

UNIT 14

ROMANTIC AGE, MAJOR WRITERS AND LITERARY WORKS

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14.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will learn

- To understand major writers of Romantic age and be familiarize with their life,
- To get detailed information about their literary works and
- To critically evaluate the major literary works of the age.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Romanticism was a movement that dominated all genres; including literature, music, art and architecture; in Europe and the United States in the first half of the 19th century. It originated in late 18th century as a reaction against the ideals of order, calm, harmony, idealization and rationality which marked Classicism in general and late 18th-century Neoclassicism in particular. It was influenced by the German movement Sturm und Drang ("storm and drive"), which focused on emotion as opposed to rationalism. Romanticism laid emphasis on emotion and individualism as well as glorification of the past and of nature. The movement was partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and the scientific rationalization of nature. The best known English Romantic poet includes Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Shelley and many more. In America, the most famous Romantic poet was Edgar Allan Poe; while in France, Victor Marie Hugo was the leading figure of the movement. Here are the most famous Romantic poets and their best known works.

14.2 MAJOR WRITERS AND LITERARY WORKS

14.2.1 William Wordsworth & Samuel Taylor Coleridge

William Wordsworth

Wordsworth, along with Coleridge, launched the Romantic Age in English literature with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. From 1799 to 1808, he lived at the Dove Cottage in the village of Grasmere in the Lake District of England. Here he became friend with another prominent poet, Robert Southey. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey were the three main figures of the group known as Lake Poets, as they all lived in the Lake District. The years 1797 to 1808 are now recognized as the best years of Wordsworth and are known as his Great Decade. After struggling initially, Wordsworth became one of the most renowned poets in his later years and was appointed Poet Laureate of Britain in 1843. *The Prelude*, an autobiographical epic, is widely regarded by critics as his *greatest work* though his *most popular poem* is perhaps *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*, commonly known as *Daffodils*. William Wordsworth is considered a pioneer of Romanticism and one of the greatest poets in English literature. His famous poems include *Daffodils* (1807) *Tintern Abbey* (1798) *The Prelude* (1850)

Wordsworth remained a formidable presence in his later years. In 1837, the Scottish poet and playwright Joanna Baillie reflected on her long acquaintance with Wordsworth. "He looks like a man that one must not speak to unless one has some sensible thing to say. However he does occasionally converse cheerfully & well; and when one knows how

benevolent & excellent he is, it disposes one to be very much pleased with him.

In 1838, Wordsworth received an honorary doctorate in Civil Law from the University of Durham and the following year he was awarded the same honorary degree by the University of Oxford, when John Keble praised him as the "poet of humanity", praise greatly appreciated by Wordsworth. In 1842, the government awarded him a Civil List pension of £300 a year. Following the death of Robert Southey in 1843 Wordsworth became Poet Laureate. He initially refused the honour, saying that he was too old, but accepted when the Prime Minister, Robert Peel, assured him that "you shall have nothing required of you". Wordsworth thus became the only poet laureate to write no official verses. The sudden death of his daughter Dora in 1847 at age 42 was difficult for the aging poet to take and in his depression; he completely gave up writing new material.

In 1814 Wordsworth published *The Excursion* as the second part of the three-part work *The Recluse*, even though he had not completed the first part or the third part, and never did. The Prospectus contains some of Wordsworth's most famous lines on the relation between the human mind and nature:

... my voice proclaims
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external World
Is fitted:—and how exquisitely, too—
Theme this but little heard of among Men,
The external World is fitted to the Mind;
And the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish ..

Apart from these, other works of Wordsworth include, *Guide to the Lakes* (1810), *To the Cuckoo*, *The Excursion* (1814) *Laodamia* (1815, 1845), *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815), *Peter Bell* (1819) *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822), *The Prelude* (1850).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Along with William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge is credited with founding the Romanticism movement in England. In 1797, the two friends broke the decorum of neoclassical verse with daring original poetic works which laid emphasis on emotion and glorification of nature. The following year their collection of poetry *Lyrical Ballads* was published. Though the immediate reaction to *Lyrical Ballads* was modest, it is now considered a landmark work which changed the course of English literature and poetry by launching the influential Romantic Movement. Coleridge is one of the most important figures in English poetry that deeply influenced the major poets of his era including

Wordsworth. Among other things, he is credited with utilizing everyday language to express profound poetic images and ideas. His famous poems includes *Kubla Khan* (1816)*Christabel* (1816)*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798). Coleridge is best known for his longer poems, particularly *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*. Even those who have never read the *Rime* have come under its influence: its words have given the English language the metaphor of an albatross around one's neck, the quotation of 'water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink', and the phrase 'a sadder and a wiser man'. The phrase "All creatures great and small" may have been inspired by *The Rime*: "He prayeth best, who loveth best; / All things both great and small; / For the dear God who loveth us; / He made and loveth all." *Christabel* is known for its musical rhythm, language, and its Gothic tale. His conversation poem includes *The Eolian Harp* (1795), *Reflections on having left a Place of Retirement* (1795), *This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison* (1797), *Frost at Midnight* (1798)

