

# *I wandered lonely as a cloud* (1798)



## LEAD IN

### 1 Focus on the word 'lonely' and answer the following questions.

1. What ideas come to your mind when you hear it?
2. Are they mainly positive or negative ideas?
3. Are you afraid of 'loneliness'? Why/Why not?

Share your ideas with the rest of the class.

→ *Daffodils and violets* by Jean-François Millet (ca. 1867), Kunsthalle, Hamburg.



### 091

This poem originated from a real-life experience made by the poet while walking in the countryside. The view of a field of daffodils produced such an intense emotion, which the poet recollected in tranquillity and turned into a poem.

I wandered<sup>1</sup> lonely as a cloud  
That floats<sup>2</sup> on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host<sup>3</sup>, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering<sup>4</sup> and dancing in the breeze.

5

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle<sup>5</sup> on the milky way,  
They stretched<sup>6</sup> in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance<sup>7</sup>,  
Tossing their heads<sup>8</sup> in sprightly<sup>9</sup> dance.

10

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did<sup>10</sup> the sparkling waves in glee<sup>11</sup>:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund<sup>12</sup> company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth<sup>13</sup> the show to me had brought:

15

For oft<sup>14</sup>, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye<sup>15</sup>  
Which is the bliss<sup>16</sup> of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

20

< The poet remembers a time when he saw a group of daffodils while walking.

< The poet compares the daffodils to the stars in the milky way.

< The view of the daffodils fills the poet with joy.

< Remembering the view of the daffodils makes the poet feel joyful.

- 1 **wandered:** vagavo
- 2 **floats:** fluttua
- 3 **host:** moltitudine
- 4 **fluttering:** ondeggianti
- 5 **twinkle:** scintillano
- 6 **stretched:** si estendevano
- 7 **at a glance:** in uno sguardo
- 8 **Tossing their heads:** Che muovevano la testa
- 9 **sprightly:** felice, allegro
- 10 **Out-did:** Superavano
- 11 **in glee:** in quanto a gioia
- 12 **jocund:** felice
- 13 **wealth:** ricchezza
- 14 **oft** = often
- 15 **inward eye:** occhio interiore
- 16 **bliss:** beatitudine



**VOCABULARY Lab****2 Match the words (1-8) with their definitions (a-h).**

- |            |                          |  |
|------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1. floats  | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. very quick look                       |
| 2. host    | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. happy                                 |
| 3. twinkle | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. moves gently like a boat on water     |
| 4. glance  | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. looked for a long time                |
| 5. glee    | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. very large number                     |
| 6. gay     | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. feeling of satisfaction or excitement |
| 7. gazed   | <input type="checkbox"/> | g. pervades                              |
| 8. fills   | <input type="checkbox"/> | h. shine with an unsteady light          |

**COMPREHENSION****3 Complete the summary with the following words.**

ability | but | dance | group | poetry | power

This poem is a perfect example of Wordsworth's idea that **1** ..... is a recollection in tranquillity, and of the poet's **2** ..... to transform the commonplace into the extraordinary. The speaker is recollecting a past experience: he was walking 'lonely as a cloud' when suddenly he saw a **3** ..... of daffodils beside a lake and under the trees. At the time, the poet was overjoyed with the scene **4** ..... did not realise the profound implication of the experience. Remembering that joy enables him to transform the experience into poetry, and to use the **5** ..... of imagination to change a seemingly commonplace event into an extraordinary one. In Wordsworth's poetic view, the simple daffodils are personified, and **6** ..... more than the waves do, and are so numerous and bright as to resemble the Milky Way.

**ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION****4 Focus on the structure of the poem.**

- Does the poem have a regular rhyme scheme?
- Can you find an example of run-on-line?

**5 Focus on the first stanza.**

- What natural element does the poet compare himself to in ll. 1-2?
- Find evidence in the text to support the idea that the view of the daffodils is unexpected.
- Underline all the expressions the poet uses to describe the flowers. What nouns does he use? What actions do they take?

**6 Focus on the second stanza.**

- What does Wordsworth turn the landscape into by comparing the daffodils to the Milky Way?
- Find an example of hyperbole. What effect does it produce?
- What words or expressions does the poet use to strengthen the idea that the daffodils are living creatures?

**7 Focus on the third stanza.**

- How did the waves react at the view of the daffodils?
- How has the state of the poet changed from the beginning of the poem?
- Is the poet totally aware of the effect the view of the daffodils produced in him? Why/Why not?

**8 Focus on the fourth stanza.**

- Underline all the verbs contained in the stanza. Do the actions described in the last stanza refer to the present or to the past?
- What does the poet mean by 'inward eye' in l. 21?
- What effect does the memory of the daffodils produce?
- What unites the poet, the daffodils and nature?
- What expressions does Wordsworth use to describe the daffodils as angelic creatures? Why do you think Wordsworth insists on this idea?

**# KEY TOPICS NATURE**

**An enduring joy.** In this poem Wordsworth describes both the immediate and the long-lasting effects Nature has on human beings: not only does Nature produce intense emotions when humans are in contact with it; the effects of such emotions last in time and thanks to memory and imagination produce an everlasting sense of joy, happiness, and well-being.

**REFLECT & DISCUSS****9 Answer the following questions.**

- What expressions can you find in the poem to support the idea that Nature can make us experience positive feelings?
- What line of the poem makes you realise that the poet has become 'part' of nature'?
- Have you ever felt what it means to be 'part of nature'? How did it make you feel?

**ORACY Lab****12 Compare Wordsworth's and Blake's views of Nature.**

Focus on the following aspects.

- The Industrial Revolution context;
- the idea of simplicity and purity;
- the role of natural symbols;
- the poet's connection with Nature.

→ *Weymouth Bay from the Downs above Osmington Mills* by John Constable (ca. 1816), oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

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