Winter Song

POEM TEXT

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 tim'rous 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.

SUMMARY

Don't ask me anymore to prove the truth of my commitment or what I'd be willing to go through for love. I'd follow you even if that meant being banished to harsh lands of constant winter, where vast blocks of ice imprison flowing water. I'd go with you through the desolate forest, where the harsh northern wind blows. There, I'd look all around this wild, barren landscape. If you had to hunt after a frightened deer or fight against a powerful aggressor, I'd be there without fear, holding your weapons for you and handing you your hunting spear. And when the winter sun goes down, threatening a night that lasts for six months, the moon and stars will guide us on our journey. Under the mountain's ledge, or within its caves, I'd make us hearty meals from the earth. I wouldn't be jealous of life in grand, lavish mansions. I'd make your bed with the softest moss and spread wild treasures all around you. I'd watch over you with steadfast love, ensuring no harm could come to you in sleep.

THEMES

LOVE AND COMMITMENT

"Winter Song" is a passionate assertion of romantic love. The poem's speaker, seeming to respond to a lover who has questioned their commitment, illustrates the immense sacrifices they would readily make in love's name. In this poem, love essentially equals unwavering commitment—a willingness to be there for another person no matter how trying the circumstances.

The speaker attempts to "prove" their "truth," by which they mean illustrate their steadfast commitment to their lover, by listing off all the difficult and outright terrible things they'd go through on love's behalf. For this love, the speaker would willingly leave everything they know behind and go into "exile." They'd gladly suffer the harshest winter conditions—"regions of eternal snow" and "solid ice"—to be with their lover. They'd take up "arms" for them (that is, fight for them), watch out for danger while they sleep, and nourish them by preparing "rural feast[s]." In short, the speaker would always have their beloved's back, no matter what hardships came along.

What's more, all this would seem completely tolerable, perhaps even *pleasant*, when done in the service of love. That is, the sacrifices that come with true love wouldn't really seem like sacrifices at all to this speaker. Love would give the speaker courage, strength, and patience to endure any obstacles.

Indeed, it sounds like the speaker would relish living in this environment so long as they could do so with their beloved by their side. They'd dress their bed with the "softest moss" and cook marvelous meals with whatever they could find. Not even the lavish, comfortable lifestyle of those who live in "palaces" could tempt them, the speaker says; material riches are no match for the comforts of love, which can make a paradise out of a hellscape.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-24

LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-2

Ask me no more, my truth to prove,

What I would suffer for my love.

The poem's opening phrase implies that the speaker's lover has just questioned their commitment. "Ask me no more," the speaker begins, "What I would suffer for my love." In other words: *Stop asking me what terrible things I'd go through in the name of love!*

The rest of the poem then consists of the speaker attempting to "prove" the "truth" of their love—to show their lover just how committed they really are.

These lines establish the poem's use of iambic tetrameter. This means that each line has four iambs, poetic units that follow an unstressed-stressed syllabic pattern (da-DUM), for a total of eight syllables per line. Iambic meters are very common in English language poetry because they approximate the sound of regular speech. Here, they also create a sense of rhythmic momentum and intensity.

Yet there's a variation on this meter from the poem's very first moment. "Ask me" scans most naturally as a trochee, a foot with a stressed-unstressed beat pattern, while the next foot is a spondee (two stressed beats in a row):

Ask me | no more, | my truth | to prove,
What I | would suf- | fer for | my love.

This begins things on a rousing, forceful note that conveys the force of the speaker's command to their listener. Note, too, the /m/ alliteration of "me," "more," and "my." This lends even more strength to the poem's opening, signaling the speaker's determination to make their case.

Finally, these two lines create a rhyming couplet: "prove" rhymes with "love" (though this sounds like a slant rhyme to modern ears, it wouldn't have been in Tollet's time). The poem will use couplets throughout, which makes sense: couplets are rhyming pairs, and the speaker is describing their devotion to a partnership. The consistent rhyme here and throughout the poem subtly reflects the strength of the bond between the speaker and the poem's addressee.

LINES 3-8

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.

