

English (sub): Part-I; Unit: 2 Poems; Topic:

'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal'; Lec-seri- 31.

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## A Slumber Did my Spirit Seal: W. Wordsworth

'A Slumber did my spirit seal' is one the four 'Lucy poems' composed by Wordsworth in 1799 during his stay at Goslar, in the Harz forest in Germany. Wordsworth lived there for about six months with his sister Dorothy and his friend Coleridge. Four of Wordsworth's poems composed here are known as 'Lucy poems'. The name 'Lucy' was a favourite name of a typical rustic girl. Some people suggest that Lucy was the name of a real girl whom the poet Wordsworth loved, while others think that Lucy is the poetic name given to Dorothy, Wordsworth's beloved sister. But there is no real basis for such guesses. The critics generally think that Lucy does not represent any real person, nor is she a composite figure, but an ideal figure.

About 'A Slumber did my Spirit Seal' Coleridge made this comment to a friend in a letter: "Some months ago Wordsworth transmitted to a most sublime epitaph whether it had any reality, I can not say."



most probably in some gloomier moment he had fancied the moment in which his sister might die."

'A Slumber did my Spirit Seal' is a unique example of a brief lyric. Each stanza consists of only 24 short and simple words. The total number of words is 48. But the poet has been able to condense the whole story of life and death in this short poem. It is one of the briefest and finest lyrics in English poetry.

The poem in its first stanza begins with the line; "A slumber did my spirit seal; I had no human fears;" which delineates the state of poet's soul which was under the blissful sleep. It was as if the sleep had sealed the soul of the poet. So much so that it was happily unaware of all human fears and anxieties. Here the poet is talking about fear. What kind of human fear he is talking? Certainly, it is death. Death is the supreme human fear. Everyone has to meet death. No body can escape it. The poet is talking about the same human fear. He has the fear of his wife's death. Yet, he assumes his beloved to be beyond the touch of age or death. It seems to the poet as if she will never grow old and die; "she seem'd a thing that could



feel; the touch of earthly years".

But the second stanza of the poem delineates the reality of the world or life. The poet, all of a sudden, finds his beloved dead. The poet is stunned and shocked. She is dead and still, without any motion or force: "No motion has she now no force;

She neither hears nor sees;

She can neither hear nor see. Her delicate and beautiful life is nipped in the bud.

She is, now motionless buried in her grave, she goes round and round with the rotating earth along with its rocks, and stones and trees:

"Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course,  
With rocks, and stones, and trees."

The underlying meaning is that the beloved was so beautiful and pure that the poet never thought or believed that she would ever die. But, suddenly, she is dead and cold like earth in which she is buried. The central idea of the poem is that man suffers from the illusion that beauty and love are everlasting, but they are as transitory as anything else.

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