

# Nature in William Wordsworth's Poetry

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## Abstract

Prominent Romantic poet, William Wordsworth is a shining example of literary inquiry into the domains of nature, human emotions, and the interdependence of all things. This study examines the deep connection between Wordsworth and the natural world, showing how his poetry bears witness to the transformational influence of the environment on the human psyche. Nature for Wordsworth was a vital, breathing entity that held immense power and significance. This paper looks at Wordsworth's depiction of nature as a living, breathing object with free will that can arouse strong feelings and spur spiritual rebirth. With reference to some of Wordsworth's best-known poems, such as "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," "The Prelude," and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," this analysis clarifies how the poet's respect for nature goes beyond simple appreciation to become a profoundly philosophical discussion of the essence of life. This paper also examines how Wordsworth used language, imagery, and poetic form to depict the dynamic interaction that exists between the natural world and the human mind. Wordsworth encourages readers to ponder their own place within the cosmic order and to immerse themselves in the sensory richness of nature through the use of techniques like vivid descriptions, sensory detail, and introspective thought. This essay makes the argument that Wordsworth's poetry provides a profound reflection on the human condition and our innate connection to the natural world, in addition to offering a lyrical celebration of nature's magnificence. By means of his classic poetry, Wordsworth extends an invitation to his audience to set out on a transforming voyage of self-exploration, re-establishing contact with the fundamental elements that uphold existence and stimulate the creative imagination.

**Keywords:** nature, wordsworth, sublimity, human psyche, poetry

## Introduction

William Wordsworth, a salient figure in the Romantic literary movement, is renowned for his profound engagement with nature in his poetry. His works often depict nature not merely as a backdrop but as a source of spiritual inspiration and moral guidance. Wordsworth, who is best known for his collection *Lyrical Ballads*, was born on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland, located in the Lake District of England. He was one of the Romantic poets of England. Romantic era was the period from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Lyrical Ballads*, published by Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798 marked the beginning of Romanticism. Wordsworth defined poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings which takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility". Word

worth's rich imagery and introspective musings encourage readers to admire the awe-inspiring aspects of nature and to acknowledge their deep connection with the environment. Wordsworth's poetry reveals nature as a source of solace, inspiration and spiritual renewal, offering respite from the chaos of urban life.

## Materials and Methods

Nature for Wordsworth was a vital, breathing entity that held immense power and significance. His poetry frequently addresses topics like the beauty, serenity and spiritual rejuvenation that may be found in nature, as well as how it can arouse strong feelings and revelations in a person's spirit. Wordsworth thought that nature had a heavenly quality that might evoke amazement and awe, providing comfort and wisdom in a world growing more industrialized and estranged. He saw nature as a teacher,

offering lessons of modesty, coherence and interconnectedness of all living beings. Through his poetry, Wordsworth sought to capture the sublime essence of nature and its transformative impact on the human spirit, enticing the audience to reconnect with the natural world. In his poems, Wordsworth depicts nature in a variety of ways. He sees the natural world as a source of spirituality, wisdom, love and endless happiness. For him, God and nature merge into one. According to him, nature is the universal spirit that guides anyone who chooses to follow its lead.

Lok Raj Sharma writes in his essay "Nature: a recurrent theme in Wordsworth's

Poetry", "The poet in his boyish days looked upon Nature as a source and scene for animal pleasure like skating, riding, fishing, walking. His first love was his romantic passion for Nature as he describes in "Tintern Abbey":

"The coarser pleasure of my boyish days,  
And their glad animal movements"

- (lines: 73-74)

In "Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey", Wordsworth reflects on the restorative power of nature, describing it as "the anchor of my purest thoughts". In "I wandered lonely as a cloud", he portrays the beauty and serenity of nature through the image of dancing daffodils, capturing the sense of joy and wonder it brings. Moreover, he examines the transformational power of nature on the individual in "The Prelude", especially in light of his early experiences with the natural world. In "To a Butterfly", he admires the Butterfly's carefree existence and envies its connection to nature, highlighting his appreciation for the simplicity and beauty of the natural world especially in the following lines

"Thou spark of life that waviest wings of gold,  
Thou songless wanderer mid the songful birds,  
With nature's secrets in thy tints unrolled  
Through gorgeous cipher, past the reach of words..."