The speaker begins to "prove" the strength of their love. This proof takes the form of a hypothetical scenario, in which the speaker and their lover are sentenced to "exile" in a land of endless winter. The speaker readily declares that they'd leave their life (and presumably familiar comforts like a cozy bed and warm fire) behind and "go / To regions of eternal snow" with their beloved.

In lines 5 and 6, the poem creates a vivid picture of this winter world:

O'er floods by solid ice confined,
Through forest bare with northern wind:

The parallelism here emphasizes just how far the speaker would be willing to go for love: they'd travel *over* ice and *through* barren forests, stripped bare by the frigid "northern wind." The sibilance of "solid ice" makes the line itself sound shivery and cold.

The speaker continues:

While all around my eyes I cast,
Where all is wild and all is waste.

In other words, everywhere they'd look, they'd see nothing but wilderness and wasteland. The alliteration of "Where," "wild," and "waste" adds intensity to the speaker's description. The breathy /w/ sounds might even evoke the whooshing of that "northern" wind through this lifeless world.

LINES 9-12

If there the tim'rous stag you chase,
Or rouse to fight a fiercer race,
Undaunted I thy arms would bear,
And give thy hand the hunter's spear.

Having established the desolation of this hypothetical winter landscape, the speaker now describes what they'd do to survive and protect their beloved.

Whether that means chasing after "the tim'rous stag" (meaning a, rather understandably, nervous deer) or fighting human aggressors, the speaker would be at the ready. They would be unafraid to carry their lover's weapons and would quickly hand them their "hunter's spear" to catch that deer or defend themselves from a "fiercer race" (presumably, the speaker has in mind a group of so-called "savages," people more "wild" than the lovers).

In either scenario, the speaker promises to be fearless; love's strength, they imply, would see them through.

The sounds of this passage help to bring it to life for the reader. For example, notice how the spiky /t/ consonance of "tim'rous stag" subtly captures the creature's trembling fright. The alliteration of "fight" and "fiercer" and "hand the hunter's," meanwhile, makes these phrases sound bolder and more forceful.

LINES 13-16

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.

A chill breeze seems to blow through lines 13-16. Here, the speaker imagines the personified sun going down, withdrawing "his light" as if to test the couple's resolve. The sun "menaces"—that is, threatens—to usher in a night lasting half a year, making it even harder to survive.

Yet not even then would the speaker waver in their love. They declare that the disappearance of the sun would simply usher in the "conscious moon and stars," who, unlike the sun, seem to want the best for the lovers. Instead of acting menacingly, they "shall guide" the speaker and their "love" as they wander through this winter world.

Stars often symbolize fate. They're thus a reassuring presence in the sky not simply because they offer a means of orientation and delicate light, but also because they also imply that the speaker and their lover are *meant* to be together—and that no hardship will push them off the course of their love.

With this in mind, listen to how lines 15 and 16 use enjambment in a way that suggests uninterrupted movement:

> The conscious moon and stars above
> Shall guide me with my wand'ring love.

The poem's form itself subtly reflects the fact that nothing will get in the couple's way.

LINES 17-20

Beneath the mountain's hollow brow,
Or in its rocky cells below,
Thy rural feast I would provide.
Nor envy palaces their pride.

In the last eight lines of the poem, the speaker presents a vision of domestic bliss—one that endures in spite of the harsh winter landscape. Exiled to this eternally icy land, the couple wouldn't have a traditionally cozy home or luxuries. Yet the speaker once again reveals how they would overcome this difficulty, implicitly arguing that the power of their love could conquer anything.

The speaker imagines the couple finding shelter underneath a mountain ledge, here called a "hollow brow." The round vowel sounds in the phrase have a warm, pleasant tone.

Perhaps, the speaker continues, the couple would take refuge in the "rocky cells below"—that is, the caves—within the mountain. Notice how those /l/ sounds in "cells below" chime with "hollow," adding gentle music to the poem that subtly supports this vision of hard-won comfort.

Below the ledge or within a cave, the speaker would provide a "rural feast." That is, they'd rustle up a great meal, turning to the environment to provide for them (perhaps the hunted "stag" in line 9 will be the main course!). The speaker would once again make the best of a bad situation and give everything to make their lover's life a good one.

