

We Are Seven



POEM TEXT

1 ---A simple Child,
 2 That lightly draws its breath,
 3 And feels its life in every limb,
 4 What should it know of death?

 5 I met a little cottage Girl:
 6 She was eight years old, she said;
 7 Her hair was thick with many a curl
 8 That clustered round her head.

 9 She had a rustic, woodland air,
 10 And she was wildly clad:
 11 Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
 12 —Her beauty made me glad.

 13 “Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
 14 How many may you be?”
 15 “How many? Seven in all,” she said,
 16 And wondering looked at me.

 17 “And where are they? I pray you tell.”
 18 She answered, “Seven are we;
 19 And two of us at Conway dwell,
 20 And two are gone to sea.

 21 “Two of us in the church-yard lie,
 22 My sister and my brother;
 23 And, in the church-yard cottage, I
 24 Dwell near them with my mother.”

 25 “You say that two at Conway dwell,
 26 And two are gone to sea,
 27 Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,
 28 Sweet Maid, how this may be.”

 29 Then did the little Maid reply,
 30 “Seven boys and girls are we;
 31 Two of us in the church-yard lie,
 32 Beneath the church-yard tree.”

 33 “You run about, my little Maid,
 34 Your limbs they are alive;
 35 If two are in the church-yard laid,
 36 Then ye are only five.”

 37 “Their graves are green, they may be seen,”
 38 The little Maid replied,
 39 “Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,
 40 And they are side by side.

 41 “My stockings there I often knit,
 42 My kerchief there I hem;
 43 And there upon the ground I sit,
 44 And sing a song to them.

 45 “And often after sun-set, Sir,
 46 When it is light and fair,
 47 I take my little porringer,
 48 And eat my supper there.

 49 “The first that died was sister Jane;
 50 In bed she moaning lay,
 51 Till God released her of her pain;
 52 And then she went away.

 53 “So in the church-yard she was laid;
 54 And, when the grass was dry,
 55 Together round her grave we played,
 56 My brother John and I.

 57 “And when the ground was white with snow,
 58 And I could run and slide,
 59 My brother John was forced to go,
 60 And he lies by her side.”

 61 “How many are you, then,” said I,
 62 “If they two are in heaven?”
 63 Quick was the little Maid’s reply,
 64 “O Master! we are seven.”

 65 “But they are dead; those two are dead!
 66 Their spirits are in heaven!”
 67 ’Twas throwing words away; for still
 68 The little Maid would have her will,
 69 And said, “Nay, we are seven!”



SUMMARY

The speaker wonders what a sweet, living, breathing child, who is totally full of vitality, might know about death.

The speaker explains that he once met a little girl who lived in the countryside. She was eight years old and had thick, curly hair.

The child's appearance reflected her rural upbringing and was somewhat disheveled. She had very lovely eyes and her beauty charmed the speaker.

The speaker asked the little girl how many children were in her family. She replied that there were seven children in total and looked at the speaker curiously.

He then asked the little girl to tell him where all these children lived. The girl explained that, of the seven children, two lived in Conway (in the UK) and two were away at sea.

The girl then clarified that two additional siblings—one brother and one sister—were buried in the churchyard, and that she and her mother lived in a nearby cottage.

Confused, the speaker asked the sweet little girl to explain how there could be seven children in her family if she only had two siblings who live in Conway and two who were at sea.

The little girl repeated that there were, in fact, seven children in her family, because two of them were lying beneath a tree in the churchyard.

The speaker retorted that the little girl herself was able to run all around because she was alive, so if two of her siblings were lying in the churchyard cemetery, there were really only five children in her family.

The little girl noted that new plant life sprouted from her siblings' graves. Moreover, she could see and visit them, as her brother and sister were buried side-by-side just steps away from the cottage that she shared with her mother.

The girl then described how she liked to spend time with her deceased siblings—knitting, sewing her handkerchief, and singing them songs as she sat on the ground by their graves.

She went on to explain that when it was nice outside after sunset, she would often take a small bowl out to the churchyard and eat her supper by their graves.

The child then told the speaker that her sister, Jane, was the first to die. Jane had been sick and laid in bed, crying in pain, until God took her out of her misery and she left.

As such, Jane was buried in the churchyard, and the little girl and her brother, John, would play by her grave when the weather allowed.

But one winter, when the ground was covered in slippery, white snow that little girl could play in, John also passed away and was buried next to Jane.

When the child finished her story, the speaker again asked how many siblings she had, given that Jane and John had gone to heaven. The little girl quickly responded that there were seven children in her family.

The speaker exclaimed that her brother and sister were dead, reiterating that their spirits had gone to heaven. At this point, the speaker felt that he was wasting his words, as the little girl would never stop insisting that there were indeed seven children in her family.



THEMES



CHILDHOOD INNOCENCE VS. ADULT UNDERSTANDING

The speaker of "We Are Seven" recalls a conversation with a young girl who insists that there are seven children in her family, despite the fact that two of them have passed away. The speaker insists that, logically, there are now only five children in her family, and portrays the little girl as unable to fully comprehend death. In doing so, the speaker suggests that childhood innocence gives rise to a blissful yet limited understanding of the world, while adults are left to grapple with life's harsh realities.

The speaker relies on hard knowledge and evidence to argue that the girl is one of five siblings. He repeatedly cites numbers and encourages the girl to count her siblings multiple times. The speaker also contrasts the girl's physical liveliness with her siblings' stillness in death, saying, "You run about, my little Maid, / Your limbs they are alive." Here, the speaker takes a scientific approach, again relying on his adult knowledge and worldly experience—things the innocent little girl does not possess—in order to make his point.

The speaker also takes care to exaggerate the girl's youth in order to undermine her own take on her family. He introduces her as "a simple Child" and refers to her as "it." He is quick to point out that "she [is] eight years old" and suggests that her youthfulness discredits her perspective on death, posing the question, "What should it know of death?" The speaker goes on to call her "little Maid" throughout the poem (while he is "Sir" and "Master"), again calling attention to their age disparity as the root of her perceived ignorance; that is, the speaker sees her youthful innocence as making her unable to grasp the reality of the world. She may be happy, but, in the speaker's mind, she is also simply wrong about the way the world works.

The speaker thus repeatedly brushes off her logic, implying that it isn't credible even as the girl spends a great deal of time explaining all the ways that she continues to interact with her deceased siblings' memories. She also points out that her siblings are buried nearby, just "twelve steps or more from [her] mother's door," implying how close she feels to them even in

death. Yet the speaker simply restates his earlier points, disregarding her reasoning.

The child is equally persistent, but the speaker suggests that she is simply blind to the truth. As the poem draws to a close, he mentions that trying to explain death to the child is like “throwing words away.” To put it differently, the speaker decides that she, as an innocent child, is simply incapable of following his logic.

While both characters are certain about their conclusions, the speaker makes clear that his perspective is based in facts and figures, while hers results from a lack of experience. Still, they never reach an agreement and their conversation apparently haunts the speaker long after its conclusion. As such, the reader is left to determine for themselves whether the acceptance of difficult truths in adulthood is necessarily more favorable than an innocent, blissful worldview.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-69



THE NATURE OF DEATH

The speaker stands by his understanding of death as something that definitively severs people from life.

The young girl, on the other hand, proposes that death is the *transformation* of life rather than its *loss*—that it is part of a larger natural cycle and, as such, that the dead remain closely connected to the living world. These two perspectives are held in tension throughout the poem, without a clear resolution as to the nature of death and what death means for those left behind.

The speaker maintains that death definitively breaks one’s ties with the living. Thus, when the girl remarks that there are seven children in her family, the speaker disagrees. He counts only her *living* siblings and asks her to explain how there can be seven children in her family.

The girl goes on to explain that they are buried nearby and that she regularly spends time by their graves. The speaker remains incredulous, however, insisting, “those two are dead! / Their spirits are in heaven!” The speaker believes that when people die, they are fundamentally cut off from the living, regardless of physical closeness or emotional connection; death is inherently incompatible with life, and the dead basically cease to exist.

The girl pushes back against this idea, however, instead seeing death as a kind of transformative experience. Although her siblings have passed away, the girl still feels a strong kinship with them because they are buried just steps from her home. Indeed, she visits them “often” to play games and sing to them. The girl, then, sees her siblings as integrated with her daily life—extensions of her household—and in doing so blurs the line between life and death.

The girl’s consistent use of the present tense further reflects the fact that she sees each of her siblings as an active presence in the living world. For instance, she says her deceased brother and sister “in the church-yard lie.” And although the girl “feels [...] life in every limb,” she refers to herself in the same terms as her deceased brother and sister, remarking, “We are seven.”

The girl also imagines death as a removal of pain or an insertion of distance rather than as some severing event. Recounting her sister’s death, she says, “God released her of her pain,” and both of her deceased siblings are said to have simply gone “away.”

Finally, the girl uses natural [imagery](#) to present her siblings’ death as one phase within a larger life cycle, furthering the idea that death is a *transformation* of life and not its loss. In particular, she points out that her brother died in winter, a difficult time for many species that is associated with dormancy and death. Yet she also explains that there are still seven children in her family because “[her siblings’] graves are green.” New grass can be interpreted as a sign of springtime and new life. All this subtly suggests that death is one stage within the circle of life—an element within a larger, ongoing natural cycle, much like the seasons that continuously fade into one another.

