

William wordsworth  
as a nature  
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There's nothing quite like poetry for singing a paean to nature. Among the many celebrated nature poets, William Wordsworth is probably the most famous. What sets his work apart from others is that his poetry was, in fact, an act of nature-worship. Wordsworth perceived the presence of divinity and healing in nature, the presence of a higher spirit that he considered a 'balm' to weary souls.

His poem, Tintern Abbey, depicts with much lucidity the unity that he found in all animate and inanimate objects - "A presence that disturbs me with the joy...a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused," the peace that they bring to him - "To them I may have owed another gift...that blessed mood...In which the heavy and the weary weight, Of all this unintelligible world, Is lightened" and his confession to his worship - "I, so long a worshipper of Nature, hither came / Unwearied in that service with far deeper zeal / Of holier love". William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland, in the Lake District. His father was John Wordsworth, Sir James Lowther's attorney. The magnificent landscape deeply affected Wordsworth's imagination and gave him a love of nature. He lost his mother when he was eight and five years later his father. The domestic problems separated Wordsworth from his beloved and neurotic sister Dorothy, who was a very important person in his life.

With the help of his two uncles, Wordsworth entered a local school and continued his studies at Cambridge University. Wordsworth made his debut as a writer in 1787, when he published a sonnet in The European Magazine . In that same year he entered St. John's College, Cambridge, from where he took his B. A. in 1791. During a summer vacation in 1790 Wordsworth went <https://assignbuster.com/william-wordsworth-as-a-nature-worshipper-essay-sample/>

on a walking tour through revolutionary France and also traveled in Switzerland. On his second journey in France, Wordsworth had an affair with a French girl, Annette Vallon, a daughter of a barber-surgeon, by whom he had an illegitimate daughter Anne Caroline. The affair was the basis of the poem “Vaudracour and Julia”, but otherwise Wordsworth did his best to hide the affair from posterity. In 1795 he met Coleridge. Wordsworth’s financial situation became better in 1795 when he received a legacy and was able to settle at Racedown, Dorset, with his sister Dorothy. Encouraged by Coleridge and stimulated by the close contact with nature, Wordsworth composed his first masterpiece, *Lyrical Ballads*, which opened with Coleridge’s “Ancient Mariner.”

About 1798 he started to write a large and philosophical autobiographical poem, completed in 1805, and published posthumously in 1850 under the title *The Prelude*. Wordsworth spent the winter of 1798-99 with his sister and Coleridge in Germany, where he wrote several poems, including the enigmatic ‘Lucy’ poems. After return he moved Dove Cottage, Grasmere, and in 1802 married Mary Hutchinson. They cared for Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy for the last 20 years of her life. Wordsworth’s second verse collection, *Poems, In Two Volumes*, appeared in 1807. Wordsworth’s central works were produced between 1797 and 1808.

His poems written during middle and late years have not gained similar critical approval. Wordsworth’s Grasmere period ended in 1813. He was appointed official distributor of stamps for Westmoreland. He moved to Rydal Mount, Ambleside, where he spent the rest of his life. In later life Wordsworth abandoned his radical ideas and became a patriotic, conservative public

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man. In 1843 he succeeded Robert Southey (1774-1843) as England's poet laureate. Wordsworth died on April 23, 1850.

### NATURE as A SOURCE OF SPIRITUALITY

Wordsworth is, indisputably, the greatest poet of Nature. There is a systematic development in his attitude towards nature. At first he loves Nature for its external loveliness. He appreciates it through his senses and revels in the colour, the smell and the form of natural objects. He loves 'sounding cataract' for its sound, and the rose for its beauty. This is the stage of 'thoughtless youth'. Later on he begins to worship Nature for its inner meaning. He now looks on Nature as 'an embodiment of the Divine Spirit'. In other words he spiritualizes Nature. He thinks that Nature is not lifeless but possesses a life and spirit. He further believes that there is a spirit in nature as well as in the mind of man. It is possible for man to have communion with Nature. Anyone who communes with her would gain in power, beauty and holiness. He says in ode on the Intimations of Immortality:

To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

He regards Nature as the nurse of his moral being and worships it as a teacher, guide and friend. He describes Nature in such a way as to suggest that nature can mould and ennoble human life. He places nature on a high pedestal. Nature is like a goddess who compels admiration and worship.

Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature, being systematic, is based on some well-defined, fundamental principles. Nature is instinct with life. In other words,

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there is an indwelling spirit behind every flower, tree and river, and indeed every commonplace object of Nature. According to Wordsworth, Nature exercises a twofold influence upon man. It is to man first impute and then law. As an impute, she inspires the human mind; as a law, she restrains and chastens man's thoughts and emotions. There is a pre-determined harmony between the Spirit of Nature and the mind of man.

The deep and essential harmony between Man and Nature works in two ways;

1. It enables Nature to communicate its message to Man.
2. It enables Man to repeat on the message.

As we have said earlier, Wordsworth realizes this deep spiritual significance of Nature through three successive stages;

- (a) The sensuous
- (b) The intellectual
- (c) The moral and spiritual.

Wordsworth's love of Nature becomes at the last stage 'holy'. He loves Nature as a devotee loves his God. No poet of Nature has been more truthful than Wordsworth in his representation of the various objects of Nature. He paints natural objects but never reads his emotions in them. He offers us the bird and the flower, the tree and the river, the wind and the rain just as they are. He sees nothing ugly or mean. He exalts and glorifies even the most

ordinary things of life and Nature. He recognizes the sentient and personal life of Nature and not merely her physical growth or outward changes. In his childhood, the flowers, the streams, the hills and even the winds are regarded as his companions.

Let us now study the two important poems of Wordsworth, namely, 'Tintern Abbey' and 'Immortality Ode' to expound the observations made above. We see Wordsworth in Tintern Abbey as a worshipper of Nature. He shows his romantic passion for nature. He gives highly emotional descriptions of the effects of the outer world upon his inner life. The main theme of the poem is the poet's relationship with Nature and his indebtedness to her.

In fact, we know everything about Wordsworth as a poet of Nature from Tintern Abbey. He recounts how Nature influenced him, brought him peace and tranquillity of mind even when he was in the din and bustle of the city. We find him as the poet and mystic of Nature. He describes how the contemplation of Nature brought to him a blessed mood and a new vision that enabled him to see into the life of things. He gives the different stages of development of his love for Nature. He takes delight in Nature. He achieves a contact with the still sad music of humanity'. And finally he feels an all-pervading spirit in her. In this poem he clearly states his faith in Nature: Nature never did betray the heart that loved her'. This poem reveals his mysticism and pantheism. Nature becomes the passion for the picturesque:

I cannot paint

What then I was. The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.

Poetry is love!

Wordsworth became friend with another famous English poet, Samuel Coleridge, and inspired by their friendship Wordsworth began composing his short lyrical and dramatic poems for which he is perhaps best remembered by most people today. Some of these poems were loving tributes to Dorothy, his beloved sister, some were tributes to plants, birds, and other elements of “Nature’s holy plan,” and some were portraits of simple rural people intended to illustrate basic truths of human nature. The country girl in the poem “We are seven” is a perfect illustration of this last type of poems.

A new view on nature When Wordsworth died in 1850 he knew that he had renewed the style of English poetry and that he had brought the Romantic revolution to England. Through his poems he had also generated a new attitude towards nature. Nature was no longer something “out there” that had to be mastered and conquered, rather nature was a part of ourselves, there was no difference between human nature and physical nature. He talks about a wedding between the two. This view is typically Romantic and also we should not forget that W Poetry is love! Wordsworth became friend with

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Wordsworth works out in his poetry the new romantic concept of self. When Keats in a letter calls this world “ The value of Soul-making”, he comes close to Wordsworth’s thinking and helps us understand how Wordsworth, by answering the empiricist attack on the Christian concept of soul, is able to use the word soul in a new way. For Keats says that we come into the world as pure potentiality or “ Intelligence” and that we acquire a “ Soul” or “ sense of Identity” through “ Circumstances.” And it is the main purport of Wordsworth’s poetry to show the spiritual significance of this world, to show that we evolve a soul or identity through experience and that the very process of evolution is what we mean by soul. we should not forget that WThat is the meaning of the crucial line in “ Tintern Abbey”: “ The picture of the mind revives again.” Wordsworth sees the present landscape through his mental picture of the landscape five years earlier. Because he discovers continuity in the disparate pictures through a principle of growth, he becomes aware of the pattern of his life – he binds his apparently disparate days together. He may be said to evolve his soul in becoming aware that his soul evolves.