The speaker says that they wouldn't "envy palaces their pride"—that they wouldn't be jealous of the glorious, showy beauty of fancy mansions because love is all the wealth they need. The crisp, popping /p/ alliteration here ("palaces"/"pride") evokes the speaker's firm, swift dismissal of material riches in favor of love.

LINES 21-24

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.

The poem dials up the intimacy in its final lines. Listen to the sibilance here, as the speaker describes making their lover's soft, squishy bed:

> The softest moss should dress thy bed,
> With savage spoils about thee spread:

All those /s/ and /sh/ sounds lend the description a gentle, tender tone, as though the speaker is whispering in their lover's ear.

"Savage spoils" here equates to something like "wild treasures"—perhaps whatever the speaker has found in their daytime wanderings. But it's also possible that the suggestion of savagery is meant as a subtle euphemism, the speaker and their lover embracing the animal sides of their nature through sex.

The speaker also vows to watch over their lover in their sleep, keeping a vigilant eye for any threats. The phrase "banish danger" perhaps even suggests that the speaker would try to protect their beloved from bad dreams. The plosive /b/ and /d/ sounds here end the poem on a forceful note, reflecting the speaker's steadfast commitment to their love.

SYMBOLS

THE HARSH WINTER

In "Winter Song," the speaker imagines a hypothetical scenario: their lover being banished to a wintry land of "eternal snow," filled with "solid ice," barren forests, frosty wind, and a "low sun" that threatens "a half-year's night." The speaker says that they would readily follow their lover "in exile," accompanying them through this inhospitable landscape.

Readers can think of this winter world as symbolizing all the various trials and tribulations of life that can threaten love. The harshness of this world, in turn, conveys the strength of the speaker's commitment to their beloved: the speaker would

sacrifice traditional creature comforts—warmth, light, security—on their beloved's behalf.

"Exile" to this place might represent a situation in which the speaker and/or their lover fall out of favor with their peers. The scarceness of food might stand in for times when the couple is short on resources (e.g., money), while the "fiercer race" perhaps reflects people opposed to the couple's union.

More broadly, winter is a season linked with darkness, death, and hardship. That the speaker would find comfort and tenderness within this harsh winter world testifies to the power of love itself.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 4-6:** "To regions of eternal snow, / O'er floods by solid ice confined, / Through forest bare with northern wind:"
- **Lines 7-14:** "While all around my eyes I cast, / Where all is wild and all is waste. / If there the tim'rous 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 MOON AND STARS

The speaker references "the conscious moon and stars above" in lines 15-16, declaring that these will guide the couple along their "wand'ring" way.

The speaker is personifying the elements of the night sky here, imbuing these celestial objects with will and agency. Stars often symbolize fate, and the fact that the stars want to "guide" the couples thus suggests that the speaker and their beloved are destined to be together. The refusal of the stars/moon to be dimmed might also reflect the steadfast nature of the speaker's commitment.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 15-16:** "The conscious moon and stars above / Shall guide me with my wand'ring love."

POETIC DEVICES

ALLITERATION

The speaker in "Winter Song" uses alliteration to strengthen their promise of love. Shared sounds intensify the poem's language, making the poem—and the speaker's declarations—more musical and memorable.

In line 1, for example, repeated /m/ sounds make the speaker's command seem all the more insistent and purposeful:

> Ask **m**e no **m**ore, **m**y truth to prove,

After that, the poem enters a hypothetical situation in which the speaker and their lover are condemned to "exile" in a harsh winter world. Alliteration helps create a vivid picture of this inhospitable environment. Take line 8, where the speaker presents the landscape as untameable and unforgiving:

> **W**here all is **w**ild and all is **w**aste.

Those whooshing /w/ sounds evoke the rush of a "wild" wind whipping through a wasteland.

Later, the speaker outlines multiple threats the couple might meet in this world (and how they would rise to the challenge). The fricative /f/ sounds in "**f**ight a **f**iercer race" come across as aggressive and sudden, while the /h/ sounds of "**h**and the **h**unter's spear" seem almost breathless.

