

Lesson 3

Cymbeline¹

By William Shakespeare

Cymbeline was the King of Britain. He had three children. The two sons were stolen away from him when they were quite little children, and he was left with only one daughter, Imogen. The King married a second time, and brought up Leonatus, the son of a dear friend, as Imogen's playfellow; and when Leonatus was old enough, Imogen secretly married him. This made the King and Queen very angry, and the King, to punish Leonatus, banished him from Britain.

Poor Imogen was nearly heart-broken at parting from Leonatus, and he was not less unhappy. For they were not only lovers and husband and wife, but they had been friends and comrades ever since they were quite little children. With many tears and kisses they said "Good-bye." They promised never to forget each other, and that they would never care for anyone else as long as they lived.

"This diamond was my mother's, love," said Imogen; "take it, my heart, and keep it as long as you love me."

"Sweetest, fairest," answered Leonatus, "wear this bracelet for my sake."

"Ah!" cried Imogen, weeping, "when shall we meet again?"

And while they were still in each other's arms, the King came in, and Leonatus had to leave without more farewell.

When he was come to Rome, where he had gone to stay with an old friend of his father's, he spent his days still in thinking of his dear Imogen, and his nights in dreaming of her. One day at a feast some Italian and French noblemen were talking of their sweethearts, and swearing that they were the most faithful and honorable and beautiful ladies in the world. And a Frenchman reminded Leonatus how he had said many times that his wife Imogen was more fair, wise, and constant than any of the ladies in France.

"I say so still," said Leonatus.

"She is not so good but that she would deceive," said Iachimo, one of the Italian nobles.

"She never would deceive," said Leonatus.

"I wager," said Iachimo, "that, if I go to Britain, I can persuade your wife to do whatever I wish, even if it should be against your wishes."

"That you will never do," said Leonatus. "I wager this ring upon my finger," which was the very ring Imogen had given him at parting, "that my

¹ adapted by E. Nesbit

wife will keep all her vows to me, and that you will never persuade her to do otherwise.”

So Iachimo wagered half his estate against the ring on Leonatus’s finger, and started forthwith for Britain, with a letter of introduction to Leonatus’s wife. When he reached there he was received with all kindness; but he was still determined to win his wager.

He told Imogen that her husband thought no more of her, and went on to tell many cruel lies about him. Imogen listened at first, but presently perceived what a wicked person Iachimo was, and ordered him to leave her. Then he said, “Pardon me, fair lady, all that I have said is untrue. I only told you this to see whether you would believe me, or whether you were as much to be trusted as your husband thinks. Will you forgive me?”

“I forgive you freely,” said Imogen.

“Then,” went on Iachimo, “perhaps you will prove it by taking charge of a trunk, containing a number of jewels which your husband and I and some other gentlemen have bought as a present for the Emperor of Rome.”

“I will indeed,” said Imogen, “do anything for my husband and a friend of my husband’s. Have the jewels sent into my room, and I will take care of them.”

“It is only for one night,” said Iachimo, “for I leave Britain again tomorrow.”

So the trunk was carried into Imogen’s room, and that night she went to bed and to sleep. When she was fast asleep, the lid of the trunk opened and a man got out. It was Iachimo. The story about the jewels was as untrue as the rest of the things he had said. He had only wished to get into her room to win his wicked wager. He looked about him and noticed the furniture, and then crept to the side of the bed where Imogen was asleep and took from her arm the gold bracelet which had been the parting gift of her husband. Then he crept back to the trunk, and next morning sailed for Rome.

When he met Leonatus, he said, “I have been to Britain and I have won the wager, for your wife no longer thinks about you. She stayed talking with me all one night in her room, which is hung with tapestry and has a carved chimney-piece, and silver andirons in the shape of two winking Cupids.”

“I do not believe she has forgotten me; I do not believe she stayed talking with you in her room. You have heard her room described by the servants.”

