

Romantic Period in English Literature – breaking the conventions of Neoclassicism

Neoclassicism strived for traditionalism and concentration on man as a part of the progressing civilization; this, as the neo-classicists believed would lead to a more structured community and literary works. However, the writers and intellectuals of the late 18th century had different ideals from their predecessors. The French Revolution [1789-1799] brought new ideas into common people and those who believed a change is coming, became more interested in portraying their beliefs in common tongue rather than eloquent language that concentrated on the aristocratic class. Romantic period thus marked the entry of the poet who focussed on the poet's feelings about Nature [not human nature] and the connection with the self.

The second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* published in 1800 of William Wordsworth and Coleridge marked the new beginnings. The **Preface** in the *Lyrical Ballads* written by Wordsworth is considered as the manifesto for the romantic period. Romantic period did not last a century, marked from 1785-1830, but its influence has become immortal because of the poetic and prose developments during the period.

Main aspects of romantic period

Escaping from the traditions of the age like urbanism, industrialism and searching for the imaginative mind concentrating on the exotic ideas.

Landscapes, trees, living beings and most things concerned with Nature are explained with precision and with great knowledge. However, romantic literature did not find it as an exclusive trait but as a connection to the feelings of the poet.

Naturalness of language and flow is preferred over constructing a piece of literature. As Keats puts it, "If poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves of a tree, it had better not come at all".

Simplicity in language did not entangle the poets and writers into undertaking simple subjects. Other than Wordsworth school, others followed either occult or fantasy or highly-imaginative or ecstasy or ecstasy elements that lifted the romantic literature to an unbelievable level.

Notable points of the period

The romantic poets are categorized into two generations. The first generation of poets consist of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Blake. The second generation of poets consist of Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats and George Gordon [Lord Byron].

The prose of romantic period was dominated by essays perfumed by the magnificence of Charles Lamb. People like Thomas Love Peacock adhered to the developing genre of English literature i.e. novel.

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Important contributions

S. No	Name	Important works	Notable aspects
1	William Blake	Poetical sketches Songs of Innocence Songs of Experience Tiriell The Book of Thel The French Revolution The Four Zoas Visions of the Daughters of Albion	
2	William Wordsworth	Lyrical Ballads Tintern Abbey The Immortality Ode Ecclesiastical sonnets The Solitary Reaper	Preface to Lyrical Ballads is crucial to the development of romantic period
3	Samuel Taylor Coleridge	Biographia Literaria The Ancient Mariner Kubla Khan	
4	Robert Southey	Thalaba the Destroyer Madoc The curse of Kehama Roderick, The Last of Goths	
5	P B Shelley	Queen Mab Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude Prometheus Unbound The Witch of Atlas Lines written among the Eugean Halls To a Skylark Defence of Poetry	
6	John Keats	Endymion Hyperion Eve of St. Agnes Annus mirabilis Ode to Nightingale Ode on a Grecian Urn Ode to Autumn	
7	Lord Byron [George Gordon]	Manfred Hours of Idleness	

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		Hebrew Melodies	
		Bards and Scotch Reviewers	
		Don Juan	
		Childe Harold's Pilgrimage	
8	Leigh Hunt	The Examiner	Journal
		The Story of Rimini	
9	Charles Lamb	Essays of Elia	Lamb is "the most lovable figure in English Literature". [E. V. Lucas]
		A Tale of Rosamund Gray	
		Last Essays of Elia	
		Tales from Shakespeare	With sister Mary Lamb
		The Adventures of Ulysses	With sister Mary Lamb
10	William Hazlitt	The Round Table	
		Characters of Shakespeare's plays	
		Table Talk	
		The Spirit of the Age	
		The Plain Speaker	
11	Thomas De Quincey	Confessions of an English Opium Eater	
		Suspiria De Profundis	
12	Thomas Love Peacock	Head Long Hall	
		Melincourt	
		Nightmare Abbey	
		The Misfortunes of Elphin	
		Crotchet Castle	
		Gryll Grange	
		Maid Marian	
		The Ages of Poetry	Essay
13	Robert Burns	A Red, Red Rose	
		A Man's a Man for A' That	
		To a Louse	
		To a Mouse	
		Ae Fond Kiss	

The writers of the romantic period in English literature completely changed the thoughts of neoclassical age; shifting from art for human's sake with the limitations of the society to art for the sake of the poet and estranged man who wonders about the universe in simple fictions. It comes as no wonder that forms developed in the romantic age are much easier to embrace than those developed in the neoclassical age.