Romantic and Victorian Poetry

Part 1

The Oxbow by Thomas Cole 1836

1ENG321 2023

Ms I Rawlins

1ENG321 Poetry Lecturer: Ms I Rawlins Office 305 Rawlinsi@unizulu.ac.za

Consultation times: please send an email to book an appointment.

1. Lectures and tutorials

- Everyone will attend **one poetry lecture** per week:
  Group A: Wednesday 13.30 in AL5 & Group B: Thursday 13.30 in AL8
  Please stick to one group throughout the semester.
- Everyone will attend **one poetry tutorial** once a week for a single period.
- Please complete a timetable form and hand it in or email it to Ms Rawlins so you can be allocated a group AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Once you are in a group you may not move to another one.
- **100% attendance** is required for both the lectures and tutorials. If you miss any you will be required to produce a doctor's certificate.

2. Assessment

- The whole class will write **one poetry test** based on an unseen poem. Attendance will be taken and you may not change groups for the test. Dates:
  Group A: Wednesday 29th March 13.30 AL5
  Group B: Thursday 30th March 13.30 AL8
- **Group Assignment 'Find-A-Song'**: Throughout the semester, in groups of 4 (four), you will meet and work on a presentation where you choose a modern day song that reflects the issues of one Romantic poem. You should have at least three meetings in preparation. You will present to the class a comparison between the song and the poem in the final two weeks of the semester. This presentation can improve your poetry test mark.
- Each tutorial group will do at least two assignments and or tests set by their tutor.
- Your poetry mark (from the test 10% and the tutorial assignments 40%) counts **50% of your 1ENG321 semester mark**. Make sure that you do all the work and to the best of your ability.
- Any and all instances of plagiarism will be treated very seriously. All work will be checked through Turnitin.com. If your work is found to be plagiarised you will receive zero and your name will be added to a plagiarism offender list. If you plagiarise more than once further disciplinary action will be taken against you.

3. Course materials

- Romantic and Victorian Poetry Reader
- Online resources:

Poetry Foundation has a wealth of information about poets, a large archive of poetry and articles to read and useful introductions to both Romantic and Victorian literature.
https://www.poetryfoundation.org/
British Romanticism: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/152982/an-introduction-to-british-romanticism
The Victorian Era https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/153447/an-introduction-to-the-victorian-era
The Victorian Web A really useful archive of information to do with the Victorian Era.
https://victorianweb.org/

4. Writing and publishing your own poetry

If you are interested in writing your own poetry, Dr Gqibithole and Mr Malimela run the Unizulu poetry journal called 'Bare Thoughts'. Contact them for more info: GqibitholeK@unizulu.ac.za or MalimelaM@unizulu.ac.za

5. Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Reading and poems
1	**Term 1** February 13 – 19	**Introduction to Romanticism**	History of English Literature, The Romantics and Legacy of the Romantics by Stephanie Forward, Timeline of Romantic poets.
2	February 20 – 26	**Childhood and Nostalgia**	"We are Seven" and the Lucy poems by William Wordsworth, "The Chimney Sweeper" by William Blake, "Frost at Midnight" by S.T. Coleridge.
3	Feb 27 – March 5	**Revolution and Reaction**	"The World Is Too Much With Us" by William Wordsworth, "London" by William Blake" "England in 1819", "Ode to the West Wind" and "Ozymandias" by Percy Shelley
4	March 6 – 12	**The Natural World**	"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", "Lines Written in Early Spring", "The Solitary Reaper" by William Wordsworth; On the Grasshopper and Cricket" and "To Autumn" by John Keats, excerpts from Childe Harolde's Pilgrimage by Lord Byron, "To Nature" by S.T. Coleridge.
5	March 13 – 19	**Ideals of Love**	"She Walks in Beauty" and "When We Two Parted" by Lord Byron, "Bright Star" by John Keats, "The Flight of Love" by Percy Shelley
6	March 20 – 26 Monday 21st March Human Rights Day	**Imagination and the Individual**	"A Night-Piece" by William Wordsworth, "When I have fears" by John Keats, "Kubla Khan" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by S.T. Coleridge.
7	**March 27 – April 4**	**POETRY TEST**	**Group A Wednesday 29th March 13.30 AL5** **Group B Thursday 30th March 13.30 AL8**
	RECESS & Easter weekend	**April 3 - 10**	
8	**Term 2** April 11 – 16	**Introduction to Victorian Poetry**	Introduction to Victorian Poetry Handout.
9	April 17 – 23	**Love and love gone wrong**	"How Do I Love thee?" Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "My Last Duchess" and "Porphyria's Lover" by Robert Browning, "Modern Love" by George Meredith
10	April 24 – April 30 Thursday 27th April Freedom Day	**Conflicts: faith and imperialism**	"The Charge of the Light Brigade" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold, "Drummer Hodge" by Thomas Hardy, "Casabianca" by Felicia Dorothea Hemans
11	May 2 - 7 Monday 1st May Worker's Day	**The Fantastic and the Macabre**	"La Belle Dame Sans Merci" by John Keats "Mariana" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson "The Witch" by Mary Elizabeth Coleridge "Dreamland" by Lewis Carrol
12	May 8 - 14	**Death (and Life)**	"Because I could not stop for death" by Emily Dickinson, "One Sea-Side Grave", "Remember" and "When I am dead, my dearest" by Christina Rosetti,
13	May 15 – 21	**Find-A-Song Presentations**	In your semester groups, you will make a five-minute presentation in class, comparing a modern day song with a Romantic or Victorian poem. You will submit your conclusions and a record in note form of your three meetings.
14	May 22 – 28 **End of Lectures**	**Find-A-Song Presentations**	As above.
	May 29 – June 15	**Exams**	

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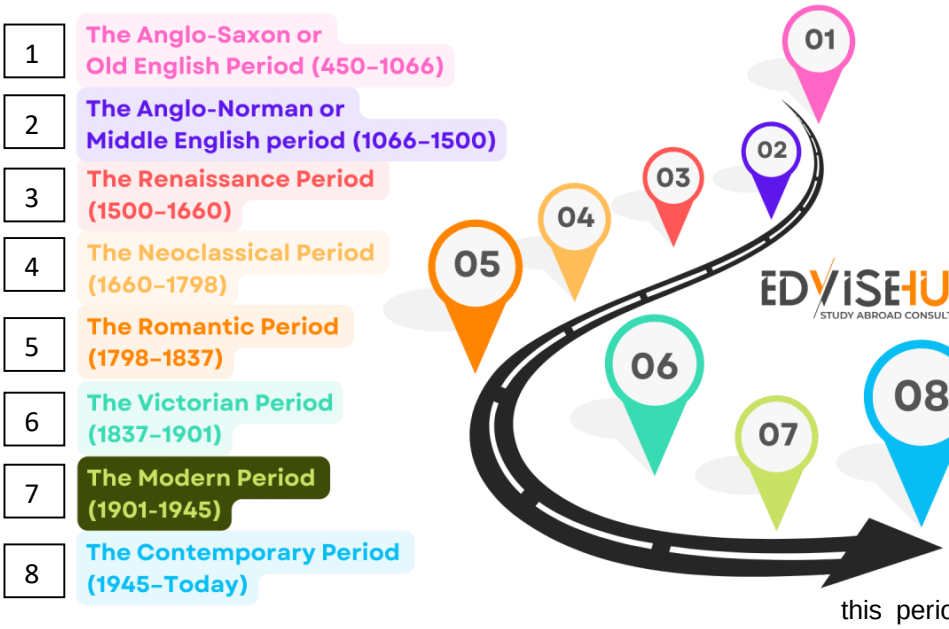
History of English Literature

by mohib / Friday, 04 March 2022 / Published in Education Blog

English literature refers to all written work created in the English language. Life is reflected through literature. It is a reflection of the society in which it is produced. The word literature is derived from the Latin word 'litaritura,' which means "letter-organized writing." Language, origin, historical time, genre, and topic matter are all used to categorise literature. It only includes works written in English in the British Isles as English literature. Everything else written in English outside of the British Isles is classified as American literature, Canadian literature, and so on. The earliest form of English is Anglo-Saxon, sometimes known as old English. From 600 A.D. to 1100 A.D., Old English was thought to have been spoken. Beowulf is the first English epic, and its author is unknown. Despite the fact that the poetry is of little interest to modern readers, it is a significant piece of poetry from the Old English period. Because it paints a fascinating picture of life and practice at the time.

When we look at the history of English literature, we can see that it is divided into eight (8) major periods

History of English Literature Chart and Brief Overview



The Anglo-Saxon or Old English Period (450–1066)

Anglo-Saxon is derived from two Germanic tribes: the Angles and the Saxons. This literary period begins around 450 when they invaded Celtic England (together with the Jutes). In 1066, Norman France, led by William, defeated England, bringing the period to a close. The historical events that happened in that period greatly influenced the literature at the time. Though Christianity was present, paganism dominated the literature in this period.

Oral literature dominated the first part of this period—at least until the seventh century. Some writings, such as Beowulf and those by period poets Caedmon and Cynewulf, are notable; but, much of the literature during this time was a translation of something else or otherwise legal, medicinal, or religious.

The Anglo-Norman or Middle English period (1066–1500)

The Middle English period marks a significant shift in England's language, culture, and way of life, resulting in what we now identify as "modern" (recognisable) English. The period lasts until roughly 1500. Much of the Middle English texts were religious in character, as they were in the Old English period; nevertheless, secular literature began to emerge from 1350. Chaucer, Thomas Malory, and Robert Henryson all lived during this time period. "Piers Plowman" and "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" are two notable works.

Morality plays, miracle plays, and interludes were among the most highly regarded works of the Mediaeval English Literature era. 'Everyman' was a popular Morality play at the period, and Miracle plays were commonly presented in churches and were based on the Bible.

The Renaissance Period (1500–1660)

Although critics and literary historians have begun to refer to this time as "Early Modern," we will continue to refer to it as "Renaissance." The period includes the Elizabethan Age (1558–1603), the Jacobean Age (1603–1625), the Caroline Age (1625–1649), and the Commonwealth Period (1649–1660) are commonly separated into four parts.

English play flourished throughout the Elizabethan period. Christopher Marlowe, Francis Bacon, Edmund Spenser, Sir Walter Raleigh, and, of course, William Shakespeare are among its notable personalities. The Jacobean Age is named after the reign of James I. John Donne, Shakespeare, Michael Drayton, John Webster, Elizabeth Cary, Ben Jonson, and Lady Mary Wroth are among the authors represented. During the Jacobean period, the King James Bible was also published. The Caroline Age spans Charles I's ("Carolus") reign. Among the famous figures are John Milton, Robert Burton, and George Herbert.

Finally, between the end of the English Civil War and the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, the Commonwealth Period was designated. This was the time when Puritan Oliver Cromwell led Parliament, which dominated the country. To avoid public assembly and combat moral and religious breaches, public theatres were shuttered (for nearly two decades) at this period. Political writings like John Milton and Thomas Hobbes emerged, and prose authors such as Thomas Fuller, Abraham Cowley, and Andrew Marvell produced prolifically.

