

Module 9

Art in the 19th century

John Constable

1

Reading

Reading and thinking about Constable

Read the poem by John Clare

Then the clouds dispers'd again,
And full sweet it was to view
Sunbeams, trembling long in vain,
Now they 'gan to glimmer through:
And as labour strength regains
From ale's booning bounty given,
So reviv'd the fresh'ning plains
From the smiling showers of heaven.

Sweet the birds did chant their songs,
Blackbird, linnet, lark, and thrush;
Music from a many tongues
Melted from each dripping bush:
Deafen'd echo, on the plain,
As the sunbeams broke the cloud,
Scarce could help repeat the strain,
Nature's anthem flow'd so loud.

What a fresh'ning feeling came,
As the sun's smile gleam'd again;
Summer seem'd no more the same,
Such a mildness swept the plain;

Breezes, such as one would seek,
Cooling infants of the shower,
Fanning sweet the burning cheek,
Trembled through the bramble-bower.

Translation

*Ancora una volta si dissolsero le nubi;
com' era gradevole vedere i raggi del sole,
dopo un lungo, vano tremolare,
penetrarla coltre come dardi.
Come il contadino è ritemperato
Dalla birra data in abbondanza come ricompensa,
così la pianura rinfrescante si destò,
rianimata dalla pioggia benedetta.*

*Intonarono gli uccelli un dolce canto,
merli, fanelli, allodole e tordi:
una musica in molti linguaggi
si disperdeva da ogni arbusto grondante.
Mentre il sole squarciava le nubi,
un'eco smorzata sui campi
non poteva che ripetere il ritornello
del canto altisonante della natura.*

*Che sensazione di vigore ritrovato
quando il sole tornò a sorridere radioso;
non più gravava l'afa dell' estate,
sulla piana soffiava un aria dolce;*

*e una brezza delle più desiderate
tremava tra gli arbusti nel boschetto
spirando lieve sulla gota infuocata
rinfrescando gli infanti della pioggia*

Answer the following questions on the poem:

1. What has the weather been like?
2. What sounds are there?
3. How is the weather now?
4. What time of year is it?
5. Where is the poet?
6. Which senses does the poet appeal to?
7. What sensations does the poem give you?
8. Can you point out the Romantic elements in the poem?

2

Writing

Joseph Mallord Turner

1

Reading

Read the text and its translation:

As mentioned in your text book, Turner accompanied the painting *Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps* with some lines from his epic poem *The Fallacies of Hope*. Turner composed this poem intermittingly throughout his life, but never completed it. The title of the poem shows a pessimism which Turner finds in the story of Hannibal's triumph followed by retreat. The lines quoted dwell on Hannibal's difficulties rather than his victories and in the last line contain a warning that Hannibal and his soldiers might be seduced and enfeebled by the luxury of the city of Capua.

Craft, treachery and fraud; Salassian force,
Hung on the fainting rear! Then Plunder-seized

The Victor and the captive, - Seguntum's spoil,
Alike became their prey; still the chief advanc'd,

Look'd on the sun with hope; - low, broad, and wan;
While the fierce archer of the downward year
Stains Italy's blanch'd barrier with storms.
In vain each pass, ensanguin'd deep with dead,

Or rocky fragments, wide destruction roll'd.
Still on Campania's fertile plains - he thought,
But the loud breeze sob'd, "Capua's joys beware!"

From The Fallacies of Hope

Ingeniosità, tradimento e frodi; forza Salassiana,
Appesa sulla retroguardia presa da svenimenti! Poi afferrato quello
che era stato saccheggiato

Il vincitore e il prigioniero, - bottino di Seguntum,
Allo stesso modo è diventato la loro preda; eppure ancora avanzò
il capo,

Guardò il sole con speranza; - basso, largo, e pallido;
Mentre l'arciere feroce dell'anno che sta per finire
Macchia la barriera imbiancata dell' Italia con temporali.
Invano ogni passo montano, insanguinato profondamente con
morti,

O frammenti di rocce, portò grande distruzione.
Ancora delle pianure fertili della Campania - pensò,
Ma il vento forte pianse, "Attenti alle gioie di Capua!"