Note, too, the crisp, plosive /p/ sounds of "**p**rovide," "**p**alaces," and "**p**ride" in lines 19-20. These sharp, popping sounds add a haughty dismissiveness to the speaker's tone, reflecting how little the speaker cares for fancy mansions when they've got a humble home with their beloved right there.

Where Alliteration appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "me," "more, my"
- **Line 8:** "Where," "wild," "waste"
- **Line 10:** "fight," "fiercer"
- **Line 12:** "hand," "hunter's"
- **Line 18:** "rocky"
- **Line 19:** "rural," "provide"
- **Line 20:** "palaces," "pride"
- **Line 22:** "savage spoils," "spread"

PARALLELISM

The poem relies on consistent parallelism throughout, which lends intensity to the speaker's declarations of love. It's almost as though the speaker is saying, *"I would do this and this and this and this for you!"*

From line 9 onward, the poem follows a steady structure: two lines establish a situation, and the following two lines then introduce how the speaker would respond to that situation:

- If there's a "stag" to hunt or a "fiercer race" to fight, then the speaker will have their love's weapons at the ready.
- If the sun sets, then the speaker will rely on the moon and stars for guidance.
- If they're sheltering in a "rocky" cave, then the speaker will rustle up a "rural feast."
- If their beloved is sleeping on a soft bed of moss, then the speaker would watch over them.

This parallelism creates a list-like *range* of potential challenges, each giving the speaker a chance to show their commitment in different ways.

There are some more specific moments of parallelism within this broader poetic structure as well. Lines 4-6, for example, all start with prepositions followed by descriptions of this wintry world:

> To regions of eternal snow,
> O'er floods by solid ice confined,
> Through forest bare with northern wind:

"To," "O'er," "Through"—all these prepositions create a vivid sense of place. As a result, this land of exile seems vast and unwelcoming, whichever direction the speaker (imaginatively) turns. The parallelism emphasizes that the speaker would face these challenges head-on.

The parallelism of lines 17-18 works similarly, emphasizing that the speaker would look out for their beloved no matter the scenario. Whether "Beneath the mountain's hollow brow, / Or in its rocky cells below," the speaker would still manage to make a haven out of this hellish landscape. The similar grammar here (achieved again through the use of prepositions) shows that it doesn't *matter* what situation comes the couple's way: their love will grant them courage and see them through anything.

Note, too, how the repetition of "all"—also an example of diacope—in lines 7-8 ensures that the speaker's lover (and the reader) gets the point:

> While all around my eyes I cast,
> Where all is wild and all is waste.

Those repeated "alls" emphasize the sheer barrenness of this landscape: *everywhere* the speaker looks, *everything* is "wild" and "waste."

Where Parallelism appears in the poem:

- **Lines 4-6:** "To regions of eternal snow, / O'er floods by solid ice confined, / Through forest bare with northern wind:"
- **Lines 7-8:** "While all around my eyes I cast, / Where all is wild and all is waste."
- **Lines 17-18:** "Beneath the mountain's hollow brow, / Or in its rocky cells below,"

PERSONIFICATION

The speaker uses personification in lines 13-16, depicting the sun as a malevolent force and the moon and stars as a more positive, guiding influence:

> 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.

In this hypothetical scenario, the sun is a cruel figure who's decided to deliberately make life harder for the speaker and their lover, spitefully "withdraw[ing] his light." Sunlight, of course, is vital to life; his threat to disappear for half a year would present tough challenges for the lovers!

Yet the speaker always finds a way to flip adversity on its head. The months-long winter night, the speaker continues, would also mean the arrival of the "conscious moon and stars." Unlike the sun, these celestial objects want the lovers to survive and thrive. They'll act as a kind of lamp and map, guiding the couple on their journey. This personification also might suggest the speaker and their lover are meant to be together—it's written in the stars!

It's worth noting, too, how pitting the sun against the moon and stars is an example of antithesis. This sense of opposition adds drama and danger to the speaker's hypothetical scenario, all done in service of proving their love.

Where Personification appears in the poem:

- **Lines 13-16:** "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."

SIBILANCE

"Winter Song" uses sibilance to evoke two very different things: the harsh, unforgiving cold of the wintry landscape *and* the speaker's vision of hard-won domestic bliss.

