

# ENGLISH

## TOPIC: LUCY POEMS

### ***SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS***

1. Wordsworth wrote five Lucy Poems in Germany in 1799. These poems appeared in the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of Lyrical Ballads. Lucy poems express Wordsworth's feelings for a girl who might be a figment of poet's imagination. Some claim that Lucy represents a transmutation of Wordsworth's feelings for his sister Dorothy.
2. Literary genre of She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways: ballad/ elegy.
3. According to literary critic Kenneth Ober, the poem describes the 'growth, perfection and death.'
4. In the poem, an unidentified speaker mourns the loss of Lucy, a young woman who died in English countryside and whose beauty and virtue were overlooked in life.
5. The phrase 'untrodden ways' means paths not marred by humdrum and common people. It is as wild as Lucy is and beautiful like the beauty and passion of Lucy. The title sets up the context of anonymity and remoteness.

6. Wordsworth here in the poem expresses his adoration for Lucy and mourns her death.
7. "She dwelt among the untrodden ways/ Beside the springs of Dove."- Lucy lives in solitude near the source of the river Dove.
8. Dove is a rivulet beside which the bower of Lucy is situated.
9. "A maid whom there were none to praise and very few to love."- Wordsworth's Lucy lived a secluded life in the salubrious altar of nature away from this imbecile world. She was unknown to the common people. So why there was none to praise or very few to love. Wordsworth means to say that his Lucy was of love and praise despite her anonymity.
10. 'A violete by a mossy stone/Half- hidden from the eye!'- metaphor. Compares Lucy with a violet by a mossy stone. The comparison implies that Lucy lived a life of isolation. The violet is half-hidden. Similarly Lucy is known to few. Her virtue and beauty would only reveal themselves under close attention. She was like a subtle flower in the shadow of an obvious rock. Needless to say, the speaker implies his or her love for Lucy.
11. 'Half hidden from the eye.'- since Lucy lives a secluded life amidst the lap of nature, she is hardly seen by the common people.

12. 'Fair as a star, when only one/ Is shining in the sky.'- Simile. Compares Lucy with a star. The comparison implies her unique beauty and her living a secluded life, of say her remoteness from the humdrum and common people. Perhaps there is an allusion to goddess Venus who represents beauty and love. Implies Lucy's modest beauty, mysteriousness, consistent shining despite having no audience.
13. 'She lived unknown, few could know/ When Lucy ceased to be.'- once again Wordsworth speaks of Lucy's living a solitary life. She died a premature death. So, nobody knows when Lucy died and was buried in the grave. [The phrase 'ceased to be' means death.] Wordsworth uses the phrase to soften the harshness and cruelty of the death of Lucy.
14. 'she is in her grave, and, oh,/ The difference to me!'- Wordsworth here acknowledges his profound love for her. The poet very well knows that her death is not so much important to the rest of the world. But to him, it makes a huge difference. [the poet experiences a difference between life and death, between blessing and curse, between joy and sorrow. When Lucy is no more, he finds himself deserted in a loveless and desolate world. Everything exists, but nothing has value . This is the difference.
15. In his 'The Golden Treasury'(1861) Frances Turner Palgrave gives an alternative title 'THE LOST LOVE' to the poem.

16. F.T. Palgrave gives an alternative title for the poem named 'The Lost Love.'

## **I TRAVELLED AMONG UNKNOWN MEN**

1. The phrase 'unknown men' stands for the people of foreign lands. They are Swiss, German , French by nationality.

2. "Nor England! Did I know till then what love I bore to thee."- Wordsworth here yearns for his reckoning love for England not for sheer and mere patriotism but for global thought process of man's desire to nature. His Lucy lived and died there which adds a new dimension almost akin to devotion to his attachment for his native land England.

As soon as he left the shores of England for a sojourn among the alien land, he felt his emotive love for England.

3. "Nor will I quit thy shore/ A second time, for still I seem to love thee more and more."- when the poet left the shores of England , he realized his profound love for England. The motley experiences along with the annihilation of his dream for an ideal world with the Reign of Terror led him to decide never to leave England..
4. Melancholy dream : it refers to Wordsworth's motley experiences during his sojourn among the alien land. It may also refer to the annihilation of his dream for a utopian world of liberty, equality, fraternity and prosperity with the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution.
5. 'Among thy mountains (=the mountains of England) did I feel the joy of my desire.'- Wordsworth, the worshipper of nature, wished to live amidst the lap of nature. The hush-hush woodland landscape captivated his heart Besides his Lucy lived

and died there which added a new dimension to the joy of his desire for living in the lap of nature of England.

6. 'And she I cherished turned her wheel/ besides an English fire.' - 'Wheel' here refers to the cycle of Lucy's life.

Here 'English fire' represents patriotic impulse. Needless to say patriotism not only centred round the national boundary of England but also the salubrious altar of nature was inherent in England i.e., imbued with the national beauty which is globally prevalent.

