



The Romantic Period

1798-1832

DATES ARE APPROXIMATE AND DEBATED BY SCHOLARS

A PERIOD OF GREAT CHANGE

- FOR CENTURIES ENGLAND HAD BEEN AN AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY WITH A POWERFUL LANDHOLDING ARISTOCRACY.
- NOW THE COUNTRY WAS BEING TRANSFORMED INTO A MODERN INDUSTRIAL NATION OF LARGE-SCALE EMPLOYERS & A GROWING, RESTLESS MIDDLE CLASS.



THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

WHAT WAS HAPPENING ACROSS THE GLOBE?

- AMERICAN REVOLUTION
- FRENCH REVOLUTION
- ENGLAND VS. FRANCE WAR
- UK = GREAT BRITAIN & IRELAND
- ABOLITION OF SLAVE TRADE IN COLONIES
- 1811-1820: REGENCY PERIOD
- WAR OF 1812
- 1820: GEORGE IV BECAME KING
- 1830: WILLIAM IV BECAME KING

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

- **AT FIRST WIDELY SUPPORTED BY ENGLISH LIBERALS & RADICALS, WHO ADVOCATED A DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC FOR ENGLAND THROUGH EITHER PEACEFUL EVOLUTION OR POPULAR REVOLUTION.**
- **AS THE REVOLUTION BECAME INCREASINGLY BLOODY, HOWEVER (CULMINATING IN THE “REIGN OF TERROR”), ENGLISH SYMPATHY WANED.**

NAPOLEAN, THE CHAMPION OF THE REVOLUTION, HIMSELF BECAME A DICTATOR WHO WAS ULTIMATELY DEFEATED BY OTHER REACTIONARY TYRANTS.

CONDITIONS IN ENGLAND

- **A TIME OF HARSH POLITICAL REPRESSION, IN SPITE OF THE NEED FOR POLITICAL CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.**

PHYSICAL & SOCIAL CHANGES

- MILL TOWNS GREW.**
- THE LANDSCAPE WAS INCREASINGLY SUBDIVIDED.**
- FACTORIES SPEWED SMOKE & POLLUTION OVER EVER-EXPANDING SLUMS.**
- THE POPULATION WAS INCREASINGLY DIVIDED INTO RICH & POOR.**



The Romantic Period

- A DIFFICULT TERM TO DEFINE BECAUSE OF THE VARIETY OF LITERARY ACHIEVEMENTS, AND WRITERS OF THE PERIOD WERE ONLY LATER LABELED “ROMANTIC.”
- BUT MANY HAD A SENSE OF THE “SPIRIT OF THE AGE”— THAT A GREAT RELEASE OF CREATIVE ENERGY WAS OCCURRING AS AN ACCOMPANIMENT TO POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE.
- THE ROMANTIC PERIOD WAS SEEN BY MANY AS AN AGE OF NEW BEGINNINGS AND UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES.

ENLIGHTENMENT VS. ROMANTICISM

- ENLIGHTENMENT ENSHIRNED REASON
 - ROMANTICS CELEBRATED MADNESS
- ENLIGHTENMENT CRITICIZED ENTHUSIASM AND DISTRUSTED THE EMOTIONAL SIDE OF HUMANITY
 - ROMANTICS CALLED ON HUMANS TO TRUST THEIR INSTINCTS AND FEELINGS
- ENLIGHTENMENT BELIEVED SCIENCE WAS THE IDEAL OF HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT
 - ROMANTICS EMPHASIZED POETRY

- ENLIGHTENMENT EMPHASIZED PROGRESS
 - ROMANTICS SOUGHT TO RETURN TO AN IDEALIZED PAST, WHILE ALSO REALIZING THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SUCH A RETURN
- *THEREFORE:*
- ROMANTICS REPLACED THE ENLIGHTENMENT'S OPTIMISM WITH A SENSE OF TRAGEDY AND MELANCHOLIA



REFLECTIONS OF ROMANTIC SENSIBILITIES

1. GOTHIC NOVEL

- LATE 18TH/EARLY 19TH
- TALES OF TERROR, FANTASY, MYSTERY
- CASTLE OF OTRANTO BY HORACE WALPOOL
- SOLITARY FIGURES, ANTI-HEROES

2. SHAKESPEARE REVIVAL

3. WILD, NATURAL GARDENS

4. GRAVEYARD SCHOOL OF POETRY

- GRIEVING, MELANCHOLY, MOURNFUL

5. SENTIMENTAL NOVEL

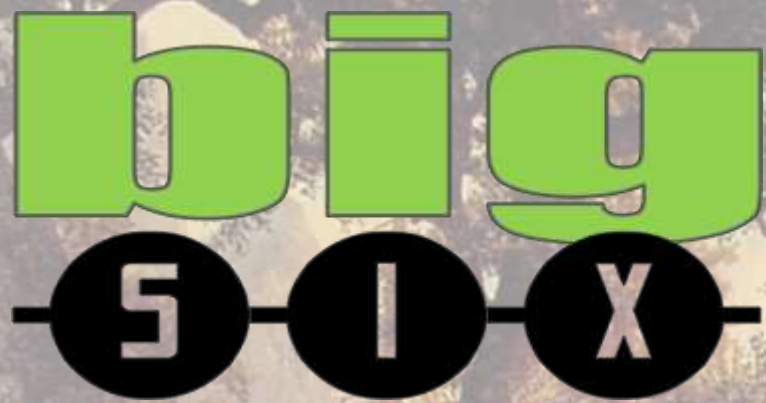
6. NOVELS OF SENSIBILITY



THE 'BIG SIX' OF ENGLISH ROMANTICISM

- WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)
- WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)
- SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)
- GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON (1788-1824)
- PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822)
- JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)





