CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Thorn

William Wordsworth · *1798 · English original, as hosted (from lyrical-ballads, PG #9622)*

There is a thorn; it looks so old, in truth you'd find it hard to say how it could ever have been young, it looks so old and grey. So this complete ballad begins, with a lowercase thorn and a semicolon, as this file prints it. William Wordsworth, 1798, extracted from Lyrical Ballads (PG #9622), which already has its own collection map. Name the poem, and the parent. For grades 9–12. A mature narrative of grief; gravity, no prurience. Quote this wording.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

How should a school read this file as Wordsworth's complete 1798 ballad The Thorn, extracted from Lyrical Ballads, beginning with a thorn that looks so old, rather than as the whole 1798 volume, or as a later modernized spelling?

"There is a thorn; it looks so old, In truth"
I.

William Wordsworth's The Thorn, 1798, complete as hosted. It is extracted from Lyrical Ballads (PG #9622), which already has its own collection map. It opens: There is a thorn; it looks so old, in truth you'd find it hard to say how it could ever have been young. Later: High on a mountain's highest ridge. And: This thorn you on your left espy. For grades 9–12. A mature narrative of grief; gravity, no prurience. Name the poem, and the parent. Keep the lowercase thorn and the semicolon. Quote this wording.

KEY CHARACTERS

The speaker
Who begins with a thorn that looks so old, and who later asks the reader to espy it on the left

William Wordsworth
The author of this complete 1798 narrative ballad

HOW TO BEGIN THE THORN

> *"There is a thorn; it looks so old, In truth"*
> I.

> *"High on a mountain's highest ridge, Where oft"*
> Later stanzas

Grades 9–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01

There Is a Thorn; It Looks So Old

I.

There is a thorn; it looks so old. The poem begins with a thorn, lowercase, and with a semicolon, as this file prints it—not "There is a Thorn—" of some later texts.

- Keep "a thorn; it looks so old," lowercase, with the semicolon.
- 9–12.
- A complete ballad, extracted from Lyrical Ballads.
- Quote this wording.

> *"There is a thorn; it looks so old, In truth"*
> I.

02

Hard to Say How It Could Ever Have Been Young

I.

In truth you'd find it hard to say how it could ever have been young, it looks so old and grey. Age is the first fact, before later grief is told.

- Keep "you'd find it hard to say," and "old and grey."
- 9–12. Gravity.
- The first stanza.
- Quote this wording.

> *"In truth you'd find it hard to say, How it"*
> I.

03

High on a Mountain's Highest Ridge

LATER STANZAS

High on a mountain's highest ridge. The place is named as a height, and as a ridge, as this file prints the apostrophe.

- Keep "mountain's highest ridge."
- 9–12.
- A place, before later grief. Gravity, no prurience.
- Quote this wording.

> *"High on a mountain's highest ridge, Where oft"*
> Later stanzas

04

This Thorn You on Your Left Espy

LATER STANZAS

This thorn you on your left espy; and to the left, three yards beyond, you see a little muddy pond. The reader is asked to see, as if standing there.

- Keep "This thorn you on your left espy."
- 9–12. Gravity, no prurience.
- One seeing, not a spectacle.
- Quote this wording.

> *"This thorn you on your left espy; And to"*
> Later stanzas

05

A Ballad Extracted from Lyrical Ballads

THE EDITION

William Wordsworth, 1798, complete as hosted: an individual poem extracted from Lyrical Ballads, Project Gutenberg #9622, which already has its own collection map. Name the poem, and name the parent. For grades 9–12. A mature narrative of grief; gravity, no prurience. Keep the lowercase thorn and the semicolon. Quote this wording. One complete ballad; do not invent what the file does not say.

- Name Wordsworth, 1798, and the extraction from Lyrical Ballads.
- 9–12. Gravity, no prurience.
- A thorn so old, a ridge, and a seeing to the left.
- Quote this English.

> *"There is a thorn; it looks so old, In truth"*
> I.

A thorn, so old and grey

A mountain's highest ridge

A seeing, to the left

Grief, taught with gravity

A ballad, named as extracted

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. It opens: "There is a thorn; it looks so old, in truth you'd find it hard to say how it could ever have been young, it looks so old and grey." Keep the lowercase thorn and the semicolon; some later texts print a different opening.
2. "High on a mountain's highest ridge." "This thorn you on your left espy."
3. This file is Wordsworth's complete 1798 ballad, extracted from the parent volume Lyrical Ballads (PG #9622), which already has its own collection map. Name the poem, and the parent.
4. For grades 9–12. A mature narrative of grief; gravity, no prurience. Quote this wording.

Quotations are verbatim from the English original, as hosted (from lyrical-ballads, PG #9622), Project Gutenberg #9622, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/wordsworth-the-thorn/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.