



The Major Works

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William Wordsworth (1770-1850) has long been one of the best-known and best-loved English poets. The *Lyrical Ballads*, written with Coleridge, is a landmark in the history of English romantic poetry. His celebration of nature and of the beauty and poetry in the commonplace embody a unified and coherent vision that was profoundly innovative.

This volume presents the poems in their order of composition and in their earliest completed state, enabling the reader to trace Wordsworth's poetic development and to share the experience of his contemporaries. It includes a large sample of the finest lyrics, and also longer narratives such as *The Ruined Cottage*, *Home at Grasmere*, *Peter Bell*, and the autobiographical masterpiece, *The Prelude* (1805). All the major examples of Wordsworth's prose on the subject of poetry are also included.

The Major Works Details

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From Reader Review The Major Works for online ebook

Michael says

I read Wordsworth as a sort of spiritual salve, a way to escape our industrialized and technology-filled world, through lines like these:

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in nature that is ours.*

These lines seem especially poignant in our internet age, when the world is with us all the time, and we are increasingly focused on "getting and spending." And what of nature? We see little of ourselves in it, with the result that "we lay waste" to ourselves. This is why I love Wordsworth, because he's earnest and spiritual and, to me, surprisingly relevant.

Jessica says

Okay. I have a real problem with William Wordsworth, for a number of reasons.

1. He's totally ripping off Charlotte Smith.
2. He completely took over *Lyrical Ballads* with his trite sayings about daffodils, when Coleridge's poems are really what interests (me, at least) the most.
3. His hypocritical turn to hardcore Anglicanism and his seeming surrender at the end of his life really bug the revolutionary Romantic in me.
4. If I read "Tintern Abbey" one more time, I'm going to throw up.

That being said, Wordsworth is a terribly, terribly important literary figure, and some of his works have serious merit and are highly interesting. It's just that I get tired of him being touted as "the ultimate Romantic," when I feel there are so many other diverse directions in which to pursue Romantic studies.

Sophie says

Wordsworth is one of my favourite poets and I have read many of his poems at different times.

I read **The Prelude** 7th June 2016-18th June 2016. I enjoyed it but I would love to come back to it some time in the future and study it closely as I know I can get a lot more out of it.

*"The Poet, gentle creature as he is,
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times,
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts."*

John says

Poems like "The Ruined Cottage" and "Tintern Abbey" are as close to perfect as poetry can be. Unpretentious, intellectual, and evocative. Wordsworth takes the simple and common and makes it achingly wonderful. Our sneering, eye-rolling, nod and wink post-modern sensibilities could certainly use a little more of the earnestness exhibited in these poems.

Gary Mesick says

I don't love Wordsworth, but I have to admit that he was on to something here. "The Prelude" is "self" as epic subject. What a concept! And we don't seem to have ever managed to get beyond it. Too bad for the world, but Wordsworth deserves a great deal of the credit/blame.

Joey Woolfardis says

[Quick review from memory before I re-read and re-review at a later date]

(This is currently on the pile on poetry that I am aiming to read at some point, having bought this for university but probably didn't really pay much attention at the time. I'm not the biggest Wordsworth fan but I'm sure he'll have something decent within this brick of a book.)

Tamara says

Not specifically this edition, but any collection of Wordsworth is as necessary as breathing to anyone who enjoys poetry. I can't live without my well-worn copy of collected poems and prefaces. Also check out the journal of Dorothy Wordsworth, his sister.

Elizabeth Rogers says

I love Wordsworth, I really do, but his works get a bit repetitive after a while. "Lyrical Ballads" is beautiful in its depictions of life in and around the Lake District. Wordsworth often combines realism with a more supernatural element, which I enjoy. His poetry is peaceful for the most part, as well as thought-provoking. The "Lucy poems" are my favorites!

Brett says

Oh, Wordsworth. I have read at least a little bit of the output of almost all of the great English romantics that are considered part of the traditional cannon. I enjoyed a lot of their work, but no poet of that age could ever

speak to me like Wordsworth.

This volume is over 1,000 pages long, so not every poem collected here is great. And the conventional criticism that later Wordsworth is not as good as young Wordsworth is certainly true. But Wordsworth's view of poetry as "a man speaking to men" and his profound relationship with nature that comes through so often, make him readable even 200 years after most of these were written. Perhaps not as dynamic as Blake, perhaps less intellectual than Coleridge, Wordsworth speaks with undiminished clarity and sincerity that is unmatched among the romantics. There is no better volume to put in your backpack for a walk in nature on a pleasant day.

Steven Belanger says

Had to read this for a graduate class. Some really good passages, but I didn't truly like any of the poems as a whole. Wordsworth was simply too much into himself, and how the natural world was, or was not, in tune with Wordsworth, rather than whether Wordsworth was, or was not, in tune with the natural world. This blighted some otherwise ingenious poems.

Sarah says

Usually I really have to like poetry to read it in my spare time although I do love studying it as you get a full grasp of the use of the language. Although I am going to study it this was one of the first times reading it before study which was new and although it did take me awhile to be able to get used to it I did begin to really enjoy this.

Meaghan says

Even at 28, I can understand both the joy and the longing that come from looking back on times when you have connected with nature in the past. One can only hope for more opportunities in order to build up a catalogue of such memories, so as to reflect on them all when much older and create a happiness in your imagination by revisiting them in your old age. I love the importance Wordsworth places on imagination and the role that it can take in taking control of our own state of mind and being. Beautifully written with modest humility and flattering invocations to Coleridge.

