

ROMANTICISM AND THE ROMANTIC AGE

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General Idea

- **Romanticism?** It was an artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe towards the end of the 18th century, and in most areas was at its peak in the approximate period from 1800 to 1850.
- **General Characteristics:**
 - A. A movement against Classicism.
 - B. Emphasis on Emotion, Imagination and Individualism.
 - C. Glorification of Nature.
 - D. Glorification of Past: Old Values, Old Cultures
 - E. Preferring Medieval to Modern.

General Idea

- **Reasons for Development:**
 - A. Reaction to the Industrial Revolution.
 - B. Reaction to the Aristocratic Social and Political Norms of Age of Enlightenment.
 - C. Scientific Rationalization of Nature.
 - D. Religious and Theological Emancipation of Mind and Intellect.
- **Manifestations:** Visual Arts, Fine Arts, Music, Literature, Social and Natural Sciences.
- **Seminal Impact:** Society, Politics, Philosophy, Historicity of History.
- **The Romantic Movement is originally rooted in *Sturm und Drang* Movement in Germany.** Translated in English as "storm and stress" movement. It was a proto-Romantic movement in German literature and music that occurred between the late 1760s and early 1780s. The movement started as reaction against the European Enlightenment Era. The period is named for **Friedrich Maximilian Klinger's** play of the same name, first performed in 1777. (Significant figures were Anton Leisewitz, Reinhold Lenz, H. L. Wagner, and Friedrich Maximilian Klinger. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller were notable proponents of the movement early in their lives, although they ended their period of association with it by initiating what would become Weimar Classicism.)
(Source: Wikipedia)

Etymology

- Romanticism / Romantic was originally derived from the word 'Roman' meaning 'Of Rome', 'belonging to Rome' or 'that which belongs to Rome'.
- The word 'Roman' etymologically signified its meaning in contrast to Latin, i.e., Roman is what which is not Latin.
- 'Roman' or 'Of Rome' or 'Belonging to Rome' had different other words in various other European languages: 'Romance' (English parallel word is Roman's or Romans'), 'Romanesque', 'Romantische' etc. These words were already in use throughout Europe during Renaissance.
- By the 1700s, European languages – notably German, French and Russian – were using the term "Roman" in the sense of the English word "novel", i.e. a work of popular narrative fiction. This usage derived from the term "Romance languages" (German, French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish), which referred to vernacular (or popular) language in contrast to formal Latin. Most such novels took the form of "chivalric romance", tales of adventure etc.
- The founders of Romanticism, critics Wilhelm Schlegel and Friedrich Schlegel, began to speak of *romantische Poesie* ("romantic poetry") in the 1790s, contrasting it with "classic". Friedrich Schlegel wrote in his 1800 essay *Gespräch über die Poesie* ("Dialogue on Poetry"):
"I seek and find the romantic among the older moderns, in Shakespeare, in Cervantes, in Italian poetry, in that age of chivalry, love and fable, from which the phenomenon and the word itself are derived."
- Wordsworth used the term 'Romantic' in 1815.
- Byron used the same term (rather disparagingly) in 1820.

Romanticism: General Characteristics

(What is Romanticism?)

- The more precise characterization and specific definition of Romanticism has been the subject of debate in the fields of [intellectual history](#) and [literary history](#) throughout the 20th century, without any great measure of consensus emerging.
- [Arthur Lovejoy](#) attempted to demonstrate the difficulty of defining Romanticism in his seminal article "On The Discrimination of Romanticisms" in his *Essays in the [History of Ideas](#)* (1948).
- An earlier definition comes from [Charles Baudelaire](#): "Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of subject nor exact truth, but in the way of feeling."
- Romanticism pays primary importance to the free expression of the feelings of the artist. German painter [Caspar David Friedrich](#) said "the artist's feeling is his law".
- [William Blake](#)'s affirmation in 1793 that "a new heaven is begun" .
- [William Wordsworth](#) defines poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", which the poet then "recollect[s] in tranquility", evoking a new but corresponding emotion the poet can then mould into art.
- [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#) declares Nature is not what we see but it is what how we see. Samuel Taylor Coleridge sees it as the beginning of a tradition of resistance to [Enlightenment](#) rationalism —a "Counter-Enlightenment"— to be associated most closely with [German Romanticism](#).
- [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#) says "The world's great age begins anew."

Romanticism: Intellectual Tenets

(What is Romanticism?)

- It was general consensus that content of art had to come from the imagination of the artist and devoid of any "artificial" rules dictating what a work should consist of.
- In literature, Romanticism found recurrent themes in the evocation or criticism of the past, the cult of "[sensitivity](#)" with its emphasis on women and children, the isolation of the artist or narrator, and respect for nature.
- Poetry was regarded as conveying its own truth; sincerity was the criterion by which it was to be judged.
- The piece of art should be original, originality in terms of Creativity. This idea is often called "romantic originality".
- Projection of personal voice of the artist: Much of romantic poetry invited the reader to identify the protagonists with the poets themselves.
- According to [Isaiah Berlin](#), Romanticism embodied "a longing for the unbounded and the indefinable, for perpetual movement and change, an effort to return to the forgotten sources of life, a passionate effort at self-assertion both individual and collective, a search after means of expressing an unappeasable yearning for unattainable goals".
- Nationalism was in many countries strongly associated with Romanticism.
- Isaiah Berlin sees Romanticism as disrupting the ideas of moral absolutes and agreed values and replaced by a passionate belief in spiritual freedom, individual creativity.