2

Comprehension

Now complete the table:

who	what	sun	Weather conditions	Places mentioned

Turner and Venice

1

Reading

Read the text about Constable's venetian paintings:

Turner visited Venice on his way to Rome in September 1819. During his stay in Italy Turner made sketches in pencil of the sights he saw. He filled 160 pages with pencil studies of all the tourist sights. The great care and detail show how important these sketches were for Turner for his future paintings. In fact he then elaborated these at home into watercolours or oil paintings. But he did take out his brushes and made three panoramic views showing the Customs House and the Churches of San Giorgio Maggiore and San Pietro di Castello, their domes and towers **silhouetted** against the soft, yellow skies and mirrored in the waters below. In a fourth watercolour he shows the Bell tower of St. Mark's and the Doge's Palace. It was rare for Turner to paint directly from nature, but it is as if he needed **to transpose on paper** the beauty he saw as quickly as possible and to do this he used pure colour. These luminous studies of architecture dissolving in light and water opened a new phase in his art. Over the next decade colour began to predominate over form. Of course Venice had a great attraction for Turner: not only for its dramatic setting, but also for its literary and historical associations and for the work of its celebrated painters. Venice existed in Turner's imagination long before he visited it through his familiarity with Canaletto's etchings and his knowledge of Byron and Shakespeare. Turner's images of Venice are one of the most important aspects of his work as a mature artist. His late Venetian works like *The Grand Canal* and *Approach to Venice* describe atmospheric effects with brighter colours and begin to resemble his more abstract paintings where he tried to portray light, space and the elemental forces of nature (e.g. *Rain, Steam and Speed*). Turner invested even the most banal view with layer upon layer of meaning. When Turner was in his twenties Venice was in decline, but later frequent comparisons were made between Venice in its glory and the thriving commercial city of early 19th century London. The comparison was also a warning that Britain risked losing its freedom if it didn't learn from the history of Venice. However Venice also seemed strange and exotic. In the 1830s and 40s Venice was considered a magical city of dreams thanks also to Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Turner's own images contributed to this sense of a city suspended in time in which past and present are merged, where it is not always possible to distinguish the real from the imaginary and the buildings seem to dissolve in their own reflections and where squalor exists next to unearthly beauty. Turner was undoubtedly influenced by Canaletto, but also by Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. In the 1820's Turner produced a series of illustrations of Venice for the poet Samuel Rogers which were immensely popular and which were to be noted by the then young John Ruskin.

In the summer of 1833 Turner returned to Venice and the painting *Venice: the Grand Canal* was the first painting of the city to be put on show at The Royal Academy.

Glossary

silhouetted:
sagomati

to transpose:
trasportare,
trasferire

Glossary

to suffuse:pervadere,
soffondere**landmark:**punti di
riferimento**100 yards:** circa

91 metri

height: altezza**indigo:** indaco**bustling:**

animato

in tandem:in tandem,
insieme**to diffuse:**

diffondere

shimmering:luccicante,
scintillante

Painted in 1840 for a Manchester textile manufacturer, Turner asked £350 for it. The watercolour explores in a very unique way the light and architecture of the city. However, always after his second visit to Venice, he painted, in 1835, what is perhaps one of his most beautiful views of the city. The title of the painting is still *The Grand Canal, Venice*, but this is oil on canvas and the view is different. We see, as in other views of the city, his interest in recording what he saw, but with a Romantic sensibility that **suffused** his work with a sense of the grandeur of nature and its magnificent light and colour. The painting is based on a pencil drawing made during his first visit and combines multiple viewpoints which present an impossible view of several Venetian **landmarks** - the buildings on the left are seen from the corner of the church of Santa Maria della Salute. Those on the right are seen from a vague position across the canal, about **100 yards** further back, near the Campo del Tragheto of Santa Maria del Giglio. Turner also extended the **height** of the bell tower and added a building in the background on the right.

From 1840 onwards Turner began to depict views from the Giudecca canal presenting the most well-known monuments of Venice in a very innovative way. In many of his watercolours we find the Church of Saint George with its bell tower and dome and where Turner studied the effects of light on the bricks and marbles. Most of the watercolours from the 1840 visit were painted in the hotel Europa possibly looking out of the window because the watercolours are sketchy and immediate. But when he depicted night scenes in St Mark's Square or a study of fireworks cascading down over the church of La Salute or a gondola racing through turbulent waves chased by **indigo** clouds of a breaking storm, these are worked from memory or from quick sketches made on location. The watercolours tell us what Turner saw at that moment, on that day and in those atmospheric conditions and are more "private" than his oil paintings. They record real sights and only a few are partly imaginary.