Sibilance first appears in lines 4-6:

> To regions of eternal snow,
> O'er floods by solid ice confined,
> Through forest bare with northern wind:

Here, those wispy /s/ sounds in "snow," "solid ice," and "forest" blow through the poem like a chill wind (the /z/ sound in "regions" and "floods" subtly support this effect).

Stronger sibilance pops up in lines 21 and 22, to a very different effect. Instead of signifying the brutal cold, the soft /s/ and /sh/ sounds here create a sense of intimacy and tenderness:

> The softest moss should dress thy bed,
> With savage spoils about thee spread:

The speaker vows to make the couple's bed as comfortable as possible, sourcing the "softest moss" the landscape can provide. The sibilance is fittingly gentle, and it makes it sound as

though the speaker is whispering to their beloved.

Where Sibilance appears in the poem:

- **Line 4:** "snow"
- **Line 5:** "solid ice"
- **Line 6:** "forest"
- **Line 21:** "softest moss should dress"
- **Line 22:** "savage spoils," "spread"

VOCABULARY

Thee/Thy (Line 3, Line 11, Line 12, Line 19, Line 21, Line 22, Line 24) - Old-fashioned forms of "you"/"your."

Exile (Line 3) - The state of being banished from one's native home/country.

O'er (Line 5) - Over.

Confined (Line 5) - Trapped within.

My eyes I cast (Line 7) - I look/observe.

Tim'rous (Line 9) - Timourous, meaning fearful and reluctant.

Stag (Line 9) - An adult male deer.

Rouse (Line 10) - This can mean to wake up (someone or something) or antagonize/provoke.

Undaunted (Line 11) - Without fear.

Bear (Line 11) - Carry or be in possession of.

Menaces (Line 14) - Threatens.

Half-year's night (Line 14) - Darkness lasting six months.

Cells (Line 18) - Caves.

Rural (Line 19) - Relating to the countryside (as opposed to a city or town).

Watch (Line 23) - Lookout.

Banish (Line 24) - Eliminate or send away.

FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

"Winter Song" consists of a single 24-line stanza. This long stanza can also be broken up into 12 rhyming couplets (two-line stanzas).

This long, unbroken stanza perhaps evokes the long, daunting journey that the speaker imagines taking on their beloved's behalf. The use of steady rhyming couplets, meanwhile, subtly reflects the "pairing" of the speaker and their love.

METER

"Winter Song" uses iambic tetrameter throughout. Iambic tetrameter refers to lines of four iambs, poetic feet that follow an unstressed-stressed syllable pattern (da-DUM).

As an example, listen to line 3:

> With thee | I would | in ex- | ile go

Iambs have a bouncy rhythm that, here, creates a sense of momentum. The speaker promises to stay constant, reliable, and strong—just like the poem's meter.

There are some minor variations here and there, which add some interest and emphasis to certain moments. Check out the poem's opening couplet, for example:

> Ask me | no more, | my truth | to prove,
> What I | would suf- | fer for | my love.

The first few two feet here are relatively ambiguous, their stresses depending somewhat on reader interpretation. We'd argue the line scans most naturally like this: with an opening trochee (DUM-da) followed by a forceful spondee (DUM-DUM). Front-loading the line with stresses adds intensity to the speaker's command that their beloved stop asking them to prove their commitment.

And listen to what happens in line 13, in which the sun is cast as a kind of villain:

> When the | low sun | withdraws | his light,

The first foot here sounds like a pyrrhic (two unstressed beats in a row) followed by another spondee. The spondee's double stresses add a heaviness to the phrase "low sun," evoking the cruel sun's downward motion in the sky.

RHYME SCHEME

"Winter Song" uses rhyming couplets throughout: AABBCCDD... and so on. While some of these rhymes sound slant to modern ears, most would have been perfect in the pronunciation of Tollet's day.

The use of couplets here reflects the bond between the speaker and their lover. Rhymes also suggest intimacy, compatibility, and connection.

Couplets also give the poem a strong sense of forward motion, evoking the left foot-right foot pattern of walking. This makes sense, given that the speaker imagines themselves and their lover on a kind of epic journey.

