

A painting of a winter landscape. In the foreground, a large, gnarled tree with bare branches stands on the left. A deer with large antlers is visible in the middle ground, standing near a body of water. The water reflects the light from a full moon in the sky. The background shows a misty, hazy landscape with more trees and rocks. The overall tone is dark and atmospheric, with a focus on natural elements.

Revision Guide

Winter Song

Elizabeth Tollet

Scrbblj.

The background of the page is a painting of a winter forest. It features several tall, thin, bare trees with intricate branch structures. The ground is covered in a mix of dark brown and light tan tones, suggesting snow and bare earth. The overall atmosphere is cold and desolate, with a focus on the textures of the trees and the ground.

Winter Song

Elizabeth Tollett

Ask me no more, my truth to prove,
What I would suffer for my love.
With thee I would in exile go
To regions of eternal snow,
O'er floods by solid ice confined,
Through forest bare with northern wind:
While all around my eyes I cast,
Where all is wild and all is waste.
If there the timrous stag you chase,
Or rouse to fight a fiercer race,
Undaunted I thy arms would bear,
And give thy hand the hunter's spear.
When the low sun withdraws his light,
And menaces an half-year's night,
The conscious moon and stars above
Shall guide me with my wand'ring love.
Beneath the mountain's hollow brow,
Or in its rocky cells below,
Thy rural feast I would provide.
Nor envy palaces their pride.
The softest moss should dress thy bed,
With savage spoils about thee spread:
While faithful love the watch should keep,
To banish danger from thy sleep.

VOCABULARY

Exile - the state of being barred from your country of origin

Stag - a male deer, especially a male red deer after its fifth year.

Rouse - make angry or excited

Undaunted - not intimidated or discouraged by difficulty, danger, or disappointment

Banish - get rid of (something unwanted)

Timorous - showing or suffering from nervousness or a lack of confidence.

Savage - fierce, violent, and uncontrolled

Spoils - the treasure or items gained in battle, in this case hunted food

Menaces - a person or thing that is likely to cause harm; a threat or danger

STORY + SUMMARY

Ask me no more, to prove my honesty, what I would suffer for my love. If you were exiled, I would accompany you to regions of eternal snow, confined floods of solid ice, and forests bare of northern wind. While I look around, I see nothing but wildness and waste. Undaunted, I would take your arms and give you the hunter's spear if you chase the scared stag or even if you became angry and decided to hunt a fiercer, more difficult species of animal. When the low sun withdraws his light, and menaces a half-year's night, the conscious moon and stars above shall guide me with my wandering love. Beneath the mountain's hollow brow, or in its rocky prisons below, I would provide your rural feast. I wouldn't even envy palaces for being better than the rocky prison where we lived in exile. The softest moss should dress your bed, with savage spoils spread around you: while faithful love watches over us, to banish danger from your sleep.



SPEAKER + VOICE

The **speaker** is in a **romantic mood**, and **fully devoted to her lover** - even in the darkest times, such as in exile, danger, or the middle of winter, when food is scarce and times are hard. The twenty-four lines of the poem are used by the speaker to emphasise how devoted they are to their target **addressee**. They'll do anything to show how much they adore each other. In the first two lines of the poem, the writer says, "Ask me no more, my truth to prove, what I would suffer for my love." The two opening lines show that the writer is willing to risk everything without question to prove their love.

LANGUAGE

Visual Imagery - 'O'er floods by solid ice confined' and 'Through forest bare with northern wind' - The poet tries to draw us into their world through the use of particularly vivid descriptions to convey the difficulties of the landscape that the speaker and her love must traverse - in this case, the **landscape symbolises** the ups and downs of life, as the period of 'Winter' is used to **symbolise** a time of difficulty and scarcity.

Alliteration - "Where," "wild," and "waste" in the eighth line create a continual 'w' sound, further emphasised by the **repetition** of the phrase 'all is', which conveys the extreme difficulty of the unknown landscape, juxtaposed with the extreme strength and faithfulness of the speaker's love and support for her partner.