7. 'The morning showed, thy nights concealed/ The bowers where Lucy played.'- Wordsworth here creates a charo-scuvo atmosphere of nature. Lucy lived amidst the lap of nature. Here by the effect of light and shade there is the suggestion of earth's connection with heavenly bliss.
8. The phrase 'last green field' implies that Lucy is no more.
9. This poem was completed in 1801 and was first published in 1807.

## A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL

1. **Slumber:** After rigorous nervy activities one achieves a peculiar mental state in which appearance and reality, promise and demise co-exist. It is a sort of stoicism, a state of Nirvana like the Buddhist philosophy. In other words, it is a trance-like state. [The poet's intense grief over the death of Lucy has become a state of solid calm.
2. 'I had no human fears.'- Wordsworth had no human fears because Lucy's death has freed him from the physical hankering after and identification with expectation and fulfillment.
3. 'The touch of earthly years.'- Wordsworth here refers to the withering influence of time. Every aspect of nature and certainly all human beings dance to the tunes of time. Prior to Lucy's death Wordsworth felt that she would be able to transcend the onslaughts of time.
4. "that could not feel the touch of earthly years."- since Lucy has ceased to be and has become one with nature, the touch of earthly years can no longer affect her as it affects all of us.
5. Earth's diurnal course: 'Earth's diurnal course' is the everflowing eternal life force of the universe/ earth's rotating itself round its own axis- the motion that causes day and night. It has no beginning and no end has it. It is not made or constructed, but being and becoming. With Lucy it was, without Lucy it is.
6. "No motion has she now; no force/ she neither hears nor sees."- as Lucy has ceased to be and become completely identified with nature, she like all other natural objects like rocks and stones, can neither see nor hear.
7. "Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course/ with rocks and stones and trees."- since Lucy has ceased to be and become completely identified with nature,

she like all other natural objects like rocks and stones and trees, is rotated with the earth.

8. There are four fundamentals which are attached to Lucy and they are MOTION, FORCE, SEEING AND HEARING.
9. The poem was written in 1798 and published in 1800 in Lyrical Ballads.

## STRANGE FITS OF PASSION HAVE I KNOWN

1. 'Strange fits of passion'- The title phrase unmistakably refers to the poet's unreasonable fear- a fear that his Lucy might be dead. Such a thought arises out of his deep emotive concern for Lucy. It is strange because it cannot be explained in terms of reason and logic.
2. 'And I will dare to tell/ but in lover's ear alone.'- out of his profound love for Lucy a strange thought passed Wordsworth's mind that his Lucy might be dead. None but a lover can feel such a sensation. Hence he intends to tell about his strange fits of passion i.e., his unreasonable fear to a lover's ear alone.
3. 'What once to me befell'- speaks about his unreasonable fear that his Lucy might be dead. One evening Wordsworth was going riding a horse and was going to his Lucy. The moon above was shining although. As he neared the cottage, the cottage itself blocked the view of the moon. The sudden dropping of the moon generated such a fear in his mind.
4. 'When she I loved looked everyday/ Fresh as a rose in June.'- wordsworth compares Lucy with a fresh rose in June. The comparison brings out three



facts concerning Lucy- i) it signifies their juvenile affair ii) unparalleled beauty of Lucy iii)it reminds the poet that his Lucy like a rose is subject to the onslaughts of time.

5. 'I to her cottage bent my way/ beneath an evening moon.'- the poet used to go to his beloved's cottage every evening. He kept his gaze fixed on the moon as it resembled his beloved's face.
6. 'upon the moon I fixed my eye/ all over the wide lea.'- -lea means grass land. During his journey towards Lucy's cottage the poet kept his eye fixed on the moon as it resembled his beloved's face./ or as it it were a compass leading to his beloved's cottage.
7. 'With quickening pace my horse drew nigh.'- the horse continued to ride faster towards the cottage.
8. "Those paths so dear to me."- the paths leading to Lucy's cottage are referred to here. They were dear to Wordsworth as they had association with Lucy's cottage and with the salubrious altar of nature as well.
9. 'The sinking moon to Lucy's cot/ came near, and nearer still.'- The moon was sinking not due to the moon's own journey but due to the motion of the horse and the rider who were gradually approaching Lucy's cottage.[The sinking motion of the moon injected in Wordsworth's mind all sorts of foolish thoughts that his Lucy might be dead.
10. 'In one of those sweet dreams I dreamt/ kind nature's gentlest boon.'- the poet means that his ride to his beloved's cottage was dream like. The light of the moon, the ride and the feeling of love – all and sundry made him feel as if he was dreaming. The dream was sweet to him as in it he could see his union with his beloved Lucy. He considers all these engaging experiences as if a blessing.

