

## **Characteristics of Romantic Poets**

**Beauty of the Supernatural:** British Romantics believed something existed beyond the physical world. The Spirit world, according to Romantics, had unleashed its power and inspiration to overthrow tyranny in government and in literature. Unlike the American Romantics who wrote of ghosts, demonic cats, and rope-gnawing rats, British Romanticism's treatment of the supernatural excluded horror and the macabre and focused on supernatural energy and beauty.

**Championing of the Individual:** Revolution in Europe brought to light the importance of the individual. Ordinary people now became the subject of lofty language. British Romanticism attempted to free itself from traditional forms and subjects.

**The Importance of Nature:** The poet, according to the Romantics, is only at peace when in nature; moreover, while in nature, the poet intervened with the great Universal Mind. Romantic poets made frequent use of personification with nature, ascribing human traits to daffodils, fields, streams, and lakes. Nature, in essence, became emotionally expressive.

**The Dangers of Technology:** A natural consequence of celebrating nature was a disdain for technology and industrialism.

### **Other Romantic Poets**

**William Blake** (1757-1827)

**William Wordsworth** (1770-1850)

**Samuel Taylor Coleridge** (1772-1834)

**Lord Byron** (1788-1824)

**Percy Bysshe Shelley** (1792-1822)

**John Keats** (1795-1821)

## Romantic Poetry

Like the French Revolution that helped inspire it, the Romantic poetry movement signaled massive, controversial changes with ramifications that are still being felt today. Watch this video lesson for an introduction to Romantic poetry, including descriptions of the major authors and significant works.

It's actually a little bit of a misconception about romantic poetry that it was all sappy and about love and stuff. They were kind of tortured souls, and they wrote stuff like *Dejection: An Ode* and *Ode on Melancholy*. The Romantics were not just about that. They had a lot going on than just touchy-feely, lovesick stuff.

### Themes

By the end of the 18th century, industrialization was responsible for life as we know it - the ability to make a bunch of stuff quickly. 'Made in China' is kind of the culmination of industrialization. That was getting going by the end of the century, and it was making huge changes in people's lives, understandably. The Age of Enlightenment, which had come before and led to this in a lot of ways, had its emphasis on science, reason and being intellectual - thinking things through - that had held sway for a while.

For young writers at the time and when things were changing so much, the world just stopped making sense. It was too unfamiliar. The city was rising in this way that was unpleasant to them. The Romantics were really looking to do things differently.

They wanted to focus on emotions and feelings more than anything else. This can be seen as a response to the cold science and industrialization thing that was sweeping the country. Enlightenment writers, again, were focused on science, fact and reason. The Romantics really wanted to focus on how people felt. So, it's like singer-songwriter, Bob Dylan and Alanis Morissette types rather than corporate manufactured boy band stuff.

Like any good revolutionaries, the Romantics had a real love of nature. Celebrating nature was really central to a lot of their most significant works. Again, it's a reaction to the Enlightenment, because the natural world had been dissected and clinically examined by scientists. The Romantics wanted to get back to just appreciating it and seeing it in its whole

Works by Romantics were also designed to represent the individual artist. The reader should feel like there's a voice behind the poem and that it's directly addressing you. This all comes back to the idea that we're not a monolith anymore. We're not a government that's a king and everyone else is a subject. We're entering a world in which individuality and individual voices can be heard. This was spurred on by the French Revolution, which was going on at that time.

