

English Romanticism

The first generation of Romantic poets

The second generation of Romantic poets

Common traits

Imagination is the highest human faculty and it is the most direct, effective way to achieve truth.
Nature is a source of inspiration and is often seen in a pantheistic way (personal interpretations vary).
Supernatural elements can be found in both generations (mostly in Coleridge).
Importance of feelings in both generations, poetry is the expression of personal feelings and passions.
Revival of past traditions and the Middle Ages for all poets (Blake, Coleridge, Keats).

Differences

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All the poets were involved in society and they tried to find a solution to social injustice and the other problems of the time. ■ They believed that poetry should have a didactic purpose and that the poet's task was to be a guide for mankind and to help people create a better world. ■ Although they supported the ideals of the French Revolution, they remained quite conservative (especially Wordsworth and Coleridge). They all had long lives. ■ Wordsworth stated that language in poetry should be as similar to the language 'really used by men' as possible. Blake used simple language and structures and Coleridge tried to follow this general rule, though he partially disagreed on this issue. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ They all travelled abroad and died far from England. They showed an escapist tendency and fought in the name of their idealistic goals. They refused to give in to imposed social standards. ■ All of them rejected conventional ethics and disliked the idea that poetry should have a moral purpose: they believed poetry could inspire the reader, but not that it could really teach a moral lesson. ■ They all led very truly romantic, passionate lives (especially Byron and Shelley). They all died young, in tragic circumstances. ■ The works of the 2nd generation are usually much more complex and refined than the 1st generation as regards language and style. There is extensive use of mythological references from the classics, a growing interest in Greek culture; the language is more elaborate and rich. All the poets are especially careful in the choice of elegant structures and words to the effect of musicality and balance. |
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Links to other subjects / topics

Italian Literature	History	Philosophy	Art	Music	European Literatures
Foscolo – Leopardi – Manzoni	American Revolution French Revolution Napoleonic wars	Kant – Fichte – Schelling – Rousseau – Hegel	Turner – Constable – Füssli – The Pre-Raphaelites	Beethoven – Chopin – Verdi	Hugo – Chateaubriand – Lamartine – Goethe – Tieck – Novalis

Main poets and writers

Poets: 1st generation: Blake (dualism – vision) – Wordsworth (nature) – Coleridge (the supernatural)
 2nd generation: Byron (rebellion) – Shelley (freedom) – Keats (beauty and art – aesthetic forerunner)

Novelists: Jane Austen: novel of manners (provincial life in the country – anti-romantic)
 Walter Scott: most important representative of the historical novel (link to Manzoni)
 Mary Shelley: novel of purpose (gothic influences, the theme of double identity)

American writers: Poe: tales of mystery (inner horror) and ratiocination (forerunner of detective stories) influences on French Symbolism
 Cooper: interest in the local traditions and culture of native American Indians and life at the frontier (= the American Walter Scott)
 Whitman: democratic ideals, the American Dream, the poet as a prophet, rejection of stylistic conventions (free verse)

The Victorian Age					
Early Victorian writers			Late Victorian Writers		
General features					
<p>Importance of respectability Great expansion of the Empire and consequent nationalistic pride (jingoism) tendency to ignore the social problems of the time while focusing only on the positive aspects a.k.a. the Victorian Compromise philanthropy as an early form of sensibility to social problems development of socialist ideas; creation of the Fabian Society Great importance given to the family and to social conventions in general Moral repression of women Taboo on sexual themes</p>					
<p>Features of early Victorian fiction (1830s – 1860s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • optimism & faith in progress • development of serial publication • identification of writers with common set of values • readership's influence on plot development of novels 			<p>Features of late Victorian fiction (1860s – 1900s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • growing pessimism • harsh social denunciation • influences of naturalism and decadentism • writers gradually become estranged from society 		
<p>Early Victorian poetry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuation of the Romantic tradition (interest in human feelings, focus on the Middle Ages) • new elements (more attention paid to musicality, more complex vocabulary and syntax, experimentation, introduction of dramatic monologue) 			<p>Late Victorian poetry</p> <p>The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • founded in 1848 as a reaction against industrialism and materialism; • interest in medieval art; • languid sensuality and extensive use of symbolism 		
Links to other subjects / topics					
<p>Literature Pellico - Carducci, Nievo, - Verga, D'annunzio, - Pascoli - Fogazzaro</p>	<p>History Potato famine in Ireland: massive emigration from Ireland to the US Crimean war and Boer War American Civil war & abolition of slavery</p>	<p>Science and philosophy: Positivism – Darwin's theories – Schopenhauer's ideas – John S. Mill</p>	<p>Art: impressionism (Monet, Manet, Gauguin, Van Gogh)</p>	<p>Music Debussy Ravel Mahler Puccini Mussorgski</p>	<p>European Literatures Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Hugo, Stendhal, Zola, Maupassant, Faubert, Ibsen, Dostoevsky</p>
<p>Main novelists Charles Dickens humour, social problems, pathos, caricatures, didacticism William M Thackeray novels of manners describing class conflict and Victorian lifestyle the Bronte sisters combination of Romantic features and Victorian themes (the role of women)</p> <p>Main poets Lord Alfred Tennyson Ulysses = represents Victorian ambitious expansionism and pride Robert Browning the dramatic monologue (a single speaker talking to a silent listener; the reader infer's speaker' personality from his words; use of informal register and broken sentences as if the speaker were talking to himself</p>			<p>Main novelists George Eliot and Thomas Hardy → the influence of social and natural environment on the individual; man can't change his fate Robert L Stevenson → new interest in the multiplicity of human psychology –theme of the double (Jekyll /Hyde) Lewis Carroll → interest in dreams and irrationality Rudyard Kipling → British India from a Victorian point of view; still supporting the ideas linked to “white man's burden” Oscar Wilde → art has nothing to do with morality as it can only be judged by aesthetic standards; making fun of Victorian values</p> <p>Main poets (preraphaelite Brotherhood) Dante G Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, Charles A Swinburne</p>		

