# Romanticism Study Guide

## Romanticism

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# Introduction

Romanticism as a literary movement lasted from about 1789 to 1832 and marked a time when rigid ideas about the structure and purpose of society and the universe were breaking down. During this period, emphasis shifted to the importance of the individual's experience in the world and his or her interpretation of that experience, rather than interpretations handed down by the church or tradition.

Romantic literature is characterized by several features. It emphasized the dream, or inner, world of the individual. The use of visionary, fantastic, or drug-induced imagery was prevalent. There was a growing suspicion of the established church, and a turn toward pantheism (the belief that God is a part of the universe rather than separate from it). Romantic literature emphasized the individual self and the value of the individual's experience. The concept of "the sublime" (a thrilling emotional experience that combines awe, magnificence, and horror) was introduced. Feeling and emotion were viewed as superior to logic and analysis.

For the romantics, poetry was believed to be the highest form of literature, and novels were regarded as a lower form of writing, often as "trash," even by those most addicted to reading them. Most novels of the time were written by women and were therefore widely regarded as a threat to serious, intellectual culture. Despite this, some of the most famous British novelists wrote during this period, including Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and Sir Walter Scott. In addition, this period saw the flowering of some of the greatest poets in the English language, including William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and William Wordsworth, many of whose works are still widely read today.

# Themes

## Dreams and Visions

Perhaps the most notable example of the emphasis on dreams and visions in romantic literature is Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan" (1816), which he claimed to have "written" during a dream while deeply asleep. While transcribing the lines from his dream, he was interrupted by a visitor, and later claimed that if this interruption had not occurred, the poem would have been much longer. The idea that a person could compose poetry while asleep was commonplace among romantics. Although critics at the time were not particularly enthusiastic about "Kubla Khan," no one thought to question whether it was possible for someone to dream such a long poem.

Coleridge was not the only poetic dreamer in his time. John Milton also claimed to have received inspired verses while sleeping, and Keats, like others, believed that poets were endowed with a special gift to translate dreams into words. In addition, opium was cheap and widely available, and its use was not yet considered harmful, so some writers□ notably Thomas De Quincey, who wrote *Confessions of an Opium Eater*□used it to gain access to what they considered to be a higher, more visionary faculty of the mind.

## Pantheism

Pantheism, which is the belief that there is no difference between the creator and creation, holds that God is not separate from the world, but manifested in it. This idea was popular among romantics. For example, Wordsworth writes in his poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798":

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

This sensation of a divine "presence" in all things marked a shift in public perceptions of nature. Until this period, most people were busy struggling to eke out a living, largely through farming, and viewed nature as simply a resource that could be used and harvested, not as a place of renewal and purity. However, with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, cities became more crowded and dirty. To the growing urban middle class, the green countryside became more attractive as a place of recreation and an escape from the ever-increasing filth and disorder that industry brought to towns. The romantics

likewise viewed nature as a place of spiritual purity and peace, where people could be redeemed by contact with the divine force immanent in the natural world.

## The Self

During the romantic period, for the first time in history, people became aware that there were parts of each individual's personality beyond the access of ordinary consciousness. This idea was further developed during the twentieth century as part of modern psychological theory, but at the time of the romantics it was a novelty. The romantics were fascinated with self-exploration and with the particulars of the individual's experience in the world. Previous writers had focused on politics, business, trade, and the lives of royalty or other famous people. The lives of ordinary people had been deemed unworthy of general interest. However, the romantics were influenced by the events of the American and French revolutions and their underlying political theories, and like the revolutionaries, they believed the ordinary individual had the same rights and worth as any leader. This sociopolitical theory inspired writers to consider the worth of the individual in their work and to focus more on the experiences of ordinary people.

## Emotion and Feeling

In keeping with an emphasis on the individual self, the romantics valued emotion, intuition, and feeling over logical abstraction. They sought "the sublime," a state of being in which a person was simultaneously awed, frightened, and filled with a sense of majesty and wonder. A poet's response to a wild, remote, and grandiose spot in nature often invoked the sublime, as did the immense night sky, gigantic geological upheavals, and vast castles. Romantics also relied on their intuitive sense of things□as opposed to physical facts□to interpret the world. If a writer sensed the presence of the divine in a natural spot, for example, the reality of this presence was not questioned, but accepted as a given because the person had felt it.

# Style

## Rejection of Rigid Poetic Forms

In keeping with their glorification of the unlimited freedom and potential of the individual, the romantics rejected old poetic conventions□such as the heroic couplet used by Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson□and used freer forms of verse like the ode and the verse narrative. They believed that the form of a verse should be shaped by the subject matter, in contrast to the neoclassicists before them, who used rigid forms and shaped their material to fit them.

## Emphasis on Poetry

An interesting aspect of the romantic period was the emphasis on poetry. Most of the great romantic writers were poets instead of novelists, as novels were widely regarded as inherently inferior to poetry, which was deemed a loftier form of writing. Critics have offered various reasons for this prejudice. Some suggest it arose from the fact that most novelists were female, and because women were devalued during the romantic period, their work was discounted. Others note that many novels were of poor quality, giving the entire genre a bad reputation. In addition, as Bradford K. Mudge notes in his foreword in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, the poets themselves, notably Wordsworth and Coleridge, campaigned against the spread of popular fiction, claiming it would lower the tastes of the reading public and lead them away from poetry. According to Mudge, Wordsworth wrote that newspapers, novels, plays, and even some poetry, would "encourage mental lethargy" and reduce readers to "a savage, uncivilized state."

# Historical Context

## American and French Revolutions

The French Revolution, which drew upon some of the principles enacted in the American Revolution, resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy of France and the spread of interest in democracy, nationalism, and socialism throughout Europe. On the eve of the revolution, France was in crisis; the monarchy, which claimed to rule by divine right, had spent so much money that the country had a massive deficit. A poor harvest and bitter winter in 1788 plunged the country into famine and drastically increased prices. In addition, British textile makers were underselling their French counterparts, leading to the closure of some French manufacturers and the spread of unemployment among the workers. The increasingly restless poor found that the wealthy nobles, clergy, and upper middle class made good targets for their anger at this situation.

The revolution was not a clean victory for either the poor or democracy, as by 1799 France was a military dictatorship. However, intellectuals throughout Europe were thrilled and inspired by the notion of revolutionaries rising up and demanding their rights. Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, and others wrote glowingly of the revolution, and Bysshe Shelley and Byron thoroughly supported its radical principles. In general, the romantics believed in the worth, potential, and freedom of the individual, and exalted this freedom over the thentraditional acceptance of social hierarchy and political repression.

## Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution was a period of social and economic change that began in the mid- 1700s and lasted until the late 1800s. This change was instigated by the invention of various mechanical means of producing goods more quickly and cheaply than by hand. For example, textile mills allowed the production of vast amounts of cloth, with far less labor and cost, than if the cloth were produced by the traditional method of individual weavers working in their homes. Factory ironworks produced iron items more quickly than individual craftspeople could, and the "spinning jenny," a device for spinning thread, could make more cotton thread than many human spinners.

The Industrial Revolution was also fueled by declining mortality rates, which resulted in rapid population growth. The increasing numbers of people provided both a workforce for the factories and a market for the goods produced.

The new factories necessitated improved transportation routes for raw materials and finished goods, as well as housing and other services for the laborers. These needs caused roads and canals to be improved or constructed, and swelled the cities with cheaply built housing. The first British railway, between Stockton and Darlington, was

built in 1821. The factories hired women and children as well as men, and were often unsafe. Housing built for the workers was often substandard and unsanitary. The factories themselves polluted both air and water, belching out smoke from coal-fired furnaces and releasing dye and other wastes into rivers. The regimented hours and repetitive work in the factories were viewed as dehumanizing and numbing by the general populace.

Romantic writers were aware of these changes, which presented such a contrast between the hellish life of the city laborer and the purity and peace of nature. The industrial changes convinced many romantics the natural world was purer than the industrial one, and that nature was a place of spiritual truth, release, and renewal. In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth applauds the advances in science and technology that made the mills possible, but also criticizes the exploitation of women and children, the dehumanizing work shifts, and the all-encompassing greed of the factory owners.

# Religious Influences

The Church of England was the official religious body during the Romantic period, but it had lost touch with much of the population. Some parishes were run by parsons who never actually visited them, while other parsons pursued their own material and physical pleasures. The growing urban population of uneducated laborers often went unserved, and in the largest cities many people grew disillusioned of the church. David Jasper notes in the *Handbook to English Romanticism* (edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson) that on Easter Day 1800, there were only six worshipers in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Coleridge (as quoted in the *Handbook to English Romanticism*), whose father was a clergyman, was so skeptical that he wrote about his own son's baptism, "Shall I suffer the Toad of Priesthood to spurt out his foul juice in this Babe's face?" and Blake characterized members of the clergy as hypocritical liars. In general, the romantics believed the established church was suffering from staleness and complacency, and they sought other avenues to express their spirituality.

The Unitarians, at the time a small sect that rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and believed that Christ was not divine, were highly educated and had a great deal of influence on the romantics. Coleridge, who was a Unitarian for some time, preached in their churches. Romantics were also influenced by the views of Immanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish mystic who promoted a pantheistic worldview particularly attractive to William Blake, who attended a Swedenborgian conference in 1787.

However, of all the churches, the Methodists had the most impact on the romantics, who were moved by the Methodist portrayal of humans as fallen sinners seeking redemption and the grace of God. In addition, the Methodist emphasis on emotional conversion rather than intellectual contemplation, as well as their joy at Christ's gift of salvation, fit the romantic worldview.

# Movement Variations

In the *Emerson Society Quarterly*, James E. Miller Jr. writes, "America has traditionally incarnated the romantic in almost every sense," and that "The American adventure, the great democratic experiment . . . are the essence of Romanticism." Romanticism in America flourished between 1812 and the years of the Civil War. Like English Romanticism, its writers emphasized the dignity and freedom of the individual; rebellion against restrictions, whether political, cultural, or social; the importance of emotion over intellect; and the need for a personal relationship with God and the natural world.

However, American Romanticism differed from the English movement because it was shaped by factors unique to American history, culture, and geography. Americans, unlike the English, lived in a democratic, more egalitarian society in which the ordinary individual had political power and was free from the dictates of a king or an entrenched upper class of nobles. In addition, rebellion and freedom of all kinds was encouraged by the presence of an apparently limitless supply of land; if people felt restricted, they would simply move farther west, where there was freedom and opportunity. In small, insular England, this feeling of personal freedom and the lure of "the open road" was nonexistent.

Because the United States was a new country with an extremely diverse population, it did not have an established set of literary forms, traditions, and masters. This lack of a creative structure or ceiling encouraged writers to experiment with new forms, genres, and styles. Americans were proud of their country and its freedoms, felt a certain rivalry with Britain, and wanted to prove that they, like the British, could create works of lasting merit that nevertheless reflected the uniqueness of the American character. Thus, American romantic writers focused on American settings and themes. In addition, the vast and largely unspoiled beauty of the American landscape provided perfect material for romantic musings on nature and spirituality.