SPEAKER

The first-person speaker in "Winter Song" has a point to prove:

> Ask me no more, my truth to prove,

What I would suffer for my love.

The poem is addressed to the speaker's lover, who has apparently been questioning the speaker's commitment. The speaker imagines a hypothetical scenario in order to demonstrate all the ways in which they'll be a good, dependable partner—no matter what life throws at the couple.

It's likely Tollet envisioned her speaker as female, given that this person undertakes the kind of domestic tasks typically done by women in the 18 century. The speaker isn't the one fighting or hunting here, but rather holding their partner's spear; the speaker also offers to handle cooking and making up their love's bed.

SETTING

The speaker of "Winter Song" conjures up a hypothetical world in order to prove their commitment to their beloved. This world is, as the title suggests, a land of "eternal" winter: a land filled with "snow" and "solid ice," "bare" forests, and a chilly "northern wind." The speaker sees "wild" and "waste" everywhere they look, and is forced to find shelter under a "mountain's hollow brow" or in the "rocky cells" (caves) below.

The harshness of this winter world reflects the strength of the speaker's love—something so powerful, the speaker argues, that it can turn this miserable landscape into something better than a "palaces." The speaker would line their lover's bed with the "softness moss" and look to the moon and stars above for guidance. They'd prepare a "rural feast" and guard their lover in sleep. In short, they'd make this barren world a loving home.

Of course, this setting isn't real; the speaker is imagining this world. The actual setting remains vague, but it doesn't matter; the speaker insists that they'd follow their beloved anywhere.

CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

The English poet Elizabeth Tollet lived from 1694 to 1754. Scholars don't know if Tollet had a specific person in mind while writing "Winter Song." Little is known about her personal life at all, in fact, apart from the fact that she remained unmarried until her death.

Tollet's best-known poem is "Hypatia," an early precursor of feminist literature that laments "What cruel laws depress the female kind, / To humble cares and servile tasks confined!" "Winter Song" is a somewhat unusual poem within the overall context of Tollet's work (much of which has likely been lost) in its focus on love and personal emotion.

Tollet wrote during the Augustan era (so-called because the king at the time, George I, likened himself to the Roman Emperor Augustus). Augustan writers, the most famous of whom was Alexander Pope, usually wrote formally strict, witty poems (often in couplets, the same form Tollet uses here) that took their cues from classical literature (e.g. odes, elegies, and satires). This literary movement was influenced by the great Latin poets of the original Augustan age (the reign of Emperor Augustus from 27 BCE to 14 CE). Like her Augustan peers, Tollet was an avid reader and even translator of writers like Ovid, Horace, and Virgil.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Tollet was unusually well-educated for a woman of her era. Noticing her knack for learning, Tollet's father encouraged her to read widely. Her fluency in Latin—in addition to more societally permissible languages for women like Italian and French—was a particular challenge to the conventions of the age. She produced numerous translations of classical poetry and religious texts, and she had a strong understanding of science and mathematics. Isaac Newton admired her intelligence, and she even wrote an elegy for the scientist when he died.

Despite her clear aptitude for academics, Tollet's options would have been limited as a woman of her day. Women in the early 18th century were largely excluded from universities and influential cultural/scientific institutions. Male-dominated society deemed them intellectually inferior, and, as Tollet points out in "Hypatia," women who *did* attempt to enter these guarded worlds were often mocked: "Yet oft we hear, in height of stupid pride, / Some senseless idiot curse a lettered [educated] bride."

Single women were expected to prioritize their looks in the pursuit of finding a husband, an attitude that Tollet also satirized in her work.

MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- More of Tollet's Poetry — Explore a selection of the poet's work. (https://www.poetrynook.com/poet/elizabeth-tollet)
- Tollet and Science — Listen to an eclectic podcast exploring Tollet's life and interests. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_BtwDWWYnA)
- Women in the Age of Newton — An article looking the scientific world during Tollet's lifetime. (https://www.historytoday.com/archive/elizabeth-tollet-and-her-scientific-sisters)
- The Role of Women in the 18th Century — An article exploring gender in British society during Tollet's life. (https://www.grin.com/document/75519)

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