



## I Wander'd Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered 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;  
5 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 stretched in never-ending line  
10 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:  
15 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:

open or delight pleasure

happy

merry, happy

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
20 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.

often

dreamily

*William Wordsworth*

## General

The speaker wanders in nature and sees a wonderful group of daffodils. He recreates the scene when sitting alone at home in his mind.

## Stanza-by-stanza

### First stanza

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

In contrast to the speaker in William Blake's poem "London", we have a speaker wandering in nature. 'Wandering' means, having no purpose. This solitary, sauntering image is enforced by the comparison to a cloud. Clouds have no intent, they just float through the sky. The image of the cloud also emphasises the distance of the speaker towards the upcoming scene, like a cloud looking down on everything on earth.

Next the speaker is confronted by an amazing scene: yellow daffodils. A daffodil is a spring flower. The scene came unexpected. The word 'golden' implies something magical within nature ("beside the lake, beneath the trees").

When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
5     Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

### Second stanza

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the Milky Way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
10    Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

This stanza continues with describing the daffodils. This enforces the attention the speaker is paying to the ordinary thing. Wordsworth said that we should value the everyday more, like the intricacies of flowers. He enlarges the mundane flowers to epic proportions, by comparing it to the Milky Way and claiming they were in 'never-ending line'.

With the daffodils Wordsworth uses personification. The flowers 'dance' (line 6) and 'tossing their heads' (line 12).



### Third stanza

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:

open or delight pleasure

Next to the flowers, we also have the waves 'dancing'. Music and dance are often used in literature to represent harmony, as both works of art rely on harmony to be successful. The ordinary scene is therefore in harmony; it is perfect. This is enforced by the subsequent lines:

15 A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:

happy

merry, happy

There is nothing else that could make a poet happier than this epiphanic moment in nature. The childlike innocence of the scene with dancing and flowers also connects to the Romantic idea of childhood innocence.

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

The 'gazing' is repeating to make the reader feel the long time the speaker is watching the scene. Coleridge also uses this device in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": "Day after day, day after day" (RotAM, l.116).

However, at that moment, the speaker did not realise the full extent of the scene, its value. The word 'wealth' plays with the idea that this encounter was a valuable (or even more valuable) than money.

### Fourth stanza

20 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.

often

dreamily

It is when the speaker is on his own in a thoughtful mood, even a bit absent-minded, the scene of the daffodils reappears by use of his imagination ('the inward eye'). It makes the speaker re-live the moment at the lake. Using your imagination in recreating life is a Romantic device. Also, solitude, being alone, is not seen as



something horrible. It gives you the opportunity to imagine, and create blissful memories.

The poem ends in dancing. This strengthens the idea of harmony. The speaker dances *with* the daffodils, making him one with nature.

## Romanticism

The Romantic movement was characterized by its emphasis on individualism, nature, emotion and the medieval past (as opposed to the classical past like the Renaissance). Wordsworth was one of the founding fathers of the Romantic movement (although the term was coined later).

In “I wandered lonely as a cloud” Wordsworth shows the value in ordinary, natural things; beautiful things you stumble upon when you had no intent to find them. This recreational enjoyment of nature is common today, but it wasn’t in Wordsworth’s time.

The solitary scene in the final stanza enforces the idea of individualism. The speaker was also alone when encountering the daffodils.

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