
William Wordsworth

He was born in 1770 and educated at the local grammar school and then went to Cambridge. He died in 1850.

He became an ardent supporter of the French Revolution, he lived and got married in France, but the lack of money forced him to return to England.

When a modest inheritance made it possible to him to live independently he devoted him to poetry. He also met the poet Coleridge with whom he wrote the Lyrical Ballads.

Wordsworth was the first poet to define the ideals and values of English Romanticism in the Preface to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, with his famous declaration that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and it is the result of "emotions recollected in tranquillity". It was him who put feeling rather than technique at the centre of poetry. He also put a new set of human subjects at the centre of his works: lonely wonderers, rustic, poor country people and children, joined by natural subjects like wild flowers, rainbows or natural scenes. The other subject of Wordsworth's poetry is the poet himself, and his prophet-like ability to reflect on nature in order to "see into the life things".

Wordsworth's insistence on simple language, pure emotions and everyday subjects didn't prevent him using and excelling in a wide variety of verse forms.

The Romantics considered Nature as those massive, uncontrollable forces which moved the universe and dominated the life of man. Wordsworth want his poetry to convey plasure; to him a poet is a man who has so trained his senses and his imagination that he responds spontaneously to an experience that for other men might be meaningless.

So, in the Preface it's possible to read that what Wordsworth want is to choose incidents and situations from common life describing them in a selection of language really used by men, and at the same time, throw over them a certain colouring of imagination presented them to the mind in an unusual way.

"I wandered lonely as a cloud... "

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Written in 1804, it was first published in 1807 in "Poems, in Two Volumes". The poem is based on one of Wordsworth's own walks in the countryside of England's Lake District. During this walk, he and his sister encountered a long strip of daffodils. In the poem, these daffodils have a long-lasting effect on the speaker, firstly in the immediate impression they make and secondly in the way that the image of them comes back to the speaker's mind later on. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is a quintessentially Romantic poem, bringing together key ideas about imagination, humanity and the natural world.

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" explores the relationship between nature and humanity. In doing so, it makes two key points. Firstly, it argues that humanity is not separate from nature, but rather part of it. And secondly, it suggests that the natural world is essential to human happiness. Though the reader might be fooled by the suggestion of solitude in the title, this is an optimistic poem with a positive outlook on the world. This happiness is drawn from the speaker's interaction with nature, in turn encouraging the reader to appreciate the natural majesty that is all around them.

Comparing the daffodils to stars in the sky, the speaker notes how the flowers seem to go on without ending, alongside a bay. The speaker guesses there are ten thousand or so daffodils, all of their heads moving as if they were dancing.

Near the daffodils, the waves are glinting on the bay. But the daffodils seem more joyful to the speaker than the waves. A poet couldn't help being cheerful, says the speaker, in the cheerful company of the daffodils. The speaker stares at the daffodils lingeringly, without yet realizing the full extent of the positive effects of encountering them.

After the experience with the daffodils, the speaker often lies on the couch, either absent-minded or thoughtful. It is then that the daffodils come back to the speaker's imaginative memory—access to which is a gift of solitude—and fills the speaker with joy as his mind dances with the daffodils.

The poem introduces the idea of loneliness in the first line, but the speaker is not really alone at all. The speaker is in the presence of “a host of golden daffodils,” whose delicate “dancing” in the wind has a long-lasting effect on the speaker’s mind. This set-up introduces a sense of togetherness between humanity (represented by the speaker) and nature (represented by the daffodils). And though this togetherness is partly rendered by the personification of the daffodils that runs throughout the poem—they are “dancing” in every stanza—the speaker pre-emptively flips this personification on its head in the very first line. Here, the speaker compares himself to a natural element: a cloud. So, the human component of the poem is like nature, and the natural component is like humanity.

The poem suggests that this togetherness is something instinctive, and sometimes obvious only in hindsight. It’s clear that the beauty of the daffodils had an instant impact on the speaker, but it was only later, when the experience “flashed” again in the speaker’s mind, that the speaker realized its full significance. In this quiet moment, the speaker draws on the experience of the daffodils as an avenue to happiness.