From the Riva degli Schiavoni there's a wonderful view of the bay of St Mark. Turner chose to represent this part of Venice through a series of works in which he placed the attention on small boats or gondolas to underline how much quieter the bay had become 100 years after the busy, **bustling** scenes depicted by Canaletto a century before. In the distance of the *View of Venice* is the Doges' Palace seen from across the mouth of the Canale della Giudecca. To the viewer's right is the Riva degli Schiavoni, and to the left, the Piazzetta San Marco with the bell tower and the Sansoviniana bookshop. In the middle ground, the Dogana projects from the left side of the scene and the Campo San Giorgio, with the domed church of San Giorgio Maggiore from the right. The gondolas, other vessels and bits of debris across the stretch of still water in the foreground seem placed haphazardly but in fact they are highly structured, designed **in tandem** with the delicate cast reflections of the buildings to lead the viewer's eye toward the distant prospect.

Turner's other Venetian paintings from the 1840s onwards have softer more **diffused** edges, more extended compositions and the buildings are further back in space giving a greater role to the **shimmering** expanse of water in the foreground.

Glossary

draughtsman:
disegnatore
marred:
danneggiato
flicks: colpetti
obliquely:
obliquamente

The evocative luminosity of the scenes is obtained in part by the painter's innovative painting techniques which wed the rich texture of oil paint with the transparent brilliance of watercolour. The delicate linear figures and architecture in *View of Venice* parallels Turner's use of red ink to define forms in his Venetian watercolours of about 1840 in both media giving a sense of structure that reminds us that Turner trained as a topographical **draughtsman**. Often Turner dips a pen in black pigment to create a row of windows and he can reproduce a set of **marred** gondolas with a few **flicks** of a tiny brush. He views the palaces on either side of the Grand canal **obliquely** and only occasionally like in his study of the Palazzo Grimani and dei Cavalli does he confront his subject head on.

It is the way Turner can turn an ordinary view into a meditation on history, art or poetry that distinguishes him from other artists who have painted Venice. Just like his ability to depict the surface of the water without reflections from nearby buildings but relying on line and colour (see, for example, *The Sun of Venice Going to Sea*), Turner's surfaces possess a much more realistic sense of movement and reflection like in a modern city and he turns away from Canaletto's idealized version of Venice. Often he did two paintings in which he contrasted morning and evening, hot and cold colours, past and present. At times he suggests that Venice masks corruption. He does this by presenting a splendid view of the city, but he places something negative in the painting like, for example, rubbish floating on the water.

Answer the following questions on the text:

1. How many different techniques does Turner use for his works? List them.
2. Which landmarks are present in the paintings?
3. Are they a true representation of the actual monuments?
4. How does he modify the works?
5. How important was Venice for Turner?
6. How many times did he visit the city?
7. Who was he influenced by?
8. Does he give us only a positive view of the city?
9. What is the connection between London and Venice?
10. How is Turner's Venice different from Canaletto's?

