

Tennyson the lady of shalott

Unveiling the Timeless Allure of Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott": A Journey Through Poetic Masterpiece The air hangs thick with anticipation, the tapestry woven with shimmering threads of mystery. Have you ever felt the pull of an untold story, a world hidden behind a veil of enchantment? Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" is not merely a poem; it's a portal to a realm where beauty, fate, and human desire intertwine in a breathtaking dance of imagery and emotion. This captivating narrative, rich in symbolism and poignant in its message, continues to resonate with readers centuries after its creation. Prepare to be transported to the ethereal world of Camelot, where the Lady of Shalott's tale echoes with profound significance.

A Tapestry of Imagination: Exploring the Poetic Landscape

Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" transcends the typical narrative structure. It's a vivid tapestry woven with intricate imagery, a masterful blend of sensory detail that paints a picture so vivid it almost seems palpable. The poem's setting, the secluded island of Shalott, becomes more than a geographical location; it becomes a metaphor for isolation, confinement, and the yearning for connection. The poem masterfully crafts an atmosphere of both beauty and melancholy. The descriptions of the island, the surrounding waters, and the Lady's existence are infused with a unique poetic sensibility. The reader is immersed in a world where

nature and human experience are inextricably linked. For instance, the "flowing water" and "yellow-leaved trees" contribute significantly to the poem's overall mood.

Unveiling the Depths of Isolation and Desire

The Lady of Shalott's fate is tragically intertwined with her isolation. Condemned to a life of solitude and a specific artistic purpose, she embodies the human desire for a broader existence, for experiencing the world beyond her mirrored confines. This confinement is not merely physical; it is a metaphorical representation of societal constraints and personal limitations.

A Mirror to the Human Condition: Themes and Symbolism

The poem probes profound themes that resonate with the human experience. The Lady's inability to look at the world directly represents the struggle against self-imposed limitations, the fear of confronting reality, or perhaps even the human tendency to seek refuge in idealized visions.

Themes Explored:

- **Isolation and longing for connection:** The Lady's confinement mirrors the struggles of individuals confined by circumstances, societal expectations, or personal choices.
- **Creative expression and the artist's burden:** The Lady's role as a weaver of images, mirroring the world around her, points to the anxieties of creative expression and the responsibility that comes with it.
- **Fate and free will:** The poem explores the tension between predetermined

paths and personal agency. The Lady's fate is shaped by circumstances, but she still possesses the capacity to choose how she responds to her situation. • **The power of sight and experience:** The poem juxtaposes the Lady's limited view with the vibrant world she observes from afar, highlighting the significance of experience and direct engagement with life.

Beyond the Poem: Examining the Cultural Context

Understanding the historical and cultural context surrounding "The Lady of Shalott" adds another layer of depth to the poem. Tennyson's work was influenced by the Victorian era's emphasis on art, beauty, and societal expectations. The poem reflects the anxieties and aspirations of a society grappling with rapid change.

Victorian Influences:

- **Emphasis on aesthetic beauty:** Victorian society valued aesthetic beauty and intricate artistry, and this is evident in the poem's meticulous descriptions.
- Ideals of femininity and domesticity: The Lady of Shalott embodies aspects of Victorian ideals of femininity, yet her confinement also challenges these norms.
- *Social anxieties and romanticism:* Tennyson's work often explored themes of isolation, longing, and the search for meaning, echoing societal anxieties and romantic sensibilities.

The Enduring Legacy: Impact on Subsequent Literature and Art

Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" has profoundly influenced subsequent literature and art, inspiring countless adaptations and

interpretations across various mediums. Its enduring power stems from its ability to evoke a wide range of emotions and explore universal themes. • *Visual interpretations*: The poem's rich imagery has inspired numerous paintings and other visual arts. • **Musical adaptations**: Composers have set the poem to music, further amplifying its emotional impact. • Literary allusions: The poem has been referenced and alluded to in other works of literature, demonstrating its lasting influence.

A Call to Action: Explore the Poetic Realm

Embark on a journey into the enchanting world of "The Lady of Shalott." Immerse yourself in the beauty of Tennyson's verse, discover the profound themes, and experience the enduring power of this timeless masterpiece. Reading "The Lady of Shalott" is not simply an intellectual exercise; it's an emotional and imaginative experience that can transform your understanding of poetry and the human condition. Take the time to appreciate the intricate details, the poetic nuances, and the profound exploration of human desire.

