

Wordsworth: Activities **B2** **C1**

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", 1805



I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
5 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
10 Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
15 A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
20 In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Help

daffodils: yellow spring flowers
sprightly (adv) lively

glee (n) great happiness
jocund (adj) merry, cheerful
oft (adv, poetic) often

Romanticism

- The Romantic movement in poetry and art was a reaction to **the Enlightenment** that had dominated the early 18th century.
- Rather than logic, the Romantics valued **instincts, emotions and imagination**.
- Visionary poet and artist **William Blake** developed a complex **mythology** in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* (1794).
- **Nature** was very important to the Romantics like **John Keats** (*Odes*, 1820) and **William Wordsworth**. A key concept is the **sublime**: strong feelings inspired by impressive landscapes. **Percy Bysshe Shelley** described his reaction to stunning scenery in the poem "Mont Blanc" (1816).
- Wordsworth's Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads* 1789, a joint work with **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**, is considered the poetic manifesto of the Romantics. He explains that:
 - essential passions are best found in a rustic, humble life;
 - the language of poetry should be that of ordinary people;
 - poetry is a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."

1. A bird's eye view of the poem

a. Read the title of the poem and identify the figure of speech. What does that imply about the content of the poem itself?

b. Read the poem once and identify the two main lexical fields. Use two colours to highlight them.

2. Go deeper

a. The class is going to be divided into 3 groups. Each group will study a stanza. In each stanza, focus on:

- Nature : words, expressions and verbs used to describe it
- the poet: words, expressions and verbs used to refer to him

What can you infer about each one's status? Use figures of speech if possible.

b. Underline all the words referring to feelings in the 3 stanzas.

What are they? _____

To what extent are they typical of the Romantic poet?

3. Scheme and meaning

a. Identify the rhyme-scheme:

Identify the meter (number of pairs of stressed and unstressed syllables).

Is the poem in :

- Iambic pentameter? da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM
- Iambic tetrameter? da DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM
- Trochaic tetrameter? DUM da DUM da DUM da DUM da

b. Read the extract from Wordsworth's preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*. To what extent do the simple rhyme-scheme and form convey the feelings evoked in the poem?

c. Can you find other stylistic devices that help reinforce these feelings? Explain their effects on the readers.

4. Beyond the words

a. Read again and visualize the colours conjured up by the words. What sort of colours? How do they reinforce the feelings?

b. Compare the first and last verse. What about the evolution of the poet's status?

c. What is the goal / message of the poet?

5. Becoming Wordsworth...

Write a fourth stanza respecting the pattern and topic. You can choose from the following words.

Feelings	Nature	Verbs
wholeness, felicity, wellness, delight, ecstasy, mirth, merriment, joy, fulfilment	blossom, bud, sprout, daisy, poppy, lily, water lily, bloom	shiver, grow, flourish, thrive, be in full bloom, open up, roam, navigate through, meander, stroll