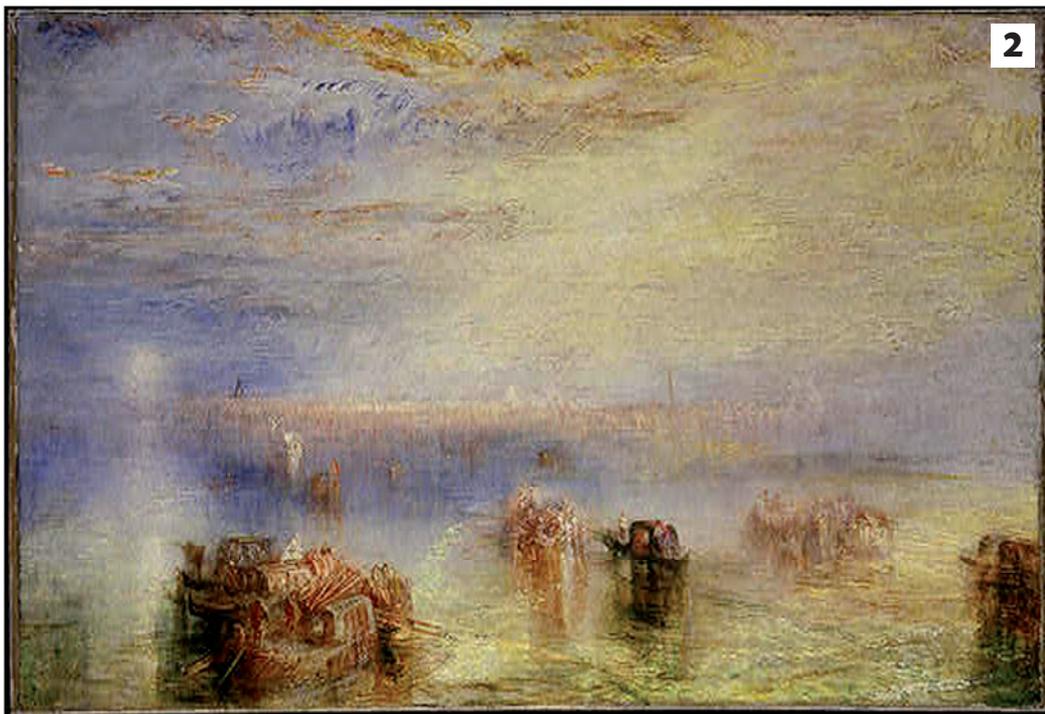
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Look at the four paintings by Turner. Can you put the correct title to each? Choose from the titles below:

- A. *View of Venice: Ducal Palace, Dogana and San Giorgio, 1841*
- B. *The Grand Canal, 1835*
- C. *The Sun of Venice Going to Sea, 1843*
- D. *Approach to Venice, 1844*

2

Observation





3

Describing

Answer the following questions after observing the paintings closely:

Picture 1

1. What first attracts your attention?
2. What monuments are present in this painting?
3. Describe the sky.
4. What kind of ships or boats are there?
5. Can you guess what time of day it is?
6. How many viewpoints are there?
7. Define the nature and source of light in the painting.

Picture 2

1. Is the horizon clearly depicted?
2. What time of day is it?
3. From what perspective do we see the painting?
4. Are the contours more classical or more romantic? Support your answer.
5. Can you distinguish the kind of boats?
6. What role does the light play in this painting?

Picture 3

1. The scene is:
Choose from the following:
 turbulent vivid quiet hazy formal
2. The lines are defined/undefined
3. How do you think Turner painted the gondolas?
4. How is luminosity achieved?
5. What insight does the painting provide into life in Venice at the time of Turner?
6. What kind of strokes are used for the water surface?

Picture 4

1. Where is the main focus of light?
2. Describe the background of this painting.
3. Describe the water around the boat.
4. Which colours dominate?
5. Are they hot or cold colours?
6. What has the painting transmitted to you? Choose from the list below:
 ecstasy fear enchantment uneasiness safety menace serenity

4

Rounding-up

Do some research on Turner's seascapes by using the net or your local library or school library. What differences do you notice in his treatment of water in *The Shipwreck*, in his paintings of Venice and in his seascapes of the 1830s? In each case see how the way he paints corresponds to a particular effect that he wants to capture. Notice, for instance, the difference in his painting of calm and rough water.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

1

Reading

Rossetti often wrote sonnets to accompany his work and wrote two sonnets for the painting 'The Girlhood of Mary Virgin'. Here you can read one of them:

Mary's Girlhood (for a Picture)

These are the symbols. On that cloth of red
I' the centre, is the **Tripoint**, - perfect each
 Except the second of its points, to teach
 That Christ is not yet born. The books (whose head
 Is golden Charity, as Paul hath said)
 Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich:
 Therefore on them the lily **standeth**, which
 Is Innocence, being interpreted.
 The **seven-thorned briar** and the palm seven-leaved
 Are her great sorrows and her great reward.
 Until the time be full, the Holy One
 Abides **without**. She soon shall have achieved
 Her perfect purity: yea, God the Lord
 Shall soon **vouchsafe** His Son to be her Son.