Frequently Asked Questions (Advanced):

1. How does the poem's use of alliteration and assonance contribute to its overall effect? The deliberate use of these phonetic devices creates a musicality that reinforces the poem's mood and emphasizes specific imagery, thereby drawing the reader deeper into the poem's sensory world. 2. **What parallels can be drawn between the Lady's fate and the role of women in Victorian society?** The poem, while seeming straightforward, hints at the constraints and expectations placed upon Victorian women. This is a point

deserving further exploration within a feminist criticism lens. 3. **How does the poem's ambiguity regarding the Lady's ultimate fate enhance its enduring appeal?** The unresolved ending allows readers to engage with the poem on a personal level, offering room for speculation and prompting critical reflection about the complexity of human existence. 4. **What is the significance of the mirror's role in the poem, and how does it relate to self-perception?** The mirror symbolizes the Lady's perception of herself and the world, acting as a barrier between her and reality, mirroring her self-imposed confinement. This theme invites comparison to the complexities of self-image and introspection. 5. **How does "The Lady of Shalott" showcase Tennyson's mastery of narrative technique?** The poem demonstrates Tennyson's skill in weaving together vivid imagery, poignant symbolism, and a captivating narrative structure, effectively engaging the reader and compelling them to consider the poem's depth. This poem invites us to delve into the depths of human experience, reminding us of the power of imagination, the allure of the unknown, and the enduring need to connect with the world around us. Open your mind, and let the magic of "The Lady of Shalott" transport you to another realm.

The Lady of Shalott: A Timeless Tale of Isolation, Art, and Sacrifice

Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" is more than just a Victorian poem; it's a haunting and beautiful exploration of isolation, the artist's struggle, and the ultimate price of experiencing the world directly. Since its publication in 1832, this ballad has captivated readers with its vivid imagery, melancholic tone, and

enduring themes. Let's delve into the heart of this iconic poem, unraveling its layers of meaning and appreciating its lasting impact on literature and our understanding of the creative spirit.

Setting the Scene: A Mystical Island and a Mysterious Curse

The poem opens by introducing us to Shalott, a mystical island situated on the River Camus. It's a place touched by ancient lore and a sense of otherworldly separation. Here resides the Lady, a figure shrouded in mystery and bound by a peculiar curse. We are told that "four grey walls and four grey towers" enclose her, symbolizing her physical and emotional confinement. This isolation isn't arbitrary. The Lady is forbidden from looking directly out of her window towards Camelot, the vibrant heart of King Arthur's kingdom. Instead, she must view the world through a mirror, a symbolic representation of indirect experience, of observing life from a detached distance. Her days are spent weaving, creating a tapestry that captures the scenes reflected in her mirror. This act of creation becomes her only connection to the outside world, a beautiful yet ultimately insufficient substitute for direct engagement.

The Tapestry of Life: Art as a Substitute for Living

The Lady's weaving is a crucial element of the poem. Her tapestry is described with breathtaking detail: "And on her screen she 'd oft behold / How the young knight of Camelot / Rode down to harvest- and to scythe." She sees lovers walking, farmers toiling, and the bustling life of Camelot, all translated into threads of color and form. This artistic endeavor is her solace, her occupation, and her only

outlet. However, the very act of creation is tied to her curse. As she weaves, the threads are drawn from her "magic mirror," implying that the essence of her art is derived from observing life without participating in it. This raises profound questions about the nature of art and the artist. Is art merely a reflection of reality, or can it truly substitute for lived experience? Tennyson suggests a poignant answer: while the tapestry is beautiful, it cannot fulfill the human need for connection and sensory engagement.

The Intrusion of the World: Lancelot's Arrival and the Breaking of the Spell

The turning point in the poem arrives with the appearance of Sir Lancelot. His "brave bright eyes" and "scarlet shoon" are vividly reflected in the Lady's mirror. He is a symbol of the vibrant, passionate, and perhaps even dangerous world that she has been forbidden to experience. His presence is electrifying, a stark contrast to the quiet solitude of her tower. Lancelot's appearance triggers an irresistible urge in the Lady. The allure of direct experience, of seeing and being seen, becomes too powerful to resist. She feels a pull towards the "golden" world beyond her confinement, a world that her art can only hint at. This is where the curse truly takes hold. When she finally turns from her loom and looks directly out of the window at Camelot, she breaks the spell. The mirror "cracked from side to side," symbolizing the shattering of her artistic detachment and the irrevocable damage to her confinement. This moment is both liberating and fatal.