“Ah!” said Iachimo, “but she gave me this bracelet. She took it from her arm. I see her yet. Her pretty action did outsell her gift, and yet enriched it too. She gave it me, and said she prized it once.”

“Take the ring,” cried Leonatus, “you have won; and you might have won my life as well, for I care nothing for it now I know my lady has forgotten me.”

And mad with anger, he wrote letters to Britain to his old servant, Pisanio, ordering him to take Imogen to Milford Haven, and to murder her, because she had forgotten him and given away his gift. At the same time he wrote to Imogen herself, telling her to go with Pisanio, his old servant, to Milford Haven, and that he, her husband, would be there to meet her.

Now when Pisanio got this letter he was too good to carry out its orders, and too wise to let them alone altogether. So he gave Imogen the letter from her husband, and started with her for Milford Haven. Before he left, the wicked Queen gave him a drink which, she said, would be useful in sickness. She hoped he would give it to Imogen, and that Imogen would die, and the wicked Queen's son could be King. For the Queen thought this drink was a poison, but really and truly it was only a sleeping-draft.

When Pisanio and Imogen came near to Milford Haven, he told her what was really in the letter he had had from her husband.

"I must go on to Rome, and see him myself," said Imogen.

And then Pisanio helped her to dress in boy's clothes, and sent her on her way, and went back to the Court. Before he went he gave her the drink he had had from the Queen.

Imogen went on, getting more and more tired, and at last came to a cave. Someone seemed to live there, but no one was in just then. So she went in, and as she was almost dying of hunger, she took some food she saw there, and had just done so, when an old man and two boys came into the cave. She was very much frightened when she saw them, for she thought that they would be angry with her for taking their food, though she had meant to leave money for it on the table. But to her surprise they welcomed her kindly. She looked very pretty in her boy's clothes and her face was good, as well as pretty.

"You shall be our brother," said both the boys; and so she stayed with them, and helped to cook the food, and make things comfortable. But one day when the old man, whose name was Bellarius, was out hunting with the two boys, Imogen felt ill, and thought she would try the medicine Pisanio had given her. So she took it, and at once became like a dead creature, so that when Bellarius and the boys came back from hunting, they thought she was dead, and with many tears and funeral songs, they carried her away and laid her in the wood, covered with flowers.

They sang sweet songs to her, and strewed flowers on her, pale primroses, and the azure harebell, and eglantine, and furred moss, and went away sorrowful. No sooner had they gone than Imogen awoke, and not knowing how she came there, nor where she was, went wandering through the wood.

Now while Imogen had been living in the cave, the Romans had decided to attack Britain, and their army had come over, and with them Leonatus, who

had grown sorry for his wickedness against Imogen, so had come back, not to fight with the Romans against Britain, but with the Britons against Rome. So as Imogen wandered alone, she met with Lucius, the Roman General, and took service with him as his page.

When the battle was fought between the Romans and Britons, Bellarius and his two boys fought for their own country, and Leonatus, disguised as a British peasant, fought beside them. The Romans had taken Cymbeline prisoner, and old Bellarius, with his sons and Leonatus, bravely rescued the King. Then the Britons won the battle, and among the prisoners brought before the King were Lucius, with Imogen, Iachimo, and Leonatus, who had put on the uniform of a Roman soldier. He was tired of his life since he had cruelly ordered his wife to be killed, and he hoped that, as a Roman soldier, he would be put to death.

When they were brought before the King, Lucius spoke out. "A Roman with a Roman's heart can suffer," he said. "If I must die, so be it. This one thing only will I entreat. My boy, a Briton born, let him be ransomed. Never master had a page so kind, so duteous, diligent, true. He has done no Briton harm, though he has served a Roman. Save him, Sir."

Then Cymbeline looked on the page, who was his own daughter, Imogen, in disguise, and though he did not recognize her, he felt such a kindness that he not only spared the boy's life, but he said, "He shall have any boon he likes to ask of me, even though he ask a prisoner, the noblest taken."

