

Romantic Period (1798 - 1832)

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As usual literary eras are different for different people, but one established era is the Romantic period which started in 1798 and ended in 1832. The Romantic period began mainly with William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge. The Romantic Period is the opposite of the Neo-classical Period. Many things happened here that did not happen in the previous period (Neo-classical Period). This period is called the Revival of Romanticism because the Elizabethan Period (1558 - 1603) belonging to the Renaissance Period (1500-1660) in the history of English literature is called the first period of Romanticism.

In 1798, William Wordsworth and S. T. Coleridge wrote a collection of poems called "**Lyrical Ballads**," which originally contained 23 poems, of which Wordsworth wrote 19 and Coleridge wrote the remaining 4. The popularity of "*Lyrical Ballads*" increased when William Wordsworth wrote an essay on it called "*Preface to Lyrical Ballads*." This article was written in 1800 (then edition 1802). It was originally written in praise of the fact that a new trend of poetry has been written here. But interestingly, he did not say much about S. T. Coleridge in this essay, which led him to write a counteressay on S. T. Coleridge called "*Biographia Literaria*" (1817). Both had a good relationship, they were close friends, and neighbors too. But at some point, their relationship broke down. Coleridge distinguishes the two in "*Biographia Literaria*."

Another important point is that William Blake, whose important poetry was written before 1798, is still called a romantic poet. This is because the elements and styles used by poets of the Romantic period are found in Blake's poetry. That is, we can call Blake the **Precursor of Romanticism**.

1st Generation Romantic Poets were William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey. 2nd Generation Romantic Poets were Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats.

The term "**Lake Poets**" refers to the group of English Romantic poets. They were primarily William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey. They lived and wrote in the Lake District of England in the early 19th century. A critic named Francis Jeffrey gave them this designation.

The French Revolution played an important role in the Romantic period. It started in 1789 and continued till 1799. But the actual time of the revolution is 1789. Its slogan was "**Liberty, Equality, Fraternity**". The people of France went into an armed struggle against the corruption, injustice, mismanagement, etc. of the ruler. After the French Revolution, the importance of the common man increased. Freedom of expression is established. This became an important literary feature during this period.

Escapism means running away from real life. Romantic writers used dreams and imagination to forget pain and problems. They created magical and beautiful worlds. **Negative Capability** is a special idea by John Keats. It means staying calm with mystery and doubt. Writers do not need clear answers. They enjoy beauty, even if it has no meaning. They accept life's mystery with peace.

In this era, the great influence of poetry can be seen. Also, during this period, more literary works branched out at a significant rate, but poetry became more popular. Among the famous poets of the era, a female novelist named Jane Austen spread her influence. She is called an Anti-romantic Novelist because her attitude was opposite to Youthful Passion. Different popular tags have been attached to each of the poets of this era. When discussing the romantic period, we must keep these few things in mind.

Important Features of the Romantic Period

- **Subjectivity:** Romantic writers focused on their own feelings and thoughts. They wrote from the heart. They showed emotions and imagination. Their writing was personal. They often looked inside their own minds. They shared what they felt deeply.
- **High Imagination and Escapism:** Romantic writers used imagination in a big way. They did not like strict rules and logic. They wanted freedom in writing. Imagination helped them escape from real life. They wrote about magic, dreams, and mystery. They explored strange and beautiful worlds. They loved the mystical and the sublime.
- **Love for Beauty and Nature:** Nature was very important to Romantic poets. They loved trees, rivers, hills, and flowers. Nature gave peace and joy. It helped them feel better inside. They wrote about natural beauty in detail. Beauty was everywhere in their works. John Keats is called the poet of beauty because of this.

- **Colloquial Language:** Romantic writers used simple and everyday language. They did not use hard or fancy words. They wanted to sound natural and close to people. They wrote like common people spoke. This helped them connect with more readers.
- **Strong Feelings for Common People:** Romantics cared about poor and simple people. They wrote about farmers, workers, and their hard lives. They respected ordinary people. They showed their hopes and struggles. Romantic literature wanted to bring change and justice.
- **Supernaturalism:** Romantic writers liked ghosts, magic, and mystery. They used supernatural things in poems and stories. They wrote about strange and unreal things. Witches, spirits, and other magical beings appeared in their works. S. T. Coleridge is called the poet of supernaturalism.
- **Political and Social Critique:** Romantic writers were not happy with society. They disliked the bad sides of the Industrial Revolution. They did not like pollution, poverty, or city life. They wanted freedom and justice. They supported the rights of people and asked for change.
- **Distant Reference:** Romantics looked to the past for ideas. They used stories from history, myths, and legends. They wrote about old heroes and ancient times. This gave their works a magical and timeless feeling. They mixed the past with the present.

Remarkable Writers and Literary Works of the Romantic Period

William Blake (1757-1827), Precursor of Romanticism, Mystic Poet, and the Poet of Symbolism:

- **Songs of Innocence (1789)**
- **Songs of Experience (1794)**

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), the Poet of Nature:

- **Lyrical Ballads (1798)**
- **Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800 & 1802)**
- The Prelude (1850)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), the Poet of Opium, the Poet of Supernaturalism:

- **"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798)**
 - Frost at Midnight (1798)
 - Dejection: An Ode (1802)
- **Kubla Khan (1816)**
 - Christabel (1816)
- **Biographia Literaria (1817)**

Jane Austen (1775-1817), the anti-romantic novelist in the Romantic Age:

- **Pride and Prejudice (1797)**
- **Sense and Sensibility (1797-98)**
- **Mansfield Park (1814)**
- **Emma (1816)**

Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

- The Essays of Elia (1823)
- The Last Essays of Elia (1833)

William Hazlitt (1778-1830) A famous critic:

- The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1820)

- The Spirit of the Age (1825)

Lord Byron (1788-1824), the Rebel Poet:

- The Vision of Judgement (1822)
- Don Juan (1824)

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), Revolutionary Poet:

- The Revolt of Islam (1817)
- Ozymandias (1818)
- Ode to the West Wind (1820)
- Ode to a Skylark (1820)
 - Ode to Liberty (1820)
 - Prometheus Unbound (1820)
 - **Adonais:** An Elegy on the Death of John Keats (1821)
 - **A Defence of Poetry (written in 1821)**, an unfinished essay published in 1840.
- The Necessity of Atheism (1811), He was rusticated from college for this.

John Keats (1795-1821), Poet of Beauty and Poet of Sensuousness:

- Endymion (1818)
- Ode to Psyche (1819)
- Ode to a Nightingale (1819)
- Ode to Autumn (1820)
- Ode on a Grecian Urn (1820)

- **Ode to Melancholy (1820)**
- **Ode to Indolence (1820)**
- Hyperion (1820)

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