Ultimately the girl’s account of her siblings’ ongoing presence suggests that death is a central *part* of life and should be treated as such. This perspective challenges the conventional views of the speaker, who contends that death is the *loss* of life—a total severance from the living. Their differences are never resolved, leaving the reader to consider the question for themselves.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-69



FAMILY BONDS

Despite pressure from the speaker to say otherwise, the young girl insists that her deceased siblings are still members of her family. The fact that she maintains a strong relationship with her siblings, even after they have passed away, suggests that familial bonds have lasting power.

The girl maintains a close connection with her deceased brother and sister, who remain central to her everyday life and sense of self. The girl visits them at the church-yard where they are buried and integrates their memories with her day-to-day activities. For instance, she “often” does her knitting and sewing while sitting by their graves. She will even sing to her siblings and eat dinner beside them, clearly still feeling connected to them even in death.

The girl also refers to herself and her siblings as a group, repeatedly using “we” and “us.” Such collective language indicates that she sees herself as part of a larger family unit, which persists even in death. In fact, she uses the same

language to describe all of her siblings, living and dead alike. She says to the speaker, "And two of us at Conway dwell, / And two are gone to sea. // Two of us in the church-yard lie." As such, the speaker portrays her departed brother and sister as equally present in her life as her surviving siblings are.

Finally, the girl points out the closeness between other members of her family. She twice refers to the fact that her brother and sister lie "side by side," and she even describes playing at her sister's grave with her brother. She also repeatedly mentions that they are buried just steps away from her mother's home. The girl emphasizes the connections between various members of her family, illustrating that familial bonds remain strong after a member dies.

The girl never caves to the speaker's claims that she is one of five children, because that is simply not her reality. The child feels, believes, and behaves as if she is one of seven. In this way, she suggests that families share unbreakable bonds that are central to one's identity.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Line 15
- Lines 18-24
- Lines 29-32
- Lines 37-60
- Lines 63-64
- Lines 68-69



LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-4

— — —A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

As the poem opens, the speaker wonders aloud what a living, breathing child would know about death. The speaker uses very delicate language to describe such a child, who breathes "lightly" and is full of life "in every limb." The [consonance](#) among muted, [euphonic](#) /l/, /f/, /th/, and /s/ sounds in this passage contributes to its gentle feel. Meanwhile, [assonant](#) short /ih/ and long /i/ sounds draw the reader in and create a sense of harmony:

— — —A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

In light of this calm, idyllic atmosphere, it might come as a surprise when the final word in this stanza reveals that the

poem's subject is death. In fact, the [end rhyme](#) between "breath" and "death" directly contrasts the liveliness of the child with an understanding of death. As such, the poem's initial [quatrain](#) creates tension between childhood frivolity and the grim realities of death.

In doing so, the speaker suggests that the child who will appear in the coming lines does not have a strong grasp of death. Moreover, the speaker uses a [rhetorical question](#) ("What should it know of death?") to raise doubts about the child's credibility. Plus, the language that he uses to describe the child—particularly "simple" and "it"—dehumanize and belittle the girl before she is even introduced.

Finally, the opening lines begin to establish the poem's form. Here is a look at their [iambic](#) (unstressed-stressed) [meter](#):

— — —A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

These lines also establish the poem's ABCB [rhyme scheme](#). As such, this quatrain resembles a [ballad](#).

That said, ballads typically alternate between lines of eight and six syllables, and the first line of this stanza contains only four. Therefore, the dashes that precede it suggest that the poem starts midway through the line, transporting the reader directly into the speaker's daydream, thought, or recollection.

LINES 5-12

*I met a little cottage Girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.
She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.*

The speaker launches into his account of a chance meeting he once had with a young girl. He notes that she lives in the country and as such, the scenic rural backdrop of the poem begins to come into focus.

In lines 9-12, which describe the child's beauty, the speaker repeats "She" and "Her" at the beginning of successive phrases—an example of [anaphora](#). By reiterating the object of his affections several times, the speaker ensures that the reader's attention is entirely focused on the child, creating a strong first impression.

Throughout this passage, the speaker seems captivated by the little girl's beauty. In particular, he mentions her curly hair, which is "clustered around her head" in a seemingly haphazard, untamed way. Indeed, according to the speaker, she has a

"rustic, woodland air" about her and is "wildly clad." The speaker even repeats "fair" twice in close succession (an example of [diacope](#)) to clarify that she isn't just beautiful, but *exceptionally* beautiful. This repetition draws out this moment, lingering on the speaker's admiration of the girl's appearance.

Moreover, the [end rhymes](#) between "air" and "fair" as well as between "clad" and "glad" link the girl's physical beauty to her rural setting, suggesting that the speaker finds her countryside ways charming. The rhymes within this passage also establish the ABAB pattern that will serve as a template for the coming [stanzas](#). [End-stops](#) appear at the end of nearly every line, aiding this effort by creating a pause after each rhyme and accentuating the [metrical](#) stress that it receives, in turn drawing the reader's attention to their sonic similarity.

The speaker introduces the girl immediately after describing a naive child who is unaware of death's difficult realities. As such, the reader might assume that they are one and the same. Indeed, he notes her age and refers to her as a "little cottage Girl," emphasizing her small size, youth, and lack of experience. Furthermore, assonance bridges the two characterizations:

What should it know of death?
I met a little cottage Girl:

The repeating vowel sounds link the girl with the child he discredits. At the same time, the [consonant](#) sounds in this passage are somewhat harsher than in the previous stanza. Here, sharp /t/ and /k/ as well as growling /r/ sounds become more prevalent—as in "little cottage" and "curl / That clustered." This shift from a lyrical, dreamlike sonic atmosphere to one that is more grounded subtly snaps the reader out of the speaker's head and into the poem's main narrative.

LINES 13-16

*"Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.*

The speaker's interaction with the child begins with a simple question: he asks how many children there are in her family. Looking at him curiously, the child responds that there are seven in total.

This passage marks the first instance of dialogue in the poem, which adds to its casual, conversational tone. The use of [common meter](#) adds to this tone, as the line length varies and the speaker's cadence rises and falls similarly to natural speech.

The speaker also establishes the power dynamic of his conversation with the child—namely, he asks the questions, while she is called on to respond and explain her answers. The speaker subtly reinforces his authority by referring to the child as "little Maid"—a term of endearment, but one that

emphasizes her youth and small stature. He will continue to call her by this name and insist that she answer his questions to his fullest satisfaction in the coming lines.

When the child first hears the speaker's question, she repeats it back to him. Her restatement of the question is an attempt to understand or confirm what he asks her, perhaps because she is slightly confused by his query or hasn't considered it in these terms before. Whatever the case, the repetition both indicates that the child finds his question curious and that she carefully considers the proper response. [Consonance](#) subtly underscores her curiosity by highlighting the word "wondering" as well as the child's repetition of the word "many":

"Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

This stanza contains a couple of metrical irregularities. In particular, line 14 begins with a [trochee](#) (stressed-unstressed) rather than an [iamb](#) (unstressed-stressed):

"Sisters and brothers, little Maid,

The stressed syllable at the beginning of this line draws attention to the speaker's question, perhaps creating an ever-so-slightly more emphatic or insistent tone. Moreover, line 15 and 16 each contain an additional unstressed syllable:

"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

The inclusion of these additional unstressed syllables quickens the pace a bit while also elongating the moment itself, building a slight sense of anticipation and drawing attention to what will become the main point of disagreement within their conversation.

LINES 17-24

*"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.
"Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."*

After the girl responds that there are seven children in her family, the speaker asks where all of them are. The child goes on to explain that two of her siblings live in Conway, while two are away at sea (possibly indicating that they are at war), and two

are buried in the church-yard, near the cottage that she shares with their mother.

The fact that two of her siblings—one brother and one sister—are dead is a notable revelation, as the speaker will dwell on this for the rest of the poem. In fact, the line that contains this statement begins with a stress (“Two of us”), the [metrical](#) irregularity subtly calling attention to this moment.

This passage also develops the poem's setting, as the child mentions Conway and a church-yard (or cemetery). Conway is a quaint, picturesque town along a river in Wales. While it is not entirely clear if the poem is set in Conway itself—indeed, the town shares its name with both a county and a river—the fact that the girl expects the man to be familiar with Conway suggests that it is at least nearby.

Whatever the case, the reference to this specific location adds depth and detail to the rural setting. Plus, the child reveals that she lives upon a cemetery—one that houses her dead siblings, no less. Most readers will find this detail a bit macabre, giving the poem's setting a morbid tinge, though the girl doesn't seem to perceive it this way.

The girl uses very similar terms to discuss each of her siblings, suggesting that she sees all of them in the same light—no matter where they are living or even *if* they are living. For instance, she consistently uses the present tense. Her deceased siblings “lie” in the cemetery, showing that she views them as active presences. Moreover, the girl uses variations on the same phrase to present each pair of siblings, producing [anaphora](#):

And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.
“Two of us in the church-yard lie,

Using the same terms to introduce each sibling equalizes them. The fact that the repeating phrase occurs at the beginnings of successive lines accentuates this effect. Similarly, the girl uses the phrase “in the church-yard” to describe where her deceased brother and sister live *and* the location of the home she shares with her mother.