Then Imogen said, "The boon I ask is that this gentleman shall say from whom he got the ring he has on his finger," and she pointed to Iachimo.

"Speak," said Cymbeline, "how did you get that diamond?"

Then Iachimo told the whole truth of his villainy. At this, Leonatus was unable to contain himself, and casting aside all thought of disguise, he came forward, cursing himself for his folly in having believed Iachimo's lying story, and calling again and again on his wife whom he believed dead.

"Oh, Imogen, my love, my life!" he cried. "Oh, Imogen!"

Then Imogen, forgetting she was disguised, cried out, "Peace, my lord—here, here!"

Leonatus turned to strike the forward page who thus interfered in his great trouble, and then he saw that it was his wife, Imogen, and they fell into each other's arms.

The King was so glad to see his dear daughter again, and so grateful to the man who had rescued him (whom he now found to be Leonatus), that he gave his blessing on their marriage, and then he turned to Bellarius, and the two boys. Now Bellarius spoke, "I am your old servant, Bellarius. You accused me of treason when I had only been loyal to you, and to be doubted, made me disloyal. So I stole your two sons, and see, they are here!" And he brought

forward the two boys, who had sworn to be brothers to Imogen when they thought she was a boy like themselves.

The wicked Queen was dead of some of her own poisons, and the King, with his three children about him, lived to a happy old age.

So the wicked were punished, and the good and true lived happy ever after. So may the wicked suffer, and honest folk prosper till the world's end.

Cymbeline

By William Shakespeare

Questions for Class Discussion

1. How do the characters Imogen and Leonatus show their love to each other in the beginning of the story?
2. Why do Imogen and Leonatus exchange the diamond and bracelet?
3. What is the wager between Leonatus and Iachimo? Why does Leonatus agree to such a wager?
4. Which of the two—Leonatus and Imogen—is more trusting than the other? Does this show the nature of a man and of a woman?
5. How does Leonatus react when he suspects that what Iachimo is? Does his reaction seem believable, considering his professed love at the beginning of the story?
6. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, there is a potion that simulates death. The potion is essential to the plot, especially the tragic ending, as Romeo believes that his beloved really has died and therefore takes his own life. There are several small incidents essential to the plot of *Cymbeline*, such as the Queen's potion. Explain how they affect the plot. Are these small incidents which affect the course of the plot believable?
7. In many of Shakespeare's plays, the plot involves mistaken identity and coincidence. Explain how these elements form a part of *Cymbeline*.
8. As is true with all of Shakespeare's plays, there are a main plot and subplot. Be able to discuss what they are and how they are related.
9. *Cymbeline*, like *King Lear*, is based on early Briton history; however, it reads very much like a fairytale. Discuss the elements in the story that make it seem like a fairytale, such as the "they lived happily ever after" ending. Are there any realistic elements that suggest the story is actual history?

10. How does Leonatus redeem himself in the end of the story? Do you think that he fully redeems himself, considering the way in which he sought to take revenge against her for what he imagined to be her unfaithfulness to him?

The Lady of Shalott
By Alfred Tennyson

About Words and Word Origins

English is a Germanic language. That means its origins can be traced back to the language spoken by the German people many years ago. Our most commonly spoken words are German in origin, such as *cow*, *look*, *land*, *book*, *man*, *house*, *eye*, and *food*. How did this come to happen, that English-speaking people now converse in a kind of German? In the 5th century, people from the northern part of Germany began to settle in England. It is said that they were invited to the island by the Briton king Vortigern to help him fight off his enemies in the north. These strangers spoke a kind of German, which today we call Anglo-Saxon, or Old English—the language of the English epic *Beowulf*. Unfortunately for the Briton people who lived in England, the German people loved their new land so much, they refused to leave. They took over the lands of the people that they came to help, and soon they dominated the island.

