

A Romantic-style landscape painting. In the foreground, a stream flows through a lush, green landscape. A small, rustic house with a thatched roof and a chimney is visible on the left. Large, leafy trees frame the scene. In the middle ground, a person is seen near the stream, and a horse-drawn cart is partially visible. The background shows a vast, open field under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The overall mood is one of natural beauty and tranquility.

# **An Introduction to Romanticism and British Romantic Poetry**

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# Timeframe of Romantic Poetry

- **First work of Romantic poetry - Lyrical Ballads by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth in 1798**
- **Traditionally ends with death of Sir Walter Scott in 1832**
- **Some consider poetry produced in Victorian and even Modern eras to be “Romantic”**

# Preface to Lyrical Ballads

It is a text of literary criticism

It is considered the Manifesto of Romanticism

It deals with :

- The content of poetry
- The language of poetry
- The features of the poet
- The definition of poetry

# Content of Poetry

- The poet chooses to relate and to describe incidents and situations from common life
- Everything expressed implies the use of imagination
- Interest is added by tracing events and situations in the way people associate ideas in a state of excitement.
- Low and rustic life is chosen.
- Poetry should present ordinary things in an unusual aspect

# The Language of Poetry

- The poet should use a selection of language really used by men.
- The language has to be familiar, plain and simple.
- The poet should convey feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions
- The language of low classes should be purified from defects and disgusts

# The Features of the Poet

- He is a man speaking to men
- He has a more lively sensibility, enthusiasm and tenderness than common men
- He has got a greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul
- He contemplates volitions and passions in the Universe
- He creates passions where he does not find them

# The Definition of Poetry

- It is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings
- It is originated from emotion recollected in tranquillity
- Its ultimate goal is pleasure
- It is based on experience

# Characteristics of Romantic Poetry

- An emphasis on emotional and imaginative spontaneity.
- The importance of self-expression and individual feeling.
- Much of their poetry celebrated the beauty of nature, or protested the ugliness of the growing industrialization of the century: the machines, factories, slum conditions.

# Characteristics of Romantic Poetry

- 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
- To them, the poet is a visionary figure.

# Characteristics of Romantic Poetry

- A capacity for wonder and consequently a reverence for the freshness and innocence of the vision of childhood.
- Emphasis on the imagination as a positive and creative faculty.
- An interest in 'primitive' forms of art.

# Themes of Romantic Poetry

## Nature

- For the Romantic poets, nature was a balm to soothe the relentless callousness of an industrialized world.
- Poets tried to translate scenes of natural beauty into words so that readers might know the power of natural forces to shape thought and feeling.

# Faith in Senses and Feelings

- **Because the Romantic poetry valued individual experience, the rationalism previously admired was replaced by a trust in one's emotions. The literature in England prior to this movement was witty, intellectual, and social. Romanticism rejects the social 'us' and embraces the 'me'! Intuitions, feelings, and emotions ruled. Man's heart was a more valued guide than his head. So, another characteristic of Romantic poetry is this enlightenment by emotion.**

# Use of simple language

- The Romantics searched for personal experiences and strove to communicate their power in meaningful ways. To achieve this, the Romantic writers employed simple and direct language. This was another way to reject the Neoclassical movement that hoped to emulate the ancient writers in lofty styles and language.

# A New Focus in Poetry

- embraced imagination and naturalness instead of reason and artifice
- wrote about personal experiences and emotions, often using simple language.
- saw nature as transformative; focused on the ways nature and the human mind mirrored each other's creative properties.

# Imagination

- The Romantics saw imagination as the link between mind and nature.
- To them, imaginative experiences were especially moving, perhaps superior to human reasoning.
- The mysterious forces of Nature inspired them.
- All six of the major Romantic poets had their own ideas about imagination, but all believed that it could be stimulated by nature and the mind.

# First generation of English Romantic Poetry - Wordsworth and Coleridge

- Men meet at Cambridge
- publish *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798
- seeks to abandon formal language of 1700's
- balance between poet's influence and "real language"
- balance between commonplace and supernatural



# First generation of English Romantic Poetry - Wordsworth and Coleridge

- Apparent contradictions seek to reveal what Wordsworth calls “the essential passions of the heart” and what Coleridge calls “our inward nature”
- natural and commonplace, supernatural and romantic all contribute to basic operation of human mind and emotions

# Second generation: Byron, Shelley, Keats

- All have tragically short lives
- Byron and Shelley both aristocrats, well educated, leave England under pressure, see themselves as outcasts
- Byron popular, while Shelley misunderstood
- Keats produces poetry at 24, dies at 25

