

Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower
by
William Wordsworth

“Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower” is one of the best ‘Lucy poems’ written by William Wordsworth the greatest and the most famous romantic poet. Wordsworth was a poet of nature and he worshipped nature in all its forms. He found a deep joy in the company of nature. He believed that the objects of nature give us permanent joy. He wrote a completely new approach to the writing of poetry, which for Wordsworth is ‘the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’ taking its origin from ‘emotion recollected in its tranquility’. With this view of poetry, he made ‘the incidents of common life look interesting’. He believed that poetry should be simple in theme and its language should be so simple as to be understood by the common man. That’s why his theory of poetic diction draws on ‘a selection from the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation.’ But it is not just physical pleasure that Wordsworth finds in nature; he believes that nature nourishes the emotional and spiritual life of man also. His poetry delineates his faith that man in constant and close communion with nature can lead a happy and peaceful life.

“Three Years She Grew in

” is one of Lucy poem, where the nurturing spirit of Nature is highlighted. The poem presents Wordsworth’s basic philosophy that nature shapes and moulds the character and personality of human beings. Hence, it is because of his conviction of the poet that Palgrave in his ‘Golden Treasury’ gives this poem the title of ‘The Education of Nature’ to this lyric; the story of Lucy is presented by Nature itself. There is a young girl named Lucy. She is very innocent and lovely. Nature sees the lovely child and decides to take her away from this world. Nature declares her resolve to bring up Lucy and carry out her intention by showering upon her its bounties of beauty and grace. Nature promises to act both as ‘impulse’ and as ‘law’ to the rustic child and, thus, educate her in her righteous ways and noble desires. Thus educated by nature she would naturally learn to restrain herself from excesses of thought and conduct. All natural objects such as rock, plains, earth, heaven, glades and bowers would exercise a very healthy influence on Lucy’s physical and moral growth. She would learn the happiness of a sportive fawn, the stateliness of the floating clouds, humility of the bending willow, grace of motions of the storm, the beauty of the stars of midnight, and the sweetness of the murmuring sound of flowing rivulets. This shows all the objects and forces of nature would contribute to the physical and moral development of Lucy. Lucy will, in this way, grow into a beautiful woman. Nature thus accomplished her self-appointed task; but unfortunately, the girl suddenly died, leaving the poet in utter desolation.

Thus nature imparts education to Lucy and moulds her mind as well as her body. This poem is a fine example of Wordsworth’s cardinal belief in the moral value of a life of simplicity and the shaping power of nature. Written in stanzas of six lines each, with rhyme scheme aab ccb, the poem belongs to the category of a lyrical ballad. The loftiness of the theme, the simplicity of poetic diction, a pathetic touch at the end, a colouring of imagination are the main strengths of the poem. This is a typical, and thus representative, Wordsworthian poem.

Questions -Answer (Sample Essay Type)

Q.1. Comment of the protective role of nature in the poem “Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower”.

Ans.: This is one of ‘Lucy Poems’, where the nurturing spirit of nature is highlighted. The poem is the delineation of Wordsworth’s belief that Nature is ‘the nurse’, ‘the guide’, and ‘the guardian’ of man. Here in this poem nature is personified as mother who resolves to adopt, rear, and educate her child, Lucy, in her ‘own’ natural way as opposed to the artificial life of society. Nature both impels man to do good deeds and restrains him from evil. She would inspire noble thoughts in Lucy. At the same time, she would keep her away from evil thoughts and actions. Nature promises to supervise and guide Lucy’s education. Nature acts as the sources of both encouragement and discipline to Lucy. Nature felt that Lucy would get a soothing effect from the silent objects of nature. She would learn playfulness from the deer. The floating clouds, the willow tree and the motions of the storm will add to her beauty. She would love the stars and would listen to the music of the streams. In this way, the poet is referring to Lucy’s complete development, i.e. physical as well as spiritual development, and emphasizes the role of nature in the growth of human beings. It is significant to note the Wordsworth is not content with only the physical delight at the sight of natural objects like Cowper and Burns but from this physical delight, he delves deep into the spirituality of nature.

Q.2. Develop Wordsworth’s philosophy of Nature.

Ans.: Wordsworth was a lover of nature. He worshipped Nature in all its moods. He believed that Nature has a great influence on man’s life. It can make a person’s life perfect. Those who grow up in the lap of nature are the best persons. The poet says that Nature is the best teacher. Nature promises to act both as ‘impulse’ and as ‘law’ to the rustic child and, thus, educate her in her righteous ways and noble desires. Thus educated by nature she would naturally learn to restrain herself from excesses of thought and conduct. All-natural objects such as rock, plains, earth, heaven, glades and bowers would exercise a very healthy influence on Lucy’s physical and moral growth. She would learn the happiness of a sportive fawn, the stateliness of the floating clouds, humility of the bending willow, grace of motions of the storm, the beauty of the stars of midnight, and the sweetness of the murmuring sound of flowing rivulets. This is how all the objects and forces of nature would contribute to the physical and moral development of Lucy. Lucy will in this way, grow into a beautiful woman. Nature thus accomplished her self-appointed task; but unfortunately, the girl suddenly died, leaving the poet in utter desolation.

