



The Tables Turned by William Wordsworth

ABOUT THE POET

William Wordsworth was an English poet born in 1770. He was one of the founders of the Romantic movement in English literature and poetry. He spent most of his life in the Lake District – a region and national park famous for its lakes in northwest England. His poems were often inspired by the beauty of nature and our relationship to it, which were important themes for the Romantic poets. Romanticism moved away from the structured and rational approach of the early 18th century, towards an emphasis on feeling and emotion. Other themes in Wordsworth's Romantic poetry are creativity, imagination and memory, and our connection to the natural world. One of his most famous poems was *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*.



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|---|--|
| <p>1 Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;
4 Why all this toil and trouble?</p> <p>2 The sun above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
8 His first sweet evening yellow.</p> <p>3 Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
12 There's more of wisdom in it.</p> <p>4 And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
16 Let Nature be your Teacher.</p> | <p>5 She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
20 Truth breathed by cheerfulness.</p> <p>6 One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
24 Than all the sages can.</p> <p>7 Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
28 We murder to dissect.</p> <p>8 Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
32 That watches and receives.</p> |
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VOCABULARY FOCUS

grow double (line 2): to grow with your body bent forwards from sitting at a desk for too long

toil (line 4): hard work which is difficult and tiring

a freshening lustre mellow (line 6): a fresh, soft, warm light

a dull and endless strife (line 9): boring fighting (with studying) which never ends

a linnet (line 10): a small brown bird which sings beautifully

wisdom (line 12): the ability to make good decisions based on knowledge and experience

hark (line 13): to listen (old-fashioned)

blithe (line 13): happy

a throstle (line 13): an old-fashioned name for the bird now called a thrush

a preacher (line 14): a person who makes speeches about religion

forth (line 15): forward (old-fashioned)

wealth (line 17): a large amount of valuable possessions or money

spontaneous (line 19): natural, unplanned

an impulse (line 21): a sudden strong feeling that something must be done

a vernal wood (line 21): a small forest in springtime

evil (line 23): very, very bad

a sage (line 24): a very wise person

lore (line 25): traditional knowledge or beliefs

meddling (line 26): getting involved in something when your involvement is not wanted

dissect (line 28): to cut into small pieces to study it

barren leaves (line 30): dry, dead pages (here leaves means the pages of a book, not leaves on a tree)



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Before reading

- 1 The title of the poem is *The Tables Turned*. What do you think *tables turned* means?
- 2 Romanticism was a poetic movement that concentrated on nature and expressing feelings. Which of the descriptions below do you think describes a Romantic poet?
 - 1 a spiritual person
 - 2 a cautious person
 - 3 a creative person
 - 4 an individualist
 - 5 a formal person who likes rules
 - 6 a person who thinks emotions are important

While reading

- 1 Read stanzas 1–3. Match each stanza with a summary below.

- 1 The sun is shining
- 2 A bird is singing
- 3 Leave your books

Now read stanzas 6–8. Match each stanza with a summary below.

- 4 Close your books and look at nature
- 5 Spring can teach us things
- 6 We destroy nature by thinking too much

- 2 Read the phrases below and decide if they relate to a life studying indoors (I) or to nature (N).

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 'you'll grow double' | I / N |
| 2 'A freshening lustre mellow' | I / N |
| 3 'toil and trouble' | I / N |
| 4 'meddling intellect' | I / N |
| 5 'Spontaneous wisdom' | I / N |
| 6 'How sweet his music!' | I / N |

- 3 Read the poem again. Work with a partner. Find nouns and adjectives in the poem which are associated with nature and add them to the sense chart.

see	hear	smell	feel
long green fields	sweet music		

- 4 In stanza 5 the poet refers to nature as 'she'. What do you think the ready wealth is in the line *She has a world of ready wealth*?

After reading

- 1 Work with a partner and discuss which of the following is the best summary of the poem.
 - 1 Science and Art are very important subjects.
 - 2 It's healthier to be outside than inside.
 - 3 We can learn more from nature than from books.
- 2 Look at stanza 1 of the poem below. Underline the words that rhyme. Then look at stanza 2 and complete the missing words.

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun above the mountain's
A freshening lustre
Through all the long green fields has
His first sweet evening

- 3a Wordsworth suggests that we can learn from nature and see the world from a different perspective. Work in groups and think of examples of things we can learn from nature and the outdoors. Use the following ideas to help you:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|
| ■ animals | ■ mountains | ■ fresh air |
| ■ trees and flowers | ■ the sea | ■ birds |

- 3b Work with a partner. You are going to write a stanza of a poem about nature. Choose one of the examples from 3a.

Look back at the sense chart and try to use some of those nouns and adjectives in your poem.

- 4 Write your rhyming stanza of a poem about nature, following the same style as *The Tables Turned*. Read your stanza to the class. Can they suggest a good title for your poem?