

A painting depicting a scene in a forest. A woman with long brown hair, wearing a long pink dress and a white shawl, stands in the center. She is looking down at a knight lying on the ground. The knight is wearing full plate armor and is looking up at the woman. A sword lies on the ground near the knight's feet, and a helmet is visible in the lower right corner. The background shows a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a blue sky.

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La Belle Dame Sans Merci- John Keats

Gist or the story :

"La Belle Dame sans Merci," written in 1819 and published the next year in a form slightly different from the one here, depicts a knight-at-arms who has been seduced and abandoned by a capricious fairy. Told in the form of a dialogue, the poem recounts the experience of loving dangerously and fully, of remaining loyal to that love despite warnings to the contrary, and of suffering the living death one who has glimpsed immortality. At the beginning and end of the poem, the knight remains on "a cold hill's side," a world devoid of happiness or beauty, waiting for his love to return. Some readers maintain that the poem is really about Keats's confused feelings for Fanny Braw, his fiancée, to whom Keats could not commit fully. Others claim the story is of the plight of the artist, who, having "fallen in love" with beauty, can never fully accept the mundane. Either way, the conclusion is the same: however self-destructive intense love may be, the lover has choice in the matter. Further, the more one entertains feelings of beauty and love, the desolate and more painful the world becomes.

Introduction:

John Keats was English Romantic lyric poet, who dedicated to the perfection of poetry marked by vivid imagery that expressed a philosophy through classical legend. A revered English poet whose short life spanned just 25 years, John Keats was born October 31, 1795 in London, England. He eventually studied medicine at a London hospital and became a licensed apothecary in 1816.

Style:

"La Belle Dame sans Merci" is a ballad, an old form of verse adapted for singing or recitation. Ballads are usually narrative or storytelling, poems and early ballads often addressed themes important to common people: love, courage, the mysterious, and the supernatural. Though the ballad is generally rich in musical qualities such as rhythm and repetition, it often portrays both characters and events in highly dramatic but simplistic terms.

Theme:

Unrequited Love: With its heartbroken narrator suffering the pangs of embarrassment, "La Belle Dame sans Merci" appears to tell readers about the universal situation known as unrequited love. While love felt equally by two parties is a celebrated event in stories and song, unrequited love occurs when the love felt by one person is much stronger than that felt by the person who is loved.

About the Poem: A lovesick knight tells an unidentified person about a beautiful "faery's child" who met him in a meadow and deceived him by deserting for ever all alone in the meadows.

"La Belle Dame sans Merci" or "The Beautiful Lady without Pity" is the title of an early fifteenth-century French poem by Alain Chartier which belongs to the tradition of courtly love, Keats appropriates this phrase for a ballad which has been generally read as the story of a

seductive and treacherous woman who tempts men away from the real world and then leaves them, their dreams unfulfilled and their lives blighted.

The knight-at-arms in this poem has been enchanted, enthralled, and is immediately suggested by his wandering in a desolate wasteland where the plant life has withered and no birds sing. He himself is in a decline; he is pale and the rose in his cheeks, like the sedge, is withering. In trying to explain his state to his questioner, he makes us highly suspicious lady whom he encountered. The narrator of the poem portrays the character.

To start with, he identifies her as a supernatural being, a faery's child' with wild wild eyes suggestive perhaps of madness. She speaks a strange language, and in her elfin grotto she lulls him to sleep. There may be a suggestion here that she is potentially treacherous since 'lull' can denote an attempt to calm someones fears or suspicions by deception. The lady's responsibility for his condition seems to be confirmed in the dream he has of the death of pale kings, princes, and warriors who claim 'La Belle Dame sans Merci / Hath thee in thrall!' 'And this is why I sojourn here' he tells his questioner, apparently referring back to this 'horrid warning' of the dream. He stays because he is in thrall to the merciless beautiful lady.

The knight is a helpless victim. He loves her so much and always courts her, and creates garlands, bracelets and belts that can be seen not only to decorate but also to bind and enclose her. As soon as they reach her elfin grot, we are given the perplexing and unexplained suggestion that she herself is now unhappy. 'she wept, and sighed full sore'. In this poem, the beautiful lady has been defined as a cruel, merciless enchantress, but nothing is described in the ballad about her cruelty and mercilessness. The poet has not given any clues of her cruelty. The knight says that she speaks in 'language strange', then how can he be sure she said "I love thee true". It is contradictory on the part of the knight himself. It is possible that he has translated what she said into what he wanted to hear.

Conclusion:

Keats sets his simple story of love and death in a bleak wintry landscape that is appropriate to it. "The sedge has wither'd from the Lake. And no bird sings". The repetition of these two lines, with minor variations as the concluding lines of the poem emphasizes the fate of the unfortunate knight and neatly encloses the poem in a frame by bringing it back its beginning.