

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

William Wordsworth was always interested in improving the world. As a young man he traveled to France to participate in the French Revolution. When he returned to England, war broke out between the two countries, and Wordsworth became disillusioned.



Together with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Wordsworth became one of the major English Romantic poets, but later he was criticized for his negative attitude toward society and the industrial revolution. It was during this time that Wordsworth wrote “The World Is Too Much with Us.”

Denise Levertov (1923–1997)



Denise Levertov published more than twenty volumes of poetry and won many awards. She was also the author of four books of prose

and translator of three volumes of poetry. She taught at Stanford University and Tufts University, among others. Born in England, she spent the last decade of her life in Seattle, Washington.

Pre-reading Activities

Literary Focus: Comparing Literature

It's been said that “there is nothing new under the sun.” People experience many of the same emotions and experiences across time and cultures.

As you read Wordsworth's “The World Is Too Much with Us” and Oliver's “Daisies,” consider how their ideas compare. Think about their descriptions of nature and their attitudes toward nature and humans. Take notes about these and other comparisons as you read.

Connect to Your Life

Some people believe we have become so focused on material goods that we have lost the ability to connect with nature. We work so hard to understand technology and science that we have forgotten how to appreciate the natural beauty around us.

Have we as a society become too “worldly”? Are we so focused on the concerns of the world that we have forgotten how to see and feel beauty in the world?

Discuss with a partner what problems arise when people are too focused on worldly matters.

Source: Portrait of Denise Levertov, by Elsa Dorfman, Flagg St, Cambridge, MA