**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**

In the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth explains his theory of poetry. He argues that literary tricks and devices such as personification make it difficult for writers and readers to speak simply and directly about their feelings. He hopes to combat this with his work.

* Wordsworth outlines three principles guiding the composition of such lyrical ballads. First, the poetry must concern itself primarily with nature and life in the country.
* Wordsworth's second reason for writing lyrical ballads is that they emphasize the status of poetry as a form of art. He intends to enlighten his readers as to the true depths of human emotion and experience.
* Wordsworth argues that good poetry doesn't have to be overly complicated or ornamental in order to capture the reader's imagination. Clean, simple lines are best, in his opinion.

In this preface, William Wordsworth explains and accounts for what he believes are poems of a new style. He spends a great deal of time talking about what makes the collection of poems that follows the preface different from others. He addresses the language most poetry uses during this time and the situations it describes, and he argues that it is important to him to use every day, conversational language to describe every day, commonplace situations. He says,

Low and rustic life was generally chosen [as the subject of these poems], because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language . . .

Wordsworth's goal is to pursue and illuminate the reactions of the mind that is affected by nature. He claims to use a simple style because the subjects of his poems ought to be considered universal and natural. Thus, the language of poetry and prose ought to be very similar. The poet speaks to people, not to other poets, and so his or her language needs to be appropriately relatable.

Wordsworth also claims that "man and nature [are] essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man [is] naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature." Poetry gives pleasure for this reason, and in order to give the most pleasure to the most people, it must use conversational diction, describe the everyday, illuminate our connection to nature, and arouse our passions.

The preface to Lyrical Ballads was written to explain the theory of poetry guiding Wordsworth’s composition of the poems. Wordsworth defends the unusual style and subjects of the poems (some of which are actually composed by Samuel Taylor Coleridge) as experiments to see how far popular poetry could be used to convey profound feeling.

There are three general reasons guiding the composition of the lyrical ballads. The first is in the choice of subject matter, which is limited to experiences of common life in the country. There, people use a simple language and directly express deep feeling. Their habit of speaking comes from associating feelings with the permanent forms of nature, such as mountains, rivers, and clouds. The challenge for the poet is to make these ordinary experiences interesting to readers; in other words, the poems attempt to take ordinary subjects and treat them in extraordinary ways. Doing so would cause readers to recognize fundamental truths of universal human experience.

The second reason guiding his poems is Wordsworth’s goal of emphasizing the purpose of poetry as art. This purpose is not a moralistic one; indeed, poetry comes from a “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” but it is disciplined by remembering those feelings in moods of peaceful meditation. The combination of feeling and meditation produces artful poetry with purpose.