The Tragic Descent: A Journey to the

River's Embrace

With the curse broken, the Lady knows her fate is sealed. She leaves her tower, a figure transformed. She finds a "snow-white" barge, symbolizing her purity and innocence, and writes her name upon it. The barge becomes her final vessel, carrying her down the River Camus towards her destiny. As she floats, she sings a "plaintive death-song," a mournful yet beautiful lament for her lost life and her shattered illusion. The scenes she passes are no longer mere reflections but tangible realities that she experiences one last time. She sees "the sun, the moon, the stars," and the "ripples" of the water, a final, fleeting immersion in the sensory world. Her journey ends at Camelot, where she is found "dead" by the people of the city. Sir Lancelot himself is among those who discover her, and he is struck by her beauty and the inscription on the barge. He utters a brief prayer, acknowledging her tragic fate.

Interpreting the Lady: Symbolism and Enduring Themes

"The Lady of Shalott" offers a rich tapestry of symbolism, inviting multiple interpretations. * **The Lady as the Artist:** Perhaps the most prevalent interpretation views the Lady as a metaphor for the artist. Her isolation and artistic creation represent the artist's detachment from society and their dedication to their craft. The curse can be seen as the inherent sacrifices artists make, their emotional and social well-being often overshadowed by their creative pursuits. The poem asks whether the pursuit of art justifies a life lived apart from the full spectrum of human experience. * **The Mirror and the Curse as Societal Constraints:** The mirror can also symbolize societal expectations, the limitations placed upon women, or the indirect ways we often perceive and engage with the

world through media and filtered information. The curse then becomes the societal forces that prevent direct experience and authentic living. * **Camelot as the World of Experience:** Camelot, with its vibrant life and its knights, represents the full, unadulterated experience of living. It is the realm of love, passion, and direct engagement, a stark contrast to the Lady's enclosed existence. * **The River as Life's Journey:** The River Camus, carrying the Lady to her end, symbolizes the flow of life, often leading towards an inevitable conclusion. Her final journey on the barge is a metaphorical passage through the stages of life and death. The enduring themes of "The Lady of Shalott" resonate deeply: * **Isolation vs. Connection:** The poem starkly contrasts the loneliness of confinement with the desire for human connection. The Lady's eventual demise highlights the essential need for interaction and belonging. * **The Nature of Art and Reality:** Tennyson probes the boundaries between artistic representation and lived reality. Is it possible to truly understand and experience life through art alone? The poem suggests a profound "no." * **Sacrifice and the Price of Knowing:** The Lady's fate serves as a cautionary tale about the potential cost of pursuing knowledge or beauty at the expense of life itself. Her desire for direct experience leads to her destruction. * **Feminine Experience in Victorian England:** Some critics interpret the poem through the lens of Victorian gender roles, where women were often expected to be passive observers rather than active participants in life. The Lady's curse and her tragic end can be seen as a commentary on these limitations.

Tennyson's Poetic Genius: Imagery and Musicality

Beyond its thematic depth, "The Lady of Shalott" is a masterclass in poetic technique. Tennyson's use of **vivid imagery** is

remarkable, painting a picture of both the desolate beauty of Shalott and the vibrant allure of Camelot. His descriptions are rich and evocative, from the "glowing squares" of Camelot to the "long field of barley" and the "river reeds and rushes." The poem also possesses a distinct **musicality**, largely due to its consistent rhyme scheme (ABCB in the first stanza of each part, then varying) and its rhythmic flow. The ballad form lends itself to a narrative, and Tennyson masterfully uses repetition and refrains to enhance its hypnotic and melancholic effect. The "Willows whiten, and the willows weep" refrain, for instance, adds a layer of sorrow and inevitability.