The Neoclassical Period (1660–1798)

The Restoration (1660–1700), The Augustan Age (1700–1745), and The Age of Sensibility (1745–1785) are all periods within the neoclassical period. The Restoration period sees some response to the puritanical age, especially in the theatre. Restoration comedies (comedies of style) arose during this period, thanks to the work of authors such as William Congreve and John Dryden. As indicated by Samuel Butler's popularity, satire too became highly popular. Aphra Behn, John Bunyan, and John Locke are among the other renowned writers of the period. The imitation of Virgil and Horace's writings in English letters arethe hallmark of this period. Addison, Steele, Swift, an d Alexander Pope are among the best-known English authors. Voltaire was the most well-known French author outside of France.

This time represents the beginning of the move to Romanticism, albeit it is still predominantly Neoclassical. Dr Samuel Johnson, Boswell, and Edward Gibbon are examples of Neoclassical authors, while Robert Burns, Thomas Gray, Cowper, and Crabbe are examples of writers who moved away from the Neoclassical ideal. This time is known in America as the Colonial Period. Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine are among the colonial and revolutionary writers represented.

The Romantic Period (1798–1837)

The beginning of the Romantic period is a point of debate between historians. Some say it's 1785, right after the Age of Sensibility ended. Others think it began in 1789, when the French Revolution began, while others believe it began in 1798 when William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's book Lyrical Ballads was published. The Romantic Age is basically the age of romance.

The romantic poet takes inspiration from Elizabethan masters- Shakespeare, Spenser and others and also focuses on and chooses the language of common people. The poet of the romantic era proved that poetry based on everyday life could also be interesting if only they are treated in the right way. The Augustan style of writing was likewise rejected by Romantic prose authors. They resorted to Renaissance writing, which was ponderous, poetical, and flowery.

Wordsworth, Coleridge, William Blake, Lord Byron, John Keats, Charles Lamb, Mary Wollstonecraft, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Thomas De Quincey, Jane Austen, and Mary Shelley are among the giants of this age. The Gothic era (from 1786 and 1800) is a smaller but equally popular period. Matthew Lewis, Anne Radcliffe, and William Beckford are notable writers from this time period.

The Victorian Period (1837–1901)

Victorian literature flourished in the period of Queen Victoria. The era saw the unification of romanticism and realism. This age was great for both poetry and prose. Alfred Lord Tennyson was the greatest poet of the Victorian era. Alfred's poetry was passionate, and it admirably mirrored the era, with its blend of religious confusion and social conviction.

Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and Matthew Arnold are among the poets of this period. At this time, Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, and Walter Pater were moving the essay form forward. Finally, under the tutelage of Charles Dickens, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), Anthony Trollope, Thomas Hardy, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Samuel Butler, prose fiction found its true home.

The Modern Period (20th Century Literature)

The modern period is typically referred to as the work written after the start of World War 1. Common themes of the era were bold experimentation with the subject matter, style, narratives, verse and drama. In this era, New Criticism also emerged which was led by the likes of Woolf, Eliot, William Empson and others.

This period saw a completely different approach to poetry, the poets of the modern era believed that poets should use poetry to project their thought in it and to find themselves through poetry T. S. Eliot is the most famous poet of the twentieth century. He was a renowned poet and critic who used his poetry to support his political beliefs, having a huge effect on modern poetry. Modern drama and novels were one of the greatest contributions to English Literature.

The Romantics by Stephanie Forward

Published: 15 May 2014

Dr Stephanie Forward explains the key ideas and influences of Romanticism, and considers their place in the work of writers including Wordsworth, Blake, P B Shelley and Keats.
Source: https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-romantics

Today the word 'romantic' evokes images of love and sentimentality, but the term 'Romanticism' has a much wider meaning. It covers a range of developments in art, literature, music and philosophy, spanning the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The 'Romantics' would not have used the term themselves: the label was applied retrospectively, from around the middle of the 19th century.

In 1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau declared in *The Social Contract*: 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.' During the Romantic period major transitions took place in society, as dissatisfied intellectuals and artists challenged the Establishment. In England, the Romantic poets were at the very heart of this movement. They were inspired by a desire for liberty, and they denounced the exploitation of the poor. There was an emphasis on the importance of the individual; a conviction that people should follow ideals rather than imposed conventions and rules. The Romantics renounced the rationalism and order associated with the preceding Enlightenment era, stressing the importance of expressing authentic personal feelings. They had a real sense of responsibility to their fellow men: they felt it was their duty to use their poetry to inform and inspire others, and to change society.

Revolution

When reference is made to Romantic verse, the poets who generally spring to mind are William Blake (1757-1827), William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), George Gordon, 6th Lord Byron (1788-1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and John Keats (1795-1821). These writers had an intuitive feeling that they were 'chosen' to guide others through the tempestuous period of change.

This was a time of physical confrontation; of violent rebellion in parts of Europe and the New World. Conscious of anarchy across the English Channel, the British government feared similar outbreaks. The early Romantic poets tended to be supporters of the French Revolution, hoping that it would bring about political change; however, the bloody Reign of Terror shocked them profoundly and affected their views. In his youth William Wordsworth was drawn to the Republican cause in France, until he gradually became disenchanted with the Revolutionaries.

Painting of the storming of the Bastille, 1789

Depiction of the storming of the Bastille, Paris - the event that triggered the French Revolution.

The imagination

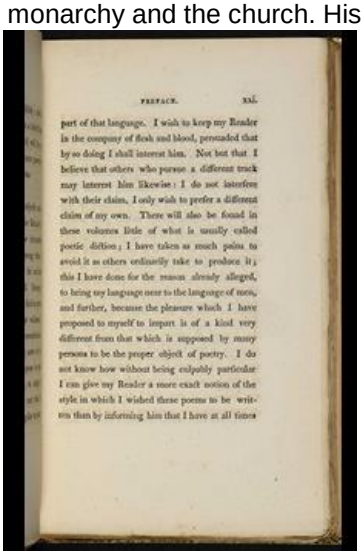
The Romantics were *not* in agreement about everything they said and did: far from it! Nevertheless, certain key ideas dominated their writings. They genuinely thought that they were prophetic figures who could interpret reality. The Romantics highlighted the healing power of the imagination, because they truly believed that it could enable people to transcend their troubles and their circumstances. Their creative talents could illuminate and transform the world into a coherent vision, to regenerate mankind spiritually. In *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), Shelley elevated the status of poets: 'They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit…'.[1] He declared that 'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world'. This might sound somewhat pretentious, but it serves to convey the faith the Romantics had in their poetry.

Manuscript of P B Shelley's 'The Masque of Anarchy'

P B Shelley's manuscript of 'The Masque of Anarchy', 1819, was a reaction of furious outrage at the Peterloo Massacre. An avowedly political poem, it praises the non-violence of the Manchester protesters when faced with the aggression of the state.
Usage terms Public Domain

The marginalised and oppressed

Wordsworth was concerned about the elitism of earlier poets, whose highbrow language and subject matter were neither readily accessible nor particularly relevant to ordinary people. He maintained that poetry should be democratic; that it should be composed in 'the language really spoken by men' (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* [1802]). For this reason, he tried to give a voice to those who tended to be marginalised and oppressed by society: the rural poor; discharged soldiers; 'fallen' women; the insane; and children. Blake was radical in his political views, frequently addressing social issues in his poems and expressing his concerns about the monarchy and the church. His poem 'London' draws attention to the suffering of chimney-sweeps, soldiers and prostitutes.



PREFACE. xxi.

part of that language. I wish to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. Not but that I believe that others who pursue a different track may interest him likewise: I do not interfere with their claim, I only wish to prefer a different claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men, and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. I do not know how without being culpably particular I can give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which I wished these poems to be written than by informing him that I have at all times

Lyrical Ballads: 1800 edition

In the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth writes that he has 'taken as much pains to avoid [poetic diction] as others ordinarily take to produce it', trying instead to 'bring [his] language near to the language of men'.
Usage terms Public Domain

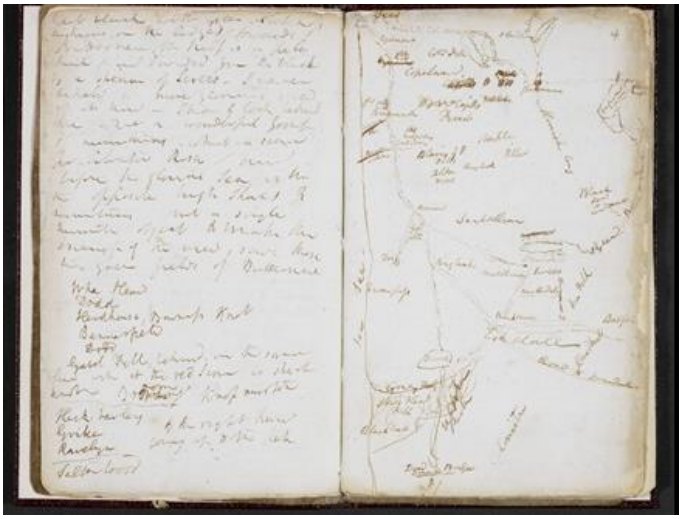
William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

'London' from William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, 1794. Blake emphasises the injustice of late 18th-century society and the desperation of the poor.
Usage terms Public Domain

Children, nature and the sublime

For the world to be regenerated, the Romantics said that it was necessary to start all over again with a childlike perspective. They believed that children were special because they were innocent and uncorrupted, enjoying a precious affinity with nature. Romantic verse was suffused with reverence for the natural world. In Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight' (1798) the poet hailed nature as the 'Great universal Teacher!' Recalling his unhappy times at Christ's Hospital School in London, he explained his aspirations for his son, Hartley, who would have the freedom to enjoy his childhood and appreciate his surroundings. The Romantics were inspired by the environment, and encouraged people to venture into new territories – both literally and metaphorically. In their writings they made the world seem a place with infinite, unlimited potential.

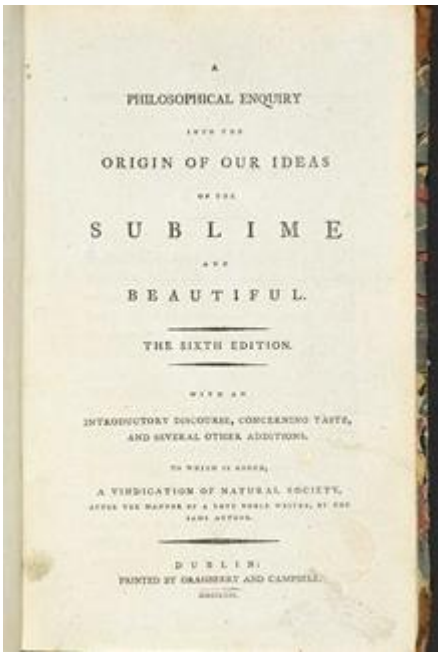
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *A Walking Tour of Cumbria*



In August 1802, Samuel Taylor Coleridge set out from his home at Greta Hall, Keswick, for a week's solo walking-tour in the nearby Cumbrian mountains. He kept detailed notes of the landscape around him, drawing rough sketches and maps. These notes and sketches are in Notebook No 2, one of 64 notebooks Coleridge kept between 1794 and his death.
Usage terms Public Domain

A key idea in Romantic poetry is the concept of the sublime. This term conveys the feelings people experience when they see awesome landscapes, or find themselves in extreme situations which elicit both fear and admiration. For example, Shelley described his reaction to stunning, overwhelming scenery in the poem 'Mont Blanc' (1816).

