

Similarities and differences in william wordsworth's poetry

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



Both W. B. Yeats and William Wordsworth mourn humanity's increasing distance from nature. However, the poets offer different responses to this man-nature divide: while Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" suggests that humans can find solace by retreating into nature, Wordsworth's "The World Is Too Much With Us" takes the more pessimistic view that because humans have become unable to relate to nature, the only possible escape from modern society is by reminiscing on times past. Devices such as visual and auditory imagery as well as complex poetic forms are used by both poets to illustrate these themes.

"The Lake Isle of Innisfree" and "The World Is Too Much With Us" share a reliance on imagery - in both poems, visual and auditory images are used to convey themes about nature. In "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," Yeats begins by vividly describing a scenic cabin in the woods; lines 2-3 describe such details as the materials of which the cabin will be made, the plants around the cabin, and its bee-hives. These minutiae have the effect of painting a life-like image of a cabin in the reader's mind; they make the reader feel as if he or she were at the cabin with the speaker and thus make it easier for the reader to empathize with the speaker's thoughts about the cabin. In addition to establishing the poem's verisimilitude, the imagery of a cabin surrounded by bean stalks begins to convey the sense of peace and tranquility which Yeats attributes to nature. This is further accomplished in the second quatrain, where Yeats writes that "peace comes dropping slow ... from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings." Here, Yeats explicitly associates peace with the auditory image of a cricket's chirping so as to deepen the connection in the reader's mind between peacefulness and the

sounds of the natural world; the reader therefore comes to understand that retreats to nature are peaceful. Wordsworth also uses imagery to illustrate his beliefs about nature, but to a different effect. In line 5, for example, he describes the visual image of the sea at night. While this image would normally seem soothing, in context with the rest of the poem, it is actually being used to illustrate humankind's distance from nature. That is, Wordsworth highlights this traditionally scenic image only to show that humans are so removed from nature that even the sight of the sea at night "moves us not." His use of auditory imagery has a similar effect: he describes mighty winds that "howl at all hours"; this, again, is a powerful image that should have an emotional impact on people, but instead serves to illustrate that even the most intense acts of nature fail to have an emotional impact on modern humans. While both Yeats and Wordsworth depend on imagery, then, Yeats uses it to convey nature's tranquility, while Wordsworth uses it to emphasize humanity's irredeemable disconnection from even the best of nature.

The form of both poems is also significant in revealing their attitudes toward nature. Yeats' poem is organized into three quatrains, each of which has a regular ABAB rhyme scheme. This technique has a rhythmic, pleasing effect; it helps develop the poem's meaning by suggesting a soothing sense of order, much like the order and rhythm that Yeats believes one can find in nature. And yet, this sense of order, while clearly regular and organized, is very non-traditional - after all, no classical poetic form consists exclusively of three quatrains. That "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is written in such a non-

traditional yet rhythmic form therefore mirrors Yeats' belief that rhythm and peace cannot be found in traditional human constructs, but must be sought out in the (non-traditional) wilderness of nature. Wordsworth's use of poetic form is also prevalent, but could not have a more different effect. Since "The World Is Too Much With Us" is written as a Petrarchan sonnet, it can be divided into an octave and a sestet. This division is significant, as the octave focuses on establishing the extent to which humans are removed from nature, whereas the sestet proposes a solution of sorts to this removal. That is, Wordsworth's use of a Petrarchan sonnet helps delineate the two different components of his argument: that humanity is removed from nature (this is described in the octave), and that people can only reconnect to the natural world by revisiting ideals from the ancient world (this is established in the sestet). Thus, while both poets rely on technique to convey their themes, they do so differently: whereas Yeats uses the technique to mirror the poem's meaning, Wordsworth uses it to distinguish between a problem and a solution.

In these ways, Yeats and Wordsworth develop their contrasting views on the human-nature divide. By forefronting peaceful images and a poetic form that is soothing but off-the-beaten-path, Yeats conveys the theme that humans can find tranquility in nature. Wordsworth, meanwhile, uses similar imagery to an almost opposite end; he suggests that humans have become irreparably distanced from all of nature's power. As underscored by his distinct sestet, the only solution, in Wordsworth's view, would be to retreat to the simpler times of Proteus or Triton. Thus, both poems take an escapist

stance, but their techniques reveal their escapes to be fundamentally different: Yeats' escape is into nature, while Wordsworth's is into history and mythology.