"The Lady of Shalott" in Popular Culture and Beyond

The impact of "The Lady of Shalott" extends far beyond the realm of literary analysis. The poem has inspired countless works of art, including famous paintings by John William Waterhouse, William Holman Hunt, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who were instrumental in the Pre-Raphaelite movement. These visual interpretations often capture the eerie beauty and tragic essence of the Lady's story. The poem's influence can also be seen in music, film, and other literary works. Its themes of isolation, the artist's plight, and the seductive danger of the outside world continue to resonate with contemporary audiences. The Lady remains a potent symbol of the creative spirit, forever bound to her loom yet forever yearning for the world beyond.

Conclusion: A Haunting Echo of

Unfulfilled Longing

"The Lady of Shalott" is a poem that lingers long after the final stanza. It is a lament for a life unlived, a testament to the power of art, and a poignant exploration of the human desire for connection. Tennyson's exquisite language and his profound understanding of the human condition ensure that this ballad continues to enchant, to provoke thought, and to remind us of the delicate balance between observation and participation, between the world of imagination and the world we inhabit. The Lady of Shalott, forever suspended between her mystical island and the vibrant Camelot, remains an enduring icon of artistic sacrifice and the eternal human longing for experience.

Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" stands as one of the most enduring and evocative poems in Victorian literature, weaving a haunting tale of isolation, artistic vision, and tragic fate. At its core, the poem centers on Elaine, a mystical figure condemned to dwell alone on the enigmatic island of Shalott, where her existence is bound by a curse that forbids her from looking directly upon Camelot or entering the world beyond. This limitation transforms her into a passive observer, forced to interpret life through a reflective mirror, capturing fleeting impressions and distant realities rather than living them directly.

The Symbolism of Shalott and Elaine's Curse

The island itself emerges as a powerful symbol—both sanctuary and prison—representing the tension between artistic contemplation and the vibrant, chaotic world it cannot touch. Elaine's curse, often interpreted as a metaphor for the artist's isolation, underscores the

profound cost of detachment. By forbidding her to engage with reality, Tennyson elevates the moment of observation into a poignant commentary on creativity's dual nature: the gift of vision paired with the sorrow of impossibility. Her mirrored gaze becomes a lens not only for physical distance but for emotional and spiritual separation, inviting readers to reflect on the barriers that distance can impose on human connection and experience.

Literary Themes and Emotional Resonance

Beyond its narrative, the poem explores universal themes of longing, fate, and the human desire to transcend limitation. Tennyson's lyrical language and rich imagery—a "silent island," "vale of Shalott," and "shadow of the day"—craft a dreamlike atmosphere that immerses the reader in Elaine's world. The repetitive refrain "Lady of Shalott" reinforces her tragic identity, a figure caught between memory and reality, forever watching but never truly participating. This emotional depth, combined with Tennyson's masterful control of rhythm and mood, has cemented the poem's place not only in literary canon but in the collective imagination, resonating across generations as a meditation on solitude and the yearning to belong.

Applications in Culture and Education

The enduring power of "The Lady of Shalott" extends far beyond the page, influencing literature, art, music, and even film. Its themes of isolation and artistic vision have inspired countless adaptations, from operas to modern reinterpretations that explore similar emotional landscapes. In educational settings, the poem serves as a rich text for studying Victorian poetry, symbolism, and the evolution

of narrative form. Its exploration of perception and reality continues to resonate in contemporary discourse on identity and digital alienation, where the “lady” can be seen as anyone distanced from direct experience by technology or circumstance.

Future Outlook and Enduring Relevance

Looking ahead, “The Lady of Shalott” remains remarkably relevant, offering a timeless lens through which to examine modern existential dilemmas. In an age defined by virtual interaction and constant distractions, Elaine’s struggle to engage authentically mirrors the inner conflicts of many navigating digital life.

Tennyson’s poem challenges readers to confront how far they are willing to look away—and what is lost in the reflection. As literature and culture continue to evolve, this work endures as a profound exploration of the human condition, reminding us that the most powerful stories often lie not in what is seen, but in what remains unseen. Its legacy ensures that the Lady of Shalott will continue to inspire, provoke, and move audiences for generations to come.