Burke's A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful


A
PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRY
INTO THE
ORIGIN OF OUR IDEAS
OF THE
SUBLIME
AND
BEAUTIFUL.
THE SIXTH EDITION.
WITH AN
INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, CONCERNING TASTE,
AND SEVERAL OTHER ADDITIONS.
TO WHICH IS ADDED,
A VINDICATION OF NATURAL SOCIETY,
DUBLIN:
PRINTED BY GRAISBERRY AND CAMPBELL.

In this 1757 essay, the philosopher Edmund Burke discusses the attraction of the immense, the terrible and the uncontrollable. The work had a profound influence on the Romantic poets.
Usage terms Public Domain

The second-generation Romantics

Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge were first-generation Romantics, writing against a backdrop of war. Wordsworth, however, became increasingly conservative in his outlook: indeed, second-generation Romantics, such as Byron, Shelley and Keats, felt that he had 'sold out' to the Establishment. In the suppressed Dedication to *Don Juan* (1819-1824) Byron criticised the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, and the other 'Lakers', Wordsworth and Coleridge (all three lived in the Lake District). Byron also vented his spleen on the English Foreign Secretary, Viscount Castlereagh, denouncing him as an 'intellectual eunuch', a 'bungler' and a 'tinkering slavemaker' (stanzas 11 and 14). Although the Romantics stressed the importance of the individual, they also advocated a commitment to mankind. Byron became actively involved in the struggles for Italian nationalism and the liberation of Greece from Ottoman rule.

Notorious for his sexual exploits, and dogged by debt and scandal, Byron quitted Britain in 1816. Lady Caroline Lamb famously declared that he was 'Mad, bad and dangerous to know.' Similar accusations were pointed at Shelley. Nicknamed 'Mad Shelley' at Eton, he was sent down from Oxford for advocating atheism. He antagonised the Establishment further by his criticism of the monarchy, and by his immoral lifestyle.

Letter from Lord Byron about his memoirs, 29 October 1819

In this letter to his publisher, John Murray, Byron notes the poor reception of the first two cantos of *Don Juan*, but states that he has written a hundred stanzas of a third canto. He also states that he is leaving his memoirs to his friend George Moore, to be read after his death, but that this text does not include details of his love affairs.
Usage terms Public Domain

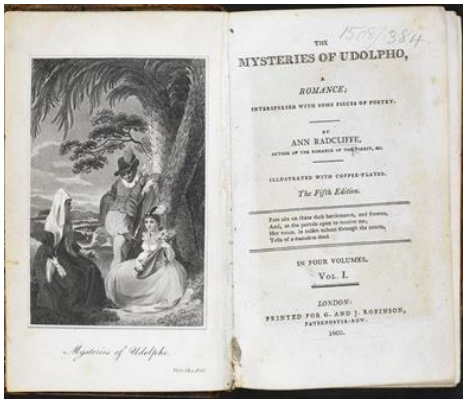
Female poets

Female poets also contributed to the Romantic movement, but their strategies tended to be more subtle and less controversial. Although Dorothy Wordsworth

(1771-1855) was modest about her writing abilities, she produced poems of her own; and her journals and travel narratives certainly provided inspiration for her brother. Women were generally limited in their prospects, and many found themselves confined to the domestic sphere; nevertheless, they did manage to express or intimate their concerns. For example, Mary Alcock (c. 1742-1798) penned 'The Chimney Sweeper's Complaint'. In 'The Birth-Day', Mary Robinson (1758-1800) highlighted the enormous discrepancy between life for the rich and the poor. Gender issues were foregrounded in 'Indian Woman's Death Song' by Felicia Hemans (1793-1835).

The Gothic

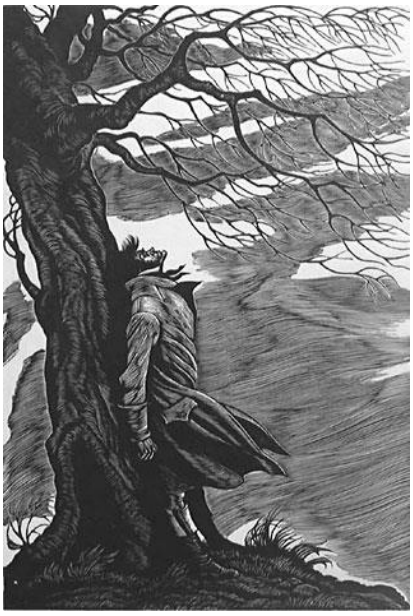
Reaction against the Enlightenment was reflected in the rise of the Gothic novel. The most popular and well-paid 18th-century novelist, Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), specialised in 'the hobgoblin-romance'. Her fiction held particular appeal for frustrated middle-class women who experienced a vicarious frisson of excitement when they read about heroines venturing into awe-inspiring landscapes. She was dubbed 'Mother Radcliffe' by Keats, because she had such an influence on Romantic poets. The Gothic genre contributed to Coleridge's *Christabel* (1816) and Keats's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' (1819). Mary Shelley (1797-1851) blended realist, Gothic and Romantic elements to produce her masterpiece *Frankenstein* (1818), in which a number of Romantic aspects can be identified. She quotes from Coleridge's Romantic poem *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere*. In the third chapter Frankenstein refers to his scientific endeavours being driven by his imagination. The book raises worrying questions about the possibility of 'regenerating' mankind; but at several points the world of nature provides inspiration and solace.


THE
MYSTERIES OF UDOLPHO,
A
ROMANCE;
INTERSPERSED WITH SOME PIECES OF POETRY.
BY
ANN RADCLIFFE,
ILLUSTRATED WITH COPPER-PLATES.
The Fifth Edition.
IN FOUR VOLUMES.
Vol. I.
LONDON:
PRINTED FOR G. AND J. ROBINSON,
1803.

The Mysteries of Udolpho

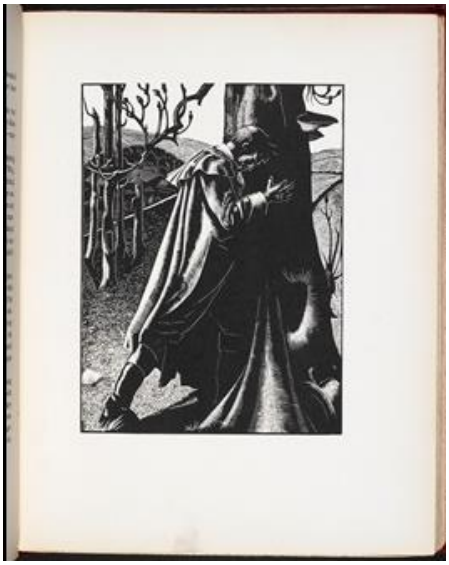
The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) by Ann Radcliffe was one of the most popular and influential Gothic novels of the late 18th century.
Usage terms Public Domain

The Byronic hero



Romanticism set a trend for some literary stereotypes. Byron's *Childe Harold* (1812-1818) described the wanderings of a young man, disillusioned with his empty way of life. The melancholy, dark, brooding, rebellious 'Byronic hero', a solitary wanderer, seemed to represent a generation, and the image lingered. The figure became a kind of role model for youngsters: men regarded him as 'cool' and women found him enticing! Byron died young, in 1824, after contracting a fever. This added to the 'appeal'. Subsequently a number of complex and intriguing heroes appeared in novels: for example, Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Edward Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (both published in 1847).

Illustrations to *Wuthering Heights* by Clare Leighton



The Byronic hero influenced Emily Brontë's portrayal of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. This 1931 edition of Brontë's novel is illustrated with wood engravings by Clare Leighton.
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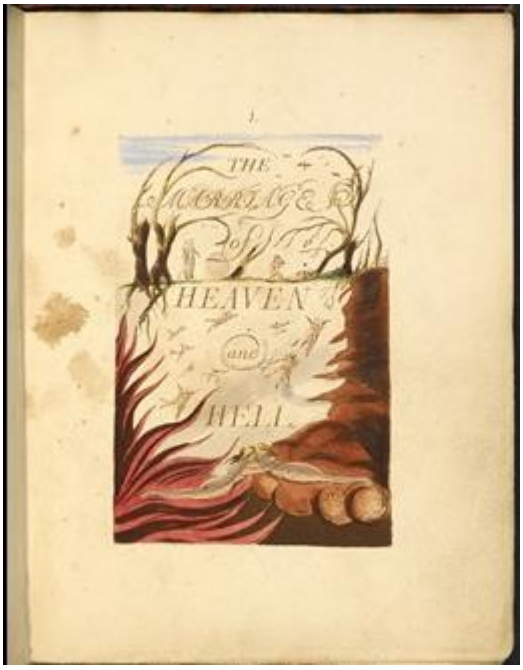
Contraries

Romanticism offered a new way of looking at the world, prioritising imagination above reason. There was, however, a tension at times in the writings, as the poets tried to face up to life's seeming contradictions. Blake published *Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul* (1794). Here we find two different perspectives on religion in 'The Lamb'

and ‘The Tyger’. The simple vocabulary and form of ‘The Lamb’ suggest that God is the beneficent, loving Good Shepherd. In stark contrast, the creator depicted in ‘The Tyger’ is a powerful blacksmith figure. The speaker is stunned by the exotic, frightening animal, posing the rhetorical question: ‘Did he who made the Lamb make thee?’ In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793) Blake asserted: ‘Without contraries is no progression’ (stanza 8).

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell by William Blake



William Blake was deeply critical of traditional religion but greatly admired John Milton. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* includes references to Milton and *Paradise Lost* and the book ends with 'A Song of Liberty', which calls for revolt against the tyrannies of church and state.
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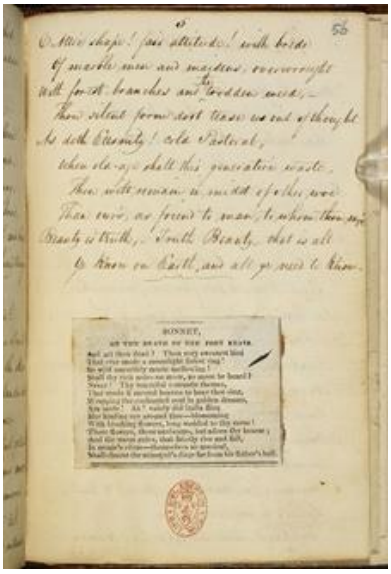
Wordsworth’s ‘Tintern Abbey’ (1798) juxtaposed moments of celebration and optimism with lamentation and regret. Keats thought in terms of an opposition between the imagination and the intellect. In a letter to his brothers, in December 1817, he explained what he meant by the term ‘Negative Capability’: ‘that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason’ (22 December). Keats suggested that it is impossible for us to find answers to the eternal questions we all have about human existence. Instead, our feelings and imaginations enable us to recognise Beauty, and it is Beauty that helps us through life’s bleak moments. Life involves a delicate balance between times of pleasure and pain. The individual has to learn to accept both aspects: ‘“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,” – that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know’ (‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ [1819]).

