

## 2

## THE TABLES TURNED

- William Wordsworth

**Talking about the poem**

- Have you been to parks?
- Do you like to see waterfalls and the seas?
- Have you observed birds building their nests?
- Is it possible to learn anything by observing nature?

Read the poem to find out .....

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;  
 Or surely you'll grow double:  
 Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;  
 Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun above the mountain's head,  
 A freshening lustre mellow  
 Through all the long green fields has spread,  
 His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:  
 Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
 How sweet his music! on my life,  
 There's more of wisdom in it.  
 And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
 He, too, is no mean preacher:  
 Come forth into the light of things,  
 Let Nature be your teacher.



She has a world of ready wealth,  
 Our minds and hearts to bless—  
 Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
 Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood  
 May teach you more of man,  
 Of moral evil and of good,  
 Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
 Our meddling intellect  
 Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things;  
 We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;  
 Close up those barren leaves;  
 Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
 That watches and receives.

## GLOSSARY

- Toil (v) /tɔɪl/** : [M] to work very hard and/or for a long time, usually doing hard physical work.  
 [U] Hundreds of men toiled for years to build the pyramid.
- Lustre (n) /'lʌstə(r)/** : [M] the shining quality of a surface.  
 [U] Her hair lost its lustre as she grew old.
- Mellow (adj) /'meləʊ/** : [M] soft, rich and pleasant.  
 [U] The leaves looked golden in the mellow afternoon light.
- Strife (n) /straɪf/** : [M] angry or violent disagreement between two people or groups of people.  
 [U] The country was torn apart by strife.
- Linnet (n) /'lɪnɪt/** : [M] A small brown and grey bird of the finch family 
- Blithe (adj) /blaɪð/** : [M] showing you do not care or are not anxious about what you are doing.  
 [U] He drove with blithe disregard for the rules of the road and hence met with an accident.
- Throstle (n) /'θrɒs(ə)l/** : [M] A small medium sized singing bird found in U.K. 
- Preacher (n) /'pri:tʃə(r)/** : [M] a person, often a member of the clergy, who gives religious talks and often performs religious ceremonies.  
 [U] In a church, a preacher is famous for her inspiring sermons.

- Impulse (n) /<sup>l</sup>ɪmpʌls/ : [M] a sudden strong wish or need to do something, without stopping to think about the results.  
[U] He had a sudden impulse to stand up and sing.
- Vernal (adj) /<sup>l</sup>vɜːnl/ : [M] connected with the season of spring.  
[U] Swans were racing along in the vernal currents.
- Sage (n) /seɪdʒ/ : [M] a very wise person, especially as a result of great experience.  
[U] Valmiki was a famous sage.
- Lore (n) /lɔː(r)/ : [M] traditional knowledge and stories about a subject.  
[U] According to a local lore, water has healing properties.
- Meddling (n) /<sup>l</sup>medlɪŋ/ : [M] involvement in something that does not concern you.  
[U] The government is completely opposed to outside forces meddling in domestic affairs.
- Barren (adj) /<sup>l</sup>bærən/ : [M] waste, not fertile.  
[U] Plants do not grow in a barren desert.

### About the poet

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), a major English Romantic poet, was born in Cumberland, England on April 7, 1770. He started the Romantic Movement in English Literature with the help of Samuel Taylor Coleridge after their joint publication of *Lyrical Ballads in 1798*. With the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, his literary career was started. This collection also contains the poem *Tintern Abbey*, one of his famous poems. He is best known as nature's poet. He shows his affection and love for nature in his famous poem *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*. His other famous works include *London, 1802*, *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*, *Resolution and Independence*, *The Solitary Reaper*, *The World Is Too Much with Us*, and *Character of the Happy Warrior*.



The poem 'The Tables Turned', was first published in *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Wordsworth dedicates this poem to his friend and asks him to leave all his books and come out with him to observe and enjoy nature. According to him, nature is filled with knowledge that would offer him peace.

## About the poem

In the Poem, 'The Tables Turned' Wordsworth explains his strong faith in nature and is confident that nature is the best teacher rather than books. He strongly believes that a man can only attain knowledge in the circle of nature. He has turned the tables and asked his friend to leave his dull and unfruitful books to observe nature. He feels that books are not a proper source of knowledge. He claims that these books will make him double and lose his reality. He asks his friend why he is facing the struggle and trouble when he has an easy way of to achieving knowledge from nature.

The poet feels that nowadays man is very busy with his books and he forgets to go outside and spend some time in nature. The peace and tranquility that nature provides couldn't be found inside the book. Books may provide you with knowledge but this knowledge is of little or no use. Nature is filled with knowledge and it will give you wisdom which is superior to knowledge. The wisdom that you get from nature will always keep you fit and healthy.

According to Wordsworth spending time in nature, will not only provide you with mental peace and health but will also teach you more about humanity, goodness, and evil as well. On the basis of bookish knowledge, we make differences. The poet gives an example of birds that are creatures who lack bookish knowledge but have knowledge of good and evil from nature.

At the end of the poem, the poet asks his friend to leave aside Science and Arts and close these books which are of no use. He asks his friend to come with an open heart that is willing to receive and absorb messages from nature.

## CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Answer the following questions in a line or two

1. Why does the poet ask his friend to quit his books ?
2. How does the poet describe the Sun ?
3. What does the poet ask his friend to listen to ?
4. What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom ?
5. What are the barren leaves in the last stanza ?

Answer the following questions in 10-15 lines each.

1. Why does Wordsworth consider Nature to be a good teacher?
2. Do you prefer to gain knowledge through books or become wise through experience of Nature? Give reasons in support of your answer with reference to the poem "The Tables Turned"

## Annotations

Annotate the following in 10-15 lines each. A model annotation is given below.

1. Up! Up! My Friend, and clear your looks;

Why all this toil and trouble?

**Context** These lines are taken from the poem The Tables Turned, written by William Wordsworth. In the poem, the poet himself speaks to his dear friend and asks him to leave all his books on the side and come out with him to observe and enjoy nature.

**Explanation** Wordsworth, an ardent lover of Nature, is confident that nature is the best teacher rather than books. He feels that books are not a proper source of knowledge. He claims that these books will make him double, losing his reality. He asks his friend to clear his looks, that is to change his attitude towards observing things. He asks him that why he is facing all the struggle and trouble when he has an easy way of achieving knowledge from nature.

**General relevance** Wordsworth says that nowadays man is so busy with his books that he forgets to go outside and spend some time in nature. The peace and tranquility that nature provides could not be found inside books. Nature is filled with knowledge and it will give you wisdom, which is superior to knowledge.

2. Books! Tis a dull and endless strife,  
Come, hear the woodland linnet.
3. She has a world of ready wealth  
Our minds and hearts to bless.
4. Enough of Science and of Arts  
Close up those barren leaves