



# E-Content

Instructional Media Centre  
Maulana Azad National Urdu University  
Gachibowli, Hyderabad - 32  
T.S. India

## Subject / Course – English

**Paper** : General English  
**Module Name/Title** : Daffodils: Poetry Programme



### DEVELOPMENT TEAM

CONTENT	Dr. Atiya Naheed
PRESENTATION	Dr. Atiya Naheed
PRODUCER	Rizwan Ahamd



Instructional Media Centre  
Maulana Azad National Urdu University  
Gachibowli, Hyderabad - 32  
T.S. India



---

## **7. DAFFODILS by WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

---

### **STRUCTURE**

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Activity
- 7.3 Features of Romanticism
- 7.4 Activity
- 7.5 William Wordsworth
- 7.6 Activity
- 7.7 Daffodils
- 7.8 Glossary
- 7.9 Summary
- 7.10 Activity
- 7.11 Theme
- 7.12 Activity
- 7.13 Form
- 7.14 Activity
- 7.15 Language
- 7.16 Activity
- 7.17 Imagery
- 7.18 Activity
- 7.19 Conclusion
- 7.20 Self- Assessment Questions

---

### **7.1 Introduction**

---

In this unit we shall study a short poem, "Daffodils." It is important to read the poem a few times before you start thinking about it and try to understand its meaning. So, read

the poem and enjoy its melody first. In poetry, like in music, the sense or meaning is communicated through the sound.

A short poem like "Daffodils" is called a lyric. A lyric is originally a song sung by one person on a musical instrument known as lyre. Hence the name "lyric." But the lyre is no longer necessary as an accompaniment to a lyric. The lyric is a subjective poem, that is, it talks about the personal emotions of the poet. It is marked by imagination, melody and emotion. You will notice all these qualities in "Daffodils." We shall discuss these features later in this lesson. The lyric or short poem became the most common and most powerful poetic form during the Romantic period.

---

### **7.2 Activity**

---

1. Why is the lyric called so?
2. What are qualities of a lyric?

---

### **7.3 Features of Romanticism**

---

We shall now briefly discuss some important features of Romanticism because "Daffodils" is a fine example of these features. Romanticism is a movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in literature, art, music, philosophy, etc., in many European countries. In England, Romanticism is identified by love of nature, interest in the past, and individualism. It also stressed imagination more than reason. The Romantic poets favoured shorter forms of poetry such as the sonnet, the Spenserian stanza, the ode, and the ballad. They preferred the simple language of ordinary people; they were opposed to the conventional poetic diction. They also chose to write on the lives of common people and their problems. The individual is at the centre of literature and art in the Romantic period. Therefore, literature is an expression of the individual's unique feelings and attitudes according to the votaries of Romanticism.

---

### **7.4 Activity**

---

1. When did Romanticism flourish?
2. List three important features of Romanticism.

---

### 7.5 William Wordsworth

---

Now we should try to learn something about the poet of "Daffodils.". It was written by William Wordsworth (1770-1850). He was a leader of the Romantic Movement in England. He and his friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, wrote a number of short poems which were very different in subject-matter, language, etc. from the established forms and themes. The novelty of these poems was like a whiff of fresh air. These poems were first published in 1798 with the simple title, **Lyrical Ballads**. When Wordsworth sensed the favourable reception to the book, he wrote a "Preface" to the second edition in 1800. In this "Preface," he explained the principles which he and Coleridge attempted to follow in composing poetry. This "Preface" has since become an important literary document. The emphasis in Romantic poetry shifted to nature, rustic life, and the strange (or supernatural) events. The language of poetry, according to Wordsworth, should be "a selection of the language of men in a state of vivid sensation." Wordsworth said that "poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." That is, poetry gushes out like water in a natural spring. Another idea which Wordsworth expressed in the same preface is that: "poetry is emotion recollected in tranquillity." This means that a poet might observe a beautiful scene, or listen to a melodious song. These emotions are recalled after a lapse of time. Poetry is composed of such recollections.

---

### 7.6 Activity

---

- 1 What are the new features of **Lyrical Ballads**?
2. Mention the important ideas which Wordsworth expressed in his "Preface."