Glossary

I': in
tripoint: tre punte
standeth: stava
seven-thorned briar: rovo con sette spine
without: a distanza
to vouchsafe: concedere

Answer the following questions on the sonnet:

1. Which elements mentioned in the sonnet are found in the painting?
2. Are all the points of the tripoint perfect?
3. Has Christ been born?
4. Where are the virtues?
5. Where is the lily?
6. What are the sorrows and the reward for The Virgin?
7. Is she alone?

A. Here are other representations of the Annunciation. Point out any similarities or differences you see, then read the text below which compares Rossetti's work to the Dutch works.

A Petrus Christus, *The Annunciation*, circa 1450, oil on wood, The Metropolitan Museum, New York.



2

Reading



B Hans Memling, *The Annunciation*, 1480-89, oil on panel, transferred to canvas, The Metropolitan Museum, New York.

C Campin, *the Merode Triptych*, circa 1427-32, oil paint on oak, The Metropolitan Museum, New York.



Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini* illustrates the moment when Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will **give birth to** the Lord. Many of the symbols he uses in the scene are common symbols used in the past by other painters, but Rossetti **breaks away from** tradition in his use of symbols, space and figures. The scenes depicted above all have lilies in a vase near the figures. Rossetti's lilies, instead, are integrated into the action and the environment. The angel Gabriel offers a lily to Mary underlining her purity and chastity. The embroidery which is the same one, now finished, already seen in the *Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, contextualizes the scene. The room is the bedroom of a young girl and it is normal to find her **needlework** here. In the three Dutch works Mary has colourful clothes but Rossetti's Mary is dressed in white. Rossetti shows blue (symbol of the Virgin and Heaven) in a **screen** behind Mary and in the sky outside the window.

The **interiors** of the Dutch works are rich (large rooms, elaborate floor tiles, stained glass, decorative rugs and so on). In Rossetti's painting the room is very simple and very small with a white floor and white walls and a low wooden bed with a white mat and pillow. The scene

Glossary

to give birth to:

dare alla luce

to break away

from: staccarsi

needlework:

lavori di cucito

screen:

paravento

interiors: interni

Glossary

depth: profondità
winged: alato
shadowed: ombreggiato
auburn: castano
to cower: rannichiare
barren: spoglio
stiff: rigido
detached: distaccato

outside in Rossetti's painting shows only a blue sky and a part of a tree. Rossetti, in fact, does not use a **plateau composition*** which could have given **depth** to the scene even if at first sight it might appear so. The angel Gabriel is not **winged** with long hair and his face is seen only in a **shadowed** profile. His feet are surrounded by small flames. Mary is shown as a typical adolescent. She is skinny with a childish body, her hair is unbrushed – **auburn** - standing out against the white dress and the white surroundings almost to remind us of Christ's crown of thorns and she is **cowering** in fright. The **barren** surroundings, moreover, the confined space, Mary's intense expression and her pose underline how terrified the young girl is as she is confronted with her adult identity. It is a completely different picture to the **stiff** poses of the previous adult Virgins who seem completely **detached** from reality.

***plateau composition:** a technique where an enclosed space occupying most of the painting is contrasted to an exterior glimpsed through a window or doorway. In Pre-Raphaelite paintings the figures are often placed against a wall and the plane behind the figure is pierced by a window or door.

B. Now answer the questions:

Fill in the table below:

	Ecce Ancilla Domini	The Dutch Paintings
The lily		
Mary's clothes		
The room		
Objects		
The scene outside		
The angel		
Mary		
Mary's pose		

1. Why does the Angel Gabriel offer a lily to Mary in Rossetti's painting?
2. In what other painting do we see the embroidery?
3. What is blue a symbol of?
4. Where is the blue in Rossetti's painting?
5. Why might Rossetti have obscured Gabriel's face?
6. How is the painting affected by Mary's youthfulness?
7. In Rossetti's *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin*, Mary and her mother, St. Anne, appear oblivious of the halos that hover above their heads, denoting their holiness. In that painting, Mary's lack of consciousness about her fate, despite the numerous symbols around her, has a strong effect on the painting: the viewer has knowledge that the Virgin does not yet possess. On the contrary, in *Ecce Ancilla Domini* Mary is keenly aware of her position, and it is this self-awareness and terror that endows the painting with its power. How does this difference between the two paintings affect the feelings they elicit from you?
8. Early Dutch Annunciations were devotional pieces, intended to inspire a viewer to religious contemplation and prayer. Could this painting serve that purpose, or does its message transcend religion and speak more strongly to universal issues of growth, responsibility and youthful vulnerability?

