

An overview of the poem “The Lady of Shalott” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Year of publication : there are two versions of the poem. First one was published in the year 1832. Tennyson published a revised version in the year 1842.

Origin and source: the poem is based on the Arthurian legend of Elaine of Astolat as depicted in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Tennyson was also very much aware of the 13th century Italian novelette *Donna di Scalotta* or *La Damigella di Scalot* in which the story of the Maid of Astolat was recounted.

Setting : the poem is set in the Arthurian world – specifically in an island named Shalott near Camelot.

Style: A narrative poem written in ballad form. The poem is divided into four sections. The first and second section has four stanzas. The second section has five stanzas and the final section has six stanzas. Each stanza has nine lines. The rhyme scheme is aaaabcccb. The first section of the poem describes the pastoral setting of Shalott and its surroundings. The second section dwells on the lady's life. All but the final stanza of the third section describe Sir Lancelot and the rest of the poem (including the final stanza of the third section) depicts the effect of the curse.

Themes: Isolation and imprisonment, Art and artist, shadow and reality, light and shadow, natural world, medievalism, liberation, the Victorian ideal of femininity, mystery and supernaturalism.

Symbols : The Lady's castle, the natural world surrounding of the castle, the magical mirror and the weave, city of Camelot, road to Camelot etc.

