EXAM STASH

WORLDS AND LIVES POETRY

AQA GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE

LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH



NATURE | HARMONY | HUMANITY

WHAT HAPPENS?

A resting speaker enjoys a grove but repeatedly returns to sadness about human conduct.

THE BIG IDEA

Nature's apparent harmony prompts a repeated question about the harm humans do to one another.

POEM BREAKDOWN

1. ***Stanzas 1–2:*** The speaker rests and listens to nature. The tone is peaceful, then troubled, as sad thoughts intrude.
2. ***Stanzas 3–4:*** Flowers, birds and branches suggest pleasure and life. The tone is wondering, as the speaker admits limits to knowledge.
3. ***Stanzas 5–6:*** The speaker returns to a wider reflection on human conduct. The tone is lamenting, ending with a direct question.

4 KEY QUOTATIONS

'I heard a thousand blended notes,'	**Method:** Auditory imagery	**Key word:** 'blended'	**Effect:** Different sounds combine without losing their individual existence.
'And much it grieved my heart to think'	**Method:** Emotional verb	**Key word:** 'grieved'	**Effect:** Enjoyment and moral pain exist at the same time.
'Their thoughts I cannot measure:—'	**Method:** Admission of limitation	**Key word:** 'cannot'	**Effect:** The speaker does not claim complete access to the birds' experience.
'What man has made of man?'	**Method:** Repeated question	**Key word:** 'made'	**Effect:** Human suffering is presented as something humanity itself has produced.

FORM & STRUCTURE

- Six quatrains with alternating rhyme.
- The shorter fourth lines repeatedly bring the reflection to a point, reinforcing the poem's central question and building its sense of concern.

CONTEXT

- Published in *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, the poem connects Romantic attention to nature with an ethical question about humanity.

COMPARE IT WITH...

- ***Shall earth no more inspire thee:*** different appeals to nature's restorative power.
- ***Like an Heiress:*** pleasure disrupted by human damage.

STORY DEVELOPMENT

1 RESTING AND LISTENING



TONE: *Peaceful, then troubled*

Pleasant surroundings do not prevent sad thoughts from entering the speaker's mind.

2 FLOWERS, BIRDS AND BRANCHES



TONE: *Wondering*

Small movements are interpreted as signs of pleasure, though the speaker admits limits to knowledge.

3 RETURNING QUESTION



TONE: *Lamenting*

The poem finishes by testing human conduct against the speaker's belief in natural harmony.

RECALL QUESTION

Why does the question about humanity return?