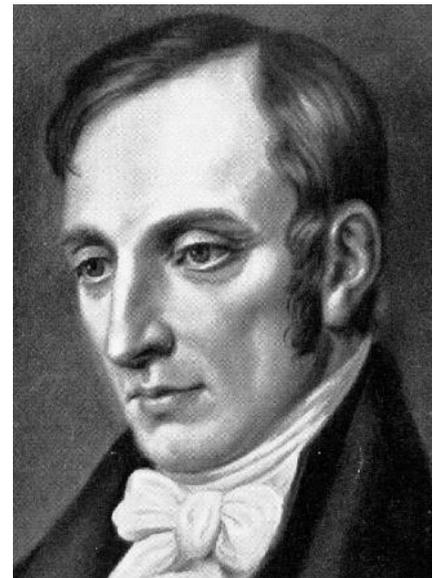


Today's poem is by WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, who was born in 1770 and died in 1850, at the age of 80. As a poet he is primarily associated with writing about nature and the countryside, particularly in the LAKE DISTRICT (his most famous lines come from a poem called 'DAFFODILS' - 'I wandered lonely as a cloud / That floats on high o'er vales and hills / When all at once I saw a crowd, / A host of golden daffodils'). But this poem was written by him on September 3 1802, as he was travelling through London on his way to France. (Wordsworth was a big fan of the French Revolution when it happened in 1789, when Wordsworth was 19. He wrote 'Bliss was it in that dawn [of the French Revolution] to be alive, but to be young was very heaven'. Maybe he wised up a bit when he got older.) He was so inspired by the sight of London when he saw it from Westminster Bridge, he wrote the poem almost immediately. This is what he wrote:

ON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

Earth has not any thing to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!



At the moment, London is lying very still indeed, but I don't think a modern-day Wordsworth would be inspired by the sight of London at the moment to write the same lines. The stillness that Wordsworth is writing about is a very different kind of stillness - the sort of stillness that a child shows when they are sleeping: the sort of stillness that carries within it the promise of so much joyful activity



when the child finally stirs and wakes up. We'll just have to hope London is able soon to get back to enjoying that kind of stillness at the start and end of the day, rather than the dead and dreary quiet that currently envelops it.