9. John William Waterhouse

1849-1917



J.W. Waterhouse, *The Lady of Shalott*, 1888, oil on canvas, Tate Gallery, London.

This painting illustrates Alfred Tennyson's poem *The Lady of Shalott* - draped over the boat is the fabric the lady wove in a tower near Camelot, but she brought a curse on herself by looking directly at Sir Lancelot. With her right hand she is letting go of the chain mooring the boat. Her mouth is slightly open, as she sings 'her last song'. She stares at a crucifix lying in front of her. Beside it are 3 candles, often used to symbolize life, two have blown out. This suggests her life will end soon, as she floats down the river.

.....

a. Point out the following items in the painting:

boat	candles
chain	river
crucifix	

b. Describe the colours used by the painter – which predominate? Is there a reason for this do you think?

c. What elements in the painting render it dreamlike and which are more realistic?

1

Pre-reading

The Lady of Shalott is a magical being who is imprisoned in a tower on an island near Camelot. She looks at the world outside in a mirror and weaves what she sees in a tapestry (web as Tennyson calls it). She can't look at the world directly. One day she sees the handsome Lancelot passing so she looks at him directly. Her mirror and tapestry shatter, flying apart. She leaves the castle, finds a boat, gets into it and sings her last song as she goes down the river to Camelot. Lancelot, on seeing her dead, prays that God will have mercy on the Lady. At the start of the poem there's no colour, only shadows. Later the Lady chooses the bright colours of reality. Then when she dies, we read only of white, one of the hueless colours of death. The poem shows how ordinary human needs destroy the artist and how isolating oneself from society also brings destruction.

Now read these lines from Tennyson's poem and then answer the questions:

And down the river's dim **expanse**
 Like some bold **seer** in a **trance**,
 Seeing all his own **mischance** --
 With a **glassy countenance**
 Did she look to Camelot.
 And at the closing of the day
 She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
 The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
 That loosely **flew** to left and right --
 The leaves upon her falling light --
 Thro' the noises of the night,
 She **floated** down to Camelot:
 And as the boat-head **wound** along
 The **willowy** hills and fields among,
 They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
 Till her blood was frozen slowly,
 And her eyes were darkened **wholly**
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
 For ere she reach'd upon the tide
 The first house by the water-side,
 Singing in her song she died
 The Lady of Shalott

Glossary

expanse:
estensione
seer: veggente
trance: in estasi
mischance: la mala sorte
glassy: vitrea
countenance:
espressione
to fly flew
flown:
svolazzare
to float:
galleggiare
to wind
wound wound:
serpeggiare
willowy:
ricoperto di salici piangenti
to chant:
cantare
wholly:
completamente

3

Comprehension

Answer the following questions:

- What is the tone here?
Choose from the list below:
Happy
Serene
Mournful
Sad
Melancholic
- Is there any colour in this part of the poem?
- What elements of nature are mentioned?
- Can you find them in the painting?
- Who are the people represented by the pronoun 'they' do you think?

4

Reading

Read the musical version by Loreena Mckennitt, a famous Irish singer.

You have the lines immediately preceding her departure from the protective tower in which she lived.

Glossary

bow-shot: tiro d'arco
bower-eaves: cornicione della sua dimora
barley sheaves: covoni d'orzo
dazzling: abbagliante
to flame: splendere, fiammeggiare
brazen: ottone
greaves: gambali
shield: scudo
brow: fronte
to glow: luccicare
burnish'd: bruniti
hooves: zoccoli
to tread trod trodden: camminare
web: ragnatela, tela
to crack from side to side: crepare da cima a fondo
curse: maledizione

A **bow-shot** from her **bower-eaves**,
 He rode between the **barley sheaves**,
 The sun came **dazzling** thro' the leaves,
 And flamed upon the **brazen greaves**
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.
 A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
 To a lady in his **shield**,
 That sparkled on the yellow field,
 Beside remote Shalott.
 His broad clear **brow** in sunlight **glow'd**;
 On **burnish'd hooves** his war-horse **trode**;
 From underneath his helmet flow'd
 His coal-black curls as on he rode,
 As he rode back to Camelot.
 From the bank and from the river
 he flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra Lirra,"* by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.
 She left the **web**, she left the loom,
 She made three paces taro' the room,
 She saw the water-lily bloom,
 She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She looked down to Camelot.