The Lady of Shalott: A Haunting Melancholy and the Artist's Curse

Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" is a cornerstone of Victorian poetry, a mesmerizing ballad that has captivated readers for generations with its evocative imagery, tragic narrative, and profound thematic resonance. More than just a tale of a cursed maiden, the poem delves into the nature of artistic creation, the isolation of the artist, and the perilous allure of the real world. This

enduring masterpiece continues to spark critical debate and inspire artistic interpretation, solidifying its place as a significant work in English literature.

The poem, first published in 1833 and later revised in 1842, tells the story of a mysterious woman who dwells in a tower on an island in the river near the town of Camelot. Under a curse, she is forbidden to look directly upon the outside world. Instead, she must weave a tapestry, a vibrant reflection of the scenes she observes only through a mirror. Her existence is one of detached observation, a world of vibrant colors and fleeting moments captured in thread, yet devoid of direct experience.

The Enigmatic Lady and Her Curse

The identity of the Lady of Shalott remains intentionally ambiguous. She is a figure of ethereal beauty and profound sorrow, her existence defined by a supernatural blight. The curse, never fully explained, serves as the central enigma of the poem. Is it a divine punishment, a consequence of a hidden transgression, or a metaphorical representation of a deeply ingrained artistic temperament? This ambiguity allows for a multitude of interpretations, inviting readers to project their own understandings onto her plight.

Her isolation is palpable. Confined to her "lonely tower," she exists in a liminal space, perpetually on the periphery of life. The "web" she weaves is a testament to her skill, a "magic, green, and gray," yet it also symbolizes her entrapment. Each thread represents a moment of life she witnesses but cannot participate in. The vibrant hues of the outside world – the "waving grass," the "purple heather," and the "freshly fallen snow" – are experienced only as reflections, a constant reminder of what she is denied.

Camelot and the World Beyond the Mirror

Camelot, the legendary court of King Arthur, represents the vibrant, dynamic world that beckons the Lady. It is a realm of "lovers" and "knights," of "marriages," and of the everyday human experience. Through her mirror, the Lady witnesses this bustling existence, a stark contrast to her own silent solitude. The "new bright" knights and the "fair comers" are particularly significant, symbolizing the vitality and connectivity she yearns for.

The arrival of Sir Lancelot on his "snow-white" steed is the pivotal moment that shatters her carefully constructed world. His vibrant presence, described with an almost overwhelming brilliance – "all in silken, white, and gold" – is too powerful to be contained within the passive observation of her mirror. The description of Lancelot is a masterpiece of sensory detail, highlighting his allure and the potent force of the external world.

The Artist's Dilemma: Isolation vs. Experience

The most compelling interpretation of "The Lady of Shalott" positions her as an allegory for the artist. Her curse mirrors the inherent paradox of artistic creation: the need for detachment and observation to perceive truth and beauty, versus the desire for direct engagement and lived experience. The tapestry represents the artwork itself – a beautiful, crafted representation of reality, but not reality itself.

The Lady's withdrawal from her weaving to gaze upon Lancelot signifies the artist's struggle between the sacred space of creation and the irresistible pull of the tangible world. The temptation to

break the rules, to experience life firsthand, is ultimately too strong. Her decision to look directly out the window is a surrender to the immediate, a desire to feel the "wind" and the "sun" rather than merely weave their likeness.

The Tragic Descent and the "Boat of Death"

Upon breaking the curse, the Lady's fate is sealed. The mirror cracks, symbolizing the shattering of her internal world and the irreversible damage caused by her transgression. Her departure from the tower is a descent into death, a poignant and somber conclusion. She chooses a "white barge," a "boat of death," upon which she lays herself down, her "pale hands" still clutching a "blackening" cross.

The image of the Lady floating down the river towards Camelot is one of profound pathos. Her final act is a silent, stark testament to her unfulfilled life and her ultimate yearning for connection, even in death. The "long black hair" and the "white robe" contribute to the spectral beauty of her final voyage. The description of her passing is imbued with a haunting beauty, a final artistic flourish in her tragic life.

Echoes in Camelot: The Reactions to Her Death

The reaction of the inhabitants of Camelot to the Lady's arrival is a stark contrast to the vibrant life they represent. They are described as "amazed," "pale," and filled with "dread." Only Sir Lancelot, the catalyst for her doom, offers a brief, almost dismissive comment: "She hath a fair face," he muses, before continuing on his way. This

casual observation underscores the profound disconnect between the Lady's tragic sacrifice and the world she sought to join.