Robert Southey

Robert Southey was born in Wine Street, Bristol. He was educated at Westminster School, London, and at Balliol College, Oxford. Southey later said of Oxford, "All I learnt was a little swimming... and a little boating." He was closely associated with Wordsworth and Coleridge and was looked upon as a prominent member, with them, of the "Lake school" of poetry. Experimenting with a writing partnership with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, most notably in their joint composition of *The Fall of Robespierre*, Southey published his first collection of poems in 1794. The same year, Southey, Coleridge, Robert Lovell and several others discussed creating an idealistic community on the banks of the Susquehanna River in America:

He was an English poet of the Romantic school, one of the Lake Poets along with William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and England's Poet Laureate for 30 years from 1813 until his death in 1843. Although his fame has been eclipsed by that of Wordsworth and Coleridge, his verse still enjoys some popularity. His poetry includes *The Inchcape Rock*, *After Blenheim* and many more. His originality is best seen in his ballads and his nine "English Eclogues," three of which were first published in the 1799 volume of his *Poems* with a prologue explaining that these verse sketches of contemporary life bore "no resemblance to any poems in our language." His "Oriental" narrative poems *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1801) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) were successful in their own time, but his fame is based on his prose work—the *Life of Nelson* (1813), and his classic formulation of the children's tale "The Three Bears."

14.2.2 Edgar Allan Poe and Percy Bysshe Shelley

Edgar Allan Poe

Widely regarded as a central figure of Romanticism in the United States, Edgar Allan Poe is one of the most influential and famous figures of American literature. His poems appear throughout popular culture and lines from them are often quoted. Poe is celebrated as the supreme exponent of *Dark Romanticism*, a genre which focuses on human frailty, self-destruction, judgement, punishment and the demonic; as well as the psychological effects of guilt and sin. One of the prominent themes in his poems is the death of a young, beautiful and dearly loved woman; which he called “*the most poetical topic in the world*”. The best known poem of Poe is *The Raven*. It influenced numerous later works including the famous painting *Nevermore* by Paul Gauguin. Apart from being one of the most famous poets, Edgar Allan Poe is considered the inventor of the detective fiction genre and an important contributor to the emerging genre of science fiction. His poems include *The Raven* (1845), *Annabel Lee* (1849), *A Dream Within a Dream* (1849). His short story work includes, ‘*The Black Cat*’, ‘*The Cask of Amontillado*’, ‘*A Descent into the Maelström*’, ‘[*The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*](#)’, ‘*The Fall of the House of Usher*’, ‘*The Gold-Bug*’, ‘*Hop-Frog*’, ‘*The Imp of the Perverse*’, ‘*Ligeia*’, ‘*The Masque of the Red Death*’, ‘*Morella*’. His poetry includes ‘*Al Aaraaf*’, ‘*Annabel Lee*’, ‘*The Bells*’, ‘*The City in the Sea*’, ‘*The Conqueror Worm*’, ‘*A Dream Within a Dream*’, ‘*Eldorado*’, ‘*Eulalie*’, ‘*The Haunted Palace*’, ‘*To Helen*’, ‘*Lenore*’, ‘*Tamerlane*’, ‘*The Raven*’, ‘*Ulalume*’.

P.B Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley was one of the leading “*second generation*” Romantic poets and he created some of the best known works of the movement. He was a controversial writer whose poems are marked by uncompromising idealism and great personal conviction. Though he produced works throughout his life, most publishers and journals declined to publish them for fear of being arrested for either profanity or sedition. As a result Shelley couldn’t gather a mainstream following during his lifetime. However, his popularity grew steadily following his death and ultimately he achieved worldwide fame and acclaim. Apart from being an idol for later generation of poets, Percy Bysshe Shelley also exerted influence on such prominent figures as the German philosopher Karl Marx and the Indian freedom fighter Mahatma Gandhi. He is considered one of the greatest poets in the English language. His works include *Ozymandias* (1818), *Ode to the West Wind* (1820), *Prometheus Unbound* (1820). His prose work includes *The Assassins*, *A Fragment of a Romance* (1814), *The Coliseum*, *A Fragment* (1817) and *The Elysian Fields: A Lucianic Fragment* (1818). His essay includes *The Necessity of Atheism* (with T. J. Hogg) (1811), *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things* (1811), *An Address, to the Irish People* (1812), *Declaration of Rights* (1812), *A Letter to Lord*