Thus nature imparts education to Lucy and moulds her mind as well as her body. This poem is a fine example of Wordsworth’s cardinal belief in the moral value of a life of simplicity and the shaping power of nature. Written in stanzas of six lines each, with rhyme scheme aab ccb, the poem belongs to the category of a lyrical ballad. The loftiness of the theme, the simplicity of poetic diction, a pathetic touch at the end, a colouring of imagination is the main strengths of the poem.

Q.3. Write a detailed note on the imagery in the poem.

Ans.: The poet uses several images in this poem. Lucy is called the loveliest flower. Here the comparison is made between Lucy and the most beautiful flower. She evokes in mind an image of beauty and freshness. In other words, the stress is on the purity and innocence of Lucy which shows her affinity and oneness with nature. Then she has been compared to the wild deer. She creates an image of wild deer jumping sportingly across the lawn or on the mountains. Wordsworth, through the romantic imagery of 'a sportive fawn', presents Lucy as an unusual phenomenon of extreme happiness that frolics gleefully in valleys and mountains. The kindling power makes Lucy glad and joyous as a playful fawn; the restraining power gives her the calmness and serenity of the mountains among which she lives. The images of the floating clouds and the running stream convey the openness of nature. There is an image of the secret places of nature where small streams flow and create a murmuring sound. Here the pictorial beauty of the expression is beautifully portrayed. Since it is a gentle murmuring sound, she must lean towards it to catch the sound. It is the beauty of Nature's act of purifying the emotions of man through melodious music. There is also the image of beautiful stars at midnight. Thus the poet uses several beautiful images in this poem.

Q.4. Which of the characteristic features of Romantic poetry do you find in this lyrical ballad? Illustrate.

Ans.: Wordsworth was the best and the greatest romantic poet of this age. It was his famous work 'Lyrical Ballads' which he published in collaboration with S.T. Coleridge in 1798 and marked the beginning of the Romantic Movement in England, ushering in a new age of poetry of feeling and imagination. The chief characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry is its sharp departure from both conventional themes and forms of the neoclassical poetry of the eighteenth century. His objections to an over stylised poetic diction, his attitude to Nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects for his poetry characterise his unique achievement. He brought a completely new approach to the writing of poetry, which for Wordsworth is 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' taking its origin from 'emotion recollected in tranquillity.' With this view of poetry, he made 'the incidents of common life interesting' his theory of poetic diction draws on 'a selection from the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation'. But it is not just physical pleasure that Wordsworth finds in Nature; he believes that Nature nourishes the emotional and spiritual life of man also. The call of high mountains, the sudden sight of daffodils by the dale, the sloping pastures, the deep and gloomy wood, all these uplift him from the mere plane of an ordinary, world of physical delight to a higher plane where he receives Nature's moral and mystical messages. All these features of Romantic poetry are found in this poem. In this poem, nature itself is the narrator. Nature adopts Lucy and teaches her to take interest in her. This poem delineates his faith that man in constant and close communion with nature can lead a happy and peaceful life. This poem dramatically tells a verse story about an imaginary or unidentified girl. There is nothing to suggest that a girl named Lucy, who is the subject of the poem, ever existed, although she has been taken to be a real person. She lives in nature. She is wild like a deer. She roams about in the wild and silent spaces of nature. There are softly running streams, storms, night skies full of stars and other wild aspects of nature. There is a great bond between human beings and nature. In this poem, Lucy has a perfect bond with nature. She is a child adopted by Nature for moulding her into a perfect human being. Along

with all these qualities, the language of the poem is simple which can easily be understood by a common reader. In this way, we can see all the characteristic features of Romantic poetry are there in this poem.

Q.5. What does the poet tell us about Lucy's education?

Ans.: Wordsworth is the greatest romantic poet of nature. He believes that Nature is 'the nurse', 'the guide', and 'the guardian' of man. He believed in the educative role of nature. He says that nature is a fine moral teacher and conveys the idea that those who grow up in the lap of nature are the best persons than the one who is brought up in the artificial atmosphere of the cities. The poet shows immense faith in the educative influence of nature on man. He believes that one can learn a great lesson if one approaches nature with a pure and humble heart.

The poet illustrates this idea through the story of Lucy's education by Nature. Nature sees the lovely child and decides to take her away from this world. Nature wants to bring her up on the right lines. Nature wants to check Lucy's evil desires and inspires her to lead a noble life. Nature feels that natural objects such as places and shady corners will have a healthy influence on her. These objects keep a watch on her growth. Lucy will lead a very happy life. She sees the power of nature and takes inspiration from it. She becomes sportive like the deer. The beauty of the murmuring sound of streams passes on to her. Thus through her education, nature moulds Lucy into a perfect girl who learns to lead a pure and simple life. Lucy imbibes all the beauty of nature which is reflected in her countenance. The poet here is referring to Lucy's complete development i.e. physical as well as spiritual development and emphasises the education of nature in the growth of human beings.