Manuscript of ‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ by John Keats



‘Ode on a Grecian Urn’ from a manuscript copy believed to be in the hand of George Keats, the poet's brother.
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The premature deaths of Byron, Shelley and Keats contributed to their mystique. As time passed they attained iconic status, inspiring others to make their voices heard. The Romantic poets continue to exert a powerful influence on popular culture. Generations have been inspired by their promotion of self-expression, emotional intensity, personal freedom and social concern.

Footnotes

[1] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Shelley’s poetry and prose: authoritative texts, criticisms*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York; London: Norton, c.1977), p.485.

Written by Stephanie Forward

Dr Stephanie Forward is a lecturer, specializing in English Literature. She has been involved in two important collaborative projects between the Open University and the BBC: The Big Read, and the television series *The Romantics*, and was a contributor to the British Library’s *Discovering Literature: Romantics and Victorians* site and to the *20th century* site. Stephanie has an extensive publications record. She also edited the anthology *Dreams, Visions and Realities*; co-edited (with Ann Heilmann) *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, and penned the script for the C.D. *Blenheim Palace: The Churchills and their Palace*.

Legacy of the Romantics by Stephanie Forward

Updated Sunday, 1st May 2022
Who were the Romantics and what did they stand for? Stephanie Forward explains.

This content is associated with The Open University's English courses and qualifications.

Nowadays the word ‘romantic’ tends to trigger associations with love and sentimentality, but the period known as the Romantic era encompassed so much more! Romanticism is notoriously difficult to define and has been interpreted in various ways in different countries. However, it is true to say that it flowered originally against a backdrop of violent revolution during a period of economic, political and social transition. It was a European phenomenon, and had an impact upon many spheres of thought and activity. Advocating freedom and independence, many artists and philosophers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries challenged the way people looked at the world, emphasizing the integrity of the individual and refusing to bow to convention.

Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Keats and Shelley were pre-eminent among the Romantic poets. Regarding themselves as intuitive prophets, they rejected the pure rationalism and order of the Enlightenment, maintaining that nature and the healing power of the imagination could enable people to transcend their everyday circumstances. Creative powers could be used to illuminate and transform the world into a coherent vision, to regenerate mankind spiritually. Given the centrality of the poetic imagination, poets could therefore claim to be interpreters of reality. Shelley asserted that ‘Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.’

The Romantics found fresh ways to express themselves: their reverence for nature, in its awesome majesty, was to prove a lasting legacy. Drawing upon the environment for inspiration, they encouraged people to travel, both literally and metaphorically, into new territories. Their attitudes to life were liberating and made the world seem a place of infinite potential. The ramifications of their approach have continued to have an impact on culture subsequently.

Certain literary character types stem from the Romantic period: for example, the dark, brooding, rebellious Byronic hero and the mysterious femme fatale such as Keats’s ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’. Romantics often embraced the macabre, hence the popularity of Gothic novels. There was also keen interest in scientific discoveries and developments. In particular, Mary Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein’ has endured and it has been argued that this pioneering text paved the way for science-fiction.

Literature was not the only art form to be affected by Romanticism. Composers also veered away from the formal clarity of classicism to experiment, striving for deeper emotional depth. Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, Berlioz and Liszt were early pioneers. They were followed by Verdi, Wagner, Brahms and Tchaikovsky, all of whom produced innovative music, and in the twentieth century Schoenberg, Debussy, Bartok, Mahler, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, Puccini and Rachmaninoff continued the Romantic tradition. Virtuoso conductors and performers attracted attention. There are a number of modern composers who are referred to as Neo-Romantics, including George Rochberg and David Del Tredici.

In the 1980s Gothic rock inspired trends in fashion and in music. The early years of the decade also witnessed the rise of New Romanticism. Whereas the eighteenth-century Romantics had rebelled against Enlightenment didacticism, the New Romantics emerged to counteract the anarchic austerity of Punk. Successful bands such as Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, ABC, Japan and Human League relied heavily on the use of synthesizers to produce their slick music, which some detractors felt was narcissistic and indulgent. Glamorous, flamboyant clothes were the order of the day, as the performers strove to achieve a personal look.

The impact of Romanticism upon the arts has been immense and ongoing. Romantic painters aimed for emotional intensity. Sometimes their pictures contained startlingly violent imagery, reflecting man’s smallness in the face of the vastness of the natural world, as in Gericault’s explicit and frightening ‘Raft of the Medusa’. However Romantic attitudes to nature worked on more than one level. Their affinity with the world around them was often evoked in their paintings, for example in the works of Constable. There are strong echoes of

Romanticism in contemporary concerns about the environment and the need to appreciate and preserve it. Romantics also embraced the foreign and the exotic, especially eliciting an interest in Orientalism, and this too affected the history of art.

In sculpture there was a move to create imaginative pieces which would appeal to the emotions: Auguste Rodin tried to capture the inner lives of his subjects. In portraiture, painters began to explore the sitter's feelings and psychological state, and pictures of animals were similarly probing. The Romantics revered children, because they were innocent and close to nature. Youngsters had tended to be included in family groups, dressed as young adults; but the Romantic approach was to depict them as real children, and to encourage society to be more child-centred.

Romanticism influenced political ideology, inviting engagement with the cause of the poor and oppressed and with ideals of social emancipation and progress. The individual was prized, but it was also felt that people were under an obligation to their fellow-men: personal commitment to the group was therefore important. Governments existed to serve the people. There was a feeling that people were actively part of the historical process, and could therefore contribute to social progress.

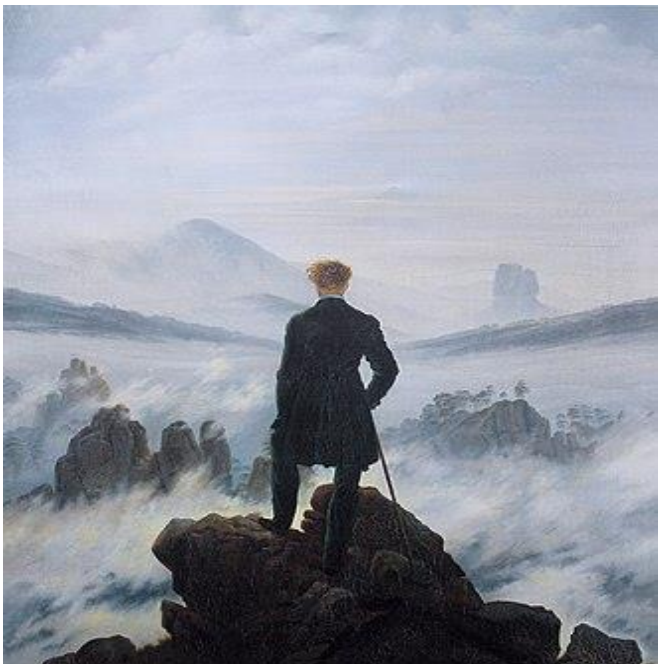
Early Romantics supported the French Revolution, although the terrible bloodshed in France caused Wordsworth, for example, to revise his opinions. Wars of self-determination appealed to Byron, who espoused Italian nationalism and advocated the liberation of the Greeks from the Turks. It seems to have been something of a Romantic trait to identify with such causes, and to get involved in foreign adventures. Similarly, in the twentieth-century the Spanish Civil War attracted ardent and idealistic supporters.

Romanticism did not supersede Enlightenment thought; rather it offered alternative outlooks and horizons. In promoting the imagination over reason, the Romantics encouraged individuals to experiment boldly, to question things instead of blindly accepting them. If we pause to think for a moment about the 1960s, this was a decade in which there was a renewed emphasis on Romanticism. The early Romantic innovative vision had clashed with classicism; in the 1960s there was again a striking opposition between tradition and counter-cultures, a desire to 'get back to nature', and many people were lured by Eastern mysticism. Rebelliousness and innovation were again manifest in many spheres of activity.

In some circumstances this was liberating and life-enhancing; however there has always been an underlying tension in Romanticism: it has a melancholic aspect, because Time is man's enemy. There is a sense of the limitless potential of man, but also an awareness that life is transitory.

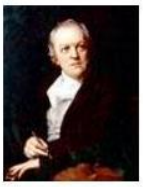
Lord Byron was larger than life, a living legend, and the early deaths of Keats, Shelley and Byron enhanced these figures in the eyes of posterity, earning them iconic status. Heroic visionaries, battling on in spite of adverse circumstances, they invited admiration and empathy. Perhaps today's passion for celebrity is very much in keeping with the spirit of Romanticism, and a number of media artistes have achieved immortality by virtue of their insistence on living life their way, seeking fulfilment on their own terms – whatever the outcome.

One thing is certain: the Romantic period marked a shift in the way people thought, and has continued to exert a decisive influence on the way we see and experience the world.



Wanderer above the sea of fog by Caspar David Friedrich (1817)

Timeline of Romantic Poets



William Blake
(1757 – 1827)

Lord Byron
(1782 – 1824)

John Keats
(1795 – 1821)

William Wordsworth
(1770 – 1850)

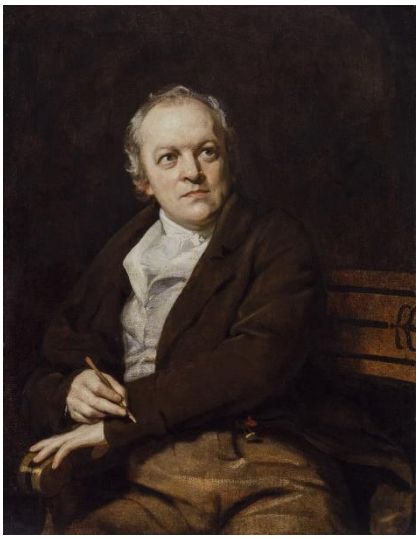
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
(1772 – 1834)

Percy Bysshe Shelley
(1792 – 1822)

Matthew Arnold
(1822 – 1888)

John Clare
(1793 – 1864)

William Blake (1757 – 1827)



Source Poets.org: https://poets.org/poet/william-blake

William Blake was born in London on November 28, 1757, to James, a hosier, and Catherine Blake. Two of his six siblings died in infancy. From early childhood, Blake spoke of having visions—at four he saw God "put his head to the window"; around age nine, while walking through the countryside, he saw a tree filled with angels. Although his parents tried to discourage him from "lying," they did observe that he was different from his peers and did not force him to attend a conventional school. Instead, he learned to read and write at home. At age ten, Blake expressed a wish to become a painter; so, his parents sent him to drawing school. Two years later, Blake began writing poetry. When he turned fourteen, he apprenticed with an engraver because art school proved too costly. One of Blake's assignments as apprentice was to sketch the tombs at Westminster Abbey, exposing him to a variety of Gothic styles from which he would draw inspiration throughout his career. After his seven-year term ended, he studied briefly at the Royal Academy.

