

talk
to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

Beehive
10: A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal
by
William Wordsworth

1. Summary

This is a poem about the poet's deep love for his beloved and his reaction to her sudden and untimely death. He was in a trance that kept him from seeing the truth that every life will finally end in death; he thought that she would live forever. So, he is totally unprepared for the death of his beloved.

Now that she is dead, the life force is gone, and she is unable to either hear or see. He realizes that she is, and always was, a part of the rhythm of the earth. She has been affected by time just like anyone else. She has returned to the earth from where we all come.

To understand the poem better click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYbjs6pgMmE&t=196s>

2. Stanza By Stanza Explanation

A slumber did my spirit seal—
I had no human fears.
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthy years.

The poet was completely in love with a young woman. It was almost as if he was asleep, and had no connection with reality. So he had none of the fears that are common to humans. He felt that she would never be affected by time, so she would not grow old or die.

No motion has she now, no force—
She neither hears nor sees,
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees

In the second stanza we learn that she has died. She lies still, without the force of life, and can no longer hear or see. She is now one with the earth. She rolls along with the rocks, stones and trees as the earth rotates on its axis.

3. Vocabulary

1. **Slumber** – sleep
She lay down on the bed and fell into a deep **slumber**.
2. **Spirit** – the way people think and feel about something
At the mela everyone was in high **spirits** and enjoying themselves.
3. **Seal** – to shut or close tightly
I used wax to **seal** the lid of the bottle.
4. **Earthy** – in this world (poetic usage)
5. **Diurnal** – daily
The **diurnal** rotation of the earth on its axis takes 24 hours.
6. **Course** – path; an area of land or water used for a sport such as race course
The **course** for the cross-country race was through a forest.

4. Questions

1. “A slumber did my spirit seal,” says the poet. That is, a deep sleep ‘closed off’ his soul (or mind). How does the poet react to his loved one’s death? Does he feel bitter grief? Or does he feel a great peace?
2. The passing of time will no longer affect her, says the poet. Which lines of the poem say this?
3. How does the poet imagine her to be, after death? Does he think of her as a person living in a very happy state (a ‘heaven’)? Or does he see her now as a part of nature? In which lines of the poem do you find your answer?

5. Literary Devices

1. Rhyme scheme of the poem: abab cdcd

A slumber did my spirit seal—	a
I had no human fears.	b
She seemed a thing that could not feel	a
The touch of earthy years.	b
No motion has she now, no force—	c
She neither hears nor sees,	d
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course	c
With rocks and stones and trees	d

2. **Alliteration:** The repetition of a consonant sound at the start of two or more consecutive words is called alliteration. The instances of alliteration in this poem are as follows

spirit sealed – the 's' sound is repeated

rolled round – the 'r' sound is repeated