Modernism

Before WWII

After WWII

General features

rebellion against traditional values
 distortion of spacial and chronological features of reality
 emphasis on the mutability and uncertainty of our perceptions
 need to represent modern urban life in art and literature
 experimentalism in themes and style
 interest in the primitive without the restrictive limitation of our cultural background
 importance of the subconscious in any form
 impossibility to give a single and well-defined interpretation of reality

Modernist fiction

experimental techniques (epiphany, interior monologue, etc.)
 the city as the world of modern Man
 exploration of human psychology
 lack of values

Post-modernist fiction

exploration of social phenomena
 dystopian literature
 political involvement of writers
 development of the literature of ex-British colonies

Modernist poetry

rebellion against post-Romantic poetry
 impersonality of the artist
 experimental techniques (objective correlative, free verse, etc.)
 alienation of Man

Post-modernist poetry

rebellion against Modernist elitarian, snobbish poetry
 chaos of the modern world
 beat generation
 exploration of contemporary issues

Drama

The Theatre of the Absurd (existential nullity, lck of moral landmarks, lack of communication, Angry Young Men (social problems and the frustration of the working classes, political theatre of the 1970s and 1980s

Links to other subjects / topics

Literature

Svevo, Pirandello, Ungaretti, Montale, Martinetti, Quasimodo, Buzzati, Levi

History

World Wars
 Totalitarian regimes (Stalin, Hitler, Franco, Mussolini)
 Women's emancipation
 Vietnam War
 Cold War
 Gulf Crisis

Science and philosophy

Nietzsche, Bergson, William James, Freud, Einstein, Jung, Popper

Art

Expressionism (Munch)
 Dadaism (Tsara)
 Cubism (Picasso, Braque)
 Surrealism (Dalì, Magritte)
 American art (Warhol, Pollock)

Music

Stravinsky
 Schoenberg
 Bartok
 Prokofiev
 Jazz
 Pop & rock music

European Literatures

Brecht, Kafka, Sartre, Chekhov, Rilke

Main novelists

Henry James → relationship between Americans and Europeans, women's psychology
E.M. Forster → relationship between England and India or other cultures (Italy)
D.H. Lawrence → relationship between parents and children and man and woman
J. Joyce → experimental novel, stream of consciousness, the paralysis of Dublin, artist vs society
V. Woolf → women and fiction, subjective perception of reality, lack of communication between man and woman
 Main poets
W.B. Yeats → concept of history as a gyre (cfr Vico), Irish question, symbolism
T.S. Eliot → experimentalism in style, influence of E. Pound, alienation of modern man, lack of values and communication

Main novelists

A. Huxley, G. Orwell J. Ballard → the horrors of totalitarian regimes, consequence of scientific progress & technology on society
Ian McEwan → memory and ambiguous nature of time
Angela Carter → feminist issues
Jonathan Coe → Britain in the 1980s
Main Poets
Seamus Heaney → cultural roots of Ireland
Liverpool poets → following the success of the Beatles, reacting against Modernism
Main playwrights
Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter → alienation of man, existential void, pessimism, experimentalism
John Osborne → Angry Young Men, frustration of working-class people

American & post-colonial writers

Hemingway (war); Faulkner (interior monologue, cfr Woolf and Joyce); Fitzgerald (exploration of the disillusionment around jazz era); Ginsberg (rebellion against conformity and materialism); Miller (disillusionment in the American Dream).

Main literary movements

Imagism - Futurism & Vorticism → Ezra Pound and Windham Lewis - Theatre of the Absurd - Dystopian fiction - Beat Generation