The speaker also uses rhyme to connect the dead and the living, emphasizing that she sees them all in the same light. In particular, her deceased “sister and brother” are paired with her living “mother,” while the fact that they “lie” in the cemetery is paired with “I,” referring to the speaker. Line 23 is one of the few lines in this poem that does not conclude with an [end-stop](#):

And, in the church-yard cottage, I

The [enjambment](#) comes immediately after a [caesura](#), calling extra attention to that “I,” which lingers out in space. As such, the combination of enjambment and rhyme highlights the girl's

perception of herself as closely linked to her deceased siblings. Moreover, the following line contains [consonant](#) /m/ sounds:

Dwell near them with my mother.”

The repeating /m/ sounds create a sense of harmony while also uniting the girl, her mother, and her deceased siblings through sound.

LINES 25-32

“You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be.”
Then did the little Maid reply,
“Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree.”

The speaker asks the girl to explain how there are seven children in her family if only five siblings can be accounted for—two in Conway, two at sea, and the girl herself. The girl then reminds the speaker about her brother and sister who are buried in the cemetery.

The speaker repeats the girl almost word-for-word, suggesting his honest attempt to understand her. At the same time, this [repetition](#) reveals that the speaker reaches a *different* conclusion from that of the little girl when presented with the same set of facts. As such, it becomes clear that the two figures have very different ideas about death and its relationship to life.

The fact that the speaker lingers on the numbers that the girl offers and counts for himself displays his reliance on measurable data, suggesting a more logical and conventional view of death. He also leaves the two deceased siblings out of his count, providing further evidence to support such an interpretation.

Moreover, this passage revives the speaker's use of [aporia](#), as he expresses disbelief in the girl's answer and in doing so raises doubts about her credibility. For instance, the explanation “Yet ye are seven!” shows his surprise. He also requires additional justification for her conclusion, essentially expressing that he doesn't understand how this can be the case when he states, “I pray you tell [...] how this may be.” The speaker has already used the phrase “I pray you tell” earlier in the poem, and its repetition here makes him appear pushy and insistent.

The girl also responds with repetition—“Seven [...] are we”—standing firm in her answer and thus displaying confidence and persistence. This time, she also clarifies that there are seven “boys and girls” in her family, rephrasing her statement slightly since the speaker seems to misunderstand her. The girl goes on to remind the speaker of the two siblings who lie in the cemetery, suggesting that he forgot critical

information when reciting her statements.

The metrical irregularity of these lines (30-31) calls attention to this moment:

"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,

The additional stressed syllables at the beginning of these lines add and force to her statements. As a result, the girl appears insistent that he remember that there are seven children, as two are in the church-yard. Plus, the rhyme between "we" and "tree" links the living with the dead, underscoring her point that the two deceased siblings (under the "tree") must be counted to arrive at the total number of children ("we").

The abundance of repetition in this passage signals an attempt to understand each other and get on the same page. Plus, the simple, [end-stopped](#) statements indicate that both the speaker and the girl want to *be* understood as well.

This section also features an abundance of sound play, which slows the reader down and calls attention to the moment in which the disagreement here is clear. For instance, take a look at [assonance](#) in stanza 7 (lines 25-28):

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be."

Here, the repetition of vowel sounds—and especially long /ay/, /oo/, /ee/ sounds—further draw this passage out.

LINES 33-40

*"You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five."
"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little Maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.*

The speaker explains that the little girl's brother and sister—unlike the girl herself—are dead. As such, the speaker insists, they should not be counted among her family members, meaning that there are only five children in the girl's family.

However, the child has her own line of thinking, which leads her to believe that her deceased brother and sister *should* be counted. For one thing, she says, their graves are the site of new life, visible, and nearby. While the previous passage revealed the speaker's technical, scientific approach to understanding life and death, the girl bases her conclusions on her own perceptions and personal experiences.

Interestingly, at this point in the poem, the speaker does not pose his question again, nor does he ask the child for another explanation. Instead, he unequivocally states that if what she says is true, then there "are only five" children in the family. By stating his conclusion as fact, the speaker displays confidence that he is right and she is wrong. In this way, he produces [aporia](#), which reinforces a sense of mistrust in the child and encourages the audience to adopt his views.

The speaker uses both [anaphora](#) and rhyme in an attempt to show the girl why she is fundamentally different from her two dead siblings. First, he says, "You run about [...] Your limbs they are alive." The repetition of "you"/"your" differentiates the girl from her deceased brother and sister as the speaker highlights her mobility and liveliness. Plus, the rhyme between "five" and "alive" subtly reinforces his point that there are only five children in her family, as only living siblings should be counted.

However, the girl employs the same tactics to refute the speaker's points. She states, "Their graves are green, they may be seen," using anaphora to link the ways in which her siblings are still present on earth. In particular, she uses springtime as a [symbol](#) of new life, presenting death as one phase within a natural cycle.

And, also like the speaker, the girl uses rhyme to strengthen her argument. This [stanza](#) marks a brief detour back to an ABCB [rhyme scheme](#), but an abundance of [internal rhyme](#) emphasizes the reasons she believes her dead brother and sister should be counted among her siblings:

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little Maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

In general, the shift in the rhyme scheme calls attention to these lines and thus ensures that the reader is aware of the girl's reasoning. Specific pairs of internal rhymes highlight individual points that the girl makes. For instance, the rhyme within "they may" stresses the fact that the graves of the child's deceased brother and sister are visible. Similarly, the [diacope](#) within "side by side" creates an internal rhyme whose sonic harmony reflects the bond of the two siblings it describes. Moreover, the repetition of "side" in close succession physically reflects the siblings' proximity to one another.

There is a great deal of sonic effects in this stanza in addition to rhyme. In line 37, for example, [consonance](#) calls attention to the development of seasonal symbolism, as the reader learns that the siblings' "graves are green." Later, consonant /m/ and /r/ sounds reinforce the proximity of the child's home to the graves, which are only "Twelve steps or more from my mother's door." [Assonance](#) has a similar impact. For instance, long /ay/ sounds link the "graves" to their visibility ("may") and the girl ("Maid").

Altogether, the dense sound play here encourage the reader to pay close attention to the way that the girl explains herself—that is, through personal experience and natural [imagery](#).

LINES 41-48

*“My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.
“And often after sun-set, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.*

The girl explains her ongoing relationship with her deceased siblings, describing how she incorporates them into her daily life. In particular, she describes doing her knitting and sewing by her siblings' graves, singing to them, and eating her dinner graveside. In short, the girl expands on why she believes that her deceased brother and sister should be counted among her siblings: she still considers them family members due to the continued strength of their bond.

The girl cites everyday tasks and uses common language throughout this passage, signaling that spending time with her deceased siblings is a normal occurrence for her. Plus, she uses the term "often" twice to emphasize the frequency of such interactions.

The child also repeats "there" three times, using [diacope](#) to call attention to her physical presence by their graves. As such, the speaker stresses that real-life experiences are the basis for her conclusion that her brother and sister remain members of her family after their death. The repetition of "there" also plays up the graves as the site of their relationship now—which makes sense, given that she earlier cites the graves' greenness, visibility, and proximity is as evidence for why her brother and sister should be counted.

The girl also uses [anaphora](#) to strengthen her point, as the repetition of "my" highlights her personal connection to the graves and the activities that occur there. Moreover, the repetition of "and," an example of [polysyndeton](#), creates a seemingly unending list of all the ways that she spends time with her deceased brother and sister. As such, the girl seems to have a great deal of evidence that supports her opinion that they should be counted among her siblings. Further, both examples of anaphora create structure, organizing her argument so that it is easy to follow.

Lines 45-46 see a return of seasonal [imagery](#) as the child notes that she eats by her siblings' grave "when it is light and fair" after the sun goes down. This description suggests that she spends more time with her siblings during the summer, as it is nice outside even after sunset. In light of line 37 ("Their graves are green [...]"), this image helps to clarify the child's use of

seasonal [symbolism](#). More specifically, these lines suggest that life and death exist within the same *natural cycle*, and thus that the girl is still able to access her siblings after they die—as death is associated with winter, spring with life, and she visits them in the summer after they have undergone such a transformation or "rebirth."

[Sibilant](#) /s/ sounds within the phrase "after sun-set, Sir" highlight the seasonal imagery, drawing the reader's attention to this moment. In general, the sound play that appears throughout this passage creates a sense of harmony as the girl describes spending time with her siblings. The [meter](#) contributes to this effect by placing rhythmic stress on syllables that contain repeating sounds. For instance, here is a look at the meter in line 41:

“My stockings there I often knit,

Here, stresses land on repeating /aw/ sounds, calling attention to the presence of [assonance](#). The rhythm draws out these long vowel sounds even further, slowing readers down and encouraging them to note the nuances of the girl's relationship with her siblings.

LINES 49-56

*“The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.
“So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.*

The girl continues to describe her relationships with her deceased siblings, providing the first details about their deaths. First, she explains that her sister, Jane, was sick and passed away. She goes on to recount how, when it was dry outside, she and her brother John would play by Jane's burial site.

In these lines, the girl directly mentions death for the first time, indicating that she doesn't *deny* that her siblings have passed away. Still, she uses innocuous and even pleasant terms to describe death. For instance, she refers to Jane's passing as her going "away" after "God released her of her pain."

