“Drinking in / A pure organic pleasure” from Nature: Wordsworth’s Two-Part Prelude

1. Lines 1-15. The Derwent is the “fairest of all rivers”; what significance does it have for him? What does he mean “was it for this”? What does nature “breathe”? Why? How?

2. Lines 16-26: how does he picture his early childhood in these lines?

3. Lines 27-49: What does he mean when he says he was a “fell destroyer”? What is the significance of the lines “I heard among the solitary hills / Low breathings coming after me”?

4. Lines 50-66: What happens when he hangs in the trees above the raven’s nest? What do you think the “strange utterance” is?

5. How many allusions to music and sound can you find in these lines?

6. Lines 67-80: How is the “mind of man fashioned . . . as a strain of music”? What are these spirits he alludes to? What do they do? How is this passage and the poem so far “visionary”? What does nature mean to him? Has nature had an impact on your life? If so, what?

7. Lines 81-129: These are some of the most famous lines from all of Wordsworth’s poetry. What happens when he steals this boat? Literally? Psychologically? Emotionally? Etc. etc. How is this an example of nature’s “severer interventions, and ministry more palpable”?

8. Lines 130-149: What function do these “beings of the hills” serve?

9. Lines 150-185: These lines, describing ice skating, are very famous as well. What does he mean when he says he “cut across the shadow of a star”? What is the significance of this line? We understand literally that when he stops short the earth keeps wheeling by, but what is the symbolic meaning of this?

10. For Wordsworth, what is a spot of time? What purpose do they serve?