

Wordsworths the  
daffodils is a  
reflection of nature,  
but a reflection on  
research...

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Daffodils, also known as ' I wandered lonely as cloud', is one of William Wordsworth's best known poems. It is also possibly one of the most mysterious ones in terms of its meaning and what the great poet was truly implying through this simple, melodious work. Traditional analysts have approached it as a straight forward reflection on nature, a poet's description of a sight that moved his heart in more ways than he had realized at the time. However, I believe that the poem has much deeper meaning than one first perceives. Wordsworth has made a remarkable statement on human nature, self-obsession, and loneliness.

This aspect leads one to consider whether the poem was written in reverse in terms of the occurrence of events. While the poem begins with the poet sighting the daffodils and ends with how the image returns to his mind when he is in a ' vacant' or ' pensive' mood. However, as the poem was written much later than the event actually taking place, it can be said that it was the pensive mood of the poet which triggered the memory of the flowers, reminding him of their beauty and the feelings it invoked in him. While this may seem irrelevant at first, it reveals the state of mind of the poet as he was writing the poem. He was not merely describing the scene, he was sharing the frame of mind which he, as a human being, had to be in to remember and truly appreciate the sight he had seen years ago. This aspect strengthens the approach that Wordsworth intended the poem not to be a depiction of the flowers, but of human nature.

One must consider that Wordsworth must have known the origins of the flower and their association with unrequited love and sadness. Yet, the sight of the flowers waving in the breeze brings him cheer and delight. In fact,

their memory brings solace to him when he is lonely. If it is only the beauty of the flowers that bring him joy, then there were several other elements of nature as described by his sister that were either as beautiful or contributed to the overall beauty of the scene . Why then does Wordsworth focus his poem solely on the daffodils? I believe that he intentionally uses the example of the daffodils based on their association with loneliness – an aspect of human existence that forms a crucial part of the poem and further supports the notion that the poem is more about human emotions than the flowers. The poem begins with a line that depicts the poet's loneliness – ' I wandered lonely as a cloud'. This feeling is revisited in the last stanza of the poem where Wordsworth specifically mentions that he remembers the daffodils in times of solitude. His associating loneliness with a cloud is also notable, as clouds generally move in groups or bunches, filling a portion of the sky, if not covering it. For a cloud to be ' lonely', it would either have to be the only cloud in the sky, or be lonely despite being surrounded by other clouds. As it is unlikely that a single cloud would be floating around in the sky, moreover on a windy day, the poet must be alluding to the feeling of loneliness in a crowd. This is such a human feeling that it cannot be ignored. Human beings, although moving in social circles and being part of groups of acquaintances, are often so disconnected with each other that they remain lonely. Wordsworth may have been associating this human loneliness to the disconnect between the inhuman clouds that flock together and yet have no meaningful company. It should also be noted that the poet is comparing himself to the cloud, as the ' I ' that starts the poem depicts. This is a direct reference to the

loneliness that Wordsworth felt just before he saw the daffodils. It is all the more likely that he was feeling lonely at the time of writing the poem as he mentions that, it is in times of solitude and vacant thought that he remembers the flowers. For a short poem, two references to the same emotion are bound to hold great weight on its purpose and meaning. Hence, it can be said that Wordsworth was, in fact, focusing more on his own emotions and state of mind when writing the poem rather than merely describing the scenic beauty of what he had seen.

Another word worthy of note is the description of the cloud's movement as 'wandering'. Wordsworth does not say that he moved or floated like a cloud, instead he chooses to say that he wandered. One is directionless when one is wandering, with no destination in mind. It is purposeless. The poet's selection of this word reveals that he is consciously trying to convey that, not only is he lonely, but he is also directionless. Further, one wanders on their own accord, it is a choice that one makes. A cloud that is drifting or floating is being guided by the wind, an external influence. However, when the poet 'wanders', he is not being made to do so, he is doing so on his own will. This informs the reader of the degree of disconnection the poet feels – he is so alone that he is wandering aimlessly. Once again, the first line of the poem itself, which otherwise seems like a simple, poetic description of a cloud, holds tremendous meaning in terms of human emotion and human nature. The poet then goes on to describe the scene below him as a cloud. He uses the word 'high' to show that the cloud was far beyond the reach of the vales and hills below. Also, it is here that he uses the word 'floats'. This line would seem to be an unnecessary inclusion as the poet has already described

himself as a cloud. Why does he mention the vales and hills, and the distance between them and the cloud that floats far from them. I believe that this is a reference to the poet's lofty thoughts and perceptive abilities which not only separate him from the more grounded hills and vales. It elevates him to a great level above them but it also secludes him. A man with Wordsworth's poetic mind is bound not to blend in with the common crowd. While people may appreciate and even love his works, they will always debate as to their true meaning. This illustrates that the poet will never be fully understood by those below his capacity for higher thinking. It should also be noted that this would, in turn, contribute to his loneliness. Thus, a critical analysis of the first two lines of the poem reveal that, beyond the obvious description of the natural landscape, the poem has much deeper meaning in terms of emotions.