Moreover, the term "moaning" is an example of [onomatopoeia](#) that shows the extent of her sister's suffering. Jane was bedridden, crying out in pain, so her death is a removal of that affliction, rather than a tragic, violent moment. Indeed, the girl thinks of her sister's death as a removal of suffering and insertion of distance rather than a loss of life.

This passage features a reprise of seasonal [symbolism](#) that supports this interpretation of the girl's view of death. In particular, she says that she and her brother would play around the grave "when the grass was dry." This is likely a reference to

summer, a season that sees little precipitation, which the sun then dries up. As such, this image recalls lines 45-46, which describe the child visiting her deceased siblings in the summer.

In combination with earlier references to springtime rebirth, these images suggest that death is one stage within an ongoing natural cycle. The girl seems to see death as a *transformation* of life rather than its *termination*. As such, the girl finds that her siblings are still accessible to her, particularly in the summer months (after their metaphorical "rebirth").

The girl uses many temporal and transitional words—"The first," "Till," "And then"—throughout her account of her siblings' deaths. Such phrases orient the reader and present their deaths as a logical, orderly process—an effect that is heightened by the consistent [end-stopped lines](#). These organizational elements contribute to the impression that the girl sees death as one element within a wider system. The well-structured narrative also increases the girl's credibility (despite the speaker's dismissal of her viewpoint).

This passage [juxtaposes](#) death and playfulness, suggesting that the girl does not see much distance between them. On a literal level, she describes playing with her brother, John, around Jane's grave. The rhyme between "laid" and "played" reinforces Jane's grave as a site of both death and lightheartedness. Plus, [assonance](#) places additional emphasis on stressed syllables, accentuating the jaunty rhythm. For example, long /ay/ sounds exaggerate the [meter](#) in line 55:

Together round her grave we played,

Here and elsewhere, [end-stops](#) also play up the poem's singsong [iambic](#) rhythm by creating regular pauses at the end of each line. This passage also contains an abundance of [consonance](#), such as among /d/ sounds in lines 49-50:

“The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,

Such strings of echoing sounds create a musical effect that contributes to the lighthearted mood while drawing the reader's interest and attention.

LINES 57-64

*“And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.”
“How many are you, then,” said I,
“If they two are in heaven?”
Quick was the little Maid's reply,
“O Master! we are seven.”*

The girl continues her account of her siblings' deaths, explaining that her brother, John, died one winter and was

buried alongside her sister, Jane. Now that the girl has explicitly acknowledged the death of her two siblings, the speaker again asks how many children are in her family. He reminds her that her brother and sister are dead, but without hesitation, she reiterates that there "are seven" children in her family.

The girl once again provides a straightforward and logical account of Jane's passing. The repetition of "And" at the beginning of several lines—an example of both [anaphora](#) and [polysyndeton](#)—provides structure, while [end-stops](#) contain short, straightforward statements, contributing to their authority.

The girl uses gentle language to describe John's death, commenting that he was "forced to go." Such a statement again presents death as an insertion of *distance*, rather than a *loss*; John's death makes him more difficult for the girl to access, but not inaccessible. In fact, this characterization of his passing likens him to her siblings who are "at sea" (possibly "forced to go" to war). Plus, her deceased brother and sister are still closer to the girl (and one another) than some of her other siblings are.

The girl's use of the present tense—"he lies"—suggests that she still sees John as active and present on earth. Similarly, she says "**we are seven**," revealing that the girl thinks of her brothers and sisters (alive *and* dead) collectively—united in the present.

The girl notes that her brother dies in the winter, "when the ground was white with snow." This statement is consistent with earlier seasonal [imagery](#) and supports its [symbolism](#): winter is often associated with dormancy and death, as it is a challenging time for many living things. However, spring brings new life, which can be celebrated during the beautiful summer months. As such, the seasonal imagery reinforces the girl's idea that death is a transformation rather than a loss, as it places the moment of her sibling's passing within a larger natural cycle.

In this way, the girl presents a view of death that is peaceful and harmonious with the natural world, explaining her unbothered tone as she discusses her siblings' deaths as well as her lighthearted behavior when she visits their graves. [Consonance](#) of /w/ sounds in line 57 call attention to the most explicit example of winter imagery:

“And when the ground was white with snow,

Even after the girl's lengthy, organized, and detailed account of her relationship with her dead siblings, however, the speaker is unsatisfied with her conclusion that "we are seven." In fact, he asks her the same question in line 61—"How many are you"—as he does when he speaks to the girl for the very first time. The speaker thus comes off as pushy and stubborn, as he refuses to accept her answers unless they align with his own preconceived ideas about life and death.

The girl, too, is set in her belief. Like the speaker, she recycles

the same language that she used at the outset of their interaction, replying "we are seven." However, whereas earlier she confirmed his question and regarded him with a "wondering" look, her response is now "quick." In other words, she understands exactly what he is asking (as well as his desired response) and holds firm her belief that there are seven children in her family.

At this point, she is exasperated with his repeated questions, exclaiming "O Master!" Indeed, the fact that both figures use the same language that appears at the beginning of their conversation shows their mutual persistence and stubbornness—essentially, they have made no progress and the chances of a resolution to their disagreement are slim.

LINES 65-69

*"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"*

As the poem draws to a close, the speaker, still unsatisfied with the girl's claim that there are seven children in her family, exclaims that her brother and sister are dead. At this point, the speaker feels like he is wasting his breath, as she refuses to agree with him. Indeed, she retorts by repeating herself, this time explicitly rejecting his argument ("Nay!"). The two parties never reach an agreement, and the girl has the last word. The poem ends on her refusal to back down, but also her reassertion that there are, in fact, seven children in her family.

The final stanza is the poem's only [cinquain](#), meaning that it contains five lines, instead of the customary four. The additional line lingers at the poem's conclusion, reflecting the open-ended culmination of their debate. Further, the additional line throws off the rhyme scheme, leaving "dead" at the end of line 65 without a rhyming pair and reinforcing the unresolved feeling at the end of the poem.

A rare instance of [enjambment](#) occurs at the end of line 67 as well, drawing the reader's attention. The word "still"—here meaning "nevertheless" or "even now"—lingers on the page, suggesting that the child will hold the same view indefinitely and will not back down.

This stanza also contains a higher concentration of exclamation marks than anywhere else in the poem. Indicating a sudden, emotive outburst, the exclamation marks display both figures' conviction in their statements, as well as their exasperation with the preceding discourse. The reader gets the sense that neither the speaker nor the child will cave to the other's will—these are their final answers, and they feel strongly about them.

Moreover, the child repeats exactly what she said in the final line of the previous stanza, "we are seven." This statement also

serves as the poem's title, showing her consistency from beginning to end. The child thus appears persistent, credible, and sure of herself.

Highlighted by enjambment, the rhyme between "still" and "will" reinforces the impression that she will not back down, while the rhyme between "seven" and "heaven" emphasizes her point that her siblings' place in heaven does not disqualify them from being counted. Similarly, while the speaker refers to her siblings separately from her—as "those two"—she says "we," implicitly correcting him and presenting *all* of her siblings as one unit.

The speaker is similarly firm in his views throughout these final lines. He brusquely declares that her brother and sister "are dead." In fact, he does this twice before rephrasing his words and exclaiming, "Their spirits are in heaven!" He reiterates the fact that they are dead to suggest that they should not be counted among the child's family members. The combination of [diacope](#) and restatement contributes to the emphatic tone of his remarks.

Through this outburst of sorts, the speaker produces [aporia](#) by arguing against the child's claim that there are seven children in her family. In other words, by resisting the idea that dead siblings can be counted among family members, he calls the validity of her responses into question. Similarly, this is the sixth (and final) time that the speaker refers to the child as a "little Maid," suggesting that his view of her does not change over the course of the poem.

Moreover, this title emphasizes her youth, small stature, and lack of life experience. By leaving the reader with such an impression of the girl, the speaker encourages the audience to consider these factors when evaluating her statements. To put it differently, he wants the audience to agree with him even though the girl does not. Therefore, he casts her as youthfully naive, suggesting that his perspective is far more valid to any reasonable (grown) person.

Finally, [consonance](#) calls attention to the speaker's statement that arguing with the child "'Twas throwing words away." The idea that their conversation is a "waste of breath" signals that he does not find their conversation productive—and, he says, it is for the sole reason that she refuses to agree with him.

However, the girl doesn't make any headway with him either, but she does not express a feeling of entitlement to his acquiescence. The speaker's inability to gain anything from the conversation—not a deeper understanding of death, childhood, or even countryside life—casts him as somewhat stubborn, bitter, and/or ungrateful as the poem comes to an end.



SYMBOLS



SEASONS

While this poem is not highly [symbolic](#), the young girl frequently uses seasonal [imagery](#) when describing her changing relationship with her siblings that comes to represent the interconnectedness of life and death in the natural world.

In particular, the girl notes the weather conditions during different interactions with her deceased siblings. For instance, her brother passes away “when the ground was white with snow,” reinforcing the symbolic association between winter and death.

When the speaker claims that only living siblings should be counted among her family members, the child responds that her deceased siblings’ “graves are green.” To the child, the emergence of new plant life—a classic image of springtime rebirth—affirms the ongoing presence of her siblings. Again, then, seasonal imagery in the poem reflects its common symbolic resonance: winter is connected to death, and spring with new life.

