

**Topic: Critical appreciation**

**Course Title: INTRODUCTION to Writing**

**Unit: Sec- B2**

**Paper: GE 4**

**SEMESTER: 4**

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In my first lesson, I spoke about critical appreciation of poems. This lesson is a detailed version of the same.

## Poetry

While dealing with poems we need to remember a few basic points, such as:

- Read the poem carefully, make a note of difficult words, **images**, **symbols** as well as the **central idea** of the poem. **Imagery** is nothing but a picture that lights up the reader's imagination and conjures the specific effects in the mind as desired by the poet. **Imagery**, **however** need **not always** be **visual**. It can appeal to any of the five senses. **Symbols** are conventional representation of ideas. For eg. a “dove” is a symbol of peace, roses symbolize beauty and romance and so on.

- Identify the **genre** or type of poem. See if it is a personal poem of love, or a poem about war in general, or a poem celebrating battles. Look at the length of poems. A 14 line poem is called a **sonnet**. A poem with a musical cadence to it could be a **ballad**.
- Identify the **speaker** and the tone of the poem. In some poems there is no speaker who can be identified, the poet is the speaker. In some poems there are speakers who “talk” to the readers or some imaginary listener (these are often **dramatic monologues**). Notice the tone of the poem/speaker.
- Next, identify the **setting** and the **context**. Why is the poem written? What is the aim of the poet? When is he writing the poem? Is the poet part of a **movement? (Movements could be literary or historic but in any case**

**you can pinpoint the literary movement).**

- **Language** is important for any poet to express their thoughts. So, make a note of the language, the **figures of speech, images, rhythm** of the poem. Assess how the language contributes (or fails to) to the principal expression. Does the poet use images and symbols economically or in abundance, does the poet make use of complicated images? Understanding **rhyme schemes** is important. The rhyme scheme used in a poem tells us a lot about the structure as well as the theme. Poets use them for elaborating particular kinds of emotions.
- **Intertextuality is** cross reference. Mention if the poet makes use of other literary works, draws from them or

simply if the poem reminds you of similar works.

## **I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud**

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 daffodil

**This is an example for you to work upon.**

- What is the **central idea or theme**? The poet speaks of his loneliness and here the lonely poet is remembering the beautiful daffodils he saw earlier and the mental image that he has carried with him never fails to cheer him up in his solitude. He finds beauty in nature's simple things such as the daffodils (which is a common flower in England).

Wordsworth dwells upon his favourite subjects: nature and memory. He explores the themes of nature and humankind, as well as memory. Although his experience was a short one, he carries the powerfully beautiful image in his mind for a long time to come. This is a comment on the power of nature and its impact on human beings. Nature is a source of inspiration and joy for the poet and the poet gives a special kind of **life** to nature. The poem is written in a very simple style.

- **Images, symbols-** the daffodils are dominant in this poem. It is the major image that is not merely a flower that pleases the **eyes**. It remains in the poet's mind long after it is not visible and “often” provides him solace and happiness when he is alone. So the **image goes on to acquire a symbolic value** in the poem.

A symbol of beautiful nature itself. The fact that the special moment when he viewed the flowers, remains with him forever, goes on to suggest the permanence of nature in a world of mutability as well. (Find out the other images and symbols)

- **Genre and Speaker:** The poem is a simple poem which celebrates human connection with nature and emphasizes the importance of nature in our lives. We could classify this as a **lyric**. The **speaker** is undoubtedly the poet himself- for it is he who talks to us- explores the solitude and the bliss that the daffodils bring in his life. The tone is simple, a bit sad as he misses human company and the daffodils provide him that solace. The style is straightforward. Wordsworth does not use complicated words or images or high philosophical notions in the poem.

- **Context and Setting:** The poet's loneliness is the occasion of the poem. In his solitude he recalls the beautiful daffodils and finds happiness and peace of mind. (You should be familiar with this poet and so you know Wordsworth was the pioneer of English Romantic movement along with Coleridge and his poetry is part of that Romantic tradition)
- **Language:** Note the first line of the poem: "I wandered lonely **as** a cloud" – the poet is comparing himself with a cloud in the sky. This **figure of speech** is called a **simile**. Similarly, "Continuous as the stars..." is another simile. "**Tossing their heads in sprightly dance**" - here the poet invests a human quality to the flowers and this figure of speech is called **personification**.
- The **rhyme scheme** in this poem is simple as lyrics usually are. There is an

uplifting musical quality but the lines do not have the even metre required in a song. The poem contains 4 stanzas of 6 lines with a rhyme scheme – ABABCC.

- **Intertextuality:** Wordsworth's poems celebrate nature. You can choose to compare with them or look at other poets who celebrate nature. For eg. William Blake.
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