Writers considered part of the American romantic movement include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. According to Mark Bevir in the *English Historical Review*, these writers differed from their British counterparts in their "close relationship to both Unitarianism and frontier individualism."

Unitarians opposed the concept of a divine Trinity, and believed that God had a single personality or manifestation. They rejected the concepts of damnation and eternal hell, the innate sinfulness of humanity, and the belief that Jesus had atoned for human sins. Bevir notes these beliefs "readily opened the way to a belief in a single spiritual deity existing within nature, rather than a transcendent God standing outside nature." He comments that although English romantics believed nature could inspire or renew people, American romantics typically believed God and nature were one, and that God's purpose was achieved through the action of natural forces.

Many romantics in England and America looked to the past for inspiration. In England, Coleridge believed that a national church could provide stability and balance against the onward forces of social progress, and art critic John Ruskin was interested in reviving the medieval importance of trade guilds and craft skills. However, American romantics such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were inspired by the democratic ideals of United States Presidents Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, and believed the birth and growth of America as a democratic state was part of a divine plan for the creation of a perfected nation. American romantics emphasized material simplicity, living close to nature, and the honest manual labor of the self-sufficient farmer and frontier dweller. Thoreau□perhaps the greatest proponent of the simple, self-sufficient life□lived alone in a hut by Walden Pond, trying to live so simply that he needed very little, and growing or making whatever he absolutely could not do without.

# Representative Authors

## Jane Austen (1775-1817)

Jane Austen was born December 16, 1775, in England, the youngest daughter of a Hampshire clergyman. Her six novels were set in the world in which she lived, that of the comfortable, rural middle class, and were often based on her observations of people she knew and her assessments of human character. The novels depict young women entering society, many of whom make mistakes or become confused but ultimately find their way to a happy marriage.

Austen began writing as a teenager and initially shared her writing only with family and friends. When she eventually published, she did so anonymously. Not well known in her own time, she soon garnered a reputation for her precision, irony, and delicate touch as a writer. Her best-known works are *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and *Emma* (1816). She influenced many later writers, including Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope, as well as George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. Austen's books have endured to the present day as some of the few "classics" widely read for pleasure. She died from illness on July 18, 1817, in Winchester, England.

## William Blake (1757-1827)

Artist and visionary poet William Blake, born November 28, 1757, in London, England to a hosier, was apprenticed at age fifteen to engraver James Basire, for whom Blake made drawings at Westminster Abbey. In 1783, Blake's *Poetical Sketches* were printed, and in 1789, he engraved *Thel* and *The Songs of Innocence*. The increasing turmoil caused by the French Revolution and the war between Britain and France influenced Blake to engrave *America* (1793) and *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). In the following year, he produced the combined *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, *Europe*, and *The First Book of Urizen*.

In 1803, Blake was accused of sedition (inciting resistance or insurrection against lawful authority). He was tried in 1804 but acquitted of the charge. During this time, he finished *Milton* and began *Jerusalem*. However, for the next two decades his life became increasingly despairing, poverty-stricken, and obscure. He was regarded as insane by some observers, and eked out a living by illustrating a pottery catalog and selling his print collection. However, late in his life he found supporters and patrons, and in 1820 *Jerusalem* was finally engraved. He died August 12, 1827, in London. While he was known primarily as an artist and engraver during his lifetime, Blake became known as an important writer after his death, influencing other poets such as William Butler Yeats.

## Lord Byron (1788-1824)

George Gordon Byron was born January 22, 1788, in London, England, inheriting his title of the sixth Lord Byron when he was ten years old. He grew up at the family estate near Nottingham, Newstead Abbey, and received an education at Harrow and Cambridge. His first publication, the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, was based on a tour of Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Turkey he took between 1809 and 1811. The work was immediately successful, and he followed it with a series of tales featuring exotic Middle Eastern settings and hero-villains.

Byron's marriage to Anne Isabella Milbanke in 1815 lasted only fifteen months, largely due to rumors spread by Byron himself about his homosexuality and incestuous relations with his half-sister Augusta Leigh. In 1816 he left England permanently, undergoing a series of travels which inspired cantos three and four of *Childe Harold* (1816, 1818). Eventually, he settled in Venice, Italy, where his immersion in the Italian language and culture would have a profound influence on his work, particularly *Don Juan* (1819-1824). While in Italy, he was the lover of Countess Teresa Guiccioli and became involved with Italian independence movements. In 1823 he went to Greece to participate in the Greek movement for independence from the Turks. He died during a voilent electrical storm on April 19, 1824, in Missolonghi, Greece, after suffering from fever-induced illness for almost two weeks. His body was returned to England, but he was refused burial in Westminster Abbey because of his scandalous past. He was eventually buried in his family's vaults near Newstead Abbey. In his time, Byron's work was noted for its emphasis on freedom, its overtly sexual themes, its pessimism, and its use of tormented, villainous heroes.

## Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born October 21, 1772, in Ottery St. Mary, Devon, England, the youngest child of a clergyman and his wife. At the age of ten he entered Christ's Hospital School in London, where he read a wide variety of classical and political works. In 1791, he entered Jesus College in Cambridge, and became interested in revolutionary politics and Unitarianism. He left school without earning a degree. In 1794, he met poet Robert Southey, with whom he planned a utopian community to be built on the banks of the Susquehanna River in the United States. As part of this plan Coleridge married Southey's sister-in-law Sara Fricker.

In 1794, he published his first poetry in the *Morning Chronicle*. In 1795, he began giving a series of lectures to finance the utopian scheme, but when the idea was abandoned, he returned to writing poetry. From 1797 to 1798, he lived at Nether Stowey in Somerset, and completed the poems "The Ancient Mariner," "Frost at Midnight," "Fears in Solitude," and "Kubla Khan," some of his best-known works. In 1798, with William and Dorothy Wordsworth, he traveled to Germany, where he became deeply interested in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Coleridge's addiction to opium gradually overtook him and his marriage. He traveled to Malta in 1804 in an attempt to restore his mental

and physical health, as well as his marriage. He returned to England in 1806, but by then his marriage had fallen apart.

By 1813, he had returned to Christian beliefs and was being treated for his opium addiction. He began working on *Biographia Literaria* (1817), a discussion of poetry and a critique of Wordsworth drawing on the work of German philosophers such as Kant and Fichte. He died July 25, 1834, in Highgate, England.

## John Keats (1795-1821)

John Keats was the youngest of the major romantic poets. He was born October 31, 1795, in London, England, to a lower-middle-class family. His father's accidental death in 1804, and his mother's death in 1809 after a long bout with tuberculosis, marked him with a sense of the precariousness of life□a theme that recurs in his poetry. He was apprenticed to a surgeon, and in 1816 was licensed as an apothecary and surgeon. This training in science helped to ground his poetry in the sensory details of nature and everyday life.

His first published poem was "O Solitude," which appeared in *The Examiner* in 1816, and aroused the interest of Leigh Hunt, the periodical's editor, who encouraged him to quit his medical practice and devote his life to poetry. He viewed this as the most noble goal one could have and was filled with a deep sense of the continuity of poetry and literature through the ages, a great love for the English language, and a desire to return poetry to its roots in Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Spenser. His first published collection entitled simply *Poems 1817* (1817) was dedicated to Leigh Hunt. His second work, *Endymion* (1818), fell short of his own expectations, but his third collection, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems* (1820) contained "some of the greatest poems in the English language," according to Jean-Claude Sallé in the *Handbook to English Romanticism* (edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson). Keats died of tuberculosis Feburary 23, 1821, in Rome, Italy, at the young age of twenty-five.

## Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851)

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley is best known as the author of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818). She was born August 30, 1797, in London, England. The daughter of two well-known authors, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary's early years were unstable. Her mother died ten days after her birth, and she was raised by her father and stepmother. In 1812 she met the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, a friend of her father's, and in 1814 they ran off together, though Percy was married. During Mary and Percy's subsequent travels in Europe, Mary began work on *Frankenstein*. Percy's wife Harriet committed suicide in 1816, and shortly afterward Percy and Mary were married. Four years after *Frankenstein* was published, Percy drowned. Mary died of a brain tumor on February 1, 1851, in London.

## Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

Percy Bysshe Shelley was the oldest child and only son of a baronet. He was born August 4, 1792, in Horsham, Sussex, England. He attended Eton, where he was mercilessly harassed because of his acute sensitivity and distaste for physical activity. He then attended University College in Oxford, but was expelled after a few months because he published a pamphlet promoting atheism. Shortly after his expulsion, he eloped with Harriet Westbrook as part of a plan to help her escape from her boarding school.

By 1914, his marriage was failing, and when Shelley met Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin through a friendship with her father, he traveled to Europe with her. Harriet committed suicide in 1916, and shortly after this Shelley married Godwin. By 1818 the couple, with Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont, decided to move to Italy, and Shelley never returned to England. He and Mary wandered throughout Italy, and between 1818 and 1822, Shelley wrote some of his most important work, including *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) and his odes and lyrics. His work is noted for its reflections on a great variety of fields□including science, history, philosophy,□ and for his attempts to synthesize seemingly conflicting theories in these fields. Shelley was drowned in a storm while sailing on the bay of La Spezia July 8, 1822. His body was cremated on the beach a few days later.

## William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

William Wordsworth was born April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumberland, England. His father was a law agent, and after his mother's death in 1778, he was sent away to school, where he enjoyed a great deal of freedom. His father died in 1783, leaving Wordsworth and his four siblings in the care of relatives. Throughout his life, Wordsworth remained very close to his sister Dorothy.

Wordsworth began writing poetry as a young man, but his most notable works were composed after 1803 and many of them were collected in *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807). These volumes include the famous "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" and "Resolution and Independence." His long poem *The Excursion* was published in 1814 and was widely read. In 1835, a major collection of his poems was published, and in 1843 he became poet laureate of England.

Wordsworth's poetry is notable for his vision of the sublime, or the divine, in ordinary people and places. He believed wholeheartedly in the redeeming power of nature, and saw mystery and wonder in both people and natural things. Wordsworth died after a bout of pleurisy on April 23, 1850, in Rydal, Cumbria, England.

# Representative Works

## Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

Byron published cantos one and two of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812, canto three in 1816, and canto four in 1818. The poem is based on Byron's European travels and describes exotic landscapes and people, along with contemporary military and political events, presenting them from the viewpoint of Childe Harold. Harold is a typical "Byronic" hero: tormented by guilt over an unnamed sin, he is bitter, cynical, and melancholy, but also proud and at times filled with remorse. Because of these feelings, he is isolated from other people, cut off by the intensity of his feelings and by his intense suffering. He wanders in search of some release, but never finds it.

Byron's descriptions of current political events, such as the Spanish resistance to the French invaders and the battle of Waterloo, allow him to depict the senselessness of war as well as the human drive for freedom from oppression. Through his hero's unsatisfied wanderings through a great variety of places, he presents the idea that the only human permanence is found in writing and the lofty creations of the human mind.