Moreover, she visits their graves “when the grass [is] dry,” the lack of precipitation (possibly dried up by the sun) signaling that it is summer. She also mentions that it is nice outside after sunset during these times, providing further evidence that she interacts with her deceased siblings in the summer.

Taken all together, the speaker’s use of seasonal imagery when describing her changing relationship with her siblings suggests that she sees each of their deaths as one moment within a larger natural cycle. Following this rationale, “alive” and “dead” are not *opposites* but rather *different* states of being, and death is a *transformation* (rather than a loss) that keeps the child’s brother and sister accessible to her.

Thus, as a symbol of the interconnectedness of life and death, the seasons help the reader better understand the child’s perspective on death as well as her insistence that “we are seven.”

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Line 37:** “Their graves are green”
- **Lines 45-46:** “after sun-set, Sir, / When it is light and fair”
- **Line 54:** “when the grass was dry”
- **Line 57:** “when the ground was white with snow”



POETIC DEVICES

ANAPHORA

[Anaphora](#) appears throughout the poem, providing structure

via [repetition](#) to create a logical, easy-to-follow narrative. As an organizational tool, anaphora helps the reader understand what is literally taking place. At the same time, by repeating important words and phrases, anaphora also contributes to the poem’s thematic meaning.

The speaker first uses anaphora when introducing the young girl. In the third stanza, he repeats “She” and “Her” at the beginning of successive phrases, offering details about the child’s charming appearance. The repetition of these terms keeps the subject of his descriptions clear, focusing the reader’s attention on the child and creating a strong first impression.

Anaphora has a similar effect in lines 33-34, in which the speaker again describes the girl, this time addressing her directly:

“You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;

Here, the speaker attempts to explain to the child that she is different from her deceased siblings because she is living—free to move around on earth—while her brother and sister are immobile and buried in the ground. The repetition of the root “You” helps to distinguish the child from her siblings so that she might understand the speaker’s point. In other words, anaphora emphasizes that *she* is alive (and her siblings are not).

Furthermore, by introducing distinct people, objects, or ideas in the same terms, anaphora can also create or reinforce a connection between them. This effect can be observed in lines 19-23, where variations on “And two of us” introduce the child’s various siblings as well as the child herself. Because she uses the same language for all the children in her family—no matter where they live or if they are living at all—the child suggests that each of the seven siblings are equally valid family members.

Later in the poem (lines 41-45), anaphora strings together all the ways in which the child spends time with her deceased siblings. Here, the child tries to explain why her departed brother and sister should be counted among her family members. The repetition of “my” highlights the child’s presence at their graves, while the repetition of “And”—which is also an example of [polysyndeton](#)—creates the impression of a never-ending list. As such, the reader gets the impression that there is a mountain of evidence that supports the child’s point of view. Therefore, anaphora allows both the speaker and the child to express and substantiate their arguments.

Where Anaphora appears in the poem:

- **Line 9:** “She”
- **Line 10:** “And,” “she”
- **Line 11:** “Her”
- **Line 12:** “Her”

- **Line 14:** "How many"
- **Line 15:** "How many"
- **Line 19:** "And two"
- **Line 20:** "And two"
- **Line 21:** "Two"
- **Line 25:** "You say that two"
- **Line 26:** "And two"
- **Line 33:** "You"
- **Line 34:** "Your"
- **Line 41:** "My"
- **Line 42:** "My"
- **Line 43:** "And"
- **Line 44:** "And"
- **Line 45:** "And"
- **Line 57:** "And"
- **Line 58:** "And"
- **Line 60:** "And"

APORIA

Throughout the poem, the speaker and the child debate the number of children in her family. [Aporia](#) becomes a crucial device for the speaker because it allows him to raise doubts about the validity of the child's answers. By suggesting that the child is not credible, aporia supports his side of the argument.

In fact, the speaker uses this device in an attempt to discredit the child before she is even introduced. In the opening stanza, aporia appears in the form of a [rhetorical question](#), as the speaker asks, "What should it know of death?" Essentially, the speaker doubts that a living, breathing child would be able to grasp the concept of death. Even as he poses the question, he cites her youth and liveliness as evidence that she would have trouble grasping the concept. As it becomes clear that the speaker does not believe that such a child would understand anything about death, aporia invites the audience to form a similar view of the child before she even appears.

When he later asks the girl how many children there are in her family, he will not accept her answer that there "are seven." First, he asks her "how [it] may be" when only five children are living. Later, later he bluntly states, "ye are only five." Essentially, he is implying that her answer *can't* be correct. By challenging and then outright rejecting her responses, the speaker raises doubt about the child's ability to understand or accurately answer his question.

In the poem's final stanzas, he repeats this pattern, asking "How many are you, then [...] If they two are in heaven?" When she responds with the same answer, he exclaims, "But they are dead; those two are dead!" Again, he creates aporia surrounding the child's credibility by disputing her conclusions and the reasoning behind them.

However, his resistance to the child's point of view comes off as increasingly impatient and insensitive. In the above case, he

bluntly asserts his own conclusion as fact, seemingly unaware of the fact that he is shouting at a child about her dead siblings. Plus, he asks the child the same question in line 61 ("How many are you") as he does in line 14, which is also the first time they talk. He apparently makes no progress towards a satisfactory answer over the course of their conversation. Thus, while aporia raises doubts about the child's credibility, it also emphasizes his persistent incredulity. As a result, aporia reveals that he is unable to understand or unwilling to accept her point of view just as much as she is unable to understand or unwilling to accept his.

During their debate, then, aporia reveals weaknesses in both characters, calling both perspectives into question. Since the two hold firm in their responses and never reach a resolution, the final judgment is left up to the audience.

Where Aporia appears in the poem:

- **Line 4:** "What should it know of death?"
- **Lines 27-28:** "I pray you tell, / Sweet Maid, how this may be"
- **Line 28:** "..."
- **Lines 35-36:** "If two are in the church-yard laid, / Then / ..."
- **Line 36:** "ye are only five"
- **Line 61:** "... "How many are you, then"
- **Lines 61-62:** "... said I, / "If they two are in heaven?""
- **Line 65:** "But they are dead; those two are dead!"

ASSONANCE

[Assonance](#) appears throughout the poem. On its most basic level, the repeating sounds create interest, drawing the reader's attention. They also increase the poem's musicality, contributing to its lighthearted nursery rhyme feel and memorability (indeed, much of the assonance is due to the poem's [rhyme scheme](#)—discussed separately in this guide).

For example, in lines 37-38, long /ay/ and /ee/ sounds create and reinforce [internal rhymes](#):

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little Maid replied,

Here, the internal rhyme between "green" and "seen" occurs on the line's second and fourth stressed syllables, reinforcing the rising and falling singsong effect of the rhythm. Meanwhile, the sonic harmony among surrounding assonant vowel sounds contributes to the musical atmosphere.

Moreover, assonance sometimes signals a relationship between words that feature the same sounds, as in lines 4-5:

What should it know of death?
I met a little cottage Girl:

In this instance, short /ih/ and /eh/ sounds bridge the first two [stanzas](#). By subtly connecting the hypothetical ignorance about death that the speaker explores in stanza 1 with the child introduced in stanza 2, assonance suggests that the speaker's question (i.e., "What should it know of death?") applies to her. As a result, the speaker is able to discredit the child more easily because the audience is aware that she is the "it" who shouldn't know anything about death. Sometimes these connections are more obvious, as in lines 65-66, where the /eh/ sound in "dead" resonates with "heaven" to emphasize the speaker's point that the spirits of the dead siblings are no longer present on earth.

Where Assonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "Child"
- **Line 2:** "lightly"
- **Line 3:** "feels," "its," "life," "in," "every," "limb"
- **Line 4:** "it," "death"
- **Line 5:** "met," "little"
- **Line 9:** "air"
- **Line 11:** "fair," "very," "fair"
- **Line 12:** "beauty," "me"
- **Line 17:** "they," "pray"
- **Line 19:** "Conway"
- **Line 21:** "lie"
- **Line 22:** "My," "my"
- **Line 25:** "You," "say," "two," "Conway"
- **Line 26:** "two," "gone," "to"
- **Line 27:** "pray," "you"
- **Line 28:** "Maid," "may"
- **Line 29:** "did," "little"
- **Line 32:** "Beneath," "tree"
- **Line 37:** "graves," "green," "they," "may," "seen"
- **Line 38:** "Maid," "replied"
- **Line 39:** "more," "door"
- **Line 40:** "side," "by," "side"
- **Line 41:** "stockings," "often"
- **Line 43:** "upon"
- **Line 44:** "song"
- **Line 45:** "often," "set"
- **Line 46:** "When," "it," "is"
- **Line 47:** "little," "porringer"
- **Line 49:** "Jane"
- **Line 50:** "she," "lay"
- **Line 51:** "released," "pain"
- **Line 52:** "then," "she," "went," "away"
- **Line 53:** "laid"
- **Line 55:** "grave," "played"
- **Line 57:** "white"
- **Line 58:** "I," "slide"
- **Line 59:** "My"
- **Line 60:** "lies," "by," "side"
- **Line 61:** "then," "said"
- **Line 62:** "If," "in," "heaven"

- **Line 63:** "Quick," "little"
- **Line 65:** "dead," "dead"
- **Line 66:** "heaven"
- **Line 67:** "still"
- **Line 68:** "little," "will"
- **Line 69:** "said," "seven"

CONSONANCE

Much like [assonance](#), [consonance](#) is present throughout the poem and creates sonic interest, drawing the reader's attention to particular moments and generally making the poem more memorable. This device also enhances the musical quality of the poem, in turn contributing to its nursery rhyme feel. For example, here is a look at the consonant sounds that repeat throughout lines 43-44:

And there upon the ground I sit
And sing a song to them.

