



ROMANTICISM

Followed the Age of Reason

- 1660-1798
- Rationalism was the ideal. (Reason, not sensory experience or faith, became paramount in answering life's basic questions.)
- People tried to use reason to make sense of the world
- John Locke and Isaac Newton.
- Napoleonic Wars and Industrial Revolution

Intellectual Foundations of Romanticism

- Reaction to the literature and, especially, the thinking and practice of the 18th century.
- Rebellion against the rules

Neoclassical Writers	Romantic Writers
Stressed reason and common sense	Stressed emotion and imagination
Wrote about objective issues that concerned society as a whole	Wrote about subjective experiences of the individual
Respected human institutions of church and state	Exalted nature in all its creative and destructive forces
Exercised controlled with and urbanity	Celebrated intense passion and vision
Maintenance traditional standards and believed in order	Believed in experimentation and spontaneity of thought

Romanticism

- **1798-1832**
- **Characteristics of Romanticism:**
 - Interest in the common man and childhood
 - Strong senses, emotions, and feelings
 - Awe of nature
 - Celebration of the individual
 - Importance of imagination



Interest in the common man and childhood

- Romantics believed in the natural goodness of humans which is hindered by the urban life of civilization.
- They believed that the savage is noble, childhood is good, and the emotions inspired by both beliefs caused the heart to soar.



Strong senses, emotions, and feelings

- Romantics believed that knowledge is gained through intuition rather than deduction.
- This is best summed up by **Wordsworth** who stated that “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.”



Awe of Nature

- Romantics stressed the awe of nature in art and language and the experience of sublimity through a connection with nature.
- Romantics rejected the rationalization of nature by the previous thinkers of the Enlightenment period.



Sublime

William Wordsworth is the Romantic best known for working with the sublime. Many scholars actually place Wordsworth's idea of the sublime as the standard of the romantic sublime. Wordsworth says that the "mind {tries} to grasp at something towards which it can make approaches but which it is incapable of attaining." In trying to "grasp" at this sublime idea, the mind loses consciousness, and the spirit is able to grasp the sublime - but it is only temporary. Wordsworth expresses the emotion that this elicits in his poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey":

Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery
In which the heavy and weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened (37-41).

- Here Wordsworth expresses that in the mood of the sublime, the burden of the world is lifted.
- In a lot of these cases, Wordsworth finds the sublime in Nature. He finds the awe in the beautiful forms of nature, but he also finds terror.
- his ultimate goal is to find Enlightenment within the sublime.

Celebration of the Individual

- Romantics often elevated the achievements of the misunderstood, heroic individual outcast.
- **Example:**
 - **Byronic Hero** – dark, handsome, brooding, restless, and a bit diabolical



Importance of Imagination

- Romantics legitimized the individual imagination as a critical authority.



Romantic Poets



Mary Shelley



Robert Burns



Samuel
Taylor
Coleridge



William Wordsworth



Lord Byron



Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lord Byron



- George Gordon Byron was born on January 22, 1788.
- Lord Byron was active in many different fields of life including politics, he took his hereditary seat in the House of Lords in 1812. However Lord Byron is best remembered for his poetry which includes the classic poetry collections Child's Harold's Pilgrimage and Don Juan.
- Don Juan was considered to be an epic of its age and was read widely by the Victorians, although to many it was considered to be somewhat shocking. The literary works of Byron were often characterized by characters who had a rebellious, non conformist streak. His heroes often displayed great skills and passion although they often misused their talents. To some extent the hero of Byron's poems had a degree of autobiography.

Percy Bysshe Shelley



- The son of a prosperous squire, he entered Oxford in 1810, where readings in philosophy led him toward a study of the empiricists and the modern skeptics, notably William Godwin. In 1811 he and his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg published their pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*, which resulted in their immediate expulsion from the university.
- The same year Shelley eloped with 16-year-old Harriet Westbrook, by whom he eventually had two children, Ianthe and Charles.
- Supported reluctantly by their fathers, the young couple traveled through Great Britain. Shelley's life continued to be dominated by his desire for social and political reform, and he was constantly publishing pamphlets. His first important poem, *Queen Mab*, privately printed in 1813, set forth a radical system of curing social ills by advocating the destruction of various established institutions.
- In 1814 Shelley left England for France with Mary Godwin, the daughter of William Godwin. During their first year together they were plagued by social ostracism and financial difficulties. After Harriet Shelley's suicide in 1816, Shelley and Mary officially married. In 1817 Harriet's parents obtained a decree from the lord chancellor stating that Shelley was unfit to have custody of his children. The following year Shelley and Mary left England and settled in Italy. By this time their household consisted of their own three children and Mary's half-sister Claire Claremont and her daughter Allegra (whose father was Lord Byron).
- On July 8, 1822, Shelley was drowned while sailing in the Bay of Spezia..

GOTHIC FICTION:



- Gothic fiction shares many characteristics with literary Romanticism, and is generally considered an offshoot of that wider movement.
- Both genres began in 18th century England, and contributed to the rise of poetry and the novel as popular entertainment.
- Combines horror, death, and romance
- May incorporate supernatural elements

FRANKENSTEIN

- Many prominent Romantic writers rendered works of gothic horror. Lord Byron, perhaps the pre-eminent author of Romantic verse, in 1816 organized a ghost story competition between himself, Percy and Mary Shelley, and John William Polidori. This competition yielded two classic works of Gothic horror in Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" and Polidori's "The Vampyre," which took inspiration for its titular character from Byron's unfinished "Augustus Darvell."
- Other English Romantics who utilized tropes from gothic horror include Samuel Coleridge, whose "Christabel" and "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" contain Gothic elements