Julie says

This is possibly written for children, but it is just as enjoyable for adults. I like the illustrations. There are also small notes of explanation for words that people might not be familiar with now. It's a wonderful overview of his poetry and there is also biographical information that I found very interesting.

Gary says

Of course, I have no business rating Wordsworth. But he is so sad, so unrelentingly, depressingly sad, poem after poem. I suppose that in that day, he was regarded as serious, but today, to a citizen of this modern world in this country, he is not serious - he needs help. Maybe operating and writing on the verge of what we might call clinical depression was more natural then. I don't know and I have no right to guess. It's interesting, though. How many of those old characters seemed to take life too seriously? We sometimes think they were just enchained by a relentless morality, but I wonder if theirs wasn't simply a harsher world and a harder life?

Neil says

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star, 60
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come"

Ode on Intimations of Immortality

Daniel Ramírez Martins says

William Wordsworth is a true genius. I really liked this book, even though I'm not very into romantic poetry, he really shows great talent, I've even found perfection in some of his creations.

He puts all his love to nature and the countryside into such beautiful words that also are very evocative! You can feel him painting a gorgeous, pure landscape as you read poems like "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey".

I'd totally recommend this book.

Elena says

It was in reading Wordsworth years ago that I learned that the ancient division between philosophy and poetry is a false one, and that both, rightly seen and wholeheartedly pursued, are ultimately convergent trajectories of the human spirit. Wordsworth is the quintessential philosophical poet, I think. His work best displays what contribution poetry can offer to philosophy in the search for wisdom.

It was especially his Preface to his Lyrical Ballads, and some of the poems contained therein, that articulated for me a concept of both knowledge and of truth - "truth as an invisible friend and hourly companion" - that seemed more primordial as well as being closer to home than any other I had encountered by that time. It was where I first realized that truth is a thing to be lived, a trivial ornament to the ego if it does not illuminate and direct our day-to-day walk through life. Here is one of the passages that rang bells for me, right from the horse's mouth:

“The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, ‘that he looks before and after.’ He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet’s thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man.”

I would only add that philosophy+poetry, as records of the knowledge by which we live, together make up "the first and last of all knowledge," as well as together forming the kind of knowledge that constitutes "the rock of defence for human nature" even in times which we have forgotten the meaning of the word "human."

What kind of insight does poetry record? I think poetry models perspectives that are more encompassing than the one we usually see the aspect of things by. To understand poetry is to recreate, leap into, and internalize, the perspective the poem models. It isn't "merely" a theoretical system you can look at from a remove; it is an invitation to add to your own lenses another's, and to expand thereby your capacity for making a meaningful unity out of experience. Now, I can see that Wordsworth in this understanding is just a part of a larger buried tradition. Here's Blake: “As a man is, so he sees. As the eye is formed, such are its powers.” The business of poetry, as each of them conducts it, is to form the eye, and thereby transform the whole personality, our experience, and, in doing so, to deepen our relation to our world. It is to dig wisdom deeper into the living flesh of the person, to bring it home, as it were, so that it transforms the way we see and so that it doesn't remain for us a mere compartmentalized acquisition distanced from our motivational and affective core. Reading Wordsworth's poetry, as a meditative exercise, can make insight effective into our lives by integrating it into our everyday way of looking at the world.

A prerequisite for this kind of transmission of wisdom is, of course, empathic identification with another's experience in order to expand our own capacity for experience. And as Schopenhauer pointed out, compassion is the basis of morality. Exercising our capacity for compassionate identification with another's point of view means more fully participating in what it means to be a full human being.

Wordsworth is another one of those underrated educators (in that he's appreciated as a purveyor of lofty but idle aesthetic exercises, not as someone with something to teach about being human, at least not outside the literature departments). Yet he is someone who can teach us to tap into capacities for relating to our world that we didn't know we had. In doing so, he gives us more, richer, and deeper material to reflect on. Poetry plants the lush garden of experience that philosophy reflects on, prunes and organizes. I am starting to think, more and more, that both philosophy and poetry are needed for the full realization of the human psyche's powers to perceive, to experience, and to understand its experience. Reading these poems a decade ago is what, I think, first planted the seeds of this insight.

Maureen says

I like Wordsworth, and most of the Victorian poets. He is lyrical and evokes the English countryside and nature. I like many, many of his poems--check them out!

What though the radiance, which was once so bright,
Be now forever taken from my sight,
though nothing can bring back the glory of the flower,
the splendor of the grass,
we will grieve not,
but take strength in what remains behind....

A somewhat bowdlerized version from my dim memory, but I couldn't resist. Look up the actual verse...

Eleanor says

3.5 stars! I read this one for school and definitely did not read all the poems, only the ones I was assigned to. Therefore it's very hard to rate and judge his entire works. I did really enjoy some of the poems, however others I thought were average or too long etc. Overall I really appreciate Wordsworth's works and his talent for Romantic poetry.

Briana says

Mehhhhhh...I only read the Prelude. Once again, I learned how immature and impatient I am as a reader and how I don't appreciate nice things. I wish I was grownup enough to enjoy hearing about someone wandering around and around in nature and becoming more and more self-aware. Well, no, I don't wish that, but it probably would have helped.

I don't think I would have liked to have known Wordsworth. Not that there's anything wrong with him or that I dislike him on a moral level, but I feel like our personalities clash a bit.

I did like the part where Wordsworth didn't like college very much and got drunk at a party and then had to run like an ostrich to get to chapel. That was fun. (You know those moments where you finally decipher a long passage and it ends up being funny and normal-person-esque and funnier because you had to work at it? Yeah. That was this passage.)