Such intricate webs of repeating sounds mimic the lines they describe by producing an echoing, song-like quality. This effect is enhanced by surrounding sonic effects such as assonance (as in "upon" and "song") and [diacope](#) (the repetition of "there" in this stanza). Moments of compact sonic effects such as these slow readers down as they parse dense clusters of sounds.

Such strings of consonant sounds often occur when the child cites seasonal [imagery](#) while describing her relationship with her deceased siblings. For instance, line 37 reads:

"Their graves are green [...]"

Line 45 reads:

"And often after sun-set, Sir,"

And line 57 reads:

"And when the ground was white with snow,

Taken together, the seasonal imagery comes to represent the child's understanding of death as a transformative experience in nature. By calling attention to these descriptions, consonance subtly heightens the reader's awareness of their [symbolism](#).

Consonance can also help establish or shift the poem's mood, as in stanzas 1-2. The consonance in the first stanza is quite soft and airy, featuring /l/, /f/, and /s/ sounds. Take lines 1-3:

A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,

However, hard, plosive /k/ sounds become much more prominent in stanza 2, snapping the reader out of this dreamlike state and into the main narrative of the poem:

I met a little cottage Girl:
[...]
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

Indeed, the first stanza poses a question and inserts the reader into the speaker's thoughts, while the second initiates a story. As such, the subtle change in sound helps signal a shift to the poem's content.

In general, this poem contains a fairly even distribution of hard and soft consonant sounds, with one rarely overshadowing the other. This sense of balance could possibly be interpreted as a reflection of the tension between the child and the speaker's points of view—neither of which ever conquers the other, but rather are held in tension throughout.

Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "simple," "Child"
- **Line 2:** "lightly," "draws," "its"
- **Line 3:** "feels," "its," "life," "limb"
- **Line 5:** "met," "little," "cottage," "Girl"
- **Line 6:** "She," "was," "years," "she," "said"
- **Line 7:** "Her," "hair," "was," "thick," "curl"
- **Line 8:** "clustered," "round," "her," "head"
- **Line 9:** "rustic," "woodland," "air"
- **Line 10:** "was," "wildly," "clad"
- **Line 11:** "Her," "were," "fair," "very," "fair"
- **Line 12:** "Her"
- **Line 13:** "Sisters," "brothers," "Maid"
- **Line 14:** "many," "may"
- **Line 15:** "many," "Seven," "in," "said"
- **Line 16:** "And," "wondering," "looked"
- **Line 17:** "where," "are," "pray"
- **Line 18:** "She," "answered," "Seven," "are"
- **Line 19:** "And," "two," "at," "Conway"
- **Line 20:** "And," "two," "gone," "to"
- **Line 21:** "church-yard"
- **Line 22:** "sister," "brother"
- **Line 23:** "church-yard"
- **Line 24:** "near," "them," "with," "my," "mother"
- **Line 25:** "You," "say," "that," "two," "at," "Conway"
- **Line 26:** "two," "to"
- **Line 27:** "Yet," "ye," "pray," "you," "tell"
- **Line 28:** "Sweet," "may"
- **Line 29:** "did," "Maid"
- **Line 30:** "Seven," "boys," "girls"
- **Line 32:** "Beneath," "the"
- **Line 33:** "run," "my," "little," "Maid"

- **Line 34:** "Your," "limbs," "are," "alive"
- **Line 35:** "are," "church-yard"
- **Line 36:** "are"
- **Line 37:** "Their," "graves," "are," "green," "may"
- **Line 38:** "little," "Maid," "replied"
- **Line 39:** "Twelve," "steps," "or," "more," "from," "my," "mother's," "door"
- **Line 40:** "are," "side," "side"
- **Line 41:** "stockings," "there," "often," "knit"
- **Line 42:** "kerchief," "there"
- **Line 43:** "And," "there," "upon," "the," "ground," "sit"
- **Line 44:** "And," "sing," "song," "them"
- **Line 45:** "And," "often," "after," "sun-set," "Sir"
- **Line 46:** "When," "it," "is," "light," "and," "fair"
- **Line 47:** "take," "little," "porringer"
- **Line 48:** "And," "eat," "supper," "there"
- **Line 49:** "first," "was," "sister"
- **Line 50:** "In," "she," "moaning"
- **Line 51:** "released," "her," "pain"
- **Line 52:** "And," "then," "went," "away"
- **Line 53:** "church-yard"
- **Line 54:** "grass," "dry"
- **Line 55:** "Together," "round," "her," "grave"
- **Line 56:** "brother"
- **Line 57:** "And," "when," "ground," "was," "white," "with," "snow"
- **Line 58:** "And," "could," "and," "slide"
- **Line 59:** "brother," "John," "forced"
- **Line 60:** "And," "side"
- **Line 63:** "reply"
- **Line 64:** "Master," "are"
- **Line 65:** "are," "are"
- **Line 66:** "Their," "spirits," "are"
- **Line 67:** "Twas," "throwing," "words," "away," "for," "still"
- **Line 68:** "little," "would," "will"
- **Line 69:** "And," "Nay," "seven"

DIACOPE

This poem contains several examples of [diacope](#), which draws the reader's attention to keywords and the ideas they represent. For instance, lines 41-43 read:

"My stockings **there** I often knit,
My kerchief **there** I hem;
And **there** upon the ground I sit,

Here, the child is explaining how she interacts with her deceased siblings by spending time by their graves, which are referred to as "there." By repeating "there" a number of times in close succession, the child emphasizes that she spends as much time graveside as possible, incorporating their resting place into her daily life. As such, she uses diacope to support her

claim that her deceased brother and sister should be counted among her siblings, as she interacts with them so often.

A similar thing happens with the diacope in line 65, which adds emphasis to the speaker's assertion that the little girl's siblings are deceased and as such shouldn't be counted among her family members:

“But they are **dead**; those two are **dead**!

While this line does not contain an [end rhyme](#), the /eh/ sound of “dead” resonates with “seven” and “heaven” in the surrounding lines. The speaker refutes the child's claim that there are seven children in her family by remarking that her siblings are “dead” and in “heaven.” The sound play—highlighted by diacope—unites and thus strengthens his argument.

Another moment of diacope appears in line 40:

And they are **side** by **side**.

In this case, diacope physically mirrors the image it describes: the siblings are “side by side,” just like the two instances of the word “side,” emphasizing the physical proximity of the girl's brother and sister.

Finally, note the diacope in line 11:

Her eyes were **fair**, and very **fair**;

Here, diacope draws out this line, lingering for a moment on the girl's beauty and emphasizing that the speaker is captivated by the child.

Where Diacope appears in the poem:

- **Line 11:** “fair,” “fair”
- **Line 21:** “church-yard”
- **Line 23:** “church-yard”
- **Line 31:** “church-yard”
- **Line 32:** “church-yar”
- **Line 40:** “side,” “side”
- **Line 41:** “there”
- **Line 42:** “there”
- **Line 43:** “there”
- **Line 65:** “dead,” “dead”

END-STOPPED LINE

[End-stopped lines](#) appear throughout the poem, creating a direct, authoritative tone. Both the speaker and the child communicate in brief, straightforward statements that are neatly contained within their own lines. As such, both characters appear candid and easy to follow—and therefore credible. For instance, here is a look at lines 5-6, in which the speaker describes the child he encounters:

I met a little cottage Girl:
She was eight years old, she said;

The concise, end-stopped lines are confident and to-the-point, giving the reader the impression that they can be trusted. The same can be said of the child's speech. Lines 57-60 are a strong example of this effect:

“And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.”

Here, each statement is contained within its own line, ensuring that the reader can easily follow the child's account of her brother's death. In combination with everyday language and simple sentence structures, the end-stops result in plain, uncomplicated, and impactful statements of fact. Thus, the audience trusts and understands both characters in the poem.

Because this poem features a very steady [meter](#), end-stops create regularity and maintain a consistent pace. The exaggerated pauses that end-stops create reinforce the bouncy [iambic](#) rhythm, contributing to its lighthearted, song-like feel and memorability. A similar effect occurs with the poem's use of rhyme—end-stops punctuate the text immediately after [end rhymes](#). This places additional emphasis on the rhymes, which already receive metrical stress. Here is a look at the meter in stanza 15 (lines 57-60) to illustrate this:

“And **when** the **ground** was **white** with **snow**,
And I could **run** and **slide**,
My **brother** **John** was **forced** to **go**,
And **he** lies by her **side**.”

