

Afterthought of ode:
intimations of
immortality from
recollections of early
child...



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Death is a natural part of human existence. Most human beings fear death because of the unknown nature of what happens after time on Earth is through. William Wordsworth paints a vivid picture of his fear of death by reminiscing about his childhood and longing to return to those days when he still had his whole future spread out before him.

William Wordsworth admits that he was afraid of death even as a young child which obviously led to his not wanting to grow up or grow old. As an adult, he looks back on his childhood and recalls his fear of death but at the same time longs to return to his carefree days of childhood.

The opening lines of the poem portray a man who wishes to return to the innocence of childhood when death was something to fear but was also something that was not going to happen for a long time. Wordsworth remembers his childhood as being “appareled in celestial light, the glory and the freshness of a dream” (Wordsworth, Lines 4 - 5).

He remembers such things as rainbows and roses holding wonder to him as a child and longs to see those things in the same innocence as he did when he was a child.

However, amongst this joy at being a child the thought of death would sometimes creep up and scare him once again. “To me alone there came a thought of grief” (Wordsworth, Line 22) shows how the fear of death can sometimes dull a perfectly joyous day.

Later in the poem he compares infancy and childhood as being similar to heaven when he says, “Heaven lies about us in our infancy” (Wordsworth,

Line 66). Wordsworth views youth as being as close to heaven as one can get because the thought of death is scary but not immediate.

He also compares growing up to being a sort of prison that closes in around humans as they get closer to the end of life. “ Shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the growing boy” (Wordsworth, Lines 67 – 68) shows just how much Wordsworth didn’t want to grow up.

Wordsworth goes on to liken childhood to the greatest treasure because of the hard work and toiling that occurs in adulthood. He once again compares childhood as being similar to heaven because of the freedom that children enjoy. “ Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might of heaven-born freedom” (Wordsworth, Lines 121 – 122) should enjoy being a child for as long as possible because becoming an adult means hard work as well as being closer to death.

Finally, Wordsworth recalls his childhood with “ delight and liberty” (Wordsworth, Line 136) and writes that remembering the innocence and pleasures of childhood can bring much joy to humans as they grow older. Wordsworth then goes to say that remembering childhood can bring about small moments of peace and quiet in years where things are noisy when he writes, “ uphold us, cherish, and have power to make our noisy years seem moments in the being of the eternal silence” (Wordsworth, Lines 153 – 155).

Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood is a poem that can both bring joy as well as bring sorrow. William Wordsworth’s words have the power to help readers recall the innocence of childhood with much delight.

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They also allow a reader to recall favorite memories to help them find joy when life is going down a dark path. At the same time, the poem can bring the fear of death to the forefront of one's mind and bring about intense fear of the unknown. However, in times when one is fearing death, Wordsworth recommends looking back and recalling how close to heaven being a child is and perhaps begin to look forward to reaching heaven after all.

William Wordsworth, *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807). See *The Manuscript of William*

Wordsworth's Poems, in Two Volumes (1807): A Facsimile (London: British Library, 1984). bib MASS (Massey College Library, Toronto).