

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

LIFE (1770 - 1850)

William Wordsworth was born and grew up in a wild area known as the “Lake District”. He was educated at a local grammar school and then went to Cambridge, graduating in 1791. In the same year he went to France, when attracted by the new democratic ideas, he became a fervent supporter of the French Revolution. While in France, he had a love affair with a young woman, by whom he had a child. Lack of money forced him to return to England. He settled in Dorset with his sister Dorothy. In 1795 he met Coleridge, with whom he was to develop a long and very productive friendship. They shared the same love for nature and enjoyed taking long walks and talking about poetry. It was during one of these walks that they planned the structure of the *Lyrical Ballads*. Wordsworth spent all his life writing poetry, free from financial preoccupations as he had received a substantial legacy from a friend. In 1843 he was appointed Poet Laureate and, seven years later, in 1850, he died.

ACHIEVEMENT

Wordsworth began writing poetry when still a schoolboy, and went on writing all his life. His best and most original verse were composed between 1797 and 1807:

- ***Lyrical Ballads***, written in cooperation with Samuel T. Coleridge. The two poets had agreed to divide the task of composing the volume, Wordsworth producing poems based on ordinary language, Coleridge those of an exotic or fantastic nature. *Lyrical Ballads* contains the two poets’ idea of poetry as a spontaneity of feeling expressed in common language, and describing common events.
- ***The Prelude***, an autobiographical poem, which explains how his ideas developed.
- ***Poems in Two Volumes***, including many sonnets and odes.
- ***The Excursion***, a philosophical examination of man, nature and society.

Wordsworth was the first poet to define the ideals and values of English Romanticism. He put feeling rather technique at the centre of poetry and he also insisted that the authenticity of emotion could only emerge in poetry that used ordinary language. He put a new set of human subjects at the centre of his works: lonely wanderers, rustics, poor country people and children, joined by natural subjects like wild flowers, rainbows or larger natural scenes.

DAFFODILS

The neoclassicists had loved the city, that great symbol of civilization. On the other hand William Wordsworth considered nature as those massive, uncontrollable forces which moved the universe and dominated the life of man. Like most romantics, Wordsworth saw in nature that same divine force which he found in the spirit of man.