’d from side to side”. It breaks the mirror that she no longer has to see through and destroys her “ web”, her handiwork.

Reality makes the art she has created vanish. This can relate to Tennyson’s view. In conclusion, the artistic intentions of Tennyson and how he created the story in the poem was interesting to read and captures the reader’s attention, keeping the readers entertained. Tennyson wrote the Lady of Shalott in a way that can relate to artists, women, teenagers and all kinds of people throughout the different time periods. This poem includes messages that still applies for us today and by analyzing this poem, we could learn a lot about the past and present.