

The Lady of Shalott, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Illustrated by Charles Keeping

This poem is about isolation, love and death. The Lady of Shalott sits in a castle overlooking a river which flows to Camelot. She is cursed never to look directly out into the world, but instead must observe the comings and goings from the Arthurian court through a mirror and weave on her loom the scenes she sees. One day she sees in her mirror the knight Sir Lancelot passing and is so struck with love, she leaves her seat and looks out of her window. Her mirror cracks and she realises she has brought the curse upon herself. The Lady of Shalott leaves her castle, runs to the river, and writes her name on the prow of a boat, before getting in and floating towards Camelot, singing a sad song. By the time she arrives at Camelot the Lady of Shalott is dead and all the knights, ladies and trades people of Camelot come out to see her float by and are afraid. Lancelot, sees her, he reacts differently and comments on her beauty, he commends her to God.