In "The Solitary Reaper", he portrays the Solitary Reaper's song as a harmonious part of the landscape, suggesting a deep connection between humans and the natural environment. To Wordsworth, nature was where the spirit of the Supreme Being dwelt. Nature revealed God's peace and mystery, it manifested the bonds that united all

forms of life together- birds, animals and humans. When England went to war with France, his mind was in conflict between patriotic loyalty and his love and admiration for the revolution. War shattered all hopes. He returned to nature to restore his faith in divine providence and found it a great healer. Wordsworth called nature "The stern daughter of the voice of God".

Li Dan writes in his essay "The Conception of Nature in William Wordsworth's poetry", "After witnessing the corruption and depravity of the society, Wordsworth gradually realized that human reason was unreliable. He decided to find the original innocence from the magical deeds of nature and ordinary people. The ideal country which Wordsworth expected to build was replaced by a tyrannical government. Therefore, William Wordsworth claimed that Revolution could not release mankind, and only by returning to nature, the wounded human heart could be healed".

Hence, according to Wordsworth, the only way human beings could be saved from the ravaging repercussions of the Industrial revolution was to breathe in nature and find solace in it.

Wordsworth believed that being in nature helped individuals to reflect on themselves and settle their volatile minds. Society was corrupted and made people aimless and money minded, something which Wordsworth truly hated and was disappointed about, thinking of all as puppets on strings so he encouraged them to depend on nature and bring peace in their lives through it. Dan also mentions in his paper that Wordsworth's focus on nature started at an early age. Following his mother's death, he experienced a period of darkness in his life. For Wordsworth, nature was not just a stark contrast to human civilization but also a divine creation by God, existing in its pure form prior to humanity's emergence.

In his famous poem "The tables turned", Wordsworth urges his friend to leave books behind and seek wisdom directly from nature, emphasizing its ability to teach and inspire in ways that books cannot.

"One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of a man  
Of moral and evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can"

Wordsworth believed that children are the closest to God and so they understand and communicate with nature much better than adults. In his poem "Lucy Gray", Lucy is depicted as a child deeply connected with the natural world. She wanders freely in the wilderness, delighted with the sights and sounds of nature. The Poet emphasizes the innocence and purity of the girl through her intuitive understanding of the rhythms of the natural world. One of the most poignant moments in the poem is when Lucy goes out to gather berries in the snowstorm but never returns home. Wordsworth suggests that Lucy becomes one with the nature, as she is found deceased later, with her footsteps in the snow. This ending portrays Lucy's spiritual communion with nature, where she eventually finds solace. Throughout the poem, Wordsworth celebrates the beauty of Lucy's relationship with nature, manifesting it as a source of comfort and solace for her. This bond throws light on Wordsworth's broader belief in the transformative power of the nature on the human soul. Wordsworth emphasizes the importance of individual perception and interpretation of nature. He believes that each person's experience of the natural world is unique and deeply personal, shaping their understanding of themselves and their place in the universe. This emphasis on subjectivity and personal experience is evident in poems like "Lines written in Early Spring", where Wordsworth contemplates the interconnectedness of all living beings and the profound sense of unity that nature inspires.

Dr. Rajeev Ranjan wrote in his paper *William Wordsworth as a poet of nature*,

"Cazamian, a noted critic says that 'To Wordsworth, nature appears a formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike, the sower in our hearts of the deep laden seeds of our feelings and beliefs. It speaks to the child in the fleeting emotions of early years, and stirs the young poet to an ecstasy, the glow of which illuminates all his work and dies of his life.'"

Wordsworth elevates nature to a distinct and significant role in his poetry, unlike previous poets who only briefly mentioned it. He presents a comprehensive and unique philosophy about nature, offering a fresh perspective. Wordsworth introduces his readers to the

profound connection between the soul and nature. He believes that individuals raised in close harmony with nature achieve perfection in all aspects of their being. While most of the Romantic poets focused on nature as their primary theme, Wordsworth's portrayal of nature differs from the depiction of nature in the works of other Romantic poets.