Early reviewers praised the poem for its originality, despite Byron's scandalous reputation, and Byron secured lasting fame because of it. It was widely imitated and translated, and was the basis of a symphonic work by Berlioz. According to J. R. Watson in *A Handbook to English Romanticism*, "It is a poem about Europe, and Europe was delighted to recognize itself in this passionate, elegiac, conservative yet liberal and revolutionary masterpiece."

## Frankenstein

Mary Shelley's novel, published between 1816 and 1818, is classically romantic in its emphasis on: feelings over intellect and the dangers of relying exclusively on intellect; the frightening, aweinspiring nature of the sublime; the loneliness of the sensitive hero; and the sadness inherent in the human ability to corrupt what should be naturally good. In the novel, arrogant scientist Victor Frankenstein creates a man using dead bodies, and animates him. The childlike monster wants only to be loved, but horrifies everyone who sees him.

Shelley subtitled the novel "A Modern Prometheus," linking Frankenstein to the Titan who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans. Prometheus was ultimately punished by Zeus for meddling in this way. Shelley makes the point that, in taking the power to create life for himself, Frankenstein is heading for a fall. He loses touch with other people and with all human feelings. By the end of the book, Frankenstein is even more alienated than the monster he created. The idea of a protagonist whose ambition defiantly knows no bounds was attractive to other romantic writers, including Shelley's husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, Coleridge, and Byron.

*Frankenstein* shocked readers of its time, who were horrified by the idea of digging up the dead and reanimating them. Many initial reviewers attacked the book. However, the book was immediately famous with the general populace, despite its shocking nature. The first stage adaptation of it occurred in 1823, the first film was made in 1910, and adaptations continue being made into the twenty-first century. In *Exploring Novels*, George V. Griffith wrote, "*Frankenstein* lives well beyond its young author's modest intentions to write an entertaining gothic tale to pass some time indoors on a cold Swiss summer evening."

## Pride and Prejudice

Austen's 1813 novel, which she originally published anonymously, is her second and bestknown work. She wrote it for her family's amusement, but readers everywhere have enjoyed its wit, amusing dialogue, and insightful characterizations. It is a "novel of manners"; in other words, it portrays comfortable middle-class rural people and dramatizes the complex web of customs and manners holding everyone in their social places. Anyone who transgresses this code is destined for a fall. The novel, like all of Austen's books, shows a young woman learning how society and human nature operate. Throughout the book, Austen shows the results of improper behavior; some characters learn from their mistakes, while others do not.

Although Austen was not well known during her lifetime, her books influenced later writers, including Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope, as well as George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. In addition, she helped to raise the novel to a respected art form, and paved the way for other women to write even when they did not share the extensive education that was then reserved for men. Despite her relative obscurity during her lifetime, Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* has sold more than 20 million copies since its original publication and has never been out of print.

## Prometheus Unbound

Percy Bysshe Shelley's long poem portrays the epic struggle between the Greek god Jupiter and the Titan Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans. In the poem, Jupiter personifies the forces of tyranny and Prometheus is a symbol of liberty, making the poem a commentary on the current political situation in England, as well as a depiction of the human struggle for freedom and truth throughout history.

According to Murray G. H. Pittock in the *Reference Guide to English Literature*, writer C. S. Lewis called *Prometheus Unbound* "the best long poem written in English in the nineteenth century." Pittock himself comments, "*Prometheus Unbound* is a stupendous vision of human potential," while the poem also makes clear "human beings are limited by the very desires they so long to fulfil."

## Songs of Innocence and of Experience

Blake wrote the earliest poems in his *Songs of Innocence* prior to 1784, and completed the collection by 1789. In 1793 *Songs of Experience* was published, and the two collections were combined in 1794. Blake subtitled the combination, "Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul," indicating that they were meant to complement each other.

In *Songs of Innocence* Blake presents childhood fears and hopes about life, which are usually forgotten or suppressed in adulthood. The poems celebrate the joy of childhood, for, like Wordsworth, Blake believed children were closer to the divine than adults.

*Songs of Experience*, on the other hand, provide adult perspectives children cannot possibly know or understand, and thus balance *Songs of Innocence*. Like all of Blake's poetry, the poems are illustrated, with the words an integral part of the design. In some cases the drawings are so much a part of the poems that the poems cannot be understood without them. In the *Reference Guide to English Literature*, David Fuller writes that "be it in density of language, power or subtlety of rhythm, or lyric beauty in the line or stanza, the lyrics all share an evident verbal craftsmanship which the drafts in Blake's notebook show was often painstakingly achieved."

According to Francois Piquet in the *Handbook to English Romanticism* (edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson), this was "the only one of Blake's books that attracted the admiration of his fellow writers during his lifetime." Piquet notes that Coleridge said of Blake, "He is a man of genius . . . certainly a mystic, emphatically."

## "To Autumn"

John Keats's ode, written in September 1819, was the last ode he wrote that year. According to Douglas Brooks-Davies in the *Reference Guide to English Literature*, "There is virtually unanimous critical acclaim for the poem's supremacy among Keats's works." "To Autumn" is simply a description of the fall season, and seems to be a conclusion to the odes Keats wrote before it. Like many of his other odes, such as "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on Melancholy," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the poem can be seen as a commentary of grief, most likely in response to the death of Keats's beloved brother Tom in December 1818.

"To Autumn," like Keats's other odes and his poetry in general, expresses his deep love of and sensual connection with nature, and his view of nature as a place of spiritual contemplation and renewal ꓺtypical of the romantics. According to Sallé in *Handbook to English Romanticism* (edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson), "With the odes, Keats invented not only a new and influential mode of symbolic poetry but also discovered the form most appropriate to his agnostic, questing genius."

# Critical Overview

The writers who are now called "romantic" did not consider themselves to be part of a movement while they were writing. The term "romantic" was applied to them much later. At the time they were writing, their work received a mixed reception. Some works, like Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* were immediately praised, and others, such as Austen's novels and Blake's other work, did not receive recognition until long after their original publications.

As John R. Greenfield points out in his foreword in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, contemporaries of the romantic poets saw them "not as a monolithic movement all agreeing upon the basic premises of Romanticism, but as belonging to various schools with different orientations concerning taste, religion, and politics." Greenfield also notes that much literary criticism was based not on the work in question but on the writer's political stance; if the critic objected to a writer's politics, he simply gave the writer a bad review. The critics divided the poets into various schools: a "radical circle" of Blake, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley; the "Lake Poets," including Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Robert Southey; the "Cockney School," which included Keats and Leigh Hunt; and the "Satanic School" of Percy Shelley and Byron. The latter group received its name because of Byron's scandalous reputation and Shelley's atheism and radical beliefs, which shocked readers of the time.

In the early twentieth century, Romanticism was strongly criticized by writers such as T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, and Cleanth Brooks. In *Midwest Quarterly*, Asad Al-Ghalith writes, "Throughout most of his writing career, Eliot attempted to write poetry that would reflect his antiromantic taste and preferences," and that Eliot

wanted to break away from the romantic development
of poetic structure. However, despite Eliot's
dislike of Wordsworth and other Romantic poets, he
shared with [Wordsworth] a profound kinship in his
concern for spirituality within nature, in his stress on
the present in relation to past and future, and in the
emphasis on the role of memory to recapture the
fleeting moments of childhood.

Recent critical work on the romantics has focused on resurrecting the almost-forgotten contributions of women writers, many of whom have historically been marginalized. In *Midwest Quarterly*, Stephen C. Behrendt points out that readers "are beginning to study a 'British Romanticism' that looks and feels very different from the one that most of their predecessors studied." Behrendt and other scholars have focused on the connections among romantic writers, instead of studying them as if they lived and wrote in isolation. Behrendt also observes Romanticism "involved women far more prominently than has traditionally been acknowledged." He maintains the traditional critical image of the romantic poet was that of "the lone male poet whose visionary experience places him beyond domesticity," a view that has persisted since the romantic period, when cultural

values prevented people from seeing women's contributions as equal to those of men. Women who dared to enter the "male" territory of poetry were considered unnatural. They were allowed to write novels because novels were considered unimportant. According to Behrendt, this idea of male poets and female novelists has persisted to the present day, but, he comments, "a whole new model has to be generated, one that incorporates men and women authors alike, in all genres."

Despite occasionally falling from critical favor when literary tastes change, the major romantic writers are still considered among the greatest poets and novelists in the English language. Their work continues to influence writers into the twentyfirst century.

# Criticism

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# Critical Essay #1

*Winters is a freelance writer. In this essay, Winters considers the persistence of romantic ideas in current attitudes about nature and the environment.*

Romantic odes may be out of style, and few novels are now written in the style of Jane Austen or Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, but some romantic ideas and ideals are still deeply embedded in our own popular culture, particularly in popular attitudes about nature. Most people do not know it, but our current ideas about the environment and our relationship to it were born during the romantic era.

# Critical Essay #2

For the romantics, the vast, uncontrolled wilderness of nature was a holy place, a place where people could retreat from the increasing filth and falsity of civilization. Nature was viewed as "wiser" than humans; it had existed since before humans existed and, if left alone, would continue to flourish. Humans could not produce anything as complex, beautiful, and grand as nature, and they could certainly not improve on anything nature had created. However, by going to wild places, people could align themselves with the harmony and wisdom inherent in nature, and be renewed.

In addition, ecological movements encourage people to think of themselves as kindred to, and part of, the natural world, rather than standing apart from it. This feeling of kinship and oneness is a hallmark of Romanticism.

These views, which persist in our own culture, were new during the romantic era. Until the eighteenth century, people had little time to spare for appreciating nature; they were busy farming, fighting wars, and simply trying to survive. However, the Industrial Revolution gave the new urban middle class time for recreation. It also resulted in pollution and overcrowding in the cities, so these people looked to natural areas, rather than the increasingly unpleasant urban ones, for their recreation. Gardening, nature walks, and appreciation of natural beauty became common pastimes for the first time in history. As Lucy Moore writes in the *Ecologist*, "For the first time, nature became an object, and this may be the moment the modern environmental movement began."

# Critical Essay #3

Through the influence of romantic writers, ordinary people became interested in experiencing nature. For example, Wordsworth, who wrote poems about the beauty and spirituality of nature, was a highly successful poet in his own lifetime and was even appointed poet laureate in 1843, but his guides to the area where he lived were even more popular than his collections of poetry. He lived in the Lake District of England, and his writings about the natural beauty of the area made the Lake District a tourist attraction in the mid-1800s. Travelers visited the area hoping to partake of the same natural beauty, inspiration, and spiritual renewal the poet describes in his writings. Although it seems commonplace now to retreat to nature for renewal, at the time this was a novel idea, and walking in the Lake District and perhaps encountering the poet on his own walks became a kind of fad of the romantic era.

