
- **“The Lady of Shalott” Summary**

- On either side of the river, long fields of barley and rye cover the open land like clothing and stretch toward the horizon. Through these fields runs the road that leads to the large castle of Camelot, which has many towers. As people walk up and down this road, they look out to a place where lilies grow: an island in the river called Shalott.

Willow trees grow pale, aspen trees tremble, and little breezes stir the surface of the river's water, which flows eternally past Shalott and toward Camelot. On the island, a square, gray, towered building looks out over a flower garden. This silent island encloses and shelters the Lady of Shalott.

Along the willow-draped banks of the river, heavy flat-bottomed boats are slowly towed along by horses. Unnoticed, little sailboats with silky sails travel lightly down the river to Camelot. But has anyone who passes by actually seen the Lady of Shalott wave her hand, or stand at her window? Does anyone actually know her at all, or is she just known as the Lady of Shalott all throughout the land?

Only the people harvesting grain in the early morning hear the sweet singing that echoes over the river as it flows toward Camelot. When the moon has come out and the tired reaper is piling up his grain on the airy hills, he listens, and whispers to himself that the singing is coming from the enchanted Lady of Shalott.

In her tower on Shalott, the Lady constantly weaves a beautiful tapestry in glorious colors. She has heard it whispered that a curse will fall on her if she looks directly toward Camelot. She doesn't know what this curse is, so she just keeps weaving, and and cares about little else.

Images of the outside world move through a clear mirror that always hangs in front of her. In this mirror she sees the nearby road winding toward Camelot. She sees the

whirling surface of the river, the serious peasants, and the red cloaks of the girls going to market as they pass her tower.

Sometimes she sees a group of cheerful young women, or a clergyman riding along at a leisurely pace, or a curly-haired shepherd boy, or a long-haired young knight-in-training in bright red clothing, as they make their way toward Camelot. And sometimes, through the blue mirror, she sees knights riding in pairs: but the Lady herself has no knight to love and be faithful to her.

But she still loves to weave the wonderful sights that she sees in the mirror. Sometimes, in the quiet of the night, a funeral procession decked out with ornaments and lights and music will pass by on its way to Camelot. Once, when the moon was out, two newlyweds came by. "I'm half-sick of these reflections of the world," the Lady said.

Only an arrow's flight from the Lady's window, a man rode through the fields. The sun, shining brightly through the leaves, reflected intensely on the brassy shinguard armor of the brave Sir Lancelot. His shield carried an image of a Knight Templar kneeling to a lady; this bright picture sparkled against the yellow fields surrounding the isolated island of Shalott.

His horse's jewel-encrusted bridle glittered like the stars of the Milky Way, and its bells rang out cheerfully as he rode toward Camelot. From his decorated sword belt, a silver hunting horn hung, and his armor rung like a bell as he rode past the isolated island of Shalott.

Under the cloudless blue sky, his bejeweled saddle shone, and his plumed helmet burned like a flame as he rode toward Camelot. He looked like when, on a dark and starry night, a meteor passes over Shalott, trailing a beard of light behind it.

His handsome forehead glowed in the sun. His horse walked on hooves that gleamed like polished metal. From under his helmet flowed curly black hair as he rode on

toward Camelot. The image of him on the riverbank flashed into the Lady's magic mirror as he sang to himself, "Tirra lirra."

The lady left her weaving on her loom, took three steps across the room, and saw from her window the blooming water-lily, Lancelot's feathered helmet, and Camelot. Her weaving then flew from the loom, and the magic mirror cracked straight across. The Lady cried: "The curse has come upon me!"

In the rough east wind, the pale yellow trees were losing their leaves, the river was making angry sounds, and the heavy sky rained on the towers of Camelot. The Lady came down from her tower and found an abandoned boat under a willow tree. She wrote her own name on the front.

Down the dark river, like a prophet having a horrible vision of his own doom, with a far-away expression, the Lady looked toward Camelot. When night began to fall, she released the boat from its mooring, lay down inside, and let the wide river carry far her away.

Dressed in a flowing, fluttering white gown, with leaves falling down on her, moving through the sounds of the night, the Lady floated toward Camelot. As her boat passed through the hills and fields, the people she passed heard her singing her last song.

They heard a sad hymn, sung loud and low, as the Lady's blood turned cold and her eyes went dark, though they were still fixed on Camelot's towers. Before her boat had even gotten as far as the edge of town, the Lady of Shalott died, in the midst of her singing.

Under the town's towers, balconies, gardens, and long open walks, the Lady of Shalott floated by, a shining, pale shape moving silently into Camelot. The citizens—knights and townspeople, lords and ladies—all came out to the wharfs to see her, and read her name on the prow of the boat.

They wondered, "Who's this, and what's going on?" In the illuminated palace, the sounds of royal partying fell silent. All the knights of the Round Table made the sign of the Cross in fear. Only Sir Lancelot stopped and looked at the Lady for a while. He said, "She has a very pretty face," and prayed that God would be merciful to the Lady of Shalott.