It is at this point in the poem that Wordsworth introduces the daffodils. His description of the flowers, their interaction with their surrounding and their overall impact is that of great glee and sprightliness. He dedicates a major part of the poem to describing this scene, which is probably why the poem is often interpreted as a mere reflection on nature. However, Wordsworth could not have been ignorant of the much more solemn pictures being drawn of the same flowers by many of his contemporaries. Up until the publication and tremendous popularity of this poem, daffodils were considered to be far from cheerful objects. Was Wordsworth consciously attempting to deviate from the norm being followed by his peers and thus he chose to depict the flowers in a positive light?

It is here, again, that the importance of the word 'wandered' and 'lonely' in

the first line of the poem throws some light on the poems interpretation. Wordsworth's peers, including Byron, often used the term 'to wander' to describe a conscious deviation from the thoughts of their fellow poets. The works of Wordsworth were often 'novelised' - departing from traditional poetic structures yet influencing their field of poetry itself. Through his works, Wordsworth has been known to use a seemingly basic object or event and assigning a universal meaning to it – something which he does with the daffodils in this poem. In short, it was Wordsworth's style to take his experiences as example and associate it with deeper meaning, while departing from the accepted norms of interpretation at the same time. This weakens the notion that The Daffodils is a straight forward description or reflection on nature. It would be against the writing style of Wordsworth to create a poem that was so direct in its meaning. Instead, through cryptic use of words, he alluded to deeper understanding and exploration of human nature.

In the final stanza of the poem, Wordsworth most clearly gives the reader an insight into the true meaning of the poem. He uses words such as 'vacant', 'pensive' and 'solitude' to describe his state of mind when he remembers the daffodils. However, he also uses the word 'oft', a shortened word for 'often', to tell the reader that this not a rare mood, he experiences it often. Although he uses the phrase 'bliss of solitude', he uses it to show the proverbial silver lining of a dark cloud. One has to be alone in order to reflect on the true meaning and beauty of their past experiences. Through these lines, Wordsworth is commenting on the tendency of human beings to be often lonely, empty and preoccupied with their own lives to the point of not truly

appreciate life and learn from it. It is only in times of solitude, that they reflect upon them.

This facet is also effectively highlighted in the last two lines of the third stanza, where the poet says that he 'gazed - and gazed - but little thought/ What wealth the show to me had brought'. Wordsworth could not be clearer in his reference to the human tendency of not observing and learning from their surroundings. Man is so occupied with the day to day problems of his life, that he does not appreciate the lessons that even simple things have to teach.

However, in order to comprehend Wordsworth's message in its entirety, one must comprehend what 'wealth' the daffodils did bring to him. Was it the simple pleasure and solace derived from remembering something beautiful? The answer to this question lies in the mythical origins of the daffodils. The story of the daffodils is a personification of human self-obsession, lack of observation of their surroundings, and, like Narcissus, never truly understanding the people they meet. Wordsworth did not simply choose to write about daffodils because he had seen them by a lake with his sister two years ago. He consciously chose them as they aptly symbolized the very shortcomings of human nature that he was trying to depict through this wonderful poem.

## **Works Cited**

Bakhtin, M. M. "The Dialogic Imagination - Four essays." Holquist, Michael. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. 269-300.

Pickles, Sheila. *The Language of Flowers: Penhaligon's Scented Treasury of Verse and Prose*. London: Harmony Books, 1990.

<https://assignbuster.com/wordsworths-the-daffodils-is-a-reflection-of-nature-but-a-reflection-on-research-paper-sample/>

Pottle, Frederick A. "The eye and the object in the poetry of Wordsworth."

Bloom, Harold. *Romanticism and Consciousness*. New York: Yale University Press, 1970. 273-287.

Vickery, R. *A dictionary of plant lore*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Wordsworth, Dorothy. "The Grasmere Journals 1800-1803." Moorman, Mary. *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth: The Alfoxden Journal 1798*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971. 109-110.