

Three Years She Grew by William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth's Poems have long comforted the sorrowful soul.

His [tone](#) is not that of the typical tortured soul poet, yet he was not without immense suffering. His ability to infuse comfort into his pain through his poetry has offered peace and understanding to people for generations. Wordsworth experienced some of the deepest pain any human being has ever known- the loss of a child. In this poem, *Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower*, he writes about Lucy, the character who represents his daughter, Catherine. She died at the age of three in the year of 1812. She was a child that was known for making those around her laugh. And as her condition was referred to as "convulsions" it is assumed that she suffered and died from Polio (Thron). Wordsworth grieves, but not beyond hope. He writes this poem about Lucy. Perhaps it was too painful to use Catherine's name. But *Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower* quickly reveals that it is Catherine whom Wordsworth thinks about while writing this piece.

Stanza 1

*Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then nature said, "a lovelier flower
on earth was never sown;
This Child I to myself will take;
she shall be mine, and I will make
A Lady of my own*

In the first stanza, the [speaker](#) let's the reader identify with Lucy. It is not hard to imagine a lively young three year old, playing in the sun or in the rain. But she was too lovely for earth, or so Nature decided. The speaker suggests that Nature has taken the child for herself because she was too beautiful for the earth.

Stanza 2

*Myself will to my darling be
both law and impulse: and with me
The irl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain*

The speaker shifts to thoughts of himself. He can easily see how Nature wanted this little girl for herself, lovely as she was, but he himself would need to respond to this loss. When he says that he will be "both law and impulse", he implies that he will react in the way he is expected to react, and do the things he is expected to do, but he would not react without impulse. He would give way to his feelings and allow grief to have its way in his heart. He implies that as he walks the earth, and as he looks into the heavens, he will feel her presence as "an overseeing power" and he reveals that he will either kindle that feeling or restrain it, probably depending upon the time and circumstances in which this feeling arises.

Stanza 3

*She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things*

The speaker shifts tones once again in order to focus on her- Lucy. He has explained what this loss means to Nature, and to himself, but what does it mean for Lucy? He finds his comfort in this. Lucy is symbolic of Wordsworth's daughter, Catherine, who died of Polio. The speaker believes that Lucy will be "sportive as the fawn" and able to run "across the lawn" as she was "wild with glee". He believes that contrary to her limited physical ability on earth, in her new place, she would be able to enjoy running wild as a fawn. She would also enjoy "the silence and the calm". The speaker finds comfort in this idea.

Stanza 4

*The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
By silent sympathy*

In this stanza of *Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower*, the speaker continues to imagine what Lucy is now doing. He imagines her floating on clouds, and watching those on earth. He imagines that she should never "fail to see" the "silent sympathy" he feels for her.

Stanza 5

*To stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place*

*Where rivulets dance their wayward round
And beauty born of murmuring sound
shall pass into her face*

The speaker imagines that Lucy “shall be dear” even “to stars”. He imagines that she is enjoying her existence as she moves about in the night, being loved by the stars and all the heavenly beings.

Stanza 6

*And vital feelings of delight
shall rear her form to stately height
her virgin bosom swell;
such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell*

In this stanza, the speaker reveals his belief that although Lucy is no longer alive in earthly terms, she will still experience “vital feelings of delight” as she grows up into her “stately height” and into maturity. The **imagery** of her rearing her form “to stately height” and of “her virgin bosom swell[ing]” reveal his belief that wherever she is, wherever Nature has taken her, she will continue to grow up there, with all feelings of life and vitality. He vows to give these thoughts to Lucy daily, so that even though she exists in a different realm than he, they would still “together live here in this happy dell”.

Stanza 7

*Thus Nature spake- the work was done
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;*

*The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.*

In this final stanza of *Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower*, the speaker refers back to Nature. Nature is the authority in this situation, and she has said that “the work was done” and Lucy was no longer needed on earth. The speaker mourns over this, but he doesn’t resent it. He exclaims, “How soon my Lucy’s race was run!” and he is clearly grieving when he said, “she died and left to me this heath, this calm, and quiet scene”. This reveals that Lucy’s absence in his life is felt deeply. The absence of her laugh is painfully noticeable, and he is left only with memories of the past. Although the stanzas leading up to this final one speak of Lucy living a vital and fulfilling eternity, the speaker chooses to end *Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower* with the grief that he feels in knowing that “what has been...never more will be”.

To end this poem in grief, even though all comforting words were spoken and acknowledged, is to be real and tangible to readers. Anyone who has experienced loss knows that all hope of an afterlife, and all words of comfort, cannot change the empty feeling and knowledge that what once was, is now changed forever. With this poem, Wordsworth offers hope and comfort, yet he does not deny the unending grief. For this reason, *Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower* relates with many who have suffered loss, for Wordsworth reveals that he suffers too, and it that, there is some comfort for readers because they feel they are not alone.

<https://poemanalysis.com/william-wordsworth/three-years-she-grew-in-sun-and-shower/>