

📖 Topic Page: [Wordsworth, William, 1770–1850](#)

Definition: **Wordsworth** from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate(R) Dictionary*

 [pronunciation](#)

William Wordsworth 1770–1850 Eng. poet; poet laureate (1843–50)

Words·worth·ian \ wərdz- wər-thē-ən, -thē-

 [pronunciation](#)

\ *adj*

Summary Article: **Wordsworth, William**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

English poet. A leader of Romanticism, Wordsworth is best known as the poet who reawakened his readers to the beauty of nature, describing the emotions and perceptive insights which natural beauty arouses in the sensitive observer. He advocated a poetry of simple feeling and the use of the language of ordinary speech, demonstrated in the unadorned simplicity of lyrics such as 'To the cuckoo' and 'I wandered lonely as a cloud'. He collaborated with English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge on *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) (which included 'Tintern Abbey', a meditation on his response to nature). His most notable individual poems were published in *Poems* (1807) (including 'Intimations of Immortality'). At intervals between then and 1839 he revised *The Prelude* (posthumously published in 1850), the first part of his uncompleted philosophical, creative, and spiritual autobiography in verse. He was appointed poet laureate in 1843.

Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth, Cumberland. Orphaned at age 13, he was educated at Cambridge University. In 1792 he returned to England from a visit to France, having fallen in love with Annette Vallon (1766–1841), with whom he had an illegitimate daughter. Religious differences, poverty, and the French Revolution prevented him from marrying Annette. A legacy of £900 encouraged him to devote himself to poetry, and in 1797 he moved with his sister Dorothy Wordsworth to Somerset, where he lived near Coleridge. From 1799 he lived in the Lake District, and in 1802 he married his cousin Mary Hutchinson (1770–1859). His later years were marred by his sister's ill health and the death of his daughter Dora in 1847.

His first published works, *The Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches of a Pedestrian Tour in the Alps*, appeared in 1793. His tragedy *The Borderers* (1796–97) was not performed, while his fine poem 'The Ruined Cottage' seemed too good for separate publication; instead he made it part of his long projected philosophical poem *The Recluse*. With the profits he made from the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* he went with Dorothy and Coleridge to Germany where he wrote some of his best short poems, including 'Strange fits...' and 'A slumber did my spirit seal'. In 1803 he visited Scotland and became friendly with Scottish poet Walter Scott and in 1805 he completed *The Prelude*, a long autobiographical poem on the development of his mind, subsequently much revised. The early part, describing his childhood, contains some of Wordsworth's best poetry. *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* (1814) were written to form part of the longer autobiographical work *The Recluse*, which was never completed. The *Poems* of 1807 include 'Michael', 'Resolution and Independence', and the famous

'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' which develops more fully the themes of 'Tintern Abbey'.

In 1813 the Wordsworths moved to Rydal Mount. *The Excursion* (the middle part of *The Recluse*) appeared the following year. Encouraged by a growing reputation, Wordsworth published some early work: *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815, written 1807) and *Peter Bell* (written 1798) and *The Waggoner* (1819, written 1805). He also visited London literary circles, where his egotistical behaviour displeased some admirers. *The River Duddon* (1820) was followed in 1822 by *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* and *Ecclesiastical Sketches*. An annuity left by George Beaumont enabled him to travel extensively abroad and to tour Scotland again. After *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* (1835) and *Poems Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842), he succeeded English poet Robert Southey as poet laureate.

At a deeper level, he saw himself as a philosophical poet and his nature mysticism had a strong, though diffuse, effect on his successors.

quotations

Wordsworth, William

documents

Thomas, Dylan: On William Wordsworth

Wordsworth, Dorothy: Journal

Wordsworth, William: 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal'

Wordsworth, William: From 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'

Wordsworth, William: 'My Heart Leaps Up'

Wordsworth, William: 'She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways'

Wordsworth, William: 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802'

Wordsworth, William: 'The World Is Too Much with Us'

Wordsworth, William: From The Prelude

Wordsworth, William: From the Preface to Lyrical Ballads

weblinks

Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth

images

Grasmere

audios

Wordsworth, William I wandered lonely as a cloud

APA

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