---

## 7.7 DAFFODILS

— WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

---

I wander'd 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;

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 stretch'd in never-ending line

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:

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  
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.

---

### 7.8 Glossary

---

1. Wander'd: moved aimlessly
2. Vales: valleys
3. Crowd, host: a large number of
4. Daffodils: bell shaped golden yellow flowers
5. Beneath: under
6. Fluttering: swaying; moving to and fro
7. Breeze: gentle wind
8. Milky Way: Galaxy in which the sun and the earth are present (*Kahkashaan*)
9. Margin: edge
10. Tossing: moving from side to side
11. Sprightly: energetic; happy
12. Sparkling: shining
13. Glee: happiness; joy
14. Gay: happy; joyful
15. Jocund: joyous
16. Gaze: look intently

17. Wealtgh: treasure
18. Oft: often
19. Couch: sofa
20. Vacant: empty
21. Pensive: thoughtful
22. Mood: spirit
23. Inward: imaginative
24. Bliss: joy
25. Solitude: isolation; a state of being alone; loneliness
26. Pleasure: happiness

---

## 7.9 Summary

---

If you have read the poem a few times, you would have some idea of its theme. The original title of the poem was "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud." Wordsworth visited Grasmere where there is a lake called Ullswater in 1802. On the shore of the lake there were beautiful flowers known as daffodils. These flowers are golden yellow in colour in the month of March. It was an unforgettable sight for the poet. He recalled his emotion in tranquility two years later wrote this poem in 1804. Thus his principle that poetry is emotion recollected in tranquility is put into practice.

**Stanza I:** The poem is in four stanzas. The first stanza describes the scene. As the poet (or speaker) was wandering over hills and valleys alone like a cloud, he suddenly sees a large number of daffodils which are golden in colour. These flowers are located beside a lake and under the trees. As they swing due to the breeze, it looked as though they were dancing.

**Stanza II:** This stanza continues the description. The flowers are compared to the stars in the sky. There are countless stars shining in the milky way (our galaxy). Similarly, a large number of daffodils are found in endless rows on the lake shore.. In a single glance, the poet could see thousands of flowers swaying in the wind. This movement is like a joyful dance.

**Stanza III:** The shining waves in the lake also seemed to dance, but the dancing of the daffodils was more beautiful. A poet like him feels happy because the sight of the stars in the sky, the waves in the lake, and the daffodils on the ground, is very enjoyable. The scene is so attractive that it is not easy to turn one's eyes away. While watching the beauty, the poet does not realize what wealth this rich experience gave him.

**Stanza IV:** Often when he relaxes on his couch either idling away or meditating, the sight of the dancing daffodils comes back to his memory suddenly like a flash. When he is lonely, the memory of the experience gives him great pleasure and his heart dances with the daffodils.

---

### 7.10 Activity

---

1. What is the similarity between the stars and the daffodils?
2. How are the waves in the lake compared to the flowers?
3. What effect does the sight of daffodils have on the poet?

---

### 7.11 Theme

---

Wordsworth is a poet of nature. He enjoys nature, the clouds, the hills, the valleys, the stars, the lake, the trees, the flowers, and the waves. All these are described in the poem; all these are admired by the poet; all these are beautiful. They are also a source of pleasure. Nature has so much to offer and make him happy. Even the recollection of the beautiful experience gives him great joy.

Certain ideas are repeated in this poem.

1. *Loneliness*: This is a favourite theme of Wordsworth in many poems. Here it appears in the first line; 'solitude' appears again in the last stanza. Loneliness gives him 'bliss,' great joy.

2. *Suddenness*: He saw the flowers 'all at once.' We are told that they 'flash' upon his inward eye in the fourth stanza.. The first sight of the flowers was sudden; their re-appearance is sudden like a flash of lightning.

3. *Crowd*: The flowers are a 'host', a large number. The stars are in a 'never-ending line,' they are countless. 'Ten thousand' flowers is also a large number.

4. *Dancing*: The swaying daffodils look like dancing flowers, the twinkling stars seem to dance; the waves in the lake appear to dance too. Finally, the poet's heart is filled with pleasure, dances too.

