

Wordsworth: “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” Teacher’s Notes **B2** **C1**

One of the most famous British poets is celebrating his 250th birthday in April! Why not celebrate him by studying one of his iconic poem, namely “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” (also known as Daffodils).

The following activities will help your students discover one of the landmark poems in Romantic poetry written by Wordsworth in 1805. This poem will help them discover not only the author but also British Romantic period’s main characteristics.

We recommend using this resource with *LLCER* students, but, as the form is quite simple and the activities accessible, it could also be studied with cycle terminal students (leaving out question 3 on verse scanning) so they could discover British Romantic poetry and its main features.

Vocabulary and structures

- **Nature:** fauna and flora (*daffodils, clouds, bay, waves...*)
- **Activities:** *wander, flutter dance, glance...*
- **Feelings:** *solitude, glee, bliss, jocund...*
- **Literary vocabulary :** *figures of speech, stylistic devices, metaphor, simile, , personification, alliteration, convey, to scan , verses, stanzas, iamb, tetrameter...*
- **Linkwords:** developing ideas: *thus, ie, ..* contrasting / opposition: *while, whereas, though...*

Pronunciation

- scanning verses
- rhymes in a poem

Listening, speaking, writing

- We’ve provided a Biobox animation on our site: 10 pieces of information to introduce pupils to Wordsworth. It will make a good introduction to the subject. Ask pupils to

watch the animation and take notes: dates, family, literary movement/ genre”. Then move on to the poem itself.

- We suggest starting with a very quick analysis of the title to help the students get a glimpse of the topic of this poem before considering the main lexical fields.
- Then, a group work focusing on the personification of nature vs reification of the poet will lead the students to get the gist of the poem, *ie* merging with nature fosters a never-ending feeling of bliss. The students will thus be led to understand the specificities of British Romantic poetry.
- Finally by scanning the poem itself and analysing its form, the students will understand how form can serve meaning or to put it differently, how the rhyming-scheme and the poem form reinforce the feelings evoked in the poem.

■ In the end, the students will be fully equipped with all the poet's tools to add a fifth stanza, following the pattern studied throughout the activities.

SOLUTIONS

These are examples of what students can say.

1. A bird's eye view of the poem

a. "as a cloud" is a simile, the use of "as" instead of "like" implies the poet fully identifies with nature, he somehow merges into it and becomes one with it.

b. **nature** : *cloud, vales, hills, daffodils, lake, trees, breeze, stars, bay...*

The poet's eye / vision : *saw I at a glance, inward eye, gazed...*

2. **Nature** : *golden fluttering, dancing, twinkle, never-ending, sparkling, tossing their heads, glee ...*

The poet: *float, gay, lie, wander, saw, gazed, my heart dances*

What is striking is that as Nature is endowed with feelings, the poet seems to disappear to become just a "gaze" and a "heart", he becomes one with nature. He seems passive, accepting nature and its beauty.

While nature is personified, the poet almost disappears.

b. *lonely, sprightly, vacant, pensive, bliss, solitude, pleasure*

→ paradoxically, happiness and loneliness are paired up and they almost feed one another

This is in keeping with the Romantic movement and its (sometimes) violent feelings inspired by nature that are very often contradictory, sometimes paradoxical and nearly always intense.

3. Scheme and meaning

a. ABABCC (a quatrain and a couplet) + iambic tetrameter (= 4 iamb = 8 syllables / octosyllable verses)

b. Simple feelings are rendered through a simple poetic form. In addition, the rhythmic pattern somehow guides us to quietness as the last 2 lines in each stanza rhyme and create some sort of lullaby that soothes the readers to a certain extent.

c. There is personification throughout the poem: the daffodils are a crowd like humans, and they dance, as do the waves. The daffodils are said to feel glee. This adds to the sense of the poet becoming one with nature.

There are many alliterations on the /s/ sound in lines 11-12:

*Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance*

The /s/ sound is smooth and reinforces the idea / feeling that the poet is hovering, even gliding amidst the clouds.

This alliteration really helps put an emphasis on the feeling of well-being experienced and conveyed by the poet

4.a. yellow (daffodils), white (clouds), green (vales), blue (waves) → lively colours

These colours are reminiscent of spring, they can be found in a natural environment and evoke happiness, bliss...

b. In the first stanza, the poet is out experiencing nature directly. In the final stanza, he is experiencing the pleasure over again in memory.

c. As a Romantic poet, Wordsworth focuses on nature and celebrates its beauty and its impact on the beholder. He suggests/implies that to reach happiness and wholeness, we should not be mere observers but should become part of Nature itself and experience it. What's more, he underlines the fact that bliss may be fuelled by loneliness, however contradictory these feelings may seem.