

ROMANTIC POETRY

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Romantic poetry (1785-1830) is one of the key movements in the history of English literature. Important Romantic poets include William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats.

Central features of Romanticism include:

- 1- The Romantic poets were deeply in touch with their feelings. Emotion was one of the most crucial characteristics of the Romantic period. The importance of self-expression and individual feeling. Romantic poetry is one of the heart and the emotions, exploring the 'truth of the imagination' rather than scientific truth. The 'I' voice is central; it is the poet's perceptions and feelings that matter.
- 2- The Romantic poets saw nature as a source of beauty and truth. Much of Romantic poetry focuses on nature as something sublime.
- 3- Emphasis on the imagination as a positive and creative faculty.
- 4- An interest in and concern for the outcasts of society: tramps, beggars, obsessive characters and the poor and disregarded are especially evident in Romantic poetry
- 5- An idea of the poet as a visionary figure, with an important role to play as prophet (in both political and religious terms).
- 6- The Critique of Progress; Romanticists viewed urbanity and industrialization in a largely negative light. Many Romantic authors understood the importance of progress, but criticized the way it impacted the common people. In England, the Industrial Revolution had created a large working class that worked in dangerous conditions. The division between the rich and the poor was widening every day.

- 7- **The Idealization of Women;** In the Romantic poetry, women were seen as innocent, pure creatures who should be admired and respected. Many Romantic poets centered their poetry around celebrating the purity and beauty of a woman.

- 8- **The Purity of Childhood;** Romanticists believed that children should be allowed to have a pure, happy childhood. At the time, many children were forced to work in factories or as chimney sweeps, which was dangerous and work for which they were paid extremely low wages. Romantic poets depicted a different kind of childhood—a happy one full of play instead of work.