Coleridge, who also lived in the area and was a favorite of Lake District tourists, likewise saw nature as a redeeming and purifying force, and loved wilderness and wildness. According to Moore, Coleridge wrote, "The farther I ascend from animated Nature, from men, and cattle, and the common birds of the woods, and fields, the greater becomes in me the intensity of the feeling of Life."

For a time, Coleridge believed he could build a utopian community that would partake of the spiritually purifying aspects of nature, and he and Robert Southey planned to construct such a community on the then-wild banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Although, like many such utopian dreams, the plan ultimately fell through, Coleridge retained his belief that nature could provide solace and wisdom to people.

Percy Shelley, who was not quite as active in outdoor pursuits, nevertheless wrote, "I love all waste / And solitary places, where we taste / The pleasure of believing what we see / Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be."

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley reflected the romantic view of nature as a place of peace and redemption in *Frankenstein*. In the book, unlike in the films based on it, the monster is a peaceful and gentle creature. When the monster discovers how cruel humans are, it dreams of fleeing to South America, where it will live peacefully in the forest with a mate Dr. Frankenstein will make for it. They will live simply on the fruits and nuts of the forest, sleeping among the trees: a romantic ideal, a return to the spiritual innocence and purity of the Garden of Eden. However, Dr. Frankenstein, who is afraid of the monster's potential, destroys the female, forcing the monster back to civilization and civilization's destruction.

Keats was also keenly aware of the destructive human impact on nature, and that appreciation of nature often occurs only when people become aware that natural beauty is fragile and can be destroyed and lost forever. In short, the romantics believed that untouched nature invoked a sense of awe and grandeur within people; that experiencing this awe could allow people to experience a feeling of purification and

redemption; that untouched nature was superior to humanity; and that the long-term presence of people in nature could only be detrimental to it.

These principles have long guided attitudes toward the preservation and use of wilderness areas, and continue to the present day. The U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964 provides for the protection and preservation of areas untouched or little-touched by human intervention, where humans can merely be temporary visitors, and where permanent human settlement or construction is not allowed. This idea of nature as pristine and separate from the degrading presence of people goes back to the romantics.

In addition, most campers and hikers have heard the popular phrase "leave no trace," which urges people to minimize their impact on nature to such an extent that, after they leave the wilderness area, it would be difficult or impossible for observers to tell that they were even there. Campers are asked to carry out everything they carry in, and to "take only pictures; leave only footprints" behind. While in the wilderness, people are also asked to respect wildlife by keeping their distance from it, to be as quiet as possible so that the sounds of nature are the only ones heard, and to avoid crowding or overusing any one area. As R. Bruce Hall notes in the *Journal of Leisure Research*, this philosophy, like other currently prevalent wilderness-use principles, "encourages people to think of themselves as temporary visitors whose presence can only harm nature. . . . [and] emphasize[s] the negative consequences people have on natural areas and on recreation experience." It also emphasizes the benefits that people can gain from experiencing nature in its purest, least-disturbed state.

# Critical Essay #4

Wordsworth wrote in his poem "The World Is Too Much With Us," "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!" What he means is that in the frenzy of economic expansion and exploitation of the environment, people have lost touch with the spiritual and creative powers that true contact with nature can provide. Thus, we are out of touch with both the environment and ourselves.

The Industrial Revolution began over two hundred years ago, but we are still experiencing it and its effects on society and nature; the problems of pollution and waste have only increased since that time as industry has grown and become ever more complex. According to James Pinkerton in *Foreign Affairs*, David Malin Rodman of the World-Watch Institute, an environmental group, noted that it is "the very nature of industrial economic systems to degrade the environment on which they depend." This idea first became prevalent during the Industrial Revolution, when coal-fired factories began spewing black smoke over England's green countryside and dumping toxic wastes into previously clean rivers.

This worry about the negative effects of industry is still widely held today. Toward the end of the twentieth century, with increasing environmental destruction, people became increasingly aware that irreplaceable natural treasures were being degraded or lost, and increasing numbers of species were becoming extinct. Pinkerton writes, "Many people have become aware that unbounded cultivation, extraction, and construction have disastrously degraded the ecosystem of the planet."

As a result of this awareness, previously marginalized ecologically-based political movements, often rooted in romantic ideas about nature, grew and gained so many adherents that they became a part of mainstream political debate. In 1997 in Europe, according to Pinkerton, the ecological political parties had a potential electorate that was almost as large as that of the Christian democratic parties. In the United States, Green Party candidate Ralph Nader came in fourth in the 1996 presidential election and came in second in many areas that were heavily populated by college students. In 2000 Nader came in third in the national election, and some observers claimed that his presence on the ballot diverted a substantial number of voters from the Democratic Party and thus lost the election for Democratic candidate Al Gore. These victories for the environmental parties show that many people, like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and other romantics, still believe that nature, as a source of renewal, transcendence, and peace, should be celebrated and protected.

**Source:** Kelly Winters, Critical Essay on Romanticism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

# Critical Essay #5

*In the following essay, Wolfson examines four poetic works of the Romantic period, including* The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, to show why interpreting an "uncertain" poem "must become an active seeking and generating of meaning."*

# Critical Essay #6

In 1799 William Blake reminded the Reverend Dr. Trusler, "The wisest of the Ancients considerd what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction, because it rouzes the faculties to act." This comment may be applied to the rhetorical activity of much Romantic poetry as well, especially in poems in which logical structures□the plots of an argument, a tale, or an informing legend□are the expected means of instruction. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *The Thorn*, "La Belle Dame sans Merci," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" all unfold mysteries against potential sources of interpretation: moral lessons, arguments, glosses, village testimony, portentous encounters, spectral legends. Yet however much such sources may "rouze" the mind to render intelligible "what is not too Explicit," in these poems, the materials invoked for that purpose themselves become invaded by what Keats calls "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts." If these poems arouse expectation that there is a secure logic to be discovered for their perplexing circumstances, they tend to dramatize the difficulties of such discovery more than its success.

These are poems, in other words, about problems in interpretation, involving questions that go to the heart of the Romantic concern with language itself: What is the status of explication or logical argument in poems that appear to frustrate such modes of discourse even as they put them forth? What kind of poem, or poetry, does this activity produce? One effect, certainly, is to cast into doubt the principles of coherence (the causal sequences) on which plots and arguments alike rely and to foreground the less certain, uneasy motions of mind attempting to describe such principles in the circumstances that have compelled its attention. Such stress yields a poetic syntax more psychological than logical in organization, more affective than narrative in its procedures. These poems all show the degree to which interpretation cannot consist simply of deciphering hidden patterns of meaning or discovering causal sequences, but must become an active seeking and generating of meaning.

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Thorn* dramatizes the efforts of their speakers to elucidate mystery through recourse to the logic of moral argument and the logic of narrative, respectively. The Mariner's "Rime" itself involves several kinds of interpretation, but the most blatant sense-making scheme in Coleridge's text□the Marginal Gloss□is amassed against the Mariner's "Rime" as a parallel commentary, making the poem as a whole bear the signature of two distinct intelligences: that of the riming Mariner and that of the Marginal Editor. In *The Thorn*, Wordsworth entertains dilemmas of interpretation in the body of the poem itself; moreover, he diminishes the locutional differences between the narrator of the tale and the voice of his logic-seeking questioner□as if to suggest a unity of enterprise. In both these lyrical ballads, the sources of interpretive authority and the logical patterns they promote or delineate never quite emerge as "points and resting places in reasoning" independent of "the fluxes and refluxes of the mind" trying to interpret.

So psychological an emphasis (and the poetic texture it effects) must have impressed Wordsworth and Coleridge alike as a revolutionary enough experiment in the language

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of poetry. Yet Coleridge's belief that "the best part of human language . . . is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself" was not to be given its most radical poetic treatment until a generation later. Keats explicitly features the questions of interpretation that haunt *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Thorn* in his own lyrical ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci"☐a poem that bears a structural resemblance to *The Thorn*. Not long after, he was at work on a series of odes (of which "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is the most striking example) in which he not only makes a premise of the problems of interpretation all these lyrical ballads trace with increasing intensity, but extends that negotiation with uncertainty to the reader's engagement with the play of his rhyme.

# Critical Essay #7

Today, most readers of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* are probably not as bothered as was Coleridge's acquaintance, the poet and essayist Mrs. Barbauld, about the "improbable" nature of his story. The second "fault" of which she complained to the author, however, remains something of a notorious vexation for many modern readers namely, that the poem "had no moral." Coleridge is willing to cede the point on "probability"; but "as to the want of a moral," he counters, the poem's "chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of pure imagination." Yet in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* Coleridge not only seems to deplore "moral sentiment"; in this work of pure imagination, he seems to want to baffle the effort to discover any principle of action. Indeed, he continues his remarks by declaring that his poem "ought to have no more moral than the *Arabian Nights'* tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up and says he *must* kill the aforesaid merchant *because* one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son." Coleridge emphasizes the causal vocabulary with knowing irony, for to the mind of the date-eater, the genie has produced moral necessity from a chance event and consequence.

But before considering what kind of moral paradigm that tale offers to the reader of Coleridge's poem, we need to turn to the Mariner himself, who finds moral uncertainties in the central circumstance of his "Rime." The world he describes, as readers from Wordsworth to the present have noted, is one informed by inscrutable forces; nature is unpredictably solicitous or persecutory, benevolent or tyrannous. As in "Dejection," the language that can be read from nature's appearances often seems barely more than the fiction of a desperate imagination. Indeed, the foggy atmosphere from which the Albatross emerges, and which always surrounds its presence, suggests both inner and outer weather:

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it God's name.

Despite the appealing rhyme of "Albatross" with "cross" (here and subsequently), the Mariner's "As if" has the effect of raising a question about what "principle or cause of action" (if any) is actually involved. For the conjecture, uttered in fogbound misery, seems to describe primarily the hopes of an anxious crew, rather than anything positive about the bird itself. The Mariner and crew attempt repeatedly to convert conjecture into a syntax of event and consequence that can join the Albatross to the fate of their ship: when the splitting of the ice and the rising of a good south wind follow the advent of the bird, they hail it as the agent of their release; when the fog disperses (along with the ice and snow) after the Mariner kills the bird, the crewmen reinterpret the Albatross as the cause of the fog, and their release into sunshine and fair breezes as a consequence of its death; and when the same breezes fail and the "glorious" sun becomes "bloody," the

crewmen imagine themselves plagued by the Mariner's killing of the Albatross and rue that act. What are we to make of this continual shuffling of logic? Even Wordsworth, usually not averse to making the reader "struggle," sides with Coleridge's perplexed readers and against his "Friend" in the "Note to the Ancient Mariner" he wrote for the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. He cites, among other difficulties, the "defect" "that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other." The arbitrary interpretations that gather around the Albatross are a case in point. Each new scheme of causality does not clarify any "necessary connection" between the bird and the state of the weather, as much as all together expose the fiction of interpretive acts: ascertainment of the bird's value emerges after the fact, as a logic of cause and effect is imposed on a mere sequence of events. As in the tale of the genie and the date-eater, cause and effect are matters of convenient collation rather than of inevitable connection. We begin to sense that if the Albatross signifies anything, it is the very ambiguity of signs□that is, the ambiguity with which the external world vexes a desire for interpretive certainty.