Here, the pauses indicated by end-stops create rhythmic regularity, in turn making these lines very easy to follow. Moreover, they call attention to the sonic similarity between “slide” and “side,” which is then picked up in “white,” “I,” and “lies,” all of which receive metrical stress, further accentuating the rhythm. By playing up end rhymes, not only do the end-stops increase the poem's musicality and memorability, but they also contribute to the poem's meaning. Here, they highlight the connection between “go” and “snow,” linking the death of the child's brother to winter (and thus contributing to the development of seasonal symbolism). In this way, end-stops also subtly reinforce the various effects of meter and rhyme.

Where End-Stopped Line appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** “”
- **Line 2:** “”
- **Line 3:** “”
- **Line 4:** “?”

- Line 5: “.”
- Line 6: “.”
- Line 8: “.”
- Line 9: “.”
- Line 10: “.”
- Line 11: “.”
- Line 12: “.”
- Line 13: “.”
- Line 14: “.”
- Line 15: “.”
- Line 16: “.”
- Line 17: “.”
- Line 18: “.”
- Line 19: “.”
- Line 20: “.”
- Line 21: “.”
- Line 22: “.”
- Line 24: “.”
- Line 25: “.”
- Line 26: “.”
- Line 27: “.”
- Line 28: “.”
- Line 29: “.”
- Line 30: “.”
- Line 31: “.”
- Line 32: “.”
- Line 33: “.”
- Line 34: “.”
- Line 35: “.”
- Line 36: “.”
- Line 37: “.”
- Line 38: “.”
- Line 39: “.”
- Line 40: “.”
- Line 41: “.”
- Line 42: “.”
- Line 43: “.”
- Line 44: “.”
- Line 45: “.”
- Line 46: “.”
- Line 47: “.”
- Line 48: “.”
- Line 49: “.”
- Line 50: “.”
- Line 51: “.”
- Line 52: “.”
- Line 53: “.”
- Line 54: “.”
- Line 55: “.”
- Line 56: “.”
- Line 57: “.”
- Line 58: “.”
- Line 59: “.”

- Line 60: “.”
- Line 61: “.”
- Line 62: “.”
- Line 63: “.”
- Line 64: “.”
- Line 65: “.”
- Line 66: “.”
- Line 68: “.”
- Line 69: “.”

REPETITION

This poem heavily features [repetition](#), many forms of which have been discussed above, including [anaphora](#), [assonance](#), [consonance](#), and [diacope](#). The remaining examples of repetition—simply words and phrases that appear in multiple places throughout the poem—highlight the persistence of both the speaker and the child’s view on the number of children in her family.

For starters, the phrase “we are seven” serves as the poem’s title and appears in both line 64 and the final line of the poem. Similarly, the child says “Seven are we” and “Seven boys and girls are we” in lines 18 and 30, respectively. As such, the young girl’s response to the speaker’s question is incredibly consistent—from the title to the very last line. While she restates and rephrases her answer, the actual number and message remain unchanged. As a result, she appears confident and unwavering and therefore trustworthy.

When the speaker asks the child where all of her siblings are, she responds:

[...] two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.
“Two of us in the church-yard lie...

The speaker then repeats:

[...] two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,

He doesn’t understand how there are seven children in her family, as he has only accounted for five. Essentially, he repeats the information he accepts—that is, the location of her four *living* siblings. The child then repeats the information he left out:

Two of us in the church-yard lie,

By reminding him of the other two siblings, the child indicates that he made a mistake by leaving them out of his count. Thus, she seems to have a strong memory and evidence to back up her claims, while he has forgotten critical information—or

perhaps misinterpreted it, at least from the child's perspective. In short, the repetition of the siblings' locales displays which siblings each of them believe should be counted.

Additionally, the speaker restates the question, "How many [children are in your family]?" It is both his first and his final question for the child, showing that he still does not accept her answer by the end of the poem. Consequently, he comes across as incredulous and even stubborn.

Moreover, the speaker refers to the child as "little Maid" six times throughout the poem. This nickname emphasizes her young age, small stature, and lack of worldly experience. As a result, the speaker appears to talk down to the child, believing himself to be more knowledgeable than she is. Such a belittling portrayal of the child challenges her authority and credibility. But it also calls his character into question, as it turns out that she has quite a lot to share.

Finally, the child uses repetition as she recounts the deaths of her brother and sister in lines 54-59:

And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.
"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,

Here, the repetition of specific words and sentence structures relates the deaths of the two siblings, reinforcing their bond. Moreover, repetition plays up the child's use of seasonal [symbolism](#), as she uses similar terms to discuss the weather at the time of each death. Further, it highlights the siblings' interconnectedness, as the siblings who play by the grave ultimately join those who are buried below. In other words, they all spend time together graveside, and who is above and below ground is relatively arbitrary, especially as they all end up in the same place.

Where Repetition appears in the poem:

- **Line 13:** "little Maid"
- **Line 14:** "How many"
- **Line 15:** "How many"
- **Line 17:** "I pray you tell"
- **Line 18:** "Seven are we"
- **Lines 19-20:** "And two of us at Conway dwell, / And two are gone to sea"
- **Line 21:** "Two of us in the church-yard lie"
- **Lines 25-26:** "two at Conway dwell, / And two are gone to sea"
- **Line 27:** "I pray you tell"
- **Line 29:** "little Maid"
- **Line 30:** "Seven boys and girls are we"

- **Line 31:** "Two of us in the church-yard lie"
- **Line 33:** "little Maid"
- **Line 38:** "little Maid"
- **Line 54:** "And, when the grass was "
- **Line 56:** "My brother John"
- **Line 57:** "And when the ground was"
- **Line 59:** "My brother John"
- **Line 61:** "How many"
- **Line 63:** "little Maid"
- **Line 64:** "we are seven"
- **Line 68:** "little Maid"
- **Line 69:** "we are seven"



VOCABULARY

Rustic (Line 9) - Having to do with the countryside and rural ways of life. This term can be used positively—to describe charming simplicity—or in a negative way—to suggest an unsophisticated, unworldly backwardness.

Woodland (Line 9) - An area of land that is forested—that is, covered with trees and other such (plant) life.

Clad (Line 10) - Dressed, clothed.

Fair (Line 11, Line 46) - An old-fashioned literary term meaning beautiful or pleasant to look at. When describing someone's physical appearance, "fair" can also mean light-colored.

Maid (Line 13, Line 28, Line 29, Line 33, Line 38, Line 63, Line 68) - An outdated term for a girl or young woman, especially one who is unmarried or a virgin.

Conway (Line 19, Line 25) - A rural town (and county) along the River Conwy on the northern coast of Wales.

Dwell (Line 19, Line 24, Line 25) - A formal term meaning to live in or reside at a particular place.

Ye (Line 27, Line 36) - An outdated, formal way of saying "you," especially when addressing multiple people.

Kerchief (Line 42) - A (usually square) cloth that is worn tied around the neck or as a head covering; a handkerchief.

Porringer (Line 47) - A small, handled bowl that was commonly used for food and drink.

'Twas (Line 67) - An outdated contraction for "it was."

Nay (Line 69) - An outdated term that simply means "no."



FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

"We Are Seven" is a [ballad](#) made up of 16 [quatrains](#) (four-line stanzas) and a [final cinquain](#) (which contains five lines). This longer closing stanza recounts the speaker's final plea to the

child—he calls on her to accept that there are now only five children in her family, but she refuses. The shift in structure calls attention to the poem's conclusion, while perhaps subtly reinforcing that their point of disagreement remains unresolved, as an additional line lingers.

Ballads were historically used to transmit stories orally because their bouncy rhythm and use of rhyme makes them easy to remember. Indeed, this poem's structure is orderly and therefore easy to follow. Plus, its repetitiveness reflects the persistence of both the speaker and the child as they debate the number of children in her family. Taking the subject—childhood innocence—into account, the combination of perfect rhymes and a jaunty rhythm gives the poem a nursery rhyme feel, playing on the use of ballads to tell children's stories.

"We Are Seven" is not entirely a traditional folk ballad, however, in that it explores an everyday subject—rather than retelling an exciting, adventurous tale—and occasionally takes liberties with rhyme, meter, and structure. In fact, this poem and others within *Lyrical Ballads* are largely responsible for reimagining this classic form to suit shifting literary concerns.

METER

Like traditional [ballads](#), this poem makes use of [common meter](#): alternating lines of [iambic tetrameter](#) and [iambic trimeter](#). This means that it alternates between lines containing six and eight syllables apiece and a da-DUM rhythm that constantly swings back and forth between [unstressed](#) and [stressed](#) syllables. For example, here is a look at the meter in [stanza 3](#):

She **had** a **rustic**, **woodland** **air**,
And **she** was **wildly** **clad**:
Her **eyes** were **fair**, and **very** **fair**;
—Her **beauty** **made** me **glad**.

Due to its variations in line length as well as the repeated rises and falls of the iamb, common meter mimics the intonations of natural speech. As such, the poem does not become overly repetitive or exhausting to listen to, despite its long length. Such a natural-sounding cadence also suits the poem's heavy use of dialogue. Moreover, the bounciness of the rhythm has a lighthearted feel that reflects the young girl's childlike innocence and carefree discussion of her siblings' death.

While the adherence to common meter is fairly strict and consistent, slight variations help shift the poem's mood at key points. For example, lines 30-31 begin with stressed syllables:

"**Seven** **boys** and **girls** are **we**;
Two of us **in** the **church-yard** **lie**,

The initial stresses emphasize the child's exasperation that the speaker will not take her at her word, as she insists that there

are seven children in her family. Interestingly, the poem's first line also contains only four syllables rather than the customary eight. This half-line, which is preceded by dashes, gives the impression that the poem begins mid-story—or perhaps mid-memory, as if it pops up in the speaker's head and he then reminisces aloud.