Out flew the web and floated wide;
 The mirror **cracked from side to side**;
 "The **curse** is come upon me," cried
 The Lady of Shalott.

*Tirra Lirra:

This is a reference to a line found in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. It is from a song sung by Autolycus in Act IV, sc III
*...For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.
 The white sheet bleaching on the hedge,
 With heigh! the sweet birds, O, how they sing!
 Doth set my pugging tooth on edge;
 For a quart of ale is a dish for a king.
 The lark, that tirra-lyra chants,
 With heigh! with heigh! the thrush and the jay,
 Are summer songs for me and my aunts,
 While we lie tumbling in the hay...*

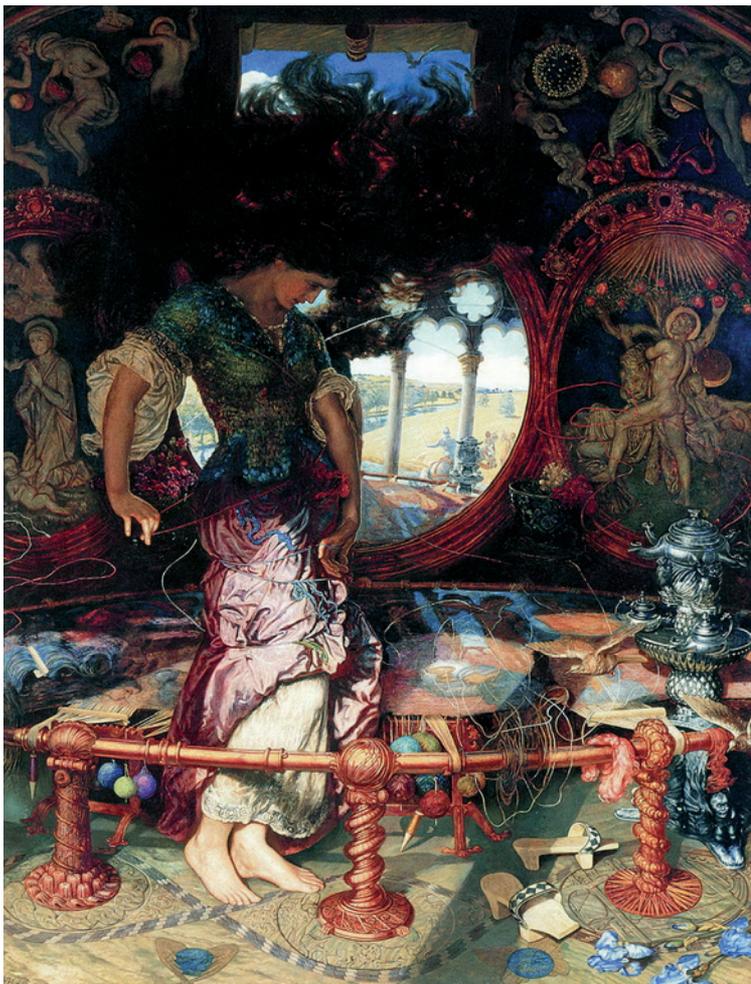
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Discussion

1. Are there any elements in this part of Tennyson's poem which are typically medieval? List them.
2. How do you imagine Sir Lancelot? Describe him to your partner.
3. Now draw a sketch based on your partner's description. Ask him/her for suggestions on how to improve it.
4. What happens when the Lady of Shalott looks at Sir Lancelot?
5. What message does the poet give us in these lines?

Now examine the painting by William Holden Hunt.

Is there a direct correspondence between the lines of the poem and the painting? Again are there dreamlike and realistic elements? Point them out.



W.H.Hunt, *The Lady of Shalott*, circa 1889-92, tempera and oil on canvas, City of Manchester Art Galleries, Manchester.

6

Homework

1. Choose one of the following and write an essay of about 250 words.
 - b. What sacrifices must a person do to be a poet, artist, scientist or scholar?
 - c. Each of us lives partly in a world of make-believe much of it inherited from our families and our cultures. What happens when it is challenged or we choose to discard it?