Included in the present experience is Wordsworth's sense that he will in future feed upon it, just as in the intervening five years he has fed on his last visit to this place. The experience includes, in other words, the consciousness of laying up treasure – not in heaven but in the memory. It is the point of "Tintern Abbey," the "Immortality Ode," and The Prelude that this spiritual storehouse of memory is our soul. Thus Wordsworth establishes, on naturalistic, psychological grounds, a self as transcendent as the old Christian self created and sustained by God. He establishes a new certainty about self and the self's perceptions, after the dissolution of the old Christian certainty had been articulated by Locke and the other empiricists.

Wordsworth's said (which serves also as an answer to the rationalist Descartes) that the mind belongs to, and therefore actively connects with, the nature it perceives.

It is this connection, sensed through what Wordsworth calls joy, that gives us confidence in the reality of ourselves and the external world. For Wordsworth the self is memory and process – the memory of all its phases and the process of interchange with the external world. The movement of thought into sensation and back again corresponds to the circular movement of self into nature and back again and to the circular movement from the subjectively individual to the objectively archetypal phases of identity and back again. Each such circular movement, which could be conceived as starting from outside as well as inside, is a new creation, a new confirmation, of self – and is impelled by joy. Wordsworth establishes the model of the modern self-creating, self-regarding identity, which draws its vital force from organic connection with nature. wordsworth's Connection to Nature

William Wordsworth is one of the famous authors from the Romantic era. Romanticism was an era which began to change during the French Revolution and continued through the Industrial Revolution. This genre of writing was different from previous genres. Romanticism followed little of the rules and authors were free to write as they felt. Most literature from this period was based on love, fascinations, obsessions, myths, and nature.

When going through William Wordsworth's poetry, we can note how far his passion for Nature is evident and multiple. This affirmation is shared by many critics. The English journalist and author, Thomas De Quincey, declares that " Wordsworth had his passion for nature fixed in his blood. It was a necessity of his being, like that of a mulberry leaf to the silk-worm, and through his commerce with nature did he live and breathe". As it can be noticed, the use of the mulberry leaf and the silk-worm image expresses Wordsworth's vision of nature as a source of literary inspiration. However, Wordsworth is concerned far less with the sensuous manifestations which delight most of the poets of Nature, than with the spiritual that he finds underlying these manifestations.

These words of Arthur Compton-Rickett confirm this remark: " It was Wordsworth's aim as a poet to seek beauty in meadow, woodland, and the mountain top and to interpret this beauty in spiritual terms". It appears clearly that the divinization of nature, which began in the modern world at the Renaissance and proceeded during the eighteenth century, culminates for English literature in Wordsworth. Unlike his contemporaries such as Coleridge, Byron, and Keats, Wordsworth has intellectualized Nature. Hence, the nickname " Prophet of Nature" is attributed to him and makes him not <https://assignbuster.com/william-wordsworth-as-a-nature-worshipper-essay-sample/>

merely a poet of nature who is concerned less to marvel at its beauty than to exult at its inner significance. In his poetry, Wordsworth has developed his literary vision of nature through various stages. In the first stage, the child Wordsworth looks upon nature as a source of and scene for animal pleasure like skating, riding, fishing and walking. Wordsworth's first love of nature is a healthy boy's delight in outdoor life. In the second stage, Wordsworth develops a passion for a sensuous beauty of nature.

As he grows up, his 'coarser pleasures' ("Tintern Abbey": line 73) lose their charm for him, and nature is loved with an unreflecting passion altogether untouched by intellectual interests or associations. Stage three refers to human heartedness. All the aching joys and dizzy raptures came to an end with the poet's experience of human suffering in France. The French Revolution opened his eyes and made him realize the dignity of the common man. This stage is followed by a final stage of the spiritual interpretation of nature. It is known as the stage of Pantheism.

In the poem "Nutting", Wordsworth describes the circumstances under which a great change comes in his approach to nature. After his 'merciless ravage' something mysterious touches him, and he feels that there is a spirit in the woods. Henceforth, he realizes a divine principle reigning in the heart of nature. As Margaret Drabble puts it: "At this stage the foundation of Wordsworth's entire existence was his mode of seeing God in nature and nature in God" Since the poet believes that the Eternal Spirit pervades all objects of nature, it is important to go through his poetry in order to grasp how he expresses the impacts of nature on the health and wellbeing of the human's everyday life. If the individual, in his quest for well-being, turns to <https://assignbuster.com/william-wordsworth-as-a-nature-worshipper-essay-sample/>

nature, it is necessary to investigate on the relation between man and nature. Furthermore, in its healing process, we can note that nature may foster joy, love, psychological and mental relief, and teaching that cannot be obtained without mystic forces pervading nature.