Hyperbole - 'To regions of eternal snow, o'er floods by solid ice confined' - Tollett makes use of hyperbole to show the tenacity and extent of the speaker's love which knows no bounds for her partner. The **noun phrases** 'eternal snow' and 'solid ice' convey the coldness and harshness of the natural landscape in exile.



STRUCTURE + FORM

This is a twenty-four-line poem penned as a **dramatic monologue**, as the lines are spoken by a character and contained within one **single stanza** - like a speech from a play.

The poem adheres to a simple **rhyme scheme of AABBCDD...**, using **rhyming couplets** – where two rhyming lines of a verse fall in succession. This adds to the melodious nature of the poem, which is titled as being a ‘song’. Additionally, rhyming couplets are traditionally used in love poetry, so the form also conveys the speaker’s love.

Tollett also uses iambic **tetrameter**. Each has **four sets of two beats**, the first stressed and the second unstressed (we call these ‘feet’). This achieves the intended **atmosphere of love**, as iambic feet are used in poetry to evoke natural speech, coupled with providing a sense of progress and pushing forwards beyond difficulties.

Moreover, the writer makes use of **synopes** as seen with the words, ‘wand'ring’ and ‘o'er’ to mean ‘wandering’ and ‘over’ respectively. This is done so that the writer may achieve the targeted number of syllables on a given line in the poem.

Enjambment - ‘With thee I would in exile go/To regions of eternal snow’ - The poet carries his train of thought from the second line through to the third. This conveys the fluidity of her love for her partner, which is flexible and adaptable - if he were banished, she would instantly follow.

CONTEXT

"Winter Song" (published in 1760) is about the power of love and commitment. The speaker tries to "prove" their love by describing all the things they would willingly "suffer" on behalf of their beloved. The poem expresses her innermost feeling of love and she puts it out there what she is willing to do for her partner,

Elizabeth Tollett (1694-1754) was a well-educated 18th century woman who spent much of her life living with a kind brother, an antiquarian, who attended Cambridge University. She was the daughter of George Tollet, Commissioner of the Navy in the reigns of William II and Queen Anne. During the period in which the poem is written, there was a fashion in English poetry for speakers to confess their undying affection for their partners, and provide a general expression of thoughts on the ideals of love.

ATTITUDES

Love has no bounds - The whole poem speaks of what the writer would do, simply for love. She says that she would be willing to give up everything for love and to prove to her partner that she loves him. She says, “With thee I would in exile go” to show that there can be no limits to her love. Additionally, she does not seem to expect anything in return - her love is selfless and altruistic.

Love endures - The writer says, “If there the timorous stag you chase, or rouse to fight a fiercer race, undaunted I thy arms would bear,” as she ascertains that she will be there through thick and thin. Further, she says, “If there the timorous stag you chase, or rouse to fight a fiercer race, undaunted I thy arms would bear” showing that she would be there through thick and thin with her partner because of her love for him.

Where there is love, there is hope - The writer emphasises throughout the poem that so long as she loves the partner, nothing can divide them as there will eternally be hope for them. eternally be hope for them.



EXERCISES

1. Identify the tone in this poem, and support your answer with at least three quotations.
2. Do you agree with Tollet's beliefs on love? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Highlight all of the examples of imagery in the poem.

The background of the page is a painting of a winter forest. In the foreground, a large, gnarled tree trunk is on the left. A deer with large antlers stands on a rock in the middle ground, looking towards the right. Another deer is partially visible behind it. The ground is covered in snow and rocks. In the background, there are more trees and a full moon glowing in a hazy, overcast sky. The overall color palette is muted, with greys, browns, and soft yellows from the moonlight.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss Tollett's treatment of the theme of love in the poem.

2. Examine the ways in which Tollett uses the symbolism of nature in 'Winter Song'.

THEMES

Romance

Love

Commitment

Winter

Difficulty

Exile / Abandonment

Perseverance

Hope