

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/illustrations/imwords_young.htm

Lyrical Ballads



http://www.worton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/guide.htm

Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800)

- The inaugurator of the Romantic Movement
- Poetic diction: no prescribed vocabulary and phraseology for verse; rather, “a selection of language really used by men.”
- Subject matter: “humble and rustic life” because of the intimate ties between country dwellers and Nature
- Poetry: “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.” Poetry lies not in the

- action and situation, but in the poet's intensely subjective feeling toward his experience.
- Meter: "tempering and restraining the passion"
- Poet: seizes "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge"

By the way

- Wordsworth's diction did little influence on the other romantic poets.

“We Are Seven”

- From the Preface to this poem: to demonstrate “the perplexity and obscurity which in childhood attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion”

“Lines Written in Early Spring”

- Wordsworth’s new ethics: a study of Nature’s teachings brings serenity and joy

“The Table Turned”

- The receptive passive soul rather than the active, grasping mind

“Strange fits of passion have I known”

- ABAB
- 4343
- Ballad form
- New subject for poetry



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/illustrations/imulls.htm

By the way

- Ballads are dramatic. They tell their stories without any suggestions of the poets' sense of their significances conditioning them at every point. In contrast, Wordsworth kept his own sensibility before the reader continually.

Sonnets and Other Poems



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/illustrations/imp6philip.htm

“My Heart Leaps up”

- “The child is the father of man”



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/topic_1/illustrations/imherkomer.htm

“It’s a Beauteous Evening”

- A Petrarchan sonnet
- God, Nature, Human Being



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/illustrations/imp25titus.htm

“The World is Too Much with us”

- Blinded by materials



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_3/illustrations/imprinters.htm

“Solitary Reaper”

- Poetic language, memory,
- Nature



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/illustrations/imgrasmereryd.htm

“I wandered
lonely as a
cloud”

- Nature and
memory



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_1/illustrations/imrydalprk.htm



BONEY'S meditations on the
The Devil addressing

“London, 1802”

- Nationalistic
- Petrarchan sonnet

http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_5/illustrations/rom5.htm



“Ode: Intimations of Immortality”

- Why is the child father of the man?

http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nae/l/romantic/topic_1/illustrations/impassgegddrd.htm

“Lines Composed
a Few Miles above
Tintern Abbey”
(1798)



http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nadel/romantic/topic_1/illustrations/imtinternabbey.htm

- The poet's development through the ministry of Nature
- Childhood, adolescence, early maturity
- Lyric + meditative
- Exaltation of reminiscence

Ballads: Characteristics and Form

- Characteristics as an oral form of art:
 - **Spareness of plot** –in media res (or even climaxes of the story), through monologue or dialogue, no narratorial comments (→ how “less” suggests “more”)
 - **Use of repetition and refrain** (→ repetition with variation)
 - **Simplicity of tune and rhythm** (four stresses in one line; rhymes)
 - One **ballad stanza** -- with \quad , alternating between tetrameter-- \quad (da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM), and trimeter-- (da-DUM, da-DUM, da-DUM) per line.

Question

- How does Wordsworth believe memory works on the human character? How is memory important in sustaining the connection between the individual and nature?

Question

- One of Wordsworth's most famous lines is "the child is father of the man," a line that reappears in the epigram of "Intimations of Immortality." How is childhood central to Wordsworth's conception of the self? How is that self affected by the aging process?

Question

- In "I wandered lonely as a cloud," how does Wordsworth achieve the seemingly effortless effect of implying the unity of his consciousness with nature?

Question

- How does Wordsworth imply the connections between God, nature, and the human mind?

Question

Characterize the relationship between Wordsworth (speaker) and the natural environment in "Tintern Abbey." How does Nature act on him? How does he act on it?

Question

- What are the criteria for good poetry explained by Wordsworth in his “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*?”

A Difficult Question

- What is the significance of close observation of individual (often small) details from nature in Wordsworth's poems? How do they compare with Blake's use of images from nature? Compare the views of nature, the past, and the imagination in the individual poems of both poets.