In 1782, Blake married an illiterate woman named Catherine Boucher. Blake taught her to read and write, and also instructed her in draftsmanship. Later, she helped him print the illuminated poetry for which he is remembered today; the couple had no children. In 1784, Blake set up a print shop with friend and former fellow apprentice, James Parker; but this venture failed after several years. For the remainder of his life, Blake made a meager living as an engraver and illustrator for books and magazines. In addition to his wife, Blake also began training his younger brother, Robert, in drawing, painting, and engraving. Robert fell ill during the winter of 1787, having probably succumbed to consumption. As Robert died, Blake saw his brother's spirit rise up through the ceiling, "clapping its hands for joy." He believed that Robert's spirit continued to visit him and later claimed that in a dream Robert taught him the printing method that he used in *Songs of Innocence* and other "illuminated" works.

Blake's first printed work, *Poetical Sketches* (1783), is a collection of apprentice verse, mostly imitating classical models. The poems protest against war, tyranny, and King George III's treatment of the American colonies. He published his most popular collection, *Songs of Innocence*, in 1789 and followed it, in 1794, with *Songs of Experience*. Some readers interpret *Songs of Innocence* in a straightforward fashion, considering it primarily a children's book, but others have found hints at parody or critique in its seemingly naive and simple lyrics. Both books of *Songs* were printed in an illustrated format reminiscent of illuminated manuscripts. The text and illustrations were printed from copper plates, and each picture was finished by hand in watercolors.

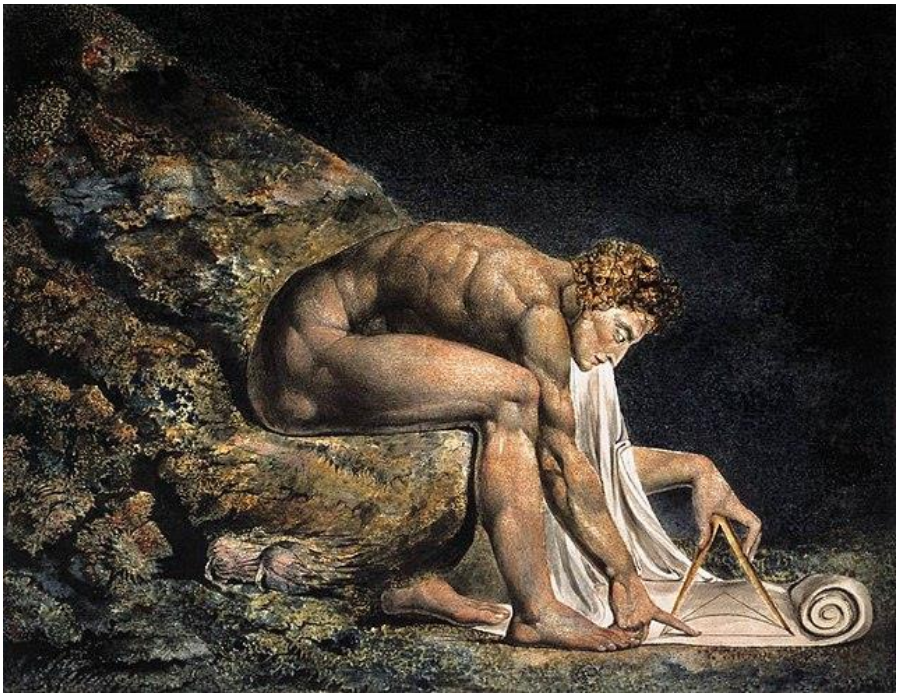
Blake was a nonconformist who associated with some of the leading radical thinkers of his day, including Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft. In defiance of eighteenth-century Neoclassical conventions, he privileged imagination over reason in the creation of both his poetry and images, asserting that ideal forms should be constructed not from observations of nature but from inner visions. He declared in one poem, "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's." Works such as "The French Revolution" (1791), "America, a Prophecy" (1793), "Visions of the Daughters of Albion" (1793), and "Europe, a Prophecy" (1794) express his opposition to the English monarchy, and to eighteenth-century political and social tyranny in general. Theological tyranny is the subject of *The Book of Urizen* (1794). In the prose work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790–93), he satirized the oppressive authority of both church and state, as well as the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish philosopher whose ideas once attracted his interest.

In 1800, Blake moved to the seacoast town of Felpham, where he lived and worked until 1803 under the patronage of William Hayley. He taught himself Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Italian, so that he could read classical works in their original language. In Felpham, Blake experienced profound spiritual insights that prepared him for his mature work, the great visionary epics written and etched between about 1804 and 1820. *Milton* (1804–08); *Vala, or The Four Zoas* (1797; rewritten after 1800); and *Jerusalem* (1804–20) have neither traditional plot, characters, rhyme, nor meter. They envision a new and higher kind of innocence—the human spirit triumphing over reason.

Blake believed that his poetry could be read and understood by common people, but he was determined not to sacrifice his vision in order to become popular. In 1808, he exhibited some of his watercolors at the Royal Academy and, in May 1809, he exhibited his works at his brother James's house. Some of those who saw the exhibit praised Blake's artistry, but others thought the paintings "hideous" and more than a few called him insane. Blake's poetry was not well known by the general public, but he was mentioned in *A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Authors of Great Britain and Ireland*, published in 1816. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who had been lent a copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, considered Blake a "man of Genius," and William Wordsworth made his own copies of several songs. Charles Lamb sent a copy of "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Songs of Innocence* to James Montgomery for his *Chimney-*

Sweeper's Friend, and Climbing Boys' Album (1824), and Robert Southey (who, like Wordsworth, considered Blake insane) attended Blake's exhibition and included the "Mad Song" from *Poetical Sketches* in his miscellany, *The Doctor* (1834–37).

Blake's final years, spent in great poverty, were cheered by the admiring friendship of a group of younger artists who called themselves "the Ancients." In 1818, he met John Linnell, a young artist who helped him financially and also helped to create new interest in his work. It was Linnell who, in 1825, commissioned him to design illustrations for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the cycle of drawings that Blake worked on until his death in 1827.



"Art is the Tree of Life. Science is the Tree of Death," the visionary Blake wrote. He condemned the scientific trio of Isaac Newton, John Locke and Francis Bacon as sterile and materialistic. Here Newton – the idea rather than a portrait – sits on a rock covered in algae, making calculations with a compass, like Urizen in *Ancient of Days*. He might be at the bottom of the sea, or perhaps in a black hole. Now in the Tate, the picture is one of a dozen of Blake's "large colour prints". Eduardo Paolozzi's vast 1995 bronze sculpture, inspired by Blake, stands in front of the British Library, visible from Euston Road.

Source: The Ten Best Works by Blake
https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/nov/21/the-10-best-works-by-william-blake

William Blake (1757–1827), Jacob's Ladder, or Jacob's Dream (1799-1806), pen and grey ink and watercolour on paper, 39.8 x 30.6 cm, The British Museum, London. Courtesy of and © Trustees of the British Museum.

Blake's painting of *Jacob's Ladder,* or *Jacob's Dream* (1799-1806) shows one of his many religious stories, that of Jacob's Ladder, as told in the book of Genesis, chapter 28, verses 10-19.

In essence, Jacob went to sleep one night when he was travelling, and dreamed that a ladder had been set up, stretching from earth to heaven. Angels were ascending and descending the ladder. God spoke to him in the dream, telling him that the land on which Jacob was sleeping would be given by God to Jacob and his descendants. Jacob then named the place Bethel, and in the future it did become a part of the land of the Israelites.

Poems by William Blake

The Chimney Sweeper: When my mother died I was very young

(Songs of Innocence 1789)

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved, so I said,
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet, & that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight!
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, & Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black;

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins & set them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run,
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

The Chimney Sweeper: A little black thing among the snow

(Songs of Experience 1794)

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying "weep! 'weep!" in notes of woe!
"Where are thy father and mother? say?"
"They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow,
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

And because I am happy and dance and sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King,
Who make up a heaven of our misery."


7
The Chimney Sweeper,
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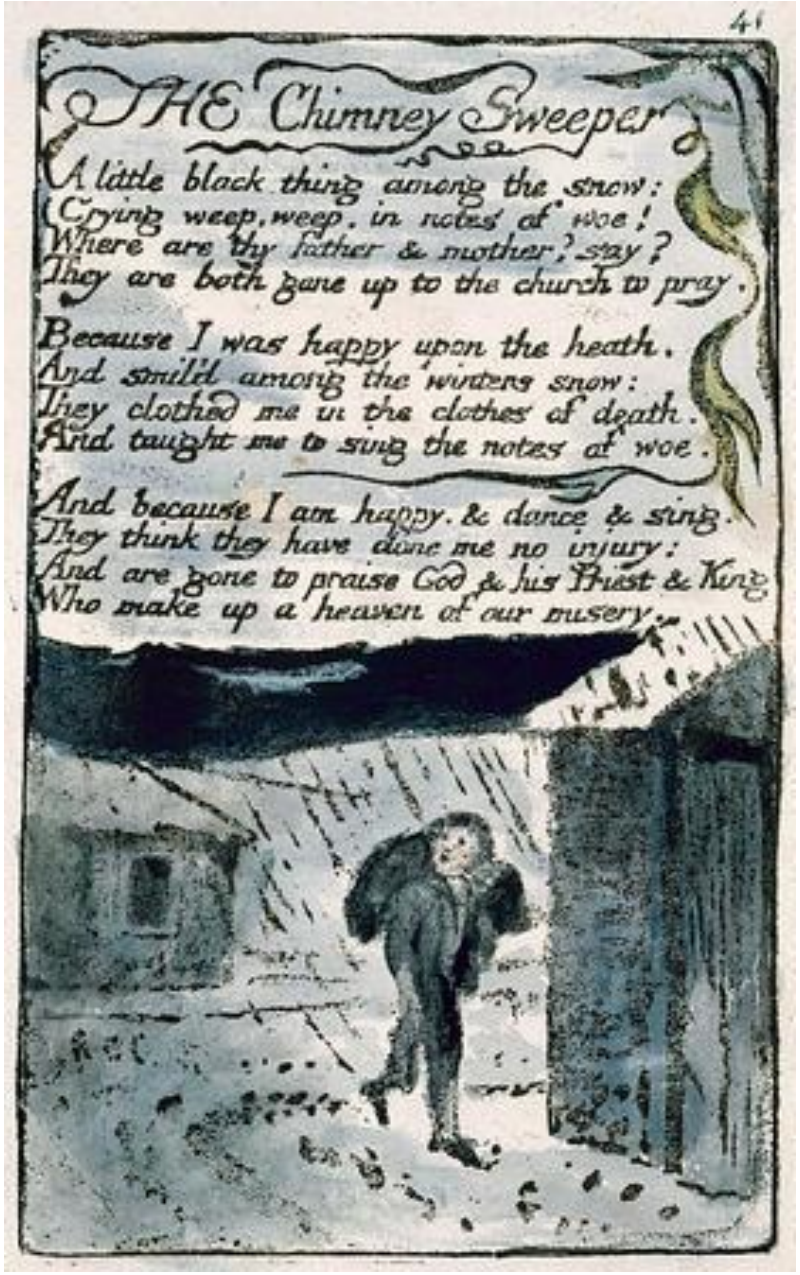
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They think they have done me no injury:
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Who make up a heaven of our misery.

