

Tikrit University

College of Education for Humanities

English Department

Introduction to Literature- First Year-2026

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Literary Analysis of “Winter”

by

William Shakespeare.

*When icicles hang by the wall
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When Blood is nipped and ways be foul,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-who;
Tu-whit, tu-who: a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.*

*When all aloud the wind doth blow,
And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
And birds sit brooding in the snow,
And Marian's nose looks red and raw
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
Then nightly sings the staring owl,
Tu-who;
Tu-whit, tu-who: a merry note,
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.*

Form: This poem is a vivid descriptive song of pastoral (rural) life. A song is a short lyrical poem meant to be sung.

Content:

The General Meaning: this poem is a description of an ordinary cold day in winter at an English village.



The Detailed Meaning:

The poem presents an (image-clip) style. Each line presents double or sometimes triple types of images that describe scenes from the ordinary life of the people in the village.

The first stanza describes the view of icicles on the walls; Dick carries the logs of wood to the hall; milk freezes outside the house, etc. The only feeling and mood of happiness in this frozen weather, is created by the singing of the staring owl.

The second stanza presents further description of more different views of winter. The wind blows severely; the sound of the coughing of the listeners and the speaker at the praying drowns the priest's voice at the sermon; birds are sitting still together in the snow to keep their bodies warm; Marian's nose looks red and wet ; and the sound of the hissing roasted wild apples is coming from inside the house. While the owl is happily singing and Joan is continuing her cooking.

Theme: The poem describes the suffering of the people and Man's struggle with nature. Despite the harsh and sever nature of winter, people are still willingly doing their jobs and continuing their life with dignity, defiance, challenge and strength.

The Figures of speech:

Imagery: the poem is full of visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic and even gustatory imagery to make us see, hear and feel the people's suffering in life.

Anaphora and Repetition: Words and lines are repeated many times to create a musical tone since this is a song. Repetitions of ideas is also used to emphasize the coldness and harshness of the villagers' life in winter.

Assonance and Alliteration are frequently used to create musical tone.

Onomatopoeia: is used to imitate the singing of the Owl and to create a musical tone.

Contrast: There is a contrast between the coldness outside the houses and the warmth inside them.

Metaphor: in (coughing **drowns** the parson's saw).

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