Ellenborough (1812), A Vindication of Natural Diet (1813), A Refutation of Deism (1814), Speculations on Metaphysics (1814)

14.2.3 Robert Burns and John Keats

Robert Burns

Robert Burns is widely regarded as the *national poet of Scotland*. He was considered a *pioneer of Romanticism* who had a major influence on the movement. The poetic style of Burns is marked by spontaneity and sincerity; and it ranges from love to intensity to humour and satire. His best known works include *Scots Wha Hae*, which served as an unofficial national anthem of Scotland for many years; *A Red, Red Rose*, among the best known love poems; Robert Burns is the *most widely read Scottish poet* and he is celebrated not only in his country but around the world. He remains a cultural icon in his nation and in 2009, he was voted as the greatest Scot by the Scottish public in a vote run by Scottish television channel STV. His famous work includes *To a Mouse (1785)* *A Red, Red Rose (1794)*. Major theme of his works included republicanism and Radicalism, which he expressed covertly in "Scots Wha Hae", Scottish patriotism, anticlericalism, class inequalities, gender roles, commentary on the Scottish Kirk of his time, Scottish cultural identity, poverty, sexuality, and the beneficial aspects of popular socializing. His direct literary influences in the use of Scots in poetry were Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson. Burns influenced later Scottish writers, especially Hugh MacDiarmid, who fought to dismantle what he felt had become a sentimental cult that dominated Scottish literature. His one of the famous poems is *A Red, Red Rose*,

O my Luve is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.
So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry...

John Keats

Along with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats was one of the most prominent figures of the second generation of English Romantic poets. Keats died due to tuberculosis in 1821 at the age of only 25. His work was in publication for only four years and it was not generally well received by critics during his lifetime. However, his reputation grew after his death and by the end of the 19th century, he became one of the most beloved of all English poets. The most famous and acclaimed poems of Keats are a series of six odes known as the Odes of 1819. The most highly regarded among these is *To Autumn*, which has been called one of the most perfect short poems in the English language.

Through his 1819 odes, Keats created a new type of short lyrical poem, which influenced later generations. His work includes *To Autumn* (1820) *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (1820) *When I have Fears* (1848).

He wrote later: "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination – What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth whether it existed before or not for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty'. In September 1819, Keats wrote to Reynolds "How beautiful the season is now – How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it ... I never lik'd the stubbled fields as much as now – Aye, better than the chilly green of spring. Somehow the stubble plain looks warm – in the same way as some pictures look warm – this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it" and the final stanza of his last great ode, *To Autumn*, runs:

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,-
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue.

14.2.4 George Crabbe

George Crabbe

He wrote poetry of another kind: his sensibility, his values, much of his diction, and his heroic couplet verse form belong to the 18th century. He differs from the earlier Augustans, however, in his subject matter, concentrating on realistic, unsentimental accounts of the life of the poor and the middle classes. He shows considerable narrative gifts in his collections of verse tales (in which he anticipates many short-story techniques) and great powers of description. His anti-pastoral *The Village* appeared in 1783. After a long silence, he returned to poetry with *The Parish Register* (1807), *The Borough* (1810), *Tales in Verse* (1812), and *Tales of the Hall* (1819), which gained him great popularity in the early 19th century.

14.2.5 George Gordon

George Gordon Byron born in 22 January 1788 and died in 19 April 1824, known simply as Lord Byron, was an English peer, who was a poet and politician. He was one of the leading figures of the Romantic movement, and is regarded as one of the greatest English poets. He remains widely read and influential. Among his best-known works are the lengthy narrative poems *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; many of his shorter lyrics in *Hebrew Melodies* also became popular. Byron received his early formal education at Aberdeen Grammar School, and in August 1799 entered the school of Dr. William Glennie, in Dulwich. Placed under the care of a Dr. Bailey, he was encouraged to exercise in moderation but could not restrain himself from "violent" bouts in an attempt to overcompensate for his deformed foot. His mother

interfered with his studies, often withdrawing him from school, with the result that he lacked discipline and his classical studies were neglected. George differed from Shelley and Keats in themes and manner, was at one with them in reflecting their shift toward “Mediterranean” topics. Having thrown down the gauntlet in his early poem *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809), in which he directed particular scorn at poets of sensibility and declared his own allegiance to Milton, Dryden, and Pope, he developed poetry of dash and flair, in many cases with a striking hero. His two longest poems, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812–18) and *Don Juan* (1819–24), his masterpiece, provided alternative personae for himself, the one a bitter and melancholy exile among the historic sites of Europe, the other a picaresque adventurer enjoying a series of amorous adventures. The gloomy and misanthropic vein was further mined in dramatic poems such as *Manfred* (1817) and *Cain* (1821), which helped to secure his reputation in Europe, but he is now remembered best for witty, ironic, and less significant writings, such as *Beppo* (1818), in which he first used the ottavavima form. The easy, nonchalant, biting style developed there became a formidable device in *Don Juan* and in his satire on Southey, *The Vision of Judgment* (1822).

