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|  | Theme | Example | Technique(s) |
| 1 | The **sublime** (esp. in relation to **transcendence** of quotidian) |  |  |
| 2 | The **beautiful** (esp. in relation to the promise of new life) |  |  |
| 3 | Return/memory |  |  |
| 4 | The role of memory in forming identity |  |  |
| 5 | Nature reflecting human conditions of isolation **AND/OR** friendship |  |  |
| 6 | Moral/spiritual freedom |  |  |
| 7 | Seclusion/individuality |  |  |
| 8 | **Existential** unity of all life; humankind part of, not apart from, Nature  |  |  |
| 9 | Restorative/educative power of Nature |  |  |
| 10 | **Deleterious** effects of modernity/urban life |  |  |
| 11 | **Transcendence** of **quotidian** reality |  |  |
| 12 | **Interanimation** of past, present, & future |  |  |
| 13 | Life *is* change; one cannot repeat the past |  |  |
| 14 | Kantian\* connection between thought & feeling; need to give expressive form to feelings/emotions |  |  |
| 15 | Transience of all things, esp. life/happiness/joy |  |  |
| 16 | Nature reflects/excites feelings that are partially **effable**/**articulable** |  |  |
| 17 | Being open to Nature’s majesty/beauty is morally improving |  |  |
| 18 | Essential connection of Nature, truth, beauty |  |  |

**Note of theme 14: Kantian\* connection between thought & feeling; need to give expressive form to feelings/emotions**

Kant’s philosophy had a profound impact on Romantic thinking. Part of Kant’s philosophy was concerned with the ways in which human understanding is made possible and is formed. According to Kant, two fundamental human capacities are **spontaneity** and **judgement**. Briefly and simply put, spontaneity allows us to deal with, and to interpret, whatever the world has throws at us; spontaneity allows us to make sense of new situations (e.g. walking through unfamiliar rooms for the first time). Judgement allows us to make sense of, to interpret, or attach meaning to our experiences. One way of thinking of judgement and spontaneity, then, is this:

***spontaneity*** *is our ability to receive experiences from the outside world;* ***judgement*** *is our ability to put our experiences into words.*

**Poetic techniques to monitor for:**

* Alliteration
* Assonance (repetition vowel sounds)
* Repetition of words/phrases
* Repetition and variation (near repetition of phrases but with some differences)
* Pathetic fallacy
* Imagery
* Symbolism
* Personification
* Metaphor
* Simile
* Polysyllabic words
* Monosyllabic words
* Philosophical language
* Mythical language/imagery
* Religious language/imagery
* Opposition
* Juxtaposition (placing **sharply differing** words/images/concepts next to each other)
* Oxymoron (stronger type of juxtaposition: putting **logically opposed words/concepts** directly next to each other)

**Vocabulary: Look up Definitions of the following**

**Sublime:**

**Beautiful:**

**Transcendence:**

**Existential:**

**Deleterious:**

**Quotidian:**

**Interanimation:**

**Effable/Ineffable:**

**Articulable/inarticulable:**

**Commentary on the poem**

In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth says “poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.” Poetry for Wordsworth involves giving linguistic form and expression to feeling. Thus, the dynamic at the heart of poetry is for Wordsworth the interplay between what Kant called spontaneity and judgement. The full title of “Tintern Abbey” suggests the spontaneity that Wordsworth writes about in the preface; however, it might be better to think of the poem as evoking *the sense* of “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” – the poem itself is carefully crafted, and *Lyrical Ballads* went through many editions, so we can hardly say the poem was an act of spontaneity!

“Tintern Abbey” is written in free verse (no set patterns of rhyme or metre); possibly this reflects the free flow of emotion and thought that Wordsworth contemplates in the poem (he writes of “the language of the sense” and Nature’s ability to “inform / The mind that is within us, so impress / With quietness and beauty, and so feed / Lofty thoughts”). The flow of the verse might also mirror the flow of the River Wye, which is invoked in the first section (the invocation of the Wye is anticipated by the alliterative use of *w* in the preceding stanza). In circular fashion, the Wye itself might, for Wordsworth, reflect or symbolize the movement of experience, thought, and feeling. The use of free verse possibly also suggests are more modern or experimental type of poetry. Remember that this is last poem in *Lyrical Ballads*, and Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” the first. Coleridge’s poem in many ways mimics an older tradition of poetry, one that follows more rigid patterns of rhyme and metre, but he does it in a way that breathes new life into those older forms. Thus we move in *Lyrical Ballads* from a new take on an older form to a more radically or thoroughly new form of poetry represented by “Tintern Abbey.”

“Tintern Abbey” is also concerned with the role memory and the past play on the formation of identity, and the relationship between past present and future. The full title of the poem informs us that Wordsworth is “revisiting” the abbey; but his return to this familiar place, which has left a lasting impression on him, is not an attempt to simply repeat the past. His memory of this place is very much alive, and has given him great comfort in times of darkness. His present return to Tintern Abbey reawakens his memories, and in doing so renews or revivifies them. And his past and present experiences of Tintern Abbey press onwards into his future, leading him to conjecture what might be to come. Thus, while the poem is very much rooted in the present experience of the speaker looking out and down towards Tintern Abbey and its beautiful surroundings, the three major sections of the poem move from the past of five years ago (section 1), the present (sections 2), and the future (section 3). The shift towards a contemplation of the future is marked by a shift to the future subjunctive mood: Wordsworth writes “If I were not thus taught...” The use of “were” rather than “was” is the future subjunctive, because the future subjunctive mood is what we use when contemplate “what if...” (e.g. “what would happen if I were to...?”).

In “Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth contemplates the unity of humankind and Nature: in Nature we find our human condition reflected and symbolized. He also reflects on the unity of truth, beauty, and Nature. He seems to believe that being truly open to Nature’s beauty and majesty is morally improving – that our “unremembered” experiences of Nature might lead to “little, nameless, unremembered, acts / Of kindness of love.”