Wordsworth views nature as a source of solace and inspiration, a means of connecting with deeper truth and inner harmony. His poetry frequently explores the relationship between humanity and natural world, highlighting themes of unity, interconnectedness and transcendence, while John Keats' approach to nature is characterized by sensual and aesthetic appreciation. He revels in the beauty and sensory richness of the natural world, often employing vivid imagery and lush descriptions in his poetry. Keats' nature poetry tends to focus on the transient and ephemeral aspects of nature, exploring themes of beauty and morality and the passage of time. When we look at Shelley's poetry, it often explores the sublime aspects of nature, evoking awe and wonder in the face of its vastness and complexity. His works reflect a deep concern for environmental and social justice and he frequently uses nature imagery to convey political and moral themes.

When we talk about the concept of sublime in Wordsworth' poetry, it refers to the awe inspiring transformative power of nature that evokes feelings of grandeur and fear in the reader. Unlike the picturesque, which emphasizes beauty and harmony, the sublime encompasses a sense of vastness, immensity and sometimes even terror. Wordsworth believed that encounters with sublime aspects of nature, such as towering mountains, vast oceans or tumultuous storms, could inspire individuals to transcend their everyday concerns and connect with something greater than themselves. By emphasizing the sublime, Wordsworth challenges readers to reconsider their place in the universe and to recognize the profound interconnectedness between humanity and the natural world. Overall, the concept of sublime in Word worth's poetry offers a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of nature, one that extends beyond mere beauty to encompass the profound emotional and spiritual experiences that it can

evoke in the individuals. Through his exploration of the sublime, Wordsworth invites readers to contemplate the mysteries of existence and to find solace and inspiration in the awe-inspiring power of the natural world. In "Ode: Intimation of Immortality", Wordsworth reflects on the loss of the direct connection to the transcendent beauty of nature that he experienced in childhood, while also exploring the possibility of regaining that connection through memory and imagination. He recalls how, as a child, he perceived the natural world with a sense of wonder and awe, seeing it as infused with divine significance and eternal beauty. Despite the passage of time and the changes wrought by adulthood, Wordsworth asserts the enduring permanence of nature's beauty and spiritual truth. He suggests that the memory of these experiences serves as the kind of "intimation of immortality", offering glimpses of a higher, eternal reality beyond the temporal world.

In another of his poem, "Composed Upon West minister Bridge", Wordsworth marvels at the sublime beauty of the urban landscape, finding inspiration and solace in the natural world even amidst the bustling city. While the poem is set in the heart of London, it celebrates the beauty and majesty of the natural world as observed from the vantage point of West minister Bridge. The speaker in the poem describes the scene as a "sight so touching in its majesty" and declares that "Earth has not anything to show more fair". Despite being a city, the scene described by Wordsworth's speaker exudes a sense of natural harmony and tranquility. He notes the absence of "a single dwelling" or any "cloud" to obscure the view, allowing the natural elements of light, air and water to dominate the landscape, this portrayal suggests that even within the bustling urban environment, moments of pure natural beauty and serenity can be found.

### Findings and Results

In this paper, the findings explore a deep thematic exploration of the natural world as a source of solace, inspiration and spiritual renewal in Wordsworth's poetry. His poetry demonstrates a profound connection between humanity and nature, emphasizing the restorative power of the natural environment on the human psyche. Through

vivid imagery and introspective reflections, Wordsworth invites the readers to appreciate the sublime beauty of nature and recognize their interconnectedness with the environment.

The results of the analysis highlight Wordsworth's belief in the transcendental qualities of nature and its ability to evoke profound emotions and insights in the human experience.

Wordsworth viewed nature as a therapeutic force that could soothe troubled minds and rejuvenate weary spirits. Additionally, the research underscores Wordsworth's view of nature as a divine creation, separate yet intimately intertwined with the human world. Overall, the research paper illuminates Wordsworth's enduring influence on environmental literature and his legacy as a pioneer of Romantic poetry.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Wordsworth's poetry offers a profound exploration of nature that extends beyond mere description to encompass a rich tapestry of themes and perspectives. From his celebration of the sublime to his exploration of the human psyche and its relationship with the nature, Wordsworth's poetry continues to captivate readers with its timeless relevance and universal appeal. By inviting us to contemplate the mysteries of existence and to connect with something greater than ourselves, Wordsworth challenges us to reconsider our place in the world and to cultivate a deeper appreciation for the beauty and wonder of the natural world. Through meticulous analysis several key findings emerge, illuminating Wordsworth's deep reverence for the natural world and its transformative impact on the human experience.

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