William Wordsworth was born in England in the year 1770. An extremely curious and intelligent man, Wordsworth lived life believing in empirical evidence, aligning him closely with scientists of the day. Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*, which “Expostulation and Reply” is a part of, remains his most famous an influential work. In it, he uses the vernacular to reach his audience. “Expostulation and Reply” is a short poem, only eight stanzas long, and lasting for only thirty two lines. It discusses the need for books and debates the necessity of empirical evidence in day-to-day life and education.

Wordsworth’s “Expostulation and Reply” reinforces Wordsworth’s own belief that nature remains mankind’s greatest teacher. While books and formal education are important, Wordsworth asserts in this poem that much more can be learned by studying the world around us and reflecting upon our experiences. In line one, Wordsworth’s friend asks: “Why, William, on that old grey stone…” (1). Wordsworth diction in “old gray stone” indicates that the natural world is ancient, and therefore has much to teach its audience. In line 9, Wordsworth personifies nature in “Mother Earth”. Mothers, as caregivers and teacher, educate their young in the ways of the world. By personifying the earth as a teacher, Wordsworth proves that the earth, not a library, is seminal in education. Lastly, Wordsworth’s friend challenges him in the first three stanzas, i.e. twelve lines. Wordsworth himself replies in four stanzas, or sixteen lines. In literature, he who speaks last and with more lines is often the more correct or highly regarded, and in this case, Wordsworth claims both titles. Therefore, his point, that education should be sought through the natural world and empirical evidence, is adequately presented in the poem.

I chose this poem because I admire Wordsworth’s approach to both poetry and the world around him. Wordsworth’s use of literary devices while still employing simplistic language allows readers of all skill levels to engage with his work. In my opinion, poetry is not meant to be aloof and confuse its audience, but rather to share experience. Wordsworth’s poetry accomplishes that feat. Also, Wordsworth very clearly cares about the natural world by acknowledging its importance and vastness. An avid hiker, I learn much by hiking through the woods, both about myself, others, and the world around me. Wordsworth seeks to prove nature’s influence in this poem, and it reinforces my already closely-held beliefs.