The language of cause and consequence not only surrounds the Albatross but is the very principle upon which a narrative must proceed, and so the problem of collation and connection extends to the listener of the Mariner's tale. How is one supposed to coordinate the two key events upon which his story depends: the killing of the Albatross and the blessing of the snakes? The way the Mariner himself represents these acts makes more of their irrationality than of their moral dimensions: "I shot the ALBATROSS" merely joins subject and predicate, rather than explains the act; and even when that act is apparently redeemed by the blessing of the water- snakes, this, too, is given without reference to a conscious motivation: "I blessed them unaware." The parallel syntax of "I shot" and "I blessed" does make a neat pattern for the sampler homily with which the Mariner caps his tale: "He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small: / For the dear God who loveth us, / He made and loveth all." Nonetheless, a listener cannot escape awareness that this moral is for its bearer embedded in a self-denying context: the Mariner is doomed to eternal exclusion from the love and prayer he preaches. Ironically, he isolates and terrifies his auditors more than he consoles them with any sense of God's inclusive love. The would-be Wedding-Guest's "wiser" state notwithstanding, that listener at least is also left "sadder" for having heard the "Rime"□perhaps more "stunned" than instructed by the Mariner's will over him. Denied the "goodly company" of the marriage feast, the Wedding- Guest's very name is rendered meaningless. Left "of sense forlorn," this student of the Mariner's lesson finds himself, instead, a participant in the Mariner's alienation: listener and tale-teller alike seem at the end of their encounter "forlorn" of common "sense"□the comfort of living in a world of rational cause and consequence. As Coleridge remarks in the "Conclusion" of his own biography, "there is always a consolatory feeling that accompanies the sense of a proportion between antecedents and consequents . . . giv[ing], as it were, a substratum of permanence, of identity, and therefore of reality, to the shadowy flux of Time."

What denies the Mariner and all his listeners this sense of proportion is that the question that is the efficient cause of his narration□"What manner of man art thou?"□eludes certain answering. What is his "substratum" of identity? Is he a killer of

an Albatross, a blesser of water-snakes, a preacher of God's love, or an agent of contamination? The question is voiced originally by the Mariner's first auditor, the Hermit, and as we learn, it wrenches the Mariner "With a woful agony" that requires nothing less than a retelling of all the events of his ordeal. Yet as tortured and elaborate as the Mariner's response is, it remains indeterminate: the question generates his "Rime," and his "Rime" regenerates the question. Its conclusion, in fact, gestures toward its perpetual rehearsal in the shadowy flux of time:

Since then, at all uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

Endlessly navigating about a core of mysterious events, the Mariner can never capture their informing logic: his text circles about this absent center but always begins and concludes in agonizing uncertainty. Nor does Coleridge's ballad itself secure the tidy closure of "moral sentiment," ending instead with a register of the aftereffect of the Mariner's tale in the mind of his stunned, forlorn auditor. If the Mariner himself "Is gone," he leaves the trace of his mystery in that interior realm, making the truest issue of his "ghastly tale" the way it haunts a listener's imagination. "I was never so affected with any human Tale," Charles Lamb wrote to Wordsworth; "After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days. . . the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom Piper's magic Whistle. □" Another listener confessed to feeling "insulated" in the wake of hearing the poem recited by its author: "a sea of wonder and mystery flows round [me] as round the spell-stricken ship itself."

The effect of the Mariner's "Rime" in leaving its readers thus "possessed," despite the patent moral at its close, is amplified by the interpretive apparatus with which Coleridge surrounds the text of the "Rime." The "Argument" at the head of the 1798 poem is primarily descriptive, concerned mainly with the course of the Mariner's ship and alluding only briefly to "the strange things that befell" as if by chance, accident, or inscrutable agency. With the "Argument" of 1800, however, Coleridge introduces terms of moral logic and potential instruction: "the Ancient Mariner cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality killed a Sea-bird and . . . was followed by many and strange Judgements." Yet in the 1802 and 1805 editions of *Lyrical Ballads* Coleridge dropped the "Argument" altogether, as if he had decided not to prejudice his reader with authorial signals, but to let his poem work its own effect. The next publication of the poem in *Sibylline Leaves* (1817) strikes a compromise, supplying a marginal gloss instead of an argument. Like the "Argument" of 1800, the Gloss often brings a moral interpretation to bear on the Mariner's story. Unlike the "Argument," however, the Gloss is a parallel text, in effect competing with the "Rime" for the reader's attention, rather than supervising it. It presumes to order the Mariner's ordeal with a logic that his own "Rime" does not disclose□if supplying the "necessary connection[ s]" whose absence Wordsworth, among others, regretted. "And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen," it declares with the authority of biblical exegesis. "The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen," it avers, judgment in its every other word. Or taking as a cue the Mariner's fervent hope that "Sure my kind saint took pity on me," the Gloss

confidently interprets a necessary connection: "By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain." The voice of the Gloss confronts the reader as the genie does the date-eater, starting up to declare moral necessity at every turn. Yet far from clarifying whatever connections between events the "Rime" may have left obscure, the very presence of a Gloss emphasizes their absence and points to the need for explicit terms of instruction in a circumstance where all is interrogative ("Why look'st thou so?" "wherefore stopp'st thou me?" "What manner of man art thou?"). Indeed the final marginal comment, "an agony constraineth . . . [the Mariner] to teach, by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth," gives the rehearsal of that lesson a psychological urgency ("agony") even as it declares a moral principle. Despite the faith readers such as Robert Penn Warren have placed in the authority of the Gloss, it persists as another fiction—a parallel account of the ordeal recounted by the Mariner's "Rime," or an account of another ordeal: the attempt to make sense of the Mariner's language.

There is one frame, however, that Coleridge retains in every edition, namely, the voice of the anonymous balladeer with which the poem begins and ends. Readers tend, as Lionel Stevenson does, to treat this frame voice as no more than a "perfunctory" device. Yet in a poem so fundamentally involved with issues of tale-telling and tale-listening, this view deserves reconsideration. The relative situation of the Mariner's "Rime" is what lyricizes the ballad, making it as much about the feelings the "Rime" develops in its tellers and listeners as about the supernatural character of its events or the moral wisdom of its instruction. Its concluding focus on the Wedding-Guest suggests, furthermore, the frame narrator's muted but overall interest in the relation between "forced" taletelling and "forced" tale-listening. The Wedding- Guest, now possessed with the "Rime," may have found a motive for narrative similar in power to that which possesses the Mariner with his ordeal. The poem leaves open to question whether this newly haunted listener might himself become a haunted purveyor of the Rime's repetitive life: Will the Wedding-Guest rise the morrow morn, compelled to reach toward an audience of his own, to say in the manner of the ballad's frame narrator, "It is an ancient Mariner, / And he stoppeth one of three"? The ballad's opening word, "It," hears the same sense of perplexed indeterminacy with which the Mariner has left the Wedding-Guest, while the present tense of narration, both here and in the ballad's penultimate stanza ("The Mariner, whose eye is bright, / Whose beard with age is hoar, / Is gone"), suggests the perpetual presence of that figure in the mind that contains his "Rime." The affinity the balladeer's language bears to the psychology of the Mariner's haunted listener is further enhanced by the copresence of their voices in the poem's inaugural stanza, before the actual character of the Wedding-Guest is introduced. The opening two lines flow immediately into a question —"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye, / Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"—in which the pattern of meter and rhyme and the as-yet-unspecified identity of the questioner momentarily create the sense of a single mind moving from observation to speech.

The self-circling energies of this narrative frame and the would-be containment offered by the poem's interpretive frame (the early Argument or later Gloss) suggest an extended rhetorical figure for the motions of a mind left stunned by the Mariner's "Rime" and attempting to sort out its mystery. Could the interpretive apparatus surrounding

what Coleridge thought of as "A Poet's Reverie" be the textual signatures of a previously sense-forlorn auditor trying to make sense by obtruding (for himself and for his own audience) a "principle of action" on the intolerably inconclusive tale that has possessed his imagination? The Latin epigraph that in 1817 takes the place of earlier Arguments and subtitles indeed brings a problematic perspective to bear on the Mariner's mysterious experience. An excerpt from *Archaelogiae Philosophicae* by the Anglican divine, Thomas Burnet, it offers scholarly speculation on the existence of the invisible and the supernatural in the things of the universe. Yet Burnet cautions that in circling about but never attaining knowledge of the unknown, the mind must be vigilant for truth, careful to distinguish the certain from the uncertain. The action of circling about a center that defies final understanding describes the relation of the Mariner's "Rime" to its enigmatic core of events; it also figures the relation of the Gloss to that "Rime": each text surrounds a mystery, attempting to negotiate moral certainty in the face of what haunts and rouses the imagination. And the comprehensive text of Coleridge's 1817 ballad, equivocating between Marginal Gloss and Mariner's "Rime," now poses that problem to the reader. For the *apparatus criticus* and the "Rime" together shape a fuller text that, while denying unambiguous principles of instruction, offers an explicit figure for the ultimate uncertainty of interpretation.

# Critical Essay #8

In leaving its reader so "struggl[ing] with feelings of strangeness and aukwardness," *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* achieves one of the revolutionary goals of *Lyrical Ballads*. Deriding the "mere artifices of connection" that characterize the "falsity in the poetic style" of the day, Coleridge points to Wordsworth's contributions to their volume and praises the way such poems reveal compelling "resemblances between that state into which the reader's mind is thrown" by the "confusion of thought front an unaccustomed train of words and images" and "that state which is induced by the . . . language of empassioned feeling." The reader's "confusion" in the presence of such language is the note on which *The Thorn* begins, and Wordsworth even supplies an interlocutor to give voice to the inevitable protests. The ballad opens plainly enough, with an unspecified speaker reporting a simple fact: "There is a thorn." But as in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the world of positive fact ("It is . . .") dissolves rather quickly into the shadows of imagination: this is no mere bush, we find out, but one of a mysteriously charged constellation of objects that has taken possession of the speaker's imagination. He hopes a village tale will supply terms by which he can explain "why" this "spot" should produce such impressive effects out of its simple elements. His initial gesture in this direction is to claim that he "saw" a "woman" at this spot, beside that thorn, crying to herself, "Oh misery! oh misery! / "Oh woe is me! oh misery!"□ namely Martha Ray: betrothed, seduced, abandoned in pregnancy on her wedding day, bereaved of her child, and perhaps guilty of infanticide at "the spot." The interpretive appeal of this rural legend for the speaker is that it plots an objective chain of events that culminate in the affective power of "the spot," allowing him to displace his obsession with "the spot" to Martha Ray; he is merely an accidetal witness.he is merely an accidetal witness.

