

# William wordsworth



William Wordsworth William Wordsworth was born on April 7, 1770 to John Wordsworth and Ann Cookson in Cockermouth, Cumberland, northwest of England (Gill, 1990). William was the second of five children. His sister, Dorothy, was a poet and diarist, and was very close with William. She became one of William's greatest influences in his own writing. William had an older brother and two younger brothers. William and his siblings had no relationship with their father.

Even though William's father was hardly present, it was he who taught William poetry. His father also allowed him complete access to his own personal library. It was his mother that taught him how to read.

Unfortunately, his mother died in 1778, and William and his sister were sent to live with relatives in Yorkshire; it was during this time that William was introduced to real education, though he could thank his parents for the knowledge that he had gained up until that time.

It was in 1787 when William made his debut as a writer, having had a sonnet published in *The European Magazine* (Johnston, 2001). Within that year, he also enrolled at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he studied until he earned his B. A. After school, he spent much of his time on walking tours and various holidays. In 1791, William met and fell in love with Annette Vallon, who gave birth to their first child, Caroline, in 1792. It was in 1802 when William married a childhood friend, Mary Hutchinson. They had five children together - two girls and three boys. In 1793, William had his poetry published for the first time in the collections *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. He received money in 1795 from his friend, Raisley Calvert, to encourage him to keep writing poetry. In the same year, William met Samuel Taylor Coleridge, another poet, and they immediately became close. They

admired each other's work and decided to be influenced by one another.

In 1797, William and his sister moved to Somerset, not too far from where Coleridge lived. With the help of William's sister, William and Samuel wrote *Lyrical Ballads*, one of the most important pieces of work in the English Romantic movement. Even though William nor Samuel was listed as the book's author, William published one of his most famous poems, "Tintern Abbey", in the volume, as well as Samuel's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The second volume was published in 1800 and had William listed as the sole author. This volume focused on Romantic literary theory, and William discussed what he felt were the elements of new type of poetry. A fourth and final edition of *Lyrical Ballads* was published in 1805.

William spent five years writing an autobiographical poem. After he finished, he refused to publish it until he completed the rest of the volume that it would appear in. In 1807, William's *Poems in Two Volumes* was published. Unfortunately, it did not do nearly as well as his previous volumes had. He did very little writing after this, finding himself to be financially secure enough on the income he received as a Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland. However, in 1814, he published *The Excursion*, or the second half of a three-part volume, despite the fact that he did not publish the first or the third (James, 2008). It was through this that his famous Prospectus became known, which detailed the structure and intent of the poem contained in the volume.

William became the Poet Laureate in 1843, after some encouragement by the Prime Minister of the time. He became the only Poet Laureate to write no poetry. When his daughter died in 1847, he stopped writing poetry altogether. He himself died only three years later on April 23, 1850, due to a

case of pleurisy. His wife published his last volume; at the time, it received no recognition, but it is now considered to be his masterpiece.

#### Works Cited

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