



**"THE WORLD IS TOO
MUCH WITH US"**

-William Wordsworth



William Wordsworth

Wordsworth was born in the Lake District of northern England in 1770. William Wordsworth was one of the founders of English **Romanticism** and one of its most central figures and important intellectuals.

Romanticism (also known as the **Romantic era**) was an artistic, literary, musical and intellectual movement that originated in Europe towards the end of the 18th century, and in most areas was at its peak in the approximate period from 1800 to 1850. Romanticism was characterized by its emphasis on emotion and **individualism** as well as glorification of all the past and nature, preferring the medieval rather than the classical. It was partly a reaction to the **Industrial Revolution**, the aristocratic social and political norms of the **Age of Enlightenment**, and the scientific **rationalization** of nature—all components of **modernity**.

“The world is too much with us” is a **sonnet** by William Wordsworth, published in 1807, is one of the central figures of the English Romantic movement. The poem laments the withering connection between humankind and nature, blaming industrial society for replacing that connection with material pursuits. Wordsworth wrote the poem during the First Industrial Revolution, a period of technological and mechanical innovation spanning the mid 18th to early 19th centuries that thoroughly transformed British life.

The World Is Too Much With Us

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;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

***“The world is too much with us: late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:”***

The speaker begins *The World is Too Much With Us* with the term “the world” and the reader quickly begins to understand what that term means in this context. He is talking about the worldly cares and concerns such as money, possessions, and power. And he concludes that it is “too much with us” meaning that we care far too much about these worldly things. He gives more depth of thought to this idea when he suggests that by using our time, minds, and energy in “getting and spending” that we “lay waste our powers”. In other words, people have powers beyond that which they have tapped into, because they are so busy getting and spending. They are tied up in their greed for more money and their time is accounted for by their actions of getting money, spending money, and caring for their possessions. He believes that money and worldly possessions are far more important to people than they should be. He continues,

**“Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!”**

In these lines, the speaker contrasts Nature with “The World”. He reveals that while people spend their time in acquiring worldly possessions, the true beauty of the earth cannot be owned. He reveals that very few things that people see in Nature actually belong to them. He then laments, “We have given our hearts away”. He believes that where we should enjoy nature, though it is not ours to own, instead we are filled with greed and we acquire wealth and worldly possessions rather than enjoying nature. The speaker then continues by describing the beauties of nature that people are missing out on by being so caught up in the want for money and possessions.

***“This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;”***

In these lines of *The World is Too Much With Us*, the speaker describes the beauties of nature that most people are missing out on. He describes the sea, and the wind, and the flowers. His description of these parts of nature use Personification to help the reader to connect with each description. The sea “bares her bosom to the moon” which suggests an intimacy between the moon and the sea. The winds “howl”. This gives the wind human emotion. The flowers “sleep”. Giving these parts of nature human attributes helps the reader to feel this connection with nature. It paints a picture of nature and allows the reader to understand what he is missing out on by being caught up in worldly possessions and greed.

***“For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. — Great God! I’d rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;”***

These lines are the speaker's final exclamation that “we are out of tune” with nature because we are so caught up in worldly wealth. Here, the speaker swears an oath that he would rather be a poor pagan than be so distracted by worldly wealth so as to render himself unable to enjoy the true beauties of life. He appeals to God, and even exclaims that he would rather be a pagan than to be out of touch with nature.

**“So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.”**

In these final lines, the speaker reveals that if he were a poor pagan, he would have “glimpses” of nature that would give him joy and hope, or at least make him feel “less forlorn”. He would rather be poor and helpless and connected with nature than rich and powerful and alienated from it.

In the final two lines, he refers to two pagan gods. Proteus was thought to be able to tell the future, though he avoided doing so if he could. The speaker implies that had he been a pagan, perhaps he could imagine being in touch with Proteus, or at least catching a glimpse of him as he stares out across the sea. Triton was the pagan god that was said to be able to calm the waves of the sea. This implies that the speaker looks out at the sea, enjoying nature, long enough to see Triton and Proteus. The speaker refers to these two pagan gods after he first appeals to God and swears that he would rather be a pagan than alienated from nature.

Sonnet

“The world is too much with us” is an Italian sonnet, also known as a Petrarchan sonnet (named after Francesco Petrarca, the Italian Renaissance poet who popularized the form). These sonnets include an octave (two quatrains, or four-line stanzas) and a sestet (two tercets, or three-line stanzas). The first stanza presents a theme or problem, and the second stanza develops the theme or suggests a solution to the problem.

1. Sonnet: A sonnet is a fourteen-line poem in with one idea flow throughout the text. There are many types of sonnets such as Petrarchan or Shakespearean. This one is Petrarchan sonnet.

2. Octave: An octave is a verse form consisting of eight lines, which usually appear with iambic The first of the sonnet is octave that starts from “The world is....and ends on “... out of tune.”

3. Sestet: A sestet is the six-line stanza of poetry. The term refers to the final six lines of a sonnet such as the second part of this sonnet.

4. Rhyme Scheme: The whole poem follows ABBA ABBA rhyme pattern in the octave and CDCDCD rhyme scheme in the sestet.

5. Iambic Pentameter: It is a type of meter consisting of five iambs. The poem comprises iambic pentameter such as, “A **Pagan suckled in a creed out.**”

THANK YOU

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