London

(Songs of Experience 1794)

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

The Lamb

(Songs of Innocence 1789)

Little Lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life & bid thee feed.
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

The Tyger

(Songs of Experience 1794)

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat.
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp.
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

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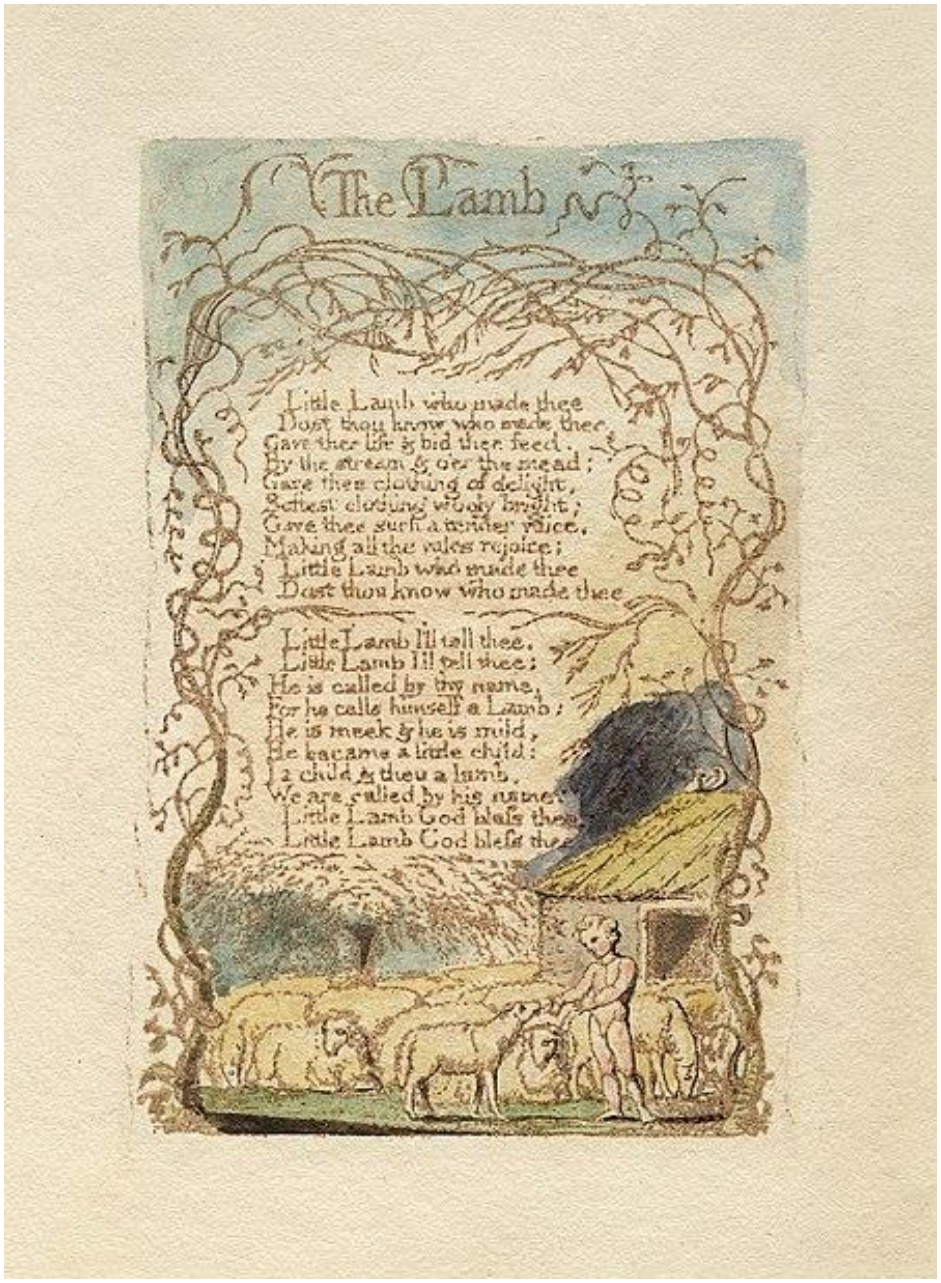
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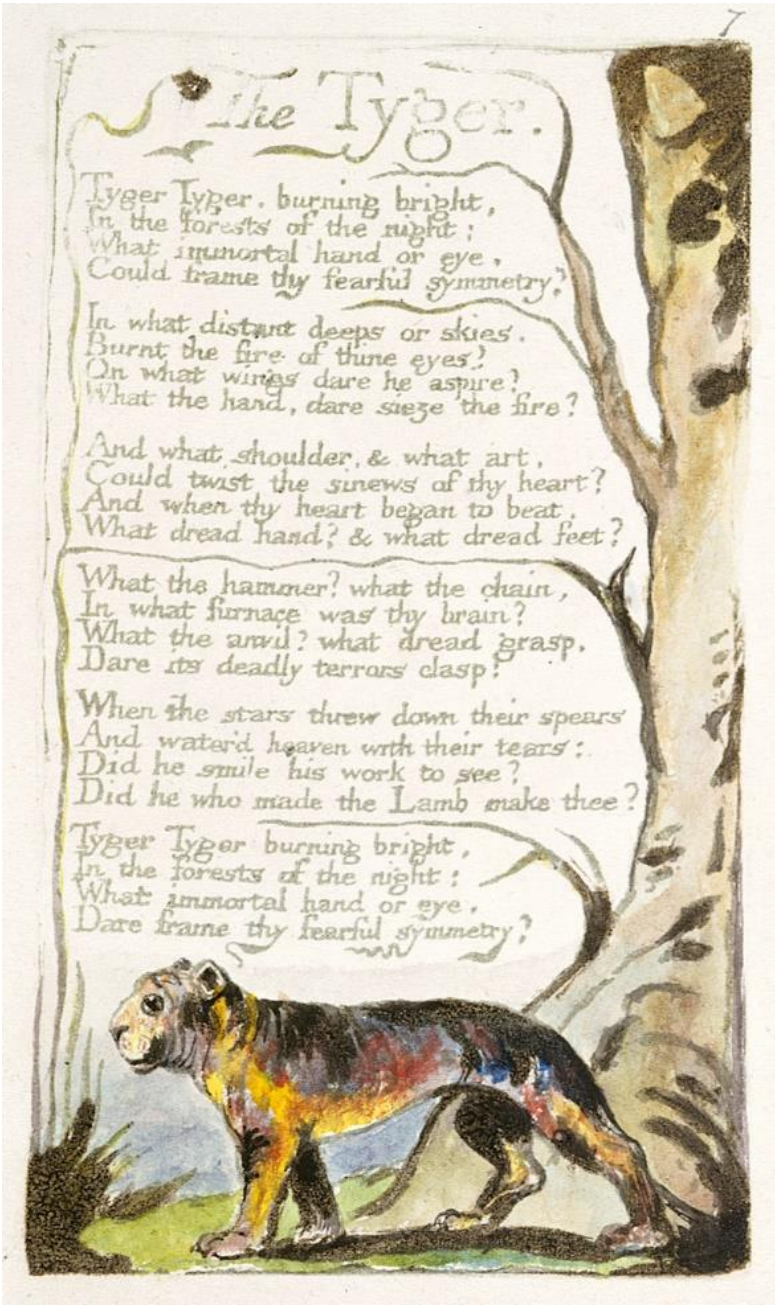
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Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850)

Source: Poets.org https://poets.org/poet/william-wordsworth

William Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth, Cumbria, England, on April 7, 1770. Wordsworth's mother died when he was eight—this experience shapes much of his later work. Wordsworth attended Hawkshead Grammar School, where his love of poetry was firmly established and, it is believed, where he made his first attempts at verse. While he was at Hawkshead, Wordsworth's father died leaving him and his four siblings orphans. After Hawkshead, Wordsworth studied at St. John's College in Cambridge and, before his final semester, he set out on a walking tour of Europe—an experience that influenced both his poetry and his political sensibilities. While touring Europe, Wordsworth came into contact with the French Revolution. This experience, as well as a subsequent period living in France, brought about Wordsworth's interest and sympathy for the life, troubles, and speech of the "common man." These issues proved to be of the utmost importance to Wordsworth's work. Wordsworth's earliest poetry was published in 1793 in the collections *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. While living in France, Wordsworth conceived a daughter, Caroline, out of wedlock; he left France, however, before she was born. In 1802, he returned to France with his sister on a four-week visit to meet Caroline. Later that year, he married Mary Hutchinson, a childhood friend, and they had five children together. In 1812, while living in Grasmere, two of their children—Catherine and John—died.

Equally important in the poetic life of Wordsworth was his 1795 meeting with the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was with Coleridge that Wordsworth published the famous *Lyrical Ballads* (J. & A. Arch) in 1798. While the poems themselves are some of the most influential in Western literature, it is the preface to the second edition that remains one of the most important testaments to a poet's views on both his craft and his place in the world. In the preface Wordsworth writes on the need for "common speech" within poems and argues against the hierarchy of the period which valued epic poetry above the lyric.

Wordsworth's most famous work, *The Prelude* (Edward Moxon, 1850), is considered by many to be the crowning achievement of English Romanticism. The poem, revised numerous times, chronicles the spiritual life of the poet and marks the birth of a new genre of poetry. Although Wordsworth worked on *The Prelude* throughout his life, the poem was published posthumously. Wordsworth spent his final years settled at Rydal Mount in England, traveling, and continuing his outdoor excursions. Devastated by the death of his daughter, Dora, in 1847, Wordsworth seemingly lost his will to compose poems.

William Wordsworth died at Rydal Mount on April 23, 1850, leaving his wife, Mary, to publish *The Prelude* three months later.

Poems by William Wordsworth

We Are Seven

———A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage Girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.

“Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?”
“How many? Seven in all,” she said,
And wondering looked at me.

“And where are they? I pray you tell.”
She answered, “Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

“Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.”

“You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be.”

Then did the little Maid reply,
“Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree.”

“You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five.”

“Their graves are green, they may be seen,”
The little Maid replied,
“Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,

And they are side by side.

“My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

“And often after sun-set, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

“The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

“So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

“And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.”