RHYME SCHEME

This poem has an overarching ABAB [rhyme scheme](#), though some [stanzas](#)—including the opening lines—more closely resemble the ABCB pattern that is customary for [ballads](#). Here is a look at the rhyme scheme for the first four stanzas:

ABCB DEDE FGFG HHHI

The abundance of rhymes makes the poem memorable and contributes to the childlike, nursery rhyme feel. However, brief deviations from the rhyme scheme highlight the distinct perspectives of the child and the speaker. First, stanza 10 follows ABCB pattern but contains a great deal of [internal rhyme](#):

"Their graves are **green**, **they** may be **seen**,"
The little Maid **replied**,
"Twelve steps or **more** from my mother's **door**,
And they are **side** by **side**."

Here, the repetition of sounds that appear within rhyming pairs (such as /gr/, /m/, and long /ay/) reinforce the sonic harmony of internal and [end rhymes](#). Thus, as the child explains the enduring strength of her relationship with her deceased siblings, rhyme reflects the unity and sameness that she feels with them.

The gratifying similarity among rhyme words might seem to conflict with the fact that there is a major *disagreement* at the center of the poem. But this, too, is something that the speaker addresses through rhyme scheme deviations. In the final stanza, the speaker points out that the child's brother and sister "are dead; those two are dead!" This line does not have a rhyming pair, creating a sense of disharmony that reflects the friction between the speaker and the child's perspectives. Indeed, their disagreement is left unresolved, just as this line is left lingering without a match.



SPEAKER

The audience learns limited biographical information about the speaker over the course of the poem. Most notably, when the child refers to him as "Sir," it becomes clear that the speaker is a male adult. Plus, the speaker is taken with the child's "rustic, woodland air," suggesting that he lives in a city and is passing through Conway. One might also infer that he is of a higher socioeconomic class, given that he comments on the child's country ways, and the fact that she calls him "Master."

As the two figures debate how many children are in the young girl's family, the speaker seems to find her charming but dismisses her perspective altogether. Indeed, he believes that personal experiences and emotions are inferior to science and logic—at least when it comes to justifying one's views. He never wavers from his initial assertion that there are now only five children in the girl's family. In fact, the speaker repeatedly insists that she should agree with him, and her refusal to do so haunts him after their conversation ends. From his perspective, she is unable to understand or accept that death has cut her off from her brother and sister, and the fruitlessness of his arguments apparently frustrates him. As such, the speaker appears firm, persistent, and somewhat argumentative.

Wordsworth has said that this poem was inspired by a young girl whom he met while traveling across the English countryside in 1793. However, it would be misguided to immediately assume that Wordsworth shares the speaker's sentiment and worldview. In his *Lyrical Ballads* and elsewhere, Wordsworth celebrates childhood wonder and nature's power, which he believes cannot be captured by human measurements or reason.



SETTING

This poem is set in Conway (also spelled Conwy), a scenic Welsh town that sits along the River Conwy. The physical backdrop for the speaker's conversation with the child is hazy. The reader might picture the speaker stumbling upon the child while wandering down a rural road or through a garden, or perhaps he is visiting the church near the child's home.

The speaker describes her as a "cottage Girl" who "[has] a rustic, woodland air" and is "wildly clad." Such characterizations emphasize the rural setting and suggest that it enchants the speaker. Still, he disregards the child's point of view, so the repeated reminders that she lives in the countryside subtly signal that he believes rural folks are more naïve than their metropolitan counterparts—though perhaps in an admirable or charming way.

On the other hand, if the reader ultimately agrees with the child, the poem can be taken to mean that nature provides a deeper understanding of the world than logic or reason can offer.



CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

William Wordsworth wrote "We Are Seven" at the outset of what some critics call his "Great Decade"—the highly productive period from 1798 to 1807 during which Wordsworth wrote many of his most celebrated and influential

works. Indeed, *Lyrical Ballads*, the 1798 collection in which this poem appears, is widely considered the first major volume of British Romantic literature.

The collection was originally published anonymously and contains poems by both Wordsworth and fellow English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Among other features, the collection is notable for its reinvention of the [ballad](#), employing common language, taking up everyday subjects, and experimenting with the form's structure and meter. In slightly later editions (the second in 1800, the third in 1802), the two poets attached their names to *Lyrical Ballads*, added new works, and reordered the poems. Wordsworth also included his famous [Preface](#), which outlines the major tenants of Romanticism, as a manifesto of sorts.

The Preface argues that industrialization and related forces such as urbanization and mass media were deadening people's minds. Wordsworth believed that poetry could allow them to experience the power of nature, waking people up from those aspects of modernity that were depleting their emotional and intellectual lives. Moreover, Wordsworth was of the opinion that mass culture led to poorly-developed tastes and a desire for instant gratification. He was against entertainment for entertainment's sake (and profit's sake), and thought poetry should do something more—inspire profound feeling.

Wordsworth's writings can also be seen as a reaction against the Enlightenment ideals of logic and reason above all else. Wordsworth felt that emotion, impression, and creativity were greater forces and that relying on observable evidence was stifling. As a result, Wordsworth's Romanticism championed subjectivity, feeling, imagination, and the beauty of the natural world. Because peasants were constantly interacting with nature, he believed that they were freer and more honest. Accordingly, he preferred common language, or "the real language of men," because it was not beholden to trends or pretensions and was therefore more universal.

Wordsworth and Coleridge had an enormous impact on the themes, styles, and techniques employed by other Romantics. However, the later generation—John Keats ("[Bright Star](#)"), Lord Byron ("[She Walks in Beauty](#)"), and Percy Bysshe Shelley ("[Ode to the West Wind](#)")—generally considered him something of an establishment sell-out for abandoning his radical leftist political views later in life. Still, as the co-founder of a revolutionary literary movement—not to mention the grandfather of straightforward poetic [diction](#)—Wordsworth's influence on the craft cannot be overstated.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Wordsworth's Romanticism is in many ways a response to the Industrial Revolution. Beginning in the 18th century, Britain saw a huge population increase as well as major technological innovations. Believing it was necessary to increase the efficiency and profitability of agriculture, the government took

over land ownership. The resulting Enclosure Acts led to the destruction of local farms as people lost their land for redistribution. Those who couldn't afford enclosure costs went to the city in search of factory jobs. When there weren't enough workers to operate farms, mechanization took hold of the agricultural industry as well. This pattern of industrialization and urbanization forever altered natural landscapes.

Still, Wordsworth believed that one could experience unparalleled wisdom, beauty, and profundity in nature. Wordsworth spent a great deal of time exploring the English countryside a child. As a young adult, his travels, particularly in France, further developed his appreciation for the natural world and common people, which would greatly inform his writings. In 1793, he walked across England, and that journey inspired this poem.

Moreover, the strength of familial ties that Wordsworth explores in "We Are Seven" resonates with his own experiences. Wordsworth was an orphan by his teenage years and was incredibly close to his sister, Dorothy, as an adult. The two lived together and Dorothy's own journals, poems, and travel narratives inspired him greatly.

Wordsworth's trips to France also led to an interest in revolutionary politics. However, he became more conservative with age, especially after the French Revolution. His convictions changed during the Reign of Terror, which he saw as an explosion of passion, but in a violent and directionless manner. As a result, he was staunch that, while poetry should be highly passionate, it should also be well-thought-out, featuring what he called "emotion recollected in tranquility."

and Peter Ackroyd. This episode addresses nature and related subjects such as industrialization and childhood mortality. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLwRXISgiSQ>)

- **Biography of the Author** — A detailed overview of Wordsworth's life and works from the Poetry Foundation. (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-wordsworth>)
- **First Edition of Lyrical Ballads** — Scanned images of a first edition copy of Lyrical Ballads (1798), the collection in which "We Are Seven" appears. Coauthored by Wordsworth and fellow English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, this collection in many ways precipitated British Romanticism. (<https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/lyrical-ballads-1798-edition>)
- **The Romantic Period** — An overview of the Romantic Period, with links to information on related historical events (e.g., the Industrial Revolution). (<https://sites.udel.edu/britlitwiki/the-romantics/>)

LITCHARTS ON OTHER WILLIAM WORDSWORTH POEMS

- [Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802](#)
- [Extract from The Prelude \(Boat Stealing\)](#)
- [I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud](#)
- [Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey](#)
- [London, 1802](#)
- [My Heart Leaps Up](#)
- [She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways](#)
- [The Solitary Reaper](#)
- [The World Is Too Much With Us](#)



MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- **The Poem Out Loud** — Listen to a live recitation of the poem. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilpwiMEyZuU>)
- **Preface to Lyrical Ballads** — A full text of the Preface to the third edition of Lyrical Ballads, the collection in which "We Are Seven" appears. This 1802 essay is considered a key text and manifesto of sorts for the Romantic movement in British literature. (<https://www.english.upenn.edu/~jenglish/Courses/Spring2001/040/preface1802.html>)
- **The Romantics and Nature** — One installment of a three-part documentary on the Romantic Era from the BBC



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