



Joseph Wright of Derby. Ullswater. c.1795" by Joseph Wright of Derby - <http://www.abcgallery.com/>.
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William Wordsworth

Using the digital [biographies resource](#), click on the picture of William Wordsworth and read a little about his life and works.

Below is an extract from his long autobiographical work, *The Prelude* where the young Wordsworth takes a boat, without permission, for a row on Ullswater at night. His feelings of guilt summon up a vision of the mountain opposite looming out of the darkness as though to punish him. Wordsworth returns the boat but is haunted for some time by memories of his actions.

Read the extract carefully, paying special attention to the punctuation, and then attempt the tasks below.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cove, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on every side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring place I left my bark,-
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Task

Write a paragraph discussing how the mood and atmosphere of the extract changes.

Possible prompts

- Underline words and phrases in the extract which help to convey mood and atmosphere in lines 1-20.
- Now do this for line 21- 33 (finishing at “mood”)
- And now do the same to the end of the extract.

Task

How does Wordsworth present the natural world here?

Possible prompts

- Look at how he personifies nature in Line 1.
- Select examples of how he describes its beauty and its power and try to explore the ways in which they are effective.

Extension Work

Compare the presentation of childhood here with Blake’s in The Chimney Sweeper, paying special attention to the features of Romanticism they demonstrate.