“How many are you, then,” said I,
“If they two are in heaven?”
Quick was the little Maid’s reply,
“O Master! we are seven.”

“But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!”
’Twas throwing words away; for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, “Nay, we are seven!”

Lucy Poems

I.

Strange fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

When she I loved look'd every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening moon.

Upon the moon I fix'd my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reach'd the orchard-plot;
And, as we climb'd the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopp'd:
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropp'd.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a lover's head!
'O mercy!' to myself I cried,
'If Lucy should be dead!'

II.

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove;
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye!
--Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, O!
The difference to me!

III.

I travell'd among unknown men
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time, for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherish'd turn her wheel
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings show'd, thy nights conceal'd
The bowers where Lucy play'd;
And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes survey'd.

IV.

Three years she grew in sun and shower;
Then Nature said, 'A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown:
This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

'Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

'She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And her's shall be the breathing balm,
And her's the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

'The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
E'en in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

‘The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

‘And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
Where she and I together live
Here in this happy dell.’

Thus Nature spake—The Work was done—
How soon my Lucy’s race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

V.

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seem’d a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Roll’d round in earth’s diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

The World Is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I’d rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

A Night-Piece

———The sky is overcast
With a continuous cloud of texture close,
Heavy and wan, all whitened by the Moon,
Which through that veil is indistinctly seen,
A dull, contracted circle, yielding light
So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls,
Chequering the ground—from rock, plant, tree, or tower.
At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
Bent earthwards; he looks up—the clouds are split
Asunder,—and above his head he sees
The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
There, in a black-blue vault she sails along,
Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
Drive as she drives: how fast they wheel away,
Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree,
But they are silent;—still they roll along
Immeasurably distant; and the vault,
Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
At length the Vision closes; and the mind,
Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.

The Solitary Reaper

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Lines Written in Early Spring

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

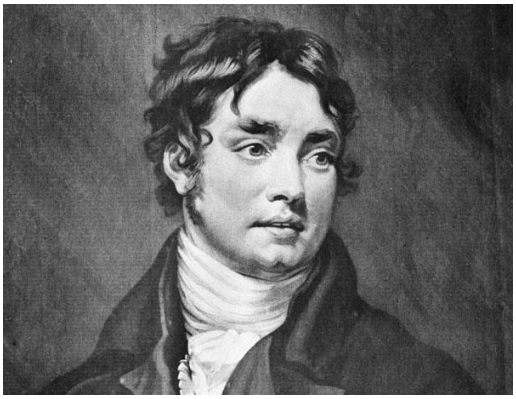
Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 – 1834)



Source: Poets.org https://poets.org/poet/samuel-taylor-coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a leader of the British Romantic movement, was born on October 21, 1772, in Devonshire, England. His father, a vicar of a parish and master of a grammar school, married twice and had fourteen children. The youngest child in the family, Coleridge was a student at his father's school and an avid reader. After his father died in 1781, Coleridge attended Christ's Hospital School in London, where he met lifelong friend Charles Lamb. While in London, he also befriended a classmate named Tom Evans, who introduced Coleridge to his family. Coleridge fell in love with Tom's older sister, Mary.

Coleridge's father had always wanted his son to be a clergyman, so when Coleridge entered Jesus College, University of Cambridge in 1791, he focused on a future in the Church of England. Coleridge's views, however, began to change over the course of his first year at Cambridge. He became a supporter of William Frend, a Fellow at the college whose Unitarian beliefs made him a controversial figure. While at Cambridge, Coleridge also accumulated a large debt, which his brothers eventually had to pay off. Financial problems continued to plague him throughout his life, and he constantly depended on the support of others.

En route to Wales in June 1794, Coleridge met a student named Robert Southey. Striking an instant friendship, Coleridge postponed his trip for several weeks, and the men shared their philosophical ideas. Influenced by Plato's *Republic*, they constructed a vision of *pantisocracy*—equal government by all, which involved emigrating to the New World with ten other families to set up a commune on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Coleridge and Southey envisioned the men sharing the workload, a great library, philosophical discussions, and freedom of religious and political beliefs.

After finally visiting Wales, Coleridge returned to England to find that Southey had become engaged to a woman named Edith Fricker. As marriage was an integral part of the plan for communal living in the New World, Coleridge decided to marry another Fricker daughter, Sarah. Coleridge wed in 1795, in spite of the fact that he still loved Mary Evans, who was engaged to another man. Coleridge's marriage was unhappy and he spent much of it apart from his wife. During that period, Coleridge and Southey collaborated on a play titled *The Fall of Robespierre* (1795). While the pantisocracy was still in the planning stages, Southey abandoned the project to pursue his legacy in law. Left without an alternative plan, Coleridge spent the next few years beginning his career as a writer. He never returned to Cambridge to finish his degree.

In 1795 Coleridge befriended William Wordsworth, who greatly influenced Coleridge's verse. Coleridge, whose early work was celebratory and conventional, began writing in a more natural style. In his "conversation poems," such as "The Eolian Harp" and "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," Coleridge used his intimate friends and their experiences as subjects. The following year, Coleridge published his first volume of poetry, *Poems on Various Subjects*, and began the first of ten issues of a liberal political publication entitled *The Watchman*. From 1797 to 1798 he lived near Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, in Somersetshire. In 1798 the two men collaborated on a joint volume of poetry entitled *Lyrical Ballads*. The collection is considered the first great work of the Romantic school of poetry and contains Coleridge's famous poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

That autumn the two poets traveled to the Continent together. Coleridge spent most of the trip in Germany, studying the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, Jakob Boehme, and G. E. Lessing. While there, he mastered the German language and began translating. When he returned to England in 1800, he settled with family and friends at Keswick. Over the next two decades, Coleridge lectured on literature and philosophy, wrote about religious and political theory, spent two years on the island of Malta as a secretary to the governor in an effort to overcome his poor health and his opium addiction, and lived off of financial donations and grants. Still addicted to opium, he moved in with the physician James Gillman in 1816. In 1817, he published *Biographia Literaria*, which contained his finest literary criticism. He continued to publish poetry and prose, notably *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), *Aids to Reflection* (1825), and *Church and State* (1830).
Samuel Taylor Coleridge died in London on July 25, 1834.

Poems by S.T. Coleridge

Frost at Midnight

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,

Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering *stranger* ! and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the *stranger's* face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersèd vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the night-thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

To Nature

It may indeed be fantasy when I
Essay to draw from all created things
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely clings;
And trace in leaves and flowers that round me lie
Lessons of love and earnest piety.
So let it be; and if the wide world rings
In mock of this belief, it brings
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.
So will I build my altar in the fields,
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
And the sweet fragrance that the wild flower yields
Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,
Thee only God! and thou shalt not despise
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.

Kubla Khan

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
  Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
  The shadow of the dome of pleasure
  Floated midway on the waves;
  Where was heard the mingled measure
  From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

  A damsel with a dulcimer
  In a vision once I saw:
  It was an Abyssinian maid
  And on her dulcimer she played,
  Singing of Mount Abora.
  Could I revive within me
  Her symphony and song,
  To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

1922 Kubla Kahn The Illustrations by Dugald Walker, for 'Rainbow Gold', a Collection of Poems, by Sara Teasdale

Lord Byron (George Gordon) (1788 – 1824)

Source: Poets.org https://poets.org/poet/george-gordon-byron

George Gordon Byron was born on January 22, 1788, in London, England. He grew up in Aberdeen, Scotland, and inherited his family's English title at the age of ten, becoming Baron Byron of Rochdale. Abandoned by his father at an early age and resentful of his mother, whom he blamed for his being born with a deformed foot, Byron isolated himself during his youth and was deeply unhappy. Though he was the heir to an idyllic estate, the property was run down and his family had no assets with which to care for it. As a teenager, Byron discovered that he was attracted to men as well as women, which made him all the more remote and secretive.

Byron studied at Aberdeen Grammar School and then Trinity College in Cambridge. During this time Byron collected and published his first volumes of poetry. The first, published anonymously and titled *Fugitive Pieces*, was printed in 1806 and contained a miscellany of poems, some of which were written when Byron was only fourteen. As a whole, the collection was considered obscene, in part because it ridiculed specific teachers by name, and in part because it contained frank, erotic verses. At the request of a friend, Byron recalled and burned all but four copies of the book, then immediately began compiling a revised version—though it was not published during his lifetime. The next year, however, Byron published his second collection, *Hours of Idleness*, which contained many of his early poems, as well as significant additions, including poems addressed to John Edelston, a younger boy whom Byron had befriended and deeply loved.

By Byron's twentieth birthday, he faced overwhelming debt. Though his second collection received an initially favorable response, a disturbingly negative review was printed in January of 1808, followed by even more scathing criticism a few months later. His response was a satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, which received mixed attention. Publicly humiliated and with nowhere else to turn, Byron set out on a tour of the Mediterranean, traveling with a friend to Portugal, Spain, Albania, Turkey, and finally Athens. Enjoying his new-found sexual freedom, Byron decided to stay in Greece after his friend returned to England, studying the language and working on a poem loosely based on his adventures. Inspired by the culture and climate around him, he later wrote to his sister, "If I am a poet ... the air of Greece has made me one."

Byron returned to England in the summer of 1811 having completed the opening cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, a poem which tells the story of a world-weary young man looking for meaning in the world. When the first two cantos were published in March of 1812, the expensive first printing sold out in three days. Byron reportedly said, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous."

Byron's fame, however, was among the aristocratic intellectual class, at a time when only cultivated people read and discussed literature. The significant rise in a middle-class reading public, and with it the dominance of the novel, was still a few years away. At twenty-four, Byron was invited to the homes of the most prestigious families and received hundreds of fan letters, many of them asking for the remaining cantos of his great poem—which eventually appeared in 1818.

An outspoken politician in the House of Lords, Byron used his popularity for public good, speaking in favor of workers' rights and social reform. He also continued to publish romantic tales in verse. His personal life, however, remained rocky. He was married and divorced, his wife, Anne Isabella Milbanke, having accused him of everything from incest to sodomy. A number of love affairs also followed, including one with Claire Clairmont, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley's sister-in-law. By 1816, Byron was afraid for his life, warned that a crowd might lynch him if he were seen in public.

Forced to flee England, Byron settled in Italy and began writing his masterpiece, *Don Juan*, an epic-satire novel-in-verse loosely based on a legendary hero. He also spent much of his time engaged in the Greek fight for independence and planned to join a battle against a Turkish-held fortress when he fell ill, becoming increasingly sick with persistent colds and fevers.

When Byron died on April 19, 1824, at the age of thirty-six, *Don Juan* was yet to be finished, though seventeen cantos had been written. A memoir, which also hadn't been published, was burned by Byron's friends who were either afraid of being implicated in scandal or protective of his reputation.

Today, Byron's *Don Juan* is considered one of the greatest long poems in English written since John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. The Byronic hero, characterized by passion, talent, and rebellion, pervades Byron's work and greatly influenced the work of later Romantic poets.

