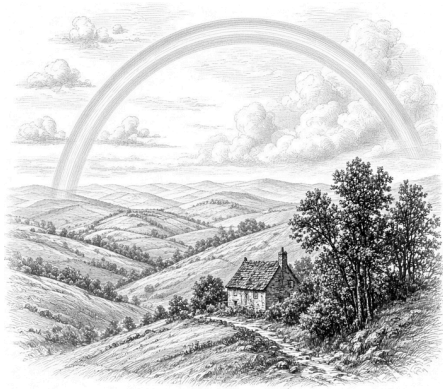
Name _____ Class _____ Date _____



My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold

by William Wordsworth

Grades 5–8 · Common Core RL.6.4, RL.6.2, RL.6.5

Wordsworth wrote the poem in March 1802 and published it in 1807; it is often called "The Rainbow." He later used its last three lines as the opening of his great "Immortality Ode." The poem has nine lines with varied line lengths.

THE POEM

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

VOCABULARY

leaps — jumps

behold — see

began — started

piety — devotion, deep respect

natural piety — a loving respect for nature

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes the speaker's heart leap?

2. Which three stages of life does the speaker mention in lines 3–5?

3. What does "Or let me die!" tell you about how much this feeling matters to him?

4. What is the paradox in "The Child is father of the Man"? What does it mean?

5. What does the speaker hope his days will be "Bound each to each by"?

WRITING PROMPT

Think of something in nature that has amazed you since you were small. Write a short poem (6–10 lines) about how it made you feel then and how it makes you feel now.

My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold — Answer Key

1. “A rainbow in the sky.”
2. Childhood (“when my life began”), adulthood (“now I am a man”) and old age (“when I shall grow old”).
3. He would rather die than lose his sense of wonder at nature.
4. A child cannot be a father; but the child we were shapes the adult we become, so childhood experiences shape the grown man.
5. “natural piety”: a lifelong love and reverence for nature connecting every stage of his life.

Read the full poem online: poetrycatalog.com/my-heart-leaps-up-when-i-behold-william-wordsworth/