5

The World is too Much With Us

William Wordsworth

The World is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The Winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Pagan: a person whose religious beliefs do not belong to any of the main religions of the world.

Proteus: a character in Greek mythology who had the gift of prophecy but who, when questioned, would assume different shapes to elude their grasp.

Triton: a sea-deity in Greek mythology, who is generally represented as blowing a shell, his body above the waist being that of a man, below it of a dolphin.

ABOUT THE POET

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) spent most of his life in the Lake district of northern England, and the many hours that he spent wandering about the hills and woods led to the production of some of the finest poetry on nature. His work *Lyrical Ballads,* co-authored with Coleridge in 1798, is regarded as the beginning of the English Romantic Movement.

He selected subjects from nature and rustic life. He held the view that the language of poetry should be simple and natural.

UNDERSTANDING THE POEM

1. Why does the poet prefer to be a primitive Pagan rather than a member of civilised society?

2. What, according to the poet, are human beings out of tune with?

TRY THIS OUT

♦ Compare the organisation of this sonnet with that of the sonnet by William Shakespeare.

SUGGESTED READING

1. 'To the Cuckoo' by William Wordsworth

2. 'The Solitary Reaper' by William Wordsworth.