5. *Shining*: The stars are twinkling in the sky. The daffodils are tossing in a sprightly dance; the waves are sparkling.

6. *Joy*: The daffodils danced in 'glee;' the poet is 'gay,' the company is 'jocund.' "Bliss" occurs in the last stanza again.

There is a contrast between the first visual experience of a myriad daffodils and the later recollection in the poet's mind, 'the inward eye.' Both are sudden; both give immense pleasure.

The poet identifies himself with the beauty, the joy, the solitude, and the serenity of the scene.

---

### 7.12 Activity

---

1. Explain how Wordsworth's idea, 'emotion recollected in tranquility,' is illustrated in this poem.
2. Point out the lines or words which mention suddenness in the poem.
3. Point out words which refer to 'joy.'

---

### 7.13 Form

---

Let us look at the form or the structure, that is, the organisation of the poem. It is in four stanzas. Each stanza has six lines. The first stanza describes the scene and the poet's sudden discovery of a host of golden daffodils. The second stanza compares the flowers

to the twinkling stars in the sky for their number, brightness and joy. The third stanza presents a comparison between the dancing daffodils and the dancing waves. The fourth stanza sums up the remembered pleasure of that rich experience.

Wordsworth uses a consistent pattern of rhymes in this poem. In the first four lines of each stanza, alternate lines rhyme. For example, *cloud* in line 1 rhymes with *crowd* in line 3. *hills* in line 2 rhymes with *daffodils* in line 4. The fifth and sixth lines in each stanza also rhyme. The pattern is ab, ab, cc. Rhymes not only have a musical effect, but stress the meaning the poet wants to convey. So, read the poem again noting the rhymes.

---

### 7.14 Activity

---

1. Explain the structure of 'Daffodils'.
2. Point out the rhyme scheme used by Wordsworth in this poem.

---

### 7.15 Language

---

Now let us look at the language of the poem. The words are simple, mostly monosyllables. The sentence structure is also straight forward. The rhythm of the poem is like the ordinary speech rhythm.

Unity is achieved in the poem through repetition of the same words, and sometimes, synonyms. Example: shine/ flash.

---

### 7.16 Activity

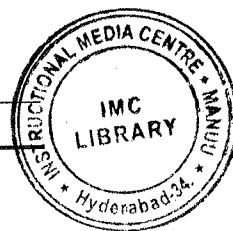
---

1. Comment on the language of the poem.
2. List at least two words which are repeated in this poem.

---

### 7.17 Imagery

---



This poem is rich in visual images. A number of beautiful things are described in the first stanza: a floating cloud, golden daffodils, a lake, trees, dancing; the description is continued in the second stanza; the shining, twinkling stars, in the third stanza the dancing and shining waves, and in the last stanza the couch, the inward eye, the flash, and the dancing heart. These bright images in every stanza reinforce the sense of joy which the poet experiences when he remembers the bright daffodils. Thus the images deepen our understanding of the central idea of the poem.

---

### 7.18 Activity

---

1. List three important visual images in this poem.
2. Which items seem to dance along with the daffodils?

---

### 7.19 Conclusion

---

In this unit, we studied Wordsworth's well-known poem, 'Daffodils.' We tried to understand it in the light of the principles of Romanticism and Wordsworth's own theory of poetry. We learnt that even ordinary things could be sources of great and lasting joy.

---

### 7.20 Self-Assessment Questions

---

1. What are the important features of a lyric?
2. Explain the important features of Romanticism.
3. Discuss Wordsworth's views on poetry.
4. Describe the scene at which Wordsworth saw the daffodils.
5. What is the theme of "Daffodils?"
6. How is the poem, "Daffodils," structured?
7. Write a note on the use of imagery in "Daffodils."
8. Explain:

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

b. "I gazed and gazed but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:"

c. "I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills"

9. Read the following passage and answer in brief the questions that follow:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
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.

- a. Who is the speaker?
- b. What does pensive mean?
- c. Find a synonym for happiness from the passage.
- d. What does inward eye mean?
- e. Why is the heart filled with happiness?