More than five hundred years later in 1066, however, William, a duke from French-speaking Normandy, invaded England. With their infantry, cavalry, and archers, the Normans (aided by the French and Bretons) defeated the ax-wielding Saxons at the Battle of Hastings. After the conquest, both French and German were spoken on the island for centuries, but all the while, the two were mixing. The language during this time of change is called *Middle English*—the language of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Father of English Poetry. Eventually, the languages solidified sometime in the 16th century into what we now call *Modern English*.

This solidifying of the language, however, did not mean that English stood still. Not at all. The last four centuries have brought many changes by the importation of new words from other countries, including China, Russia, Spain and Holland—just to name a few. Dutch is a Germanic language spoken in Holland or the Netherlands. The Dutch were sea rovers and traders who brought us the word *sloop* (originally *sloep*), which is a single-masted sailboat. The word *sloep* was borrowed by the French who changed it to *chaloûpe*. The English changed *chaloûpe* to *shallop*, a word meaning a boat moved by sails or oars or both. The two words *sloop* and *shallop* may be two separate words with slightly different meanings, but they have the same word origin.

Vocabulary

Use context clues to figure out the meaning of the italicized words. The answers are provided at the end of the exercise.

1. Weeping *willows* grew in the yard, as well as aspens, oaks and sycamores.
 - a) a tree with long slender branches and narrow, long leaves
 - b) a red flower resembling the rose
 - c) a type of pond lily
2. The *shallop* sailed slowly down the river.
 - a) canoe
 - b) a type of small sailboat
 - c) a steamship
3. The merchant owned a large *barge*.
 - a) a rowboat
 - b) a vehicle used to drive in desert places
 - c) a boat used for cargo
4. The farmers *reaped* a bountiful harvest.
 - a) sold
 - b) harvested plants
 - c) planted seeds
5. The *sheaves* stood up in the field.
 - a) hired farm hands
 - b) tools used for harvesting
 - c) bundles of hay or other such grass
6. The *surly* waiter refuse to acknowledge my signal.
 - a) rude; unmannered
 - b) polite
 - c) excessively attentive
7. The hero saved the *damsel* trapped in the castle.
 - a) children
 - b) nobility
 - c) girl or young woman

8. Lisa wore a *crimson* cape.
- a) long
 - b) expensive
 - c) a shade of red
9. *Clad* in a long, black unbuttoned cloak, the general mounted his horse.
- a) looking handsome
 - b) strongly built
 - c) dressed
10. The plane crashed on a *remote* island.
- a) deserted
 - b) far away
 - c) undesirable
11. The butler *burnished* the silver.
- a) hid
 - b) stole away
 - c) polished
12. His interest in the game *waned* as the night wore on.
- a) lessened
 - b) increased
 - c) spread
13. The captain stood at the *prow* of the ship.
- a) the mast of a ship
 - b) the back part of a ship
 - c) front part of a boat
14. His *countenance* showed fear.
- a) way of walking
 - b) wrinkles
 - c) face or its expression
15. The farmer grew *rye* and barley on his seventy-acre farm
- a) flowering ornamental plants
 - b) a type of grain used to make flour
 - c) weeds

Answers: 1) a 2) b 3) c 4) b 5) c 6) a 7) c 8) c 9) c 10) b 11) c
12) a 13) c 14) c 15) b

Vocabulary Exercise: Fill In the Blank

Use one of the following words from the word bank to complete the sentences below. The first one has been completed for you.