The "gleam" of the mirror and the "glimmer" of her eyes are the last vestiges of her existence, now extinguished. The poem concludes with the somber pronouncement of her name: "The Lady of Shalott." This final utterance serves as a memorial, a whispered acknowledgment of her existence and her tragic end.

Legacy and Literary Significance

"The Lady of Shalott" has left an indelible mark on literature and art. Its themes of isolation, art, and the unattainable nature of true fulfillment have resonated with countless writers and artists. The poem's rich symbolism and evocative language have inspired numerous paintings, musical compositions, and literary adaptations.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, in particular, was deeply influenced by Tennyson's work. Artists like John William Waterhouse created iconic paintings that vividly captured the essence of the Lady's story, further cementing her image in the public consciousness. The poem's enduring appeal lies in its ability to tap into universal human experiences: the longing for connection, the struggle between duty and desire, and the bittersweet beauty of an unfulfilled life.

Understanding "The Lady of Shalott" Today

In contemporary discussions, "The Lady of Shalott" continues to be analyzed through lenses of feminism, psychoanalysis, and artistic theory. The curse can be viewed as a patriarchal construct that limits female agency, or as a manifestation of internal psychological

struggles. The poem's exploration of observation versus participation remains a potent metaphor for our own digitally mediated lives, where we often experience the world through screens rather than direct engagement.

The poem's melancholic beauty, its haunting imagery of a cursed life and a tragic end, ensures its continued relevance. "The Lady of Shalott" is more than just a ballad; it is a profound meditation on the human condition, a timeless exploration of the artist's journey, and a testament to the enduring power of poetry to capture the deepest of human emotions.

Keywords: The Lady of Shalott, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Victorian poetry, Arthurian legend, Camelot, Sir Lancelot, artistic allegory, isolation, curse, art and life, literary analysis, Pre-Raphaelites, poetic interpretation, melancholy, tragedy.

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Questions & Answers About

tennyson the lady of shalott

No	Question	Answer
1	What's the central mystery behind 'The Lady of Shalott'?	The central mystery revolves around why the Lady is cursed to weave what she sees in her mirror and only look out the window indirectly. Her isolation and the tragic consequences of her breaking the curse are key elements.
2	Who is the Lady of Shalott, and what is her role in the poem?	The Lady of Shalott is a mysterious, isolated woman confined to a tower on an island near Camelot. She is destined to weave constantly, only observing the world through a magic mirror, and cannot directly look out her window.
3	What does the mirror symbolize in 'The Lady of Shalott'?	The mirror symbolizes the Lady's connection to the outside world and, more importantly, her perception of reality. It represents her artistic creation and her limited, mediated experience of life.
4	Why does the Lady of Shalott ultimately leave her island and head towards Camelot?	The Lady abandons her weaving and leaves her tower when she sees Sir Lancelot in her mirror. His vibrant presence inspires a forbidden desire, breaking her curse and compelling her to seek him out directly.
5	What is the significance of Sir Lancelot in the poem?	Sir Lancelot represents the allure of the real world, beauty, and romantic love. His appearance in the mirror is the catalyst for the Lady's doom, representing the temptation of direct experience over artistic detachment.

6	What are the main themes explored in 'The Lady of Shalott'?	Key themes include the conflict between art and life, isolation vs. connection, fate vs. free will, and the destructive power of unfulfilled desire. The poem also touches on the role of women in society.
7	What is the ultimate fate of the Lady of Shalott?	The Lady dies during her journey down the river to Camelot. Her boat is found in Camelot, where Sir Lancelot is among those who see her dead body and lament her tragic fate.

Tennyson The Lady of Shalott analysis, The Lady of Shalott poem by Alfred Tennyson, Tennyson literary interpretation of The Lady of Shalott, The Lady of Shalott summary and themes, Tennyson's The Lady of Shalott and medieval legend, The Lady of Shalott symbolism in Victorian poetry, Tennyson's The Lady of Shalott and Arthurian romance, Poetic analysis of The Lady of Shalott by Tennyson, Tennyson's The Lady of Shalott and female isolation, The Lady of Shalott by Alfred Tennyson: themes and motifs

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