

The River

River, river, little river!
Bright you sparkle on your way;
O'er the yellow pebbles dancing,
Through the flowers and foliage glancing,
Like a child at play.
River, river! swelling river!
On you rush through rough and smooth;
Louder, faster, brawling, leaping,
Over rocks, by rose-banks, sweeping
Like impetuous youth.
River, river! brimming river!
Broad and deep, and still as time;
Seeming still, yet still in motion,
Tending onward to the ocean,
Just like mortal prime.
River, river! headlong river!
Down you dash into the sea,
Sea that line hath never sounded,
Sea that sail hath never rounded,
Like eternity.

- C.A. Bowles



About the poet

Caroline Anne Bowles (1786-1854) was married to Robert Southey who was the poet laureate of Britain. She wrote various other works including '*Chapter on Churchyard*' and '*Tales of the Factories*'.



Glossary

sparkle (v)	:	reflect / shine
foliage (n)	:	leaves
glancing (adj)	:	taking a brief look
swelling (adj)	:	increasing or expanding in size
brawling (adj)	:	struggling
rose-banks (n)	:	riverbanks where roses (flowers) appear along
impetuous (adj)	:	rash / acting quickly without thinking
brimming (adj)	:	full / full of
tending (adj)	:	going in a particular way
mortal prime (n)	:	the best part of one's life that cannot last for ever
headlong (adv)	:	with the head first and the rest of the body following
hath (v)	:	has
eternity (n)	:	life continuing without end after death



I Answer the following questions.

1. Is the river like a child? Why?
2. Why does the poet call it 'swelling river'?
3. 'Seeming still yet still in motion.' What does the word 'still' mean in either case?
4. How does the sea remind you of eternity?
5. What do the river and the sea remind the poet of?

II Read the poem once again and list the words in the poem which show the movement of the river at various stages.

III What are the word pictures used in the poem? How do they add to the beauty of the poem?

IV Read the following comparisons.

‘She skims like a bird.’

‘Her face shines as the moon in the sky.’



Pick out similar expressions from the poem ‘The River’. Say why the poet has made these comparisons. What would you compare them to?

Stanza	Poet’s idea	What is the river compared to?	Similarities
1	young river	a child	Both the river and the child dance and sparkle.
2			
3			
4			

- Now, read the last line of each stanza. What do these lines say about the river?
- Do the river and its movement suggest something else to you?
- Attempt an appreciation of the poem comparing and contrasting your experience of a river with that of the poet.