14.2.6 Sir Walter Scott and John Clare

Sir Walter Scott

He was the English writer who can in the fullest sense be called a Romantic novelist. After a successful career as a poet, Scott switched to prose fiction in 1814 with the first of the “Waverley novels.” In the first phase of his work as a novelist, Scott wrote about the Scotland of the 17th and 18th centuries, charting its gradual transition from the feudal era into the modern world in a series of vivid human dramas. *Waverley* (1814), *Guy Mannering* (1815), *Old Mortality* (1816), *Rob Roy* (1817), and *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) are the masterpieces of this period. In a second phase, beginning with *Ivanhoe* in 1819, Scott turned to stories set in medieval England. Finally, with *Quentin Durward* in 1823, he added European settings to his historical repertoire. Scott combines a capacity for comic social observation with a Romantic sense of landscape and an epic grandeur, enlarging the scope of the novel in ways that equip it to become the dominant literary form of the later 19th century.

John Clare

A man of humble background, achieved early success with *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (1820), *The Village Minstrel* (1821), and *The Shepherd’s Calendar* (1827). Both his reputation and his mental health collapsed in the late 1830s. He spent the later years of his life in an asylum in Northampton; the poetry he wrote there was rediscovered in the 20th century. His natural simplicity and lucidity of diction, his intent observation, his almost Classical poise, and the unassuming dignity of his attitude to life make him one of the most quietly moving of English poets.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION. (LONG QUESTION)

Discuss any two writer of Romantic Age

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

WRITE SHORT NOTES

1. William Wordsworth
2. Samuel Taylor Coleridge
3. Edgar Allan Poe
4. Percy Bysshe Shelley
5. Rober Burns
6. John Keats

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 3

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. _____ lived at the *Dove Cottage*
2. _____ was born in Wine Street, Bristol.
3. Best known poem of Poe is _____
4. _____ was one of the leading “*second generation*” Romantic poets
5. _____ is widely regarded as the *national poet of Scotland*.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 4

CHOOSE THE CORRECT OPTIONS FROM GIVEN BELOW.

1. Robert Browning criticized this Romantic for abandoning his ideals and becoming conservative, all so that he might, in Browning's opinion, receive "a riband to stick in his coat."
 - a) William Wordsworth
 - b) Lord Byron
 - c) John Keats
2. Though an icon of the Romantic period, his works are in some ways the least romantic of the group. He favored traditional forms over new innovations; he preferred satire to introspection; and in "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," he ridiculed his fellow Romantics as being inferior to the neoclassical poets.
 - a) William Wordsworth
 - b) Lord Byron
 - c) John Keats
3. author of "To a Skylark" died by drowning.
 - a) Percy Bysshe Shelley
 - b) Wordsworth
 - c) Lord Byron
4. Wordsworth's first publication was.
 - a) **Descriptive Sketches**
 - b) Poetical Sketches
 - c) Lyrical Ballad
5. defines "Poetry as a spontaneous overflow of power flow feeling"
 - a) Coleridge
 - b) **Wordsworth**
 - c) Keats

14.3 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt,

- Familiarize with the life and times of the important Romantic writers
- Major writers of Romantic Age and their works

14.4 KEY WORDS

- **Dominate:** have power and influence over.
- **Harmony:** the combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce a pleasing effect.
- **Formidable:** inspiring fear or respect through being impressively large, powerful, intense, or capable.
- **Acquaintance:** a person one knows slightly, but who is not a close friend.
- **Occasionally:** at infrequent or irregular intervals; now and then.
- **Decorum:** behaviour in keeping with good taste and propriety.
- **Immediate:** occurring or done at once; instant.
- **Influences:** the capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.

14.5 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. "Wordsworth, William (WRDT787W)". *A Cambridge Alumni Database*. University of Cambridge
2. *Poetical Works*. Oxford Standard Authors. London: Oxford U.P. 1936.
3. Wordsworth, William (4 January 1810). "French Revolution". *The Friend* (20). Retrieved 8 June 2018.
4. *Poetical Works*. Oxford Standard Authors. London: Oxford U.P. 1936
5. Oueijan, Naji B. *A Compendium of Eastern Elements in Byron's Oriental Tales*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999.

ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 3

1- William Wordsworth, 2- Robert Southey, 3- *The Rave*, 4- Percy Bysshe Shelley, 5- Robert Burns

Check Your Progress 4

1-A, 2-B, 3-A, 4-A, 5-B