But as with the Gloss attached to the Mariner's "Rime," here too the very pressures that introduce the cause-and-effect logic of the tale call into question the validity of the proposed explanation. The speaker's insistence that it was Martha Ray whom he "found," "saw," and "heard" "Ere [he] had heard of Martha's name" may indicate no more than a desperate effort to release his imagination from the grip of a mist-bound panic on a lonely, stormy mountain ridge. Stephen Parrish argues persuasively that the credulous and superstitious speaker may have traced into his account of "the spot" the details of Martha Ray's history after the event of his own witnessing, converting mere objects into intelligible signs of her ordeal. A psychological urgency shades the explanation promised by the tale into language that expresses the reach for explanation by a mind invaded by mystery. The questioner in the speaker's audience may plead, "But what's the thorn? and what's the pond? / "And what's the hill of moss to her?" But that plea, despite its relentless repetition, fails to make the speaker clarify an account suspended uneasily between what he professes to know, or swears is true, and what he "do[es] not know," "cannot think" or "tell."

That the poem dramatizes the motions of interpretation as much as it displays the materials of interpretation constitutes what Geoffrey Hartman has, termed the "double plot" of *The Thorn*, in which "the action narrated and that of the narrator's mind run

parallel." The question for the speaker is "why?": what is the connection between the "tale" and "the spot"? But for the reader, that question is compounded with another, about the agent of that second psychological order of action: "What manner of *mind* is this?" we may ask. Wordsworth himself takes up this last question in his own version of the Coleridgean Argument and Gloss: the long Note he appends to the poem in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Addressed to "Readers who are not accustomed to sympathize with men feeling in that manner or using such language," the Note supplies a sort of second text that "Introductory Poem" Wordsworth felt he "ought" to have adducced to *The Thorn* "to give this Poem its full effect." But unlike Coleridge's Gloss, Wordsworth's Note is not concerned with clarifying a principle for the "action narrated"; he means instead to clarify his intent to exhibit what happens to the language of discourse in the absence of such a principle particularly in the case of a "credulous and talkative" discourser with an imagination "prone to superstition." Wordsworth argues that the speaker's particular "manner," especially his "repetition of words" (a chief complaint among the poem's first readers), is meant to dramatize an effort "to communicate impassioned feelings" an effort spurred by "something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of [his] powers, or the deficiencies of language" to do so.

The speaker's frustration of plot and his larger struggle with the language of cause and effect thus become a general struggle with all modes of articulation except the repetition of verbal fragments "which appear successfully to communicate" a feeling, and "the interest" thereby "which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion." "During such efforts," Wordsworth explains, "there will be a craving in the mind" which, to the extent that it remains "unsatisfied," will cause the speaker to "cling to the same words." Though Coleridge deplored this effect, the circumstances of his own Mariner's narrative suggest a certain amount of sympathy for its motivation. For the implicit repetition of the Mariner's "Rime," and the actual repetitions in *The Thorn* that play in the voices of both Martha Ray and the ballad's speaker, all describe motions of mind engaged with what is not too explicit: repetition becomes re-petition, re-asking. As such an interrogative attempt, repetition emerges as another version of the questions that provoke the telling of each tale, that "craving in the mind" for a certainty it cannot locate. Indeed, the voice that actually utters questions in *The Thorn* is itself a repetitive one. This voice never quarrels with the narrator but merely echoes his tentative discourse in interrogative tones. Both the echoing locution of this voice, as well as its indeterminate origin, suggest that Wordsworth may even be shading the poetics of dialogue into monologue, as if to represent a colloquy within one intelligence, between a voice seeking fact and reason ("But why. . .?"), and a write helplessly burdened with mystery ("I do not know"). The play of these voices, like that between Coleridge's "Rime" and his framing apparatus, becomes an extended figure for the mind's engagement with uncertainty. There is a difference, however, for in Wordsworth's poem the two writes we hear are scarcely distinguishable, and neither presumes interpretive authority.

# Critical Essay #9

The effort of Wordsworth and Coleridge in these "lyrical ballads" to dramatize the uncertainties of interpretation opens a field of rhetorical activity in English Romanticism in which the play of interpretive strategies emerges as a primary subject □a "principle of action" in itself. Shelley writes an ode the whole point of which seems to be to question whether "the human mind's imaginings" work against a "vacancy" of information in the external world (*Mont Blanc*); Byron chants playfully: "Apologue, Fable, Poesy, and Parable, / Are false, but may be rendered also true, / By those who sow them in a land that's arable: / 'T is wonderful what Fable will not do! / 'T is said it makes Reality more bearable" (*Don Juan* XV:89). Keats's Odes are perhaps the consummate Romantic instance of a poetic design in which the primary principle of action is a psychological event□a mind exploring and testing its own fictions of interpretation. But narrative, too, becomes arable land for such testing in a poem such as "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," Keats's version of a lyrical ballad. As in *The Thorn* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the central event (the perhaps fatal entanglement of a knight with an enigmatic woman of the meads) emerges only as a troubled memory, the primary action becoming instead the exchange between a perplexed questioner and a would-be tale-teller. The poem opens on an explicitly interrogative note, as a voice arrested by a strange impression queries its cause: "O what can ail thee, knight at arms, / Alone and palely loitering?"

Like the questioners of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Keats's balladeer seeks a reason for a peculiar phenomenon: what explains this unexpected sight on the meads, a knight absent from his wonted world of quest and romance? What sort of tale awaits the telling? The tone of the question reflects its speaker's uncertainty, for it suggests at once a moment of puzzled concern for an ailing countryman and a slightly chiding "what-ails-you?" reproach for the appearance of negligence. The description of the landscape that completes the stanza□"The sedge has wither'd from the lake, / And no birds sing"□extends the mood of inquiry by stressing the incongruity of figure and place. Yet there is a gap between the stanza's questions and its voice of description that raises a question for the reader: are the comments on the landscape a cryptic but potentially meaningful reply *to* the questioner or a further effort *by* the questioner to provoke a reply from the knight? That ambiguity, and its mysterious circumstance, persist in the second stanza:

O what can ail thee, knight at arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

This stanza compounds rather than clarifies the indefinite relation between question and statement, an ambiguity to which I shall return. For now it is enough to note that both the landscape that frames the knight and the statements that frame the questions announce a world of depleted vitality, no longer productive of any harvest, even, apparently, the harvest of inquiry: the field is unyielding for all. The principle of *in*action

seems the profoundest absence of all; indeed, the questioning voice is the singular movement in this otherwise barren circumstance.

The adjectives "haggard" and "woe-begone" (as well as the previous stanza's "Alone" and "loitering") begin to play against this vacancy of information, however, by hinting at anterior events: "woe-begone" and "Alone" suggest diagnoses of an ailment for which "loitering" may be a symptom, while the etymology of "haggard," along with what Keats might describe as "its original and modern meaning combined and woven together, with all its shades of signification," suggests an intuition of cause. The modern meaning of "drawn, gaunt, exhausted" is enhanced by the status of "haggard" as an adjective derived from "hag," implying prior bewitchment. The word points even more specifically to the effects of commerce with a "haggard": "a wild or intractable female," and with special relevance to Keats's La Belle Dame with a "'wild' expression of the eyes." May the knight's present "haggard" appearance be the effect of a contagious encounter with some haggard's "wild wild eyes"? The latent efforts at interpretation stirring in these adjectives emerge in the overtly symbolic imagery that follows:

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

As Earl Wasserman remarks, this stanza invites a "symbolic reading": the lily is the harbinger of death (Keats in fact wrote "death's lilly" in an earlier draft); the "fading rose" (also originally "death's fading rose") cannily surmises the fatal fading of romance, while the repetition of the verb "wither" in reference to the knight's appearance can now suggest an affinity between him and a heretofore incongruous circumstance. The elaboration of detail has begun to resonate with an obscure significance which promises a logical connection: the imagery of the whole reports a hollow center whose very vacancy has become significant. Everything speaks of absences, withdrawals, depletions, and abandonments.

The questioner has in effect entered the realm of latent narrative, for with the cue of this "symbolic reading," the knight produces a tale whose information confirms all these intuitions and imaginative surmises. Nonetheless, its sequence of events far from elucidating the original mystery only deepens its range, for here too details elude definite organization. Wasserman's study of the poem is particularly alert to "the dim sense of mystery and incompleteness" Keats's artistry arouses in us, along with the way certain "overtones" in the "affective and image-making energies of the poem" "drive the mind to ask questions of conceptual intent. What, one wonders, is the larger meaning couched in the absence of song? why a knight-at-arms and an elfin grot? and what are the significances of the cold hill side and the pale warriors?" Like the Marginal Editor of the Mariner's "Rime," Wasserman means to "penetrate [this] mystery", and he thinks he has the answer: La Belle Dame "is the ideal" that entices mortal man "towards heaven's bourne," but which must elude permanent possession in this world. Other readers surmise different causes and propose "Circe" as a more accurate key to interpretation.

Yet the knight's tale yields no certain logic either way, for like his questioner, he too is in struggle with indeterminate appearances. "She look'd at me as she did love," he reports, with a syntax that hovers between a confidently durational sense of "as" as "while" and that of less confident conjecture, "as if." His subsequent assertion, "And sure in language strange she said / I love thee true," bears no more certainty than the Mariner's hopefully proffered "Sure my kind saint took pity on me." In both cases the claim only accentuates the gap between the strangeness of signs and their proposed translations. La Belle Dame escapes logical explication even in retrospect as the syntax of the knight's tale everywhere demonstrates: his narration merely accretes from "and" to "and" a word sounded in fact in every stanza of the ballad, more than two dozen times throughout. As in *The Thorn*, the final stanza comes to rest on the original mystery, its terms now intensified by the intervening narrative:

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Despite the withering of lush romance into a death-pale aftermath, the cause remains unknown. The knight's summation simply echoes on a syntactic level the absences noted by the questioner. Though he frames an answer in the syntax of explanation ("And this is why. . ."), it is an answer that doesn't produce much, beyond halting present tenses left wandering between two worlds, one dead and one powerless to be *re* born. Lacking a clear antecedent, its "this" belies the stress by voice and meter: there is, finally, no "why" to solve the mystery of La Belle Dame or to dispel its lingering effects. Indeed, the knight's final, haunting repetition of his questioner's voice only magnifies the interrogative mood of the whole, whose irresolution now involves the reader too.