Portrait of Lord Byron in Albanian Dress by Thomas Phillips 1813

Coloured Engraving of Lord Byron 1873, artist unknown

Poems by Lord Byron

Excerpt from ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’ by Lord Byron (1812-18)

Painting of Lake Nemi by Joseph Wright 1790

CLXXIII.

Lo, Nemi! navelled in the woody hills
So far, that the uprooting wind which tears
The oak from his foundation, and which spills
The ocean o'er its boundary, and bears
Its foam against the skies, reluctant spares
The oval mirror of thy glassy lake;
And, calm as cherished hate, its surface wears
A deep cold settled aspect nought can shake,
All coiled into itself and round, as sleeps the snake.

CLXXIV.

And near Albano's scarce divided waves
Shine from a sister valley;—and afar
The Tiber winds, and the broad ocean laves
The Latian coast where sprung the Epic war,
'Arms and the Man,' whose reascending star
Rose o'er an empire,—but beneath thy right
Tully reposed from Rome;—and where yon bar
Of girdling mountains intercepts the sight,
The Sabine farm was tilled, the weary bard's delight.

CLXXV.

But I forget.—My pilgrim's shrine is won,
And he and I must part,—so let it be,—
His task and mine alike are nearly done;
Yet once more let us look upon the sea:
The midland ocean breaks on him and me,

And from the Alban mount we now behold
Our friend of youth, that ocean, which when we
Beheld it last by Calpe's rock unfold
Those waves, we followed on till the dark Euxine rolled

CLXXVI.

Upon the blue Symplegades: long years—
Long, though not very many—since have done
Their work on both; some suffering and some tears
Have left us nearly where we had begun:
Yet not in vain our mortal race hath run,
We have had our reward—and it is here;
That we can yet feel gladdened by the sun,
And reap from earth, sea, joy almost as dear
As if there were no man to trouble what is clear.

CLXXVII.

Oh! that the Desert were my dwelling-place,
With one fair Spirit for my minister,
That I might all forget the human race,
And, hating no one, love but only her!
Ye Elements!—in whose ennobling stir
I feel myself exalted—can ye not
Accord me such a being? Do I err
In deeming such inhabit many a spot?
Though with them to converse can rarely be our lot.

CLXXVIII.

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

CLXXIX.

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore;—upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

CLXXX.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise

And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth:—there let him lay.

CLXXXI.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals.
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war;
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.

CLXXXII.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
Thy waters washed them power while they were free
And many a tyrant since: their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts: not so thou,
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play—
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow—
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

CLXXXIII.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving;—boundless, endless, and sublime—
The image of Eternity—the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee: thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

CLXXXIV.

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne like thy bubbles, onward: from a boy
I wantoned with thy breakers—they to me
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror—'twas a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane—as I do here.

CLXXXV.

My task is done—my song hath ceased—my theme
Has died into an echo; it is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.
The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit
My midnight lamp—and what is writ, is writ—
Would it were worthier! but I am not now
That which I have been—and my visions flit
Less palpably before me—and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt is fluttering, faint, and low.

CLXXXVI.

Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been—
A sound which makes us linger; yet, farewell!
Ye, who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
A thought which once was his, if on ye swell
A single recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal-shoon and scallop shell;
Farewell! with HIM alone may rest the pain,
If such there were—with YOU, the moral of his strain.

She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

When We Two Parted

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow—
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame;
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well—
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met—
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?—
With silence and tears.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 – 1822)

Source: Poets.org https://poets.org/poet/percy-bysshe-shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born August 4, 1792, at Field Place, near Horsham, Sussex, England. The eldest son of Timothy and Elizabeth Shelley, with one brother and four sisters, he stood in line to inherit not only his grandfather's considerable estate but also a seat in Parliament. He attended Eton College for six years beginning in 1804, and then went on to Oxford University. He began writing poetry while at Eton, but his first publication was a Gothic novel, *Zastrozzi* (G. Wilkie and J. Robinson, 1810), in which he voiced his own heretical and atheistic opinions through the villain Zastrozzi. That same year, Shelley and another student, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, published a pamphlet of burlesque verse, "Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson," and with his sister Elizabeth, Shelley published *Original Poetry; by Victor and Cazire*. In 1811, Shelley continued this prolific outpouring with more publications, including another pamphlet that he wrote and circulated with Hogg titled "The Necessity of Atheism," which got him expelled from Oxford after less than a year. Shelley could have been reinstated if his father had intervened, but this would have required his disavowing the pamphlet and declaring himself a Christian. Shelley refused, which led to a complete break between him and his father. This left him in dire financial straits for the next two years.

At age nineteen, Shelley eloped to Scotland with sixteen-year-old Harriet Westbrook. Once married, Shelley moved to the Lake District of England to study and write. Two years later he published his first long serious work, *Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem*. The poem emerged from Shelley's friendship with the British philosopher William Godwin, and it expressed Godwin's freethinking Socialist philosophy. Shelley also became enamored of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter, Mary, and, in 1814, they eloped to Europe. After six weeks, out of money, they returned to England. In November 1814, Harriet Shelley bore a son; and, in February 1815, Mary Godwin gave birth prematurely to a child who died two weeks later. The following January, Mary bore another son, named William, after her father. In May, the couple went to Lake Geneva, where Shelley spent a great deal of time with George Gordon, Lord Byron, sailing on Lake Geneva and discussing poetry and other topics, including ghosts and spirits, into the night. During one of these ghostly "seances," Byron proposed that each person present should write a ghost story. Mary's contribution to the contest became the novel *Frankenstein*. That same year, Shelley produced the verse allegory *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude*. In December 1816, Harriet Shelley apparently committed suicide. Three weeks after her body was recovered from a lake in a London park, Shelley and Mary Godwin officially married. Shelley lost custody of his two children by Harriet because of his adherence to the notion of free love.

In 1817, Shelley produced *Laon and Cythna*, a long narrative poem that, because it contained references to incest as well as attacks on religion, was withdrawn after only a few copies were published. It was later edited and reissued as *The Revolt of Islam* (C. and J. Ollier, 1818). At this time, he also wrote revolutionary political tracts signed "The Hermit of Marlow." Then, early in 1818, he and his new wife left England for the last time. During the remaining four years of his life, Shelley produced all his major works, including the lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* (C. and J. Ollier, 1820). Traveling and living in various Italian cities, the Shelleys were friendly with the British poet Leigh Hunt and his family, as well as with Byron.

On July 8, 1822, shortly before his thirtieth birthday, Shelley was drowned in a storm while attempting to sail from Leghorn to La Spezia, Italy in his schooner, the *Don Juan*.

Poems by Percy Shelley

England in 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying King;
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring;
Rulers who neither see nor feel nor know,
But leechlike to their fainting country cling
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow.
A people starved and stabbed in th' untilled field;
An army, whom liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield;
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;
A senate, Time’s worst statute, unrepealed—
Are graves from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

Ode to the West Wind

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—“Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

The Flight of Love

When the lamp is shatter'd,
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scatter'd,
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remember'd not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute—
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruin'd cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possest.
O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

Its passions will rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high;
Bright reason will mock thee
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

John Keats (1795 – 1821)

Source: Poets.org https://poets.org/poet/john-keats

English Romantic poet John Keats was born on October 31, 1795, in London. The oldest of four children, he lost both his parents at a young age. His father, a livery-stable keeper, died when Keats was eight; his mother died of tuberculosis six years later. After his mother's death, Keats's maternal grandmother appointed two London merchants, Richard Abbey and John Rowland Sandell, as guardians. Abbey, a prosperous tea broker, assumed the bulk of this responsibility, while Sandell played only a minor role. When Keats was fifteen, Abbey withdrew him from the Clarke School, Enfield, to apprentice with an apothecary-surgeon and study medicine in a London hospital. In 1816 Keats became a licensed apothecary, but he never practiced his profession, deciding instead to write poetry.

Around this time, Keats met Leigh Hunt, an influential editor of the *Examiner*, who published his sonnets "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" and "O Solitude." Hunt also introduced Keats to a circle of literary men, including the poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Wordsworth. The group's influence enabled Keats to see his first volume, *Poems by John Keats*, published in 1817. Shelley, who was fond of Keats, had advised him to develop a more substantial body of work before publishing it. Keats, who was not as fond of Shelley, did not follow his advice. *Endymion*, a four-thousand-line erotic/allegorical romance based on the Greek myth of the same name, appeared the following year. Two of the most influential critical magazines of the time, the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, attacked the collection. Calling the romantic verse of Hunt's literary circle "the Cockney school of poetry," *Blackwood's* declared *Endymion* to be nonsense and recommended that Keats give up poetry. Shelley, who privately disliked *Endymion* but recognized Keats's genius, wrote a more favorable review, but it was never published. Shelley also exaggerated the effect that the criticism had on Keats, attributing his declining health over the following years to a spirit broken by the negative reviews.

Keats spent the summer of 1818 on a walking tour in Northern England and Scotland, returning home to care for his brother, Tom, who suffered from tuberculosis. While nursing his brother, Keats met and fell in love with a woman named Fanny Brawne. Writing some of his finest poetry between 1818 and 1819, Keats mainly worked on "Hyperion," a Miltonic blank-verse epic of the Greek creation myth. He stopped writing "Hyperion" upon the death of his brother, after completing only a small portion, but in late 1819 he returned to the piece and rewrote it as "The Fall of Hyperion" (unpublished until 1856). That same autumn Keats contracted tuberculosis, and by the following February he felt that death was already upon him, referring to the present as his "posthumous existence."

In July 1820, he published his third and best volume of poetry, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. The three title poems, dealing with mythical and legendary themes of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance times, are rich in imagery and phrasing. The volume also contains the unfinished "Hyperion," and three poems considered among the finest in the English language, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," "Ode on Melancholy," and "Ode to a Nightingale." The book received enthusiastic praise from Hunt, Shelley, Charles Lamb, and others, and in August, Frances Jeffrey, influential editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, wrote a review praising both the new book and *Endymion*.

The fragment "Hyperion" was considered by Keats's contemporaries to be his greatest achievement, but by that time he had reached an advanced stage of his disease and was too ill to be encouraged. He continued a correspondence with Fanny Brawne and—when he could no longer bear to write to her directly—her mother, but his failing health and his literary ambitions prevented their getting married. Under his doctor's orders to seek a warm climate for the winter, Keats went to Rome with his friend, the painter Joseph Severn. He died there on February 23, 1821, at the age of twenty-five, and was buried in the Protestant cemetery.

Poems by John Keats

To Autumn

I
Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
  Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
    To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
  With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
    For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

II
Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
  Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
  Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
  Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
    Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
  Steady thy laden head across a brook;
  Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
    Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

III
Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
  Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
  And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
  Among the river sallows, borne aloft
    Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
  Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
  The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
    And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

On the Grasshopper and Cricket

The Poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury,—he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

"Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art"

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

When I have Fears That I May Cease to Be

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high-pilèd books, in charactery,
Hold like rich garners the full ripened grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.