The Romantic Era (British)

(What is the Timeline?)

- There cannot be any rigid timeline of any literary or philosophical movement.
- In England, Romanticism was in vogue during 1760s. (Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, 1764; James Macpherson's *The Works of Ossian*, 1765)
- The Romantic Era: 1800 -1850. Reign of (William J. Long)
- Alternative views about the beginning of Romanticism in England suggests / holds that:
 1. It started with **French Revolution in 1789**. (Publication of Blake's Songs of Innocence)
 2. It started with the publication **Lyrical Ballads (1798)**, a joint venture of Wordsworth and Coleridge.
- Alternative views about the end of Romanticism in England suggests / holds that:
 1. It ended with the Reformation Bill in 1832.
 2. It ended with Queen Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837 that earmarked the beginning of Victorian Age in English Literature.
 3. It ended with death of William Wordsworth in 1850.

Precursors of Romanticism / Early Romantics

- The precursors of Romanticism in English poetry go back to the middle of the 18th century, including figures such as **Joseph Warton** (headmaster at Winchester College) and his brother **Thomas Warton** (Professor of Poetry at Oxford University).
- The Scottish poet James Macpherson influenced the early development of Romanticism with the international success of his first **Ossian cycle of poems** published in 1762, inspiring both **Goethe** of Germany and **Walter Scott** of Scotland.
- **Thomas Chatterton** is generally considered the first Romantic poet in English.
- Some critics consider **Robert Burns** to be the pioneer of the Romantic Movement in England.
- The **Gothic novel**, beginning with **Horace Walpole's** ***The Castle of Otranto*** (1764), was an important precursor of one strain of Romanticism.
- **William Blake** was one of the notable precursors.
- Other important precursors include Robert Southey, George Crabbe.
- Lesser known practitioners: Samuel Roger, Charlotte Smith, William Lisle Bowles, Thomas Campbell, Thomas Moore et al.

Poets of Romantic Age

Lake Poets:

Robert Southey, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Later Romantics:

Lord George Gordon Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats

- **BIG SIX:** Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats.

Romantic Age: Women Writers

(Alternative Current of Romanticism)

- Mary Wollstonecraft: ***A Vindication of the Rights of Women***, 1792. Mary Wollstonecraft argued that women were not to be observed only as passive objects of literary works, since every woman has the capability to think for herself, as well as to write what she thinks (and not only what she feels); concluding with a demand for improved education of women.
- Women poets, such as **Charlotte Smith, Anna Barbauld, Mary Robinson** or Hannah More, strongly defended their position on the use of the, in Wordsworth's words, —'language of men' (Dizdar, 1999), since, as they claimed, it was the language that women usually used while concerned with the vernacular, with the ordinary, i.e. with the quotidian qualities of that time.
- Jane Austen: ***Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Mansfield Park, Sense and Sensibility*** .
- Mary Shelley: ***Frankenstein*** (1818).

Romantic Prose Writings (Introduction)

- **Romantic and autobiographical exploitation of personality flaunting personal tastes, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies, often whimsical.**
- **Significant change in the relation between the writer and the society: an ever-increasing sophisticated public and audience who were less homogenous.**
- **Experimentation on suitability of various prose styles for various purposes: Poetry, Letter writing, Essay Writing, Pamphleteering, Novel writing etc.**

Romantic Prose Writings

Category: Fiction

- **Sir Walter Scott: Waverly Novels.**
(Ivanhoe, Rob Roy, Heart of Midlothian, Kenilworth, Old Mortality, The Antiquary)
- **Jane Austen**
- **Mary Shelley**

Category: Non-Fiction

- **Charles Lamb:** *(Essays of Elia 1820-23, Last Essays of Elia 1833, Tales from Shakespeare 1807, The Adventures of Ulysses 1808)*
- **William Hazlitt:** *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays (1817) , On the English Poets (1818), On the English Comic Writers (1819), On the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1820), The Round Table, Table-Talk (1821-22), The Plain Speaker (1826), The Spirit of the Age (1825)*
- **Thomas De Quincey:** *Confessions of a n English Opium-Eater (1821), Suspiria de Profundis (1845), Knocking on the Door in Macbeth.*
- **Mary Wollstonecraft**
- **William Wordsworth:** Apology for French Revolution, 1793. The Convention of Cintra. Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, 1800.
- **Samuel Taylor Coleridge:** Biographia Literaria.
- **Percy Bysshe Shelley:** The Necessity of Atheism, 1811. A Vindication of Natural Diet, 1813. A Refutation of Deism, 1814. A Defence of Poetry, 1823 (1840)