11. 'At once the bright moon dropped.'- the moon dropped not due to its own journey but due to the motion of the horse and the rider who were gradually approaching Lucy's cottage. As they came quite near, the cottage itself blocked the view of the moon.

The disappearance of the moon all on a sudden engendered into his mind all sorts of foolish thoughts like seemingly an irrational thought that his Lucy might be dead.

12. 'What fond and wayward thoughts will slide/ into a lover's head.'- the 'fond and wayward thoughts' here refer the poet lover's strange workings in his mind that his Lucy might be dead

Such thoughts arise out of his profound emotive concern for Lucy. There is no clear reasoning behind it. So they are called fond and wayward.

13. 'O mercy! To myself I cried./ if Lucy might be dead.'- the premonition that his Lucy might be dead occurs due to his emotive concern for Lucy. Hyperbaton.

14. The poet compare his beloved's death to the dropping of the moon behind the cottage.

**THREE YEARS SHE GREW IN SUN AND  
SHOWER.**

1. Three years: critics and philosophers are in a dilemma about the span of three years. Perhaps the genesis of time reckons from the date of the poet's acquaintance with the girl.
2. 'Then Nature said , 'A lovelier flower/ on earth was never sown.'- Lucy is here compared with a flower with the addition of the adjective lovelier. The adjective connotes that no other flower has the semblance with the girl. Suggests unique beauty.
3. 'This child I to myself will take/ She shall be mine, and I will make/ A lady of my own.'- the child refers to Lucy. The nature and the girl are inseparably interlinked with as nature flourishes so the girl thrives, and nature also promulgates that the girl will also become a very species of nature herself(indicates Lucy will cease to exist). So nature humanized and the girl naturalized are the whole and sole process of nature in collaboration with the girl.
4. 'Myself will to my darling be / Both law and impulse.'- Nature acts as a vitality, a speaking presence and acting principle in the life of Lucy. As law she would restrain her from doing evil things, as impulse she would inspire Lucy to positive good. There is therefore no contradiction in the phrase.
5. 'The girl in rock and plain/ in earth and heaven, in glade(open forest) and bower/ shall feel an overseeing power/to kindle and restrain.'- Overseeing power means the power that supervises and controls things. It is the

omnipresent spirit of nature which will inspire Lucy to do positive good and restrain from doing evil things.

Lucy will feel the overseeing power everywhere i.e., in rocks and plain, in earth and heaven, in glade and bower.

What will kindle and restrain Lucy?

The overseeing power will inspire Lucy to do noble deeds and restrain her from doing evil things.

6. 'She shall be as sportive as the fawn/ That wild with glee across the lawn.'

A fawn is a deer that is less than one year old. Lucy according to Wordsworth would be as sportive as the fawn devoid of any intellectuality. Nature inculcates in her own lady such an amount of raw energy like that of a deer which frisks about in its wild habitat.

7. 'And hers shall be the breathing balm/ And hers the silence and the calm/ of mute insensate things.'- breathing balm means the wild breeze that brought comfort to Lucy's soul.

The mute insensate things refer to the dumb and insensible objects of nature like rocks and wood. Lucy would learn SILENCE and CALM of mind from them.

8. 'The floating clouds...by silent sympathy.'- The phrase 'silent sympathy' means the formative influences of nature upon the mind and personality of man.

All the finest leaves of nature, of say, the floating clouds, the willow tree, the motions of the storm, the glades and bowers, the midnight stars will have their formative influences and will make Lucy learn their inherent grace and thus will shape her character and intrinsic personality.

9. In particular Lucy will learn grace from the motions of the storm, the majestic way of walking from floating clouds, humility and politeness from willow trees, the murmuring sound of rivulet will move her and add to the charm of her beauty, the midnight stars will inculcate within her love for nature.
10. Beauty born of the murmuring sound of rivulet shall pass into the face of Lucy. So the source of murmuring sound was rivulet.
11. "Thus Nature spake- The work was done"- perhaps the work here refers to the transformation of Lucy into nature's own lady. Lucy died a premature death and became part and parcel of nature. Personification.
12. "How soon my Lucy's race was run!"- relates deep sorrow over the premature demise of Lucy.
13. "She died, and left to me/ This heath, this calm and quiet scene."- She here refers to Lucy. With her death she left to Wordsworth the heath where she played and grew and the serene tranquil nature. In the poet's mind she left an indelible memory of joyful life in her company.
14. 'The memory of what has been/ And never more will be.'- the excerpt relates Wordsworth's love-lorn memory for Lucy.
15. Nature chose Lucy because she was the loveliest flower on earth. Moreover, she had many fine qualities that could grow and develop under the benevolent influence of nature.
16. The moment Lucy's education was completed, the moment she became one with nature leaving the corporal body.
17. The alternative title of the poem is THE EDUCATION OF NATURE.

18. Wordsworth in this poem preaches the teaching of the philosopher Rousseau.

By Dr. A. Rahaman