

Understanding Poetry

Read the following poem, *Daffodils* by William Wordsworth. It might help you to understand it better if you read it aloud.

Daffodils

by William Wordsworth

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.

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.

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:

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.

Key:

o'er = over

vale = valley

oft = often

When you have read the poem, look at the questions below, which will help you to understand some of the language and poetic techniques.

- 1 Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right. Use a dictionary to check your answers.

Words

to wander

to flutter

a breeze

the Milky Way

the margin

a glance

sprightly

vacant

to gaze

a couch

pensive

solitude

Meaning

a light wind

the edge of a place or thing

the state of being completely alone

done with a lot of energy

to look at someone or something for a long time

seeming to be thinking carefully about something

to travel from place to place without a particular direction or purpose

a long, low, comfortable seat

to move up and down or from side to side with short, quick, light movements

a quick look at someone or something

looking as if you do not understand or are not paying attention

a group of planets and stars that the Earth belongs to

- 2 Write the words below in the correct column to show their meaning. We've done the first one to help you.

somber glee gay sorrow misery jocund bliss melancholy

happy	happiness	sad	sadness
		somber	

- 3 Write each poetic technique from the list below next to the correct meaning in the table. Then find an example of each technique in the poem.

personification simile alliteration assonance metaphor

Poetic technique	Meaning	Example from poem
	using words that start with the same sound, e.g. <i>silver sky</i>	
	comparing two things and saying that they are the same, e.g. <i>the house was a prison</i>	
	using words that have the same vowel sound, e.g. <i>white night</i>	
	comparing two things, using <i>as</i> or <i>like</i> , e.g. <i>as white as snow</i>	
	comparing something to a human being, e.g. <i>the wind sighed sadly</i>	

- 4 The rhyming pattern for the following 4-line verse can be shown as ABAB:

Water, water, every where **(A)**
 And all the boards did shrink; **(B)**
 Water, water, every where, **(A)**
 Nor any drop to drink. **(B)**

(Verse taken from *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*, by Samuel Coleridge)

Use the letters A, B, C to show the rhyming pattern for *Daffodils*.

5 Answer the following questions about *Daffodils*:

a How would you describe the mood or tone of this poem?

b How does the poem make you feel?

c Do you like the poem?
