

The Education of Nature

William Wordsworth

‘The Education of Nature’ is a poem written by William Wordsworth. Wordsworth was one of the greatest of the romantic poets in English literature. The period from 1798 to 1830 is known as the period of Romantic Literature. Wordsworth belongs to the first generation of romantic poets along with S.T. Coleridge and Robert Southey. Romantic poetry was the poetry of nature as well as the free expression of the poet’s personal feelings.

This poem belongs to a series of five poems known as ‘Lucy Poems’ written by Wordsworth. Lucy may be a real person or an imaginary character by the poet. This poem is an Elegy. The poet is lamenting the death of Lucy who dies as a child. Here, the poet is talking about the education that is received in the company of nature. It is not the formal education of the school system. Here, the nature describes how she (nature) wanted to adopt the small child Lucy in order to educate her in her company. Unfortunately the child dies suddenly and the dream of educating (Lucy) her directly by nature did not come true in that sense this is an elegy and the poet is lamenting her death.

There are seven stanzas in this poem. Each stanza is made up of six lines that is a sestet. The poem as an example of Romantic poetry and is full with nature imagery. There are also many figures of speech like simile, metaphor, alliteration etc.

In the first stanza the speaker tells the reader about Lucy as a child of three years. But after this first line of the poem, the first six stanzas consist of Nature’s speech. The speaker again talks to the reader in the last stanza only. In the stanza spoken by Nature, she describes her plan and dream to adopt Lucy as a child of her own and to rear and nourish with all the delights and powers of her own that is of nature.

In the first stanza the nature says that she will take Lucy who is just like a lovely flower in her care and will make her into a lady.

In the second stanza Nature says that Lucy will grow in her company among the rocks and plains, glades, and bowers. These nature images show that Lucy will grow up close to nature and she will get the knowledge of nature. This knowledge will make her powerful to inspire or control others.

In the third stanza the nature says that in her company Lucy will be a sportive person just like fawns that is the young deer dancing in open nature. She will know all the beautiful places in nature like the mountain springs. By living close to nature she will get the knowledge of each and everything belonging to nature.

In the fourth stanza the images used are that of the floating cloud and the trees that grow near water. This suggests that Lucy will consistently be in the company of nature. She will understand even the movements of the storms. All these things in nature will provide her honour and grace that will make her a beautiful and silent maiden.

In the fifth stanza the poet uses two images from nature that is the stars and the rivulets or the small streams. He wants to suggest that these natural things will give Lucy all the secret knowledge of nature and all these things will make Lucy more beautiful.

In the sixth stanza Nature is talking about the power and happiness Lucy gets from nature which will make her more beautiful in body as well as spirit. In these lines nature is talking about her dream of adopting the child Lucy and make her a beautiful and great person.

However this dream of nature could not come true because of the sudden death of Lucy. In the last stanza the speaker is talking to the reader and expressing his grief over Lucy's death. Lucy has gone leaving behind her memories only.

In this way this is an Elegy in which nature as well as the speaker is lamenting the untimely and tragic death of the child Lucy.