We should not ascribe that questioning voice simply to ballad convention, however, even if it does perform the conventional service of prompting a tale. For the very presence of this questioner on the meads is itself questionable. As in *The Thorn*, the status of the poem's conversation remains ambiguous enough to suggest two voices playing in one intelligence, instead of two dramatically distinct speakers. We note, for instance, a curiously shared attraction to the landscape of barren meads, as well as a shared song the knight reports being spellbound by "La Belle Dame sans Merci," and the balladeer repeats the spell of that language strange in the title of his own song. Keats enhances these provocative affinities by keeping the identity of the questioner anonymous (more a voice than a character) and by withholding any punctuation that might distinguish two separate speakers. There is a quality to the place and play of these voices, in other words, that implies the self-questioning motions of a divided consciousness examining its forlorn state. Even the knight's summary statement, "And I awoke and found me here," points to selfdivision and the need to heal it, with the location of "here" suspended between a situation in the landscape and a situation in the mind. Like *The Thorn*, Keats's lyrical ballad allows a reading of its voices as a dialogue of the mind with itself; by the end of the poem, the question that drew our attention to the knight has been utterly absorbed into his own voice. The status of the ballad's

dialogue must of course remain part of its mystery☐neither clearly an internal colloquy nor a conversation between distinct *dramatis personae*. But the ambiguity is suggestive, for it points toward the rhetorical play of the odes, which, as many readers remark, is one of internal dialogue and debate.

# Critical Essay #10

If "La Belle Dame sans Merci" foregrounds a probing question and a perplexed reply against a set of events that haunt about the shape of present speech, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" heightens that drama of interpretation. Instead of a narrative organization of tale, tale-teller, and listener (or reader), Keats concentrates the action of the poem on the motions of a single lyric intelligence engaged with an image: a tableau on an urn, which like "the spot" in *The Thorn* or the appearance of the knight on the meads seems to signify something beyond itself, but for which there is no "legend" forthcoming, problematic or not. Keats's field of action is that of a poet's mind beckoned to interpretation, and the drama he presents concerns the increasingly self-conscious attempts of that mind to describe the significance of the object before it.

Like "La Belle Dame," the Ode begins with a greeting that suggests there is a story to be told, a meaning to be expressed:

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme.

All the vocatives⬜an "unravish'd bride," a "foster-child," a silent tale-teller⬜suggest an unfinished circumstance⬜or from a rhetorical point of view, information on the verge of expression. Keats brilliantly exploits that implication by following these invocations with a series of questions, the syntactic equivalent of these figures of provocative incompletion:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

If the speaker surmises the urn as a silent Grecian "historian," the questioning of his "rhyme" provides a particularly cooperative voice, for *historia* is the Grecian method of learning by inquiry. Yet the attempt to double the historians on this occasion produces an ironic counterplay in the language of poetic inquiry. Far from recovering the mysterious legend presumably harbored by this "Sylvan historian," the speaker's rhyme doubles back on itself to mirror his own perplexities: he barely launches his greeting before it branches into multiple "or"s, a kind of "wild ecstasy" of syntax that diagrams his "mad pursuit" of his own "maiden loth"⬜the unravished "what" that might supply the absent meaning of the images he riddles. As Keats's speaker pursues the significance of his object, Keats's rhyme mirrors the course of that pursuit.

Keats's Ode continues to elaborate this double plot, presenting a speaker in pursuit of interpretation in rhyme that expresses, primarily, the ardor of the pursuer. If, however, Keats's readers are inclined to exempt themselves from this mirror-play, they have unwittingly played into an even more subtle irony. For over the course of the Ode, Keats turns the behavior of his rhyme into a dilemma for the reader, fully analogous to the speaker's dilemma of interpretation before the urn. By the conclusion of the Ode, in fact, the reader may have the uneasy feeling that not only have these dilemmas converged, they may even have reversed, for Keats's speaker abandons us with an ambiguously toned "that is all" just before becoming as silent as the urn itself.

The dovetailing of the two dilemmas of interpretation □the speaker's of the urn and the reader's of the rhyme□begins as soon as the speaker stops questioning to muse on the freedom of the urn from any finite significance. If no "legend" can be read into the silent tableau, it may be because "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter." With this new premise, the absent "legend" finds a productive counterpart in "unheard" melodies, those "ditties of no tone" played "Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd . . . to the spirit." The language of Keats's poetry intensifies that paradox with a play of visual repetitions and halfheard echoes. The word "ear," for instance, reemerges enfolded in "end*ear*'d," as if that repetition were both a visual and auditory figure for the inner audience to which it refers. Furthermore, the sound (as well as the spelling) of "endear'd" resonates as "end ear'd," as if to signify audience beyond the bourn of "the sensual ear"□"just below the threshold of normal sound," as Cleanth Brooks puts it. The slant and sight rhyme of "endear'd" with "unheard" adds a further elaboration to the visual and auditory design of rhyme. As readers, we begin to attend to information that haunts about the shape of rhyme, as well as the information it expresses through the logic of paradox. Language itself becomes a provocative figure of interpretation.

Yet that very elaboration of linguistic surface further perplexes these "ditties of no tone," for the speaker has a tone, or rather tones, that correspond ambivalently to the absences he notes:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal□yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Any effort to evaluate the syntax of these judgments is thoroughly involved with the speaker's own perplexity before the arrested figures he contemplates. On the one hand, "Fair youth" and "Bold lover" present ideal images of mortals whose special stasis insulates them from the normal attritions of human passion and the vagaries of human inspiration; "the negation of these verbs," Earl Wasserman insists, "creates an infinity of mutable or chronological time." But the dependency of surmise on such negatives may be decreative as well, for the tone of the whole is poised between emphatic celebration and rueful irony: "do not grieve; / She cannot fade." The initially bold assurance of "therefore, ye soft pipes, play on" succumbs to the wavering balance of "Though . . .

yet . . . though," while the expansive potential of figures seemingly poised on the verge of action yields figures trapped in an eternity of postponements.

The third stanza heightens these tensions of interpretation, both for the speaker and for us, not with syntactic equivocation this time, but with a univocal insistence on gradations of happiness, where the very repetition of positive value exposes the urgency with which it is being declared:

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd . . .

Like the repetitions of Wordsworth's Sea Captain in *The Thorn*, here too "words" verge on becoming mere "things" of passionate speech, rather than "symbols:" They render a linguistic event that like the branching syntax of stanza 1 or the seesawing sentences of stanza 2 aligns the reader of Keats's "rhyme" ever more sharply with the interpretive dilemma of the beholder before the urn.

This third stanza concludes with a particularly intense convergence of situation and syntax that invariably trips Keats's readers:

For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

On a first reading, "All breathing human passion far above" seems to be a summary phrase for the state of "More happy love! . . . For ever panting, and for ever young": the semicolon after "young" perhaps marks a pause analogous to a comma, like the semicolons after "adieu" and "new" in the same stanza, while, conversely, the comma after "above" temporarily halts our reading in this field of happy surmise. Moreover, the stanza's syntax encourages us to feel that there is no problem in reading "breathing" as a continuation of those activities that the speaker has also described in present participles, "piping" and "panting"☐activities that in fact involve kinds of "breathing." Wasserman puts the case this way: the line "is the syntactical analogue" of a visionary ideal where "breathing human passion" exists in a state "far above," fusing "mortal and immortal, the temporal and the atemporal." We may even be inclined to read "All" as an inclusive noun for the melodist and the lovers, and "breathing" as a verb whose direct object is "human passion."

The comma keeps us reading, however, and as we do, we reject this last syntactic possibility. More important, we find that "far above" is not a place but a value judgment that separates "All breathing human passion" from the conditions of the "happy love" we have been imagining. The value of "breathing" does perplex that judgment with

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information that will emerge more fully in stanza 5's "Cold Pastoral!"☐an obverse evaluation of the same condition. But at this point, "breathing" is realigned only with the "sorrowful" conditions of the immediately ensuing participles, "burning" and "parching," its situation distilled utterly from the possibility of mystical convergence with "for ever panting and for ever young."

What is striking about this line, and the stanza as a whole, is the "phenomenology of reading" it produces. The teetering syntax of "All breathing human passion far above"☐first promoting, then subverting, a coordination between the "happy love" on the urn and the highest promise of "human passion"☐becomes significant not only for what it would describe, but for the way it behaves. Just as the urn's art resists decisive interpretation, so that one line entangles nearly every reader who has studied Keats's Ode. The question of narrative legend ("What men or gods are these?") moves, in this stanza, into a question of grammar and syntax: "What nouns or verbs are these?" Ambiguity is now the common property of urn and rhyme, and the dilemma of interpretation, the common situation of Keats's speaker and Keats's reader.

The return of questions in stanza 4 can be only an ironic event after these doublings of dubious surmise. They seem deliberately calculated to demonstrate the futility of certain interpretation:

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

This object of address is not the potentially intelligent "Sylvan historian" of stanza 1 but a "mysterious priest," whose knowledge (like his identity) is beyond possible knowing. Nor is there any possibility of discerning a historical context for this "sacrifice": origin and termination can be a matter of surmise only:

What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

The question of "what little town" echoes the earlier inquiry for "what leaf-fring'd legend," but here the configuration of "or"s concerns one of those "Nothings" that have existence only in the "ardent pursuit" of imagination. The circumstance is without a representation and, significantly, without a voice:

And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

The connective "And" hardly breaks the flow of the question, for it produces a response that extends interrogative motion into an undoing of its very premises. In stanza 1, the urn as a "bride of quietness" or a "foster-child of silence" suggested a haunting indeterminacy, while the paradox of "unheard melodies" made that "silence" an elusive

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spiritual extension of sound. Stanza 4 reduces that potential to mere emptiness. Like the landscape in "La Belle Dame" where "no birds sing," here, too, is a tableau of absence: there is finally no "historian," "not a soul to tell/Why," and the voice of bold inquiry, eager to ravish the urn for its "what" and "why," finds itself ironically partnered to her silence. The final stanza completes this movement: all questions are absorbed by the object that had excited them, and the urn relapses to a mere "Attic shape"□the "attitude" of "silent form" that signals the silencing of inquiry.

Yet even as Keats's speaker appears to concede this consequence, Keats's rhyme redeems language by exploiting its multiplicity of interpretive signals. For the profusion of puns and shades of signification that play through the ode's final stanza at once speak of and enact the indeterminacy the ode has dramatized throughout. If the urn's art withholds its spectral legend, flattening illusory possibility to a merely opaque "Fair attitude! with brede / Of marble men and maidens overwrought," Keats takes advantage of the "heard melodies" of poetry to multiply the dimensions of its activity. "Brede," for instance, describes the quality of the urn's figured design, but its punning against "breed" and ironic half-echoes of "bride" and "breathe" subtly reject the "human passion" the speaker had projected onto the urn's fair attitudes. Indeed, "Fair attitude" refers both to the loveliness of the urn's art and to the fairness, or justice, of its silent seeming. "Overwrought" involves similar shadings, for while it refers to the lapidary quality of the urn's design, it also criticizes an eternity where one may never, never kiss. And as a pun on over-"raught" (an archaic or Spenserian version of "reached"), it gently mocks the speaker's previous overreaching to idealize the urn's tableau, as well as implicates his view of the overwrought figures before him with his own overwrought postures of interpretation□that voice given to chanting, "Ah, happy, happy boughs!. . . More happy love! more happy, happy love!" "I found my Brain so overwrought that I had neither Rhyme nor reason in it□ so was obliged to give up," Keats reports of one mood of composition in the midst of *Endymion*.

