

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is one of the most famous and best-loved poems written in the English language. It was composed by Romantic poet William Wordsworth around 1804, though he subsequently revised it—the final and most familiar version of the poem was published in 1815. The poem is based on one of Wordsworth's own walks in the countryside of England's Lake District. During this walk, he and his sister encountered a long strip of daffodils. In the poem, these daffodils have a long-lasting effect on the speaker, firstly in the immediate impression they make and secondly in the way that the image of them comes back to the speaker's mind later on. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is a quintessentially Romantic poem, bringing together key ideas about imagination, humanity and the natural world.

The speaker walks alone, similar to a solitary cloud in the sky floating over hills and valleys. Suddenly, the speaker sees a long and bustling row of daffodils. They are near the lake and the trees and flutter and shift as they are blown by the breeze.

Comparing the daffodils to stars in the sky, the speaker notes how the flowers seem to go on without ending, alongside a bay. The speaker guesses there are ten thousand or so daffodils, all of their heads moving as if they were dancing.

Near the daffodils, the waves are glinting on the bay. But the daffodils seem more joyful to the speaker than the waves. A poet couldn't help being cheerful, says the speaker, in the cheerful company of the daffodils. The speaker stares at the daffodils lingeringly, without yet realizing the full extent of the positive effects of encountering them.

After the experience with the daffodils, the speaker often lies on the couch, either absent-minded or thoughtful. It is then that the daffodils come back to the speaker's imaginative memory—access to which is a gift of solitude—and fills the speaker with joy as his mind dances with the daffodils.

Stanza 1

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;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

The poet was travelling aimlessly just like a cloud over the hills and valleys of the mountainous Lake District in England. At that time, suddenly he came across a large number of golden

daffodils beside the lake and under the trees. The flowers were 'fluttering and dancing' in the breeze.

The poet directly compares himself to a cloud, as he was wandering without aim, just like the clouds. This is an example of **simile** (Simile is a figure of speech where two things are compared using 'as' or 'like'. Read more about figures of speech). He also uses the expressions like 'crowd' and 'host' to mean that he saw a large area covered with a whole lot of daffodils. In the last line, the poet **personifies** the flowers by saying that they were fluttering (like birds or butterflies) and dancing (like human beings). There is also an indication that it was a breezy day. So we get an overall idea of the landscape which includes the valleys and hills, the lake, the trees, the flowers beneath them and the breezy atmosphere.

Stanza 2

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

Here is another **Simile**. The flowers are compared to the stars. They stretched in a continuous line just like the stars in a galaxy like the Milky Way. Moreover, the daffodils were shining (as they were golden in colour) and twinkling (as they were fluttering in the breeze) as the stars. This comparison with the stars may have a greater implication in indicating that the flowers are heavenly as the stars.

The flowers were visible as far as the poet could see along the shore-line of a bay. That is why he uses the phrase "never-ending line". Here 'continuous' and 'never-ending' may also suggest that the flowers left an everlasting impact on him.

Wordsworth exaggerates the number of flowers by saying "Ten thousand saw I at a glance". That indicates that the poet has never seen so many daffodils at once. So he is just overjoyed. This type of exaggeration is called **hyperbole** (exaggerated statements or claims not meant to be taken literally).

The poet also says that the daffodils were tossing their heads as if they were dancing in happiness. Actually the poet was amazed at the beauty of the flowers. So, he found everything around him joyful. All these references of dancing and tossing heads are parts of his **personification** of the flowers.

Stanza 3

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:

The waves in the bay were dancing and looking gleeful at the atmosphere. But the flowers outshone the lively waves in their happiness. Having such cheerful companion like the daffodils, a poet like Wordsworth cannot help being happy. So he was gazing constantly at the flowers and enjoying their beauty. The word 'gazed' is used twice to indicate how moved or charmed the poet was. So he gazed at them for a long time, forgetting his surroundings.

At that time, he did not think much about the 'wealth' that the flowers had brought to him. The poet realized that later, may be, after a few days. This 'wealth' is the happiness and the pleasant memory that he enjoyed for a long time since the day.

Stanza 4

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.

By starting this stanza with 'For', the poet continues his reasoning for saying that the flowers had brought him 'wealth'. He clarifies why the sight of the flowers was so important in his life. Whenever he lies on his bed in a vacant or thoughtful mood, the daffodils flash upon his inner-eye, i.e., his imagination. The daffodils have become an everlasting memory for the poet, whenever he is lonely. So, he calls it 'a bliss of solitude', a blessing of staying alone.

And whenever he sees the flowers in his imagination, his heart fills with pleasure and his mind dances with the dancing daffodils.

This shows the poet's intense feelings. The poet has been able to depict the landscape and express his mind so vividly in so simple language and form, that really draws one's attention. And that is why this poem has been one of the most read and mentioned subjective poems in the history of English literature.