

**‘daffodils’ and
‘composed upon
westminster bridge’
analysis**



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William Wordsworth himself once said, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." Wordsworth, like most romantic poets, had a strong attitude towards the rebellion against the industrial revolution and strove to revert back to the "bliss" of nature. He believed that by returning to nature, mankind would become unrestricted by the constraints imposed upon them by an industrialised society. Humanity had corrupted his view of human nature and man from a state of innocence and natural beauty. Wordsworth's "Daffodils" and "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" are poems that convey Wordsworth's preoccupations with nature, politics and the imagination through the beautiful image of the daffodils "fluttering and dancing in the breeze" and a city adorned with an almost celestial light. During the romantic period nature became a powerful symbol; a vision of life as it should be. "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" colludes with the idea that nature is pure and beautiful. This is evident as early as the very first line where the Earth is personified as a "fair" and beautiful woman. This mimics the sonnet form of Shakespeare, where the crux of the sonnet dealt with the everlasting beauty of women. Perhaps this leads on to say that the beauty of nature is eternally existent for those who simply look for it. "This city now doth like a garment wear the beauty of the morning; silent, bare," these lines further emphasise the beauty of nature. The garment that the city wears is the beauty of nature's morning. While the industrialised society "seem[s] asleep" the "smokeless air" is bare of pollution and the streets are silent, free from the hustle and bustle of the noon city. The garment masks the ugliness, that is the city, but these clothes can not be worn all the time because they would become ruined by the corruption of man.

Wordsworth is trying to inform us that the morning is the only time that God,
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nature and man can co-exist in harmony. Religious imagery is used to reinforce the notion that God-made (nature) is perfect and magnificent, whilst man-made is corrupt and destructive. "The river [that] glideth at his own sweet will," provides a religious connotation to God in a Pantheistic view. This establishes a hierarchy between the binary opposition of God-made, at the top, and man-made, at the bottom. The "Earth had not anything to show more fair," meaning that everything was flawless, that is, until man corrupted nature's purity and perfection with their "ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples." Following this, came commercialisation and industrialisation, along with pollution in all forms and dystopia. Wordsworth is critical of the man who can not stop to appreciate the beauty of the city in the hectic intercourse of daily life, "Dull would he be of soul who could pass by a sight so touching...the beauty of the morning." He comments that society has lost touch with the divinity that allows man to see natural beauty. Wordsworth contrasts the morning city and the noon city, creating two entirely different worlds. The noon city expresses images of congested traffic, loud senseless noises and polluted air - an industrialised society working at full capacity. It destroys the good qualities of sympathy and kindness in humanity, and replaces them with a sense of malice and corruption. The morning city however; has an implied "smokeless air" and is beautiful, clean, fresh and majestic. The binary opposition between the morning and the noon cities represents the opposition of God-made and man-made respectively. Wordsworth is astounded, in that the average person is able to simply "pass by" the "splendour" of nature, which gives him nourishment and contentment each day. He is overcome by this site of perfection that he calls out to God, "Dear God!", to thank him for being a

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witness to this site, while others merely “ pass by” with their “ heart[s] lying still.” The thematic preoccupations of the “ Daffodils,” are the tranquility and unity with nature that the poet experiences through introspection. The first stanza discusses how mankind is disconnected from nature. Wordsworth says that the majority of people float “ high o’er [the] vales and hills,” like a cloud, where the hosts of daffodils grow. The great distance between the cloud and the daffodils show a disconnection and lack of a proper relationship with nature, and ultimately God. Wordsworth muses upon the tranquility to be found in nature, and when in “ pensive mood” he contemplates the “ flash,” the brief memory of the daffodils. His “ heart with pleasure fills” as he contemplates on his experience with the daffodils and becomes at one with nature. The second, and in particular, the third stanza illustrates the unification of nature and the poet. “ A poet could not but be gay, in such a jocund company,” here, the poet is at one with the daffodils. Not only are the daffodils personified as people by stating that their presence is associated with intelligent company, they are described with human characteristics, “ fluttering...dancing... [and] tossing their heads.” The personification of the daffodils shows a close relationship between the poet and the natural world. This relationship is further intensified with the reverse personification of the earlier stanza. “ I wandered lonely as a cloud.” The poet compares himself to a natural object, implying an inherent unity between man and nature. This reflects the poet’s desire to become a part of the natural world and Wordsworth yearns for the reader to experience the “ bliss” of nature, too. Wordsworth, in effect, becomes a social critic to the loss of spontaneity, purpose, innocence, passion and imagination. For

Wordsworth, the child and childhood represented a spontaneous and natural
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feeling of wisdom which is innately linked to nature, in a way which adults have lost touch with. Children are not corrupt by the ' vaulting ambition' which drives adults to perform uncanny behaviour, and therefore have the natural divinity to clearly see and experience nature. Natural and religious imagery are combined to symbolise the purity and incorruptibility of children, and reveals how children are inherently at one with nature. " God being with thee when we know it not," at this point the poet believes that his daughter is unconsciously devout, though she is outwardly untouched by the beauty of the evening. Wordsworth capitalises the words " Temple," " Nun" and " Girl," showing that there is an essential link between religion and the purity and beauty of nature. The sonnet is written in iambic pentameter, however; in the very first line this strict rule is broken, having eleven syllables. This shows Wordsworth's overflow of emotion with regards to his imagery of the " beauteous evening" and the love he feels for his daughter, who is pure and innocent of heart. Wordsworth's poems and sonnets, " Daffodils" and " Composed upon Westminster Bridge," convey the thematic preconceptions of politics, imagination and most importantly the relationship between God, nature and man. Wordsworth is able to effectively utilize literary techniques, such as personification, metaphor and simile, to describe how he feels not only about nature itself, but of his concerns of those in society who are " dull...of soul" and unknowingly " pass by" the absolute beauty, peace and tranquility of nature. Wordsworth encourages us to experience nature's beauty first hand and to veer away from the pollution and corrupting intentions of a commercialised and industrialise society. And as the man himself said: " Come forth into the light of things; let nature be your teacher."

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