The transition from the "overwrought" brain to "giving up" is in fact the consequence Keats's final stanza enacts. The resistance of both urn and rhyme to any single pattern of significance is again underscored with the utterance, "Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought / As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!" "Cold Pastoral!" is, of course, the speaker's decisive revision of his previous surmise, "For ever warm": the epithet coolly extinguishes the ardor of that pursuit. More important, however, is the way this phrase not only juxtaposes the beholder's conflicting responses ("Cold" marble, "Pastoral" illusion), but translates that perplexity of signification into a compelling linguistic figure. "Cold Pastoral!" is no reconciliation but rather a tensed collation of opposites: a dynamic, because, unresolvable, oxymoron. The disjunctive effect of reading Coleridge's Marginal Gloss against his Mariner's "Rime" is something Keats's "Cold Pastoral" concentrates into a single phrase. It is Coleridge in fact who provides the most cogent Romantic argument for the imaginative value of oxymorons. To defend Shakespeare's attraction to the figure, he urges allowance for the way oxymoron reveals and perpetuates that

effort of the mind, when it would describe what it
cannot satisfy itself with the description of, to reconcile

opposites and qualify contradictions, leaving
a middle state of mind more strictly appropriate to
the imagination than any other, when it is, as it were,
hovering between images. As soon as it is fixed on
one image, it becomes understanding; but while it is
unfixed and wavering between them, attaching itself
permanently to none, it is imagination. . . a strong
working of the mind, still offering what is still repelled,
and again creating what is again rejected.

Not only is this a provocative countertext to Coleridge's favored poetics of reconciliation, but it is the best reading of "Cold Pastoral" ever not written about the phrase, for it speaks to the way the voice of judgment Keats produces in stanza 5 keeps the mind of the reader working hard in a dialectic of constructions and deconstructions. However teasingly silent this "Sylvan historian" remains about its informing "legend," it becomes, through the very provocation of its silence, the historian of urn-readers and urn-reading, a historian of the speaker's activity and our own. The urn befriends its beholders the way Keats's rhyme does⎕by encouraging their imaginative activity. We come to value its artistry not so much by what it yields to thought as by what it does to thought⎕provoking questions and refusing to confirm any sure points and resting places for our reasonings.

The voice of the urn, were one to imagine it, is a perfect contrast to the voice that declares "Cold Pastoral!": "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is such a piece of self-enclosed harmony that it merits separation by quotation marks from the rest of the rhyme. Its status is another matter, however. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" emerges in part as the final, desperate surmise of a beholder not happy with an absent legend, nor with being so teased out of thought, and determined to tease the silent form into oracular utterance. And oracular utterance it seems⎕a rich, cryptic piece of *sententiae antiquae*. Yet despite the grace of its neatly balanced syntax, its language proves for some a cold comfort; for the ambiguous situation of this voice compromises its high philosophical tone, bringing a special kind of "woe" to "generations" of readers expecting something more accessible to interpretation. The phrase all but requires another "legend" to help us know what it means. Indeed, the words "Beauty" and "truth" seem so inscrutable as an abstract and brief chronicle of the urn's art that they sound its "ditties of no tone" with a vengeance. As with the marble brede of figures on the urn's surface, one may project whatever significance onto the aphorism one wishes: but as with those figures, this phrase contracts to mere opacity if its mystery is too irritably teased.

The statement "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is a lofty answer that in effect plays ironically against the rhetoric of answering, for it simultaneously invites and repels the possibility of understanding, shaping a piece of "charactered language" that is partly like the "hieroglyphics" Keats celebrates in Kean's "music of elocution" and partly like the "{hie}*rague*glyphics in Moor's almanack." The two poles of meaning, "Beauty" and "truth," slide across their marker of equivalence, "is," reverse positions at the comma, and so elude syntactic priority that, despite the elegant symmetry of statement, its logic can only be wondered at, like the urn itself. Urn and aphorism together go round and

round, each serenely self-enclosed, endlessly circular, resonating with mysterious promise, but "still unravish'd" at last.

The only consequence is a further mockery of the questioner: " that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." This statement, too, has the sound of stable wisdom, but the more one teases it, the more one discovers a tone that unsettles its terms of resolution. That "all" hints at sufficiency, even at mysterious plenitude, and yet it has a ring of dismissal, as if parodying anyone's effort to "know" "all." The irony against interpretation is as wry as Robert Frost's couplet: "We dance round in a ring and suppose, / But the Secret sits in the middle and knows." For Keats, however, there may be no "Secret" only the effect of those dancing round and supposing. Whether the speaker imagines "that is all" as the urn's comment on its aphorism, or himself tells us this, the opacity of the pronoun "that" and the uncertain tone of the whole still leave us wanting to know "*what* is all?" Keats takes us only this far, then to relinquish us to an utterance that, like the contemplation of eternity, absorbs inquiry into silent thought. Here, a negotiation with "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" is not merely an act of mind we observe in another (be it Mariner, Marginal Editor, Sea Captain, knight, or poet), but one that the play of Keats's language has produced and sustained in the reader's own experience.

**Source:** Susan J. Wolfson, "The Language of Interpretation in Romantic Poetry: 'A Strong Working of the Mind,'" in *Romanticism and Language*, edited by Arden Reed, Cornell University Press, 1984, pp. 22-49.

# Adaptations

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was first filmed by inventor Thomas Edison in 1910 and directed by J. Searle Dawley. This film has since been lost from public archives, but many more versions were made. These include the most famous adaptation, filmed in 1931 by Universal Pictures, which starred Boris Karloff as the monster.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has also spawned numerous spin-offs, including *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1932), *Son of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1939), *Ghost of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1942), and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (Universal, 1943).

*Frankenstein* was made into a comedy in *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Universal, 1946) and Mel Brooks's *Young Frankenstein* (20th Century Fox, 1974). In 1994, a more serious version, which claimed to be faithful to the book, was produced by Columbia/Tristar, titled *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was filmed as a television miniseries in 1995 by BBC Television and the A&E Network. It was first shown on the A&E Network beginning in January 1996 and is now available on video and DVD. The program starred Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet and Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy. It was directed by Simon Langton.

# Topics for Further Study

Read Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* and watch one or more of the many films that were inspired by the book. How do the book and film differ? How are they the same? In particular, how is the character of the monster portrayed in each?

During the romantic period, opium was cheap and widely available, and people did not know its use could be harmful. Read some works by romantic writers who claimed to be inspired by opium, such as Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1822). Write an essay explaining the ways the drug may have affected the writing, citing specific examples from the work.

Read Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and write your own poetry in the same style. Or, write an ode in the style of Keats.

Read about the life of Mary Shelley or Jane Austen. Write an essay explaining how they were affected by cultural attitudes and expectations of women in their time period? How did they rebel against those attitudes and expectations?

# Compare and Contrast

**Nineteenth Century:** Women are not expected or encouraged to have professions or to make a living. There are no women diplomats, lawyers, or judges, and professions such as medicine, law, engineering, architecture, and banking refuse entry to women. A woman must marry to ensure that she will be financially supported. It is considered immoral for an unmarried woman to live alone. If a woman does not marry, she is expected to earn her keep and remain "respectable" by living with and taking care of a male sibling or her parents.

**Today:** Although there are still differences in pay scale and status between men and women in many fields, women in many countries are now working in all professions and can choose to be educated in any field. In addition, a majority of women are not required to marry and can choose the type of household or family that is most suitable to them.

**Nineteenth Century:** The Industrial Revolution results in a greater variety of goods for consumers as well as in the growth of cities. It also leads to pollution, urban overcrowding, labor problems, and the exploitation of laborers, including children. The growing blight in the cities leads people to view nature in a new light and to value it for its own sake rather than simply as a resource to be exploited.

**Today:** Factories are still polluting nature, and people are still trying to find a balance between industrial growth and the preservation of natural resources. However, children in most industrialized nations are no longer permitted to work and laws require factories to provide healthy workplaces. A computer/Internet revolution is occurring, leading to widespread changes in industry, communications, and consumer habits.

**Nineteenth Century:** Novels are largely regarded as "trash," not something serious, intelligent people should spend time reading. Many novelists are women. Poetry is considered the highest form of literature.

**Today:** Novels are written by both men and women and are widely read. They range from light reading to serious, award-winning fiction, and some novelists make millions of dollars on their books. In contrast to the romantic age, poetry has been marginalized in popular culture, and it is difficult for poets to make a living from their art.

# What Do I Read Next?

Christopher Hibbert's *The Days of the French Revolution* (1999) discusses the political and social ideals underlying this revolution that influenced the romantic movement.

Claire Tomalin's *Jane Austen: A Life* provides a fascinating biography of the now popular author.

Renowned critic Harold Bloom's *The Visionary Companion: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (1971) delves into the works of many of the great English Romantic Poets, such as Keats, Shelley, Byron, Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1976) has all 1,775 poems arranged in the chronological order of their writing (as far as could be determined). Dickinson was a poet of the American Renaissance in the nineteenth century. Her style is distinctive and unparalleled, noted for its brevity; its beautiful, sometimes morbid, imagery; and for occassional obscurity.

*Florentin* (1801), by German romanticist Dorothea Schlegel, tells the story of a typical romantic hero, from his mysterious birth, difficult youth, and amorous encounters until the hero is eventually driven to discover the truth of his existence. However, the full truth of this mystery is never reavled since *Florentin* was intended to be the first book among several, but Schlegel never finished the series.

French romantic novelist Victor Hugo penned his most famous book *Les Misérables* in 1862, which was a successful bestseller in its day. *Les Misérables* is the story of a poor man who is transformed by the generous kindness of another person. Jean Valjean eventually rises to success, despite the fact that his past continues to haunt him.

Alexander Dumas was a novelist of the romantic style who became famous within his lifetime. His book, *The Three Musketeers* (1844) continues to be a favorite among young readers today as it is unabashedly filled with adventure, intrigue, and romance.

# Further Study

Curran, Stuart, ed., *Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, Cambridge
University Press, 1993.

This collection of critical essays on Romanticism discusses
poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and sociopolitical
influences on the movement.

Prickett, Stephen, ed., *The Romantics*, Holmes, Meier, 1981.

This collection of essays is a critical examination of
the romantics and their time.

Ruoff, George W., ed., *The Romantics and Us: Essays in Literature and Culture*,
Rutgers University Press, 1990.

This collection of critical essays brings together a
wide variety of scholars with varying interpretations
of romantic literature.

Shaffer, Julie, "Non-Canonical Women's Novels of the Romantic Era: Romantic
Ideologies and the Problematics of Gender and Genre," in *Studies in the Novel*, Winter
1996, p. 469.

Shaffer examines little-known romantic novels by
women and discusses their role in changing society's
view of women.

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**Introduction**

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literary Movements for Students (LMfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's For Students Literature line, LMfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

classic novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LMfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LMfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of classic novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members educational professionals helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in LMfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by LMfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LMfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literary Movements for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literary Movements for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literary Movements for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from LMfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from LMfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literary Movements for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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