WORD BANK: WILLOW, SHALLOP, BARGE, REAP, SHEAF, SURLY, DAMSEL,
CRIMSON, CLAD, REMOTE, BURNISH, WANE, PROW, COUNTENANCE, RYE

1. The ___ Congressman spoke to everyone he met with a sour countenance.
Answer: surly
2. The old maid ___ the brass candelabra until it reflected like a mirror.
3. Right after hitting the age of thirty-five, the athlete's physical strength and skill started to ___.
4. From the ___ of the ship, the captain spied a Spanish barge.
5. The volunteers of the reenactment felt uncomfortable and terribly hot, ___ in their old fashioned colonial garments.
6. Everyone immediately knew George's good nature by his cheerful ___.
7. Tom lived in a ___ part of the country that was not accessible by any paved road.
8. The vacationers left their ___ by the shore and went on land.
9. The prince fell in love with the ___, but his father and mother disapproved of the match.
10. The farmer planted the rye in the late summer and ___ the harvest more than a year later in the middle of the autumn.

The Lady of Shalott

By Alfred Tennyson

Part I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-towered Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four grey walls, and four grey towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed
 Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to towered Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,

Listening, whispers, "Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

Part II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colors gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
 To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the "curse" may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
 The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
 Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
 And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;

“I am half-sick of shadows,” said
The Lady of Shalott.

Part III

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 redcross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro’ the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down 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 thro’ 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.

Part IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
“The Lady of Shalott.”

And down the river’s dim expanse—
Like some bold seër 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,
Turned to towered Camelot;
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.

Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
“The Lady of Shalott.”

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, “She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.”

Questions for Class Discussion

1. Who is “The Lady of Shalott”? Describe the tower she lives in.
2. What does the Lady of Shalott do in her tower?
3. Write down the colors that the Lady of Shalott sees in the mirror. What color is most often mentioned in the poem?
4. What drives the Lady of Shalott to leave her tower?

5. Tennyson uses a simile in Part IV of the poem to describe what the Lady of Shalott looked like when she traveled down the river. (A simile is a comparison using “like” or “as.”) Write down the simile.

Literary Terms: Symbol

A symbol is something mentioned in a poem, story, novel or any other writing that suggests something other than what it is. Often authors choose animals as symbols. A lion in a story, for instance, might be symbolic of a king. Naturally, an author would not choose a rabbit to symbolize a king because the rabbit is a timid creature and not at all suggestive of a king or any of his expected traits, such as bravery. The adjective form of the word *symbol* is *symbolic*, and the verb form is *symbolize*.

The poet Tennyson uses many symbols in “The “Lady of Shalott.” One striking symbol is the web that the Lady weaves in her tower. Perhaps Tennyson thought to put the detail of the web in the poem as it brings to mind waiting women. Penelope, the faithful wife of Odysseus in Homer’s ancient poem *Odyssey*, wove a web as she waited for her husband to return from his long journey home from Troy.

Also, a web brings to mind art, as weaving in ancient times was the common creation of many artisan women (and men). Thus, the web in the poem could very well symbolize artistic expression and the Lady of Shalott could represent the artist. This symbolism of the web becomes yet more striking when combined with other such details as the gray tower, the colorful sights outside, and the reflections that the Lady sees in the mirror.

Questions for Class Discussion

1. What do you think Tennyson is saying about the artist (the Lady of Shalott) as she waits in a tower weaving reflections rather than living life? Is the poem saying that an artist’s life is really not life at all because he is only painting mirror reflections of life? Are artists, such as painters, composers and writers, seeing reflections of life but not experiencing life?
2. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle said that poetry was a mirror of “life” (or nature). In what way is art a mirror?
3. Does the color of the tower suggest anything about the Lady of Shalott’s life shut up in a tower?
4. What specifically drives the Lady of Shalott to turn around and look outside? What does she say before she is struck by the outdoor sights she sees in the mirror?

The Sun Has Long Been Set
By William Wordsworth

- The sun has long been set,
The stars are out by twos and threes,
The little birds are piping yet
Among the bushes and trees;
There's a cuckoo, and one or two thrushes,
- And a far-off wind that rushes,
And a sound of water that gushes,
And the cuckoo's sovereign cry
Fills all the hollow of the sky.
- Who would go "parading"
In London, "and masquerading,"
On such a night of June
With that beautiful soft half-moon,
And all these innocent blisses?
On such a night as this is!