Now read another song and complete with the missing words. Use the words in the box.

my bed soon wearied poisoned handsome eels met
 my hawks and my hounds died my gold and my silver
 my land mak fear give hell and fire

"O where **ha** you been, Lord Randal, my son?
 And where ha you been, my _____ young man?"
 "I ha been at the greenwood; mother, _____ my bed soon,
 For I'm wearied wi hunting, and **fain wad** lie down."

"An **wha** _____ ye there, Lord Randal, my son?
 And wha met ye there, my handsome young man?"
 "O I met wi my true-love; mother, mak, _____
 For I'm _____ wi huntin, and fain wad lie down."

"And what did she _____ you, Lord Randal, my son?
 And wha did she give you, my handsome young man?"
 " _____ fried in a pan; mother, mak my bed soon,
 For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fein wad lie down."

"And what gat your **leavins**, Lord Randal my son?
 And wha gat your leavins, my handsome young man?"
 " _____; mother, mak my bed soon,
 For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fein wad lie down."

"And what becam of them, Lord Randal, my son?
 And what becam of them, my handsome young man?"
 "They stretched their legs out and _____; mother mak my bed soon,
 For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fain wad lie down."

"O I _____ you are poisoned, Lord Randal, my son!
 I **fear** you are poisoned, my handsome young man!"
 "O yes, I am _____; mother, mak my bed soon,
 For I'm sick at the heart, and fain wad lie down."

"What d'ye leave to your mother, Lord Randal, my son?
 What d'ye leave to your mother, my handsome young man?"
 "**Four and twenty milk kye** -; mother, make my bed soon,
 For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down."

Glossary

ha: have
mak: make
wi: with
wearied: stanco
fain: volentieri
wad: would
an: and
wha: who
leavins:
leftovers: avanzi
to fear: aver
 paura
**four and
 twenty milk
 kye:** 24 mucche

“What d’ye leave to your sister, Lord Randal, my son?
 What d’ye leave to your sister, my handsome young man?”
 “_____ ; mother mak my bed soon,
 For I’m sick at the heart, an I fain wad lie down.”

“What d’ye leave to your brother, Lord Randal, my son?
 What d’ye leave to your brother, my handsome young man?”
 “_____ ; mother, mak my bed soon,
 For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.”

“What d’ye leave to your true-love, Lord Randal, my son?
 What d’ye leave to your true-love, my handsome young man?”
 “I leave her _____ ; mother mak my bed soon,
 For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.”

The song you have just read is a ballad. The ballad is a genre which was, in fact, originally sung. For this reason its language was simple and there was a refrain and many repetitions which helped to make the song more memorable. Often the stanzas were made up of four lines rhyming ABCB and the ballad was a mixture of dialogue and narration. The stories told were often dramatic, but we have flashes of the event rather like the rapid images of a sequence in an action film. The vocabulary used was conventional and easily recognizable by everyone. Protagonists of the ballad were not only humans, but also animals, fairies, witches and ghosts. The ballads were often about the rivalry between the Scots and the English, love, outlaws, or fantasy worlds.

The ballads of the 13th and 14th centuries were collected by Bishop Percy in *The Reliques of Ancient Poetry* in 1765. Among the most well known ballads there are *Lord Randal*, which you have just read, *Kemp Owyne and Scarborough Fair*. The ballad, however, remained as a popular form throughout the centuries and today many songwriters have used the ballad form. One of the most famous is *A Hard Rain’s Gonna Fall* by Bob Dylan, but perhaps you are more familiar with *Time of Your Life* by Green Day.

Tennyson’s poem *The Lady of Shalott* has much in common with the ballad. **Can you point out what elements are taken from the medieval ballads?**

1. Imagine you are part of a group which plays and creates Celtic songs. You are going to write a ballad for your musical group. Without writing the complete text make notes on the principal characters, the theme, the kind of music, the fantastic and real elements, the magical aspects (if any). Write a refrain of not more than four lines for the ballad.
2. Do you write songs? Or music? If you do you might like to try putting your refrain to music in order to play it to the class.
3. Find a modern ballad in English to bring to class. Write the words for your classmates to follow and be prepared to give a brief summary of the song.

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Creative writing