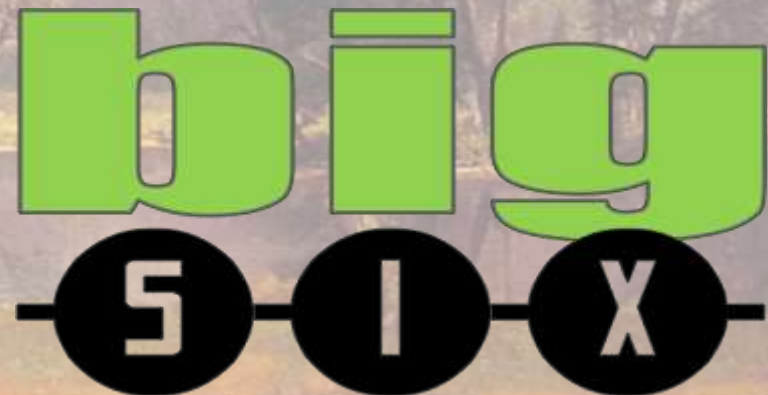
“FATHERS” OF ROMANTIC POETRY

- **WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE PUBLISHED THE *LYRICAL BALLADS* IN 1798**
- **THE TENETS OF THE ROMANTIC PERIOD WERE OUTLINED IN THE PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS**
 - **BECAME A CRITICAL MANIFESTO GATHERING ISOLATED IDEAS AND ORGANIZING INTO A COHERENT THEORY.**

POETIC THEORY & PRACTICE

- WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850) TRIED TO ARTICULATE THE SPIRIT OF THE NEW POETRY OF THE PERIOD IN **THE PREFACE TO LYRICAL BALLADS** (1800, 1802).

THE PREFACE BECAME A CRITICAL MANIFESTO GATHERING ISOLATED IDEAS AND ORGANIZING INTO A COHERENT THEORY.



ROMANTIC POETRY

- THE ROMANTIC CONCEPTION OF POETRY WAS OF THE “SPONTANEOUS OVERFLOW OF POWERFUL FEELINGS.”



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ROMANTIC POETRY

- THE ESSENCE OF POETIC CONTENT WAS SEEN AS THE MIND, EMOTIONS, AND IMAGINATION OF THE POET (NOT THE OUTER WORLD).



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ROMANTIC POETRY

- **THE FIRST-PERSON LYRIC POEM BECAME THE MAJOR LITERARY FORM OF THE ERA, WITH THE “I” OF THE POEM OFTEN REFERRING DIRECTLY TO THE POET.**



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ROMANTIC POETRY

- ROMANTIC POETS ALSO OFTEN SAW THEMSELVES AS PROPHETS IN A TIME OF CRISIS, REVISING THE BIBLICAL PROMISE OF DIVINE REDEMPTION IN TERMS OF A “HEAVEN” ON EARTH.



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ROMANTIC POETRY

- ROMANTICISM ALSO PLACES GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE CONCEPT OF POETIC SPONTANEITY & FREEDOM.



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POETIC SPONTANEITY

- **IN THE ROMANTIC VIEW, THE INITIAL ACT OF POETIC COMPOSITION MUST ARISE FROM IMPULSE, BE FREE FROM RULES INHERITED FROM THE PAST, AND RELY ON INSTINCT, INTUITION, AND FEELING.**



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ROMANTIC POETRY

- ROMANTIC POETS ALSO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCURATELY OBSERVING AND DESCRIBING NATURE, WHICH SERVES AS A STIMULUS TO THINKING AND TO THE RESOLUTION OF PERSONAL PROBLEMS AND CRISES.
 - IN ROMANTIC POETRY THE LANDSCAPE IS OFTEN GIVEN HUMAN QUALITIES OR SEEN AS A SYMBOL SYSTEM REVEALING THE NATURE OF THE DIVINE.



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ROMANTIC POETRY

- ROMANTIC POETS ALSO FREQUENTLY **GLORIFY THE COMMONPLACE.**
- IN THIS PERIOD, **HUMBLE, RUSTIC SUBJECT MATTER AND PLAIN STYLE BECAME THE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT AND MEDIUM OF POETRY.**
- **MANY ROMANTIC POEMS ALSO EXPLORE THE REALM OF MYSTERY AND MAGIC, THE STRANGE AND SUPERNATURAL.**



The Romantic Period

ROMANTIC POETS

- ROMANTICISM WAS IN OPPOSITION TO LITERARY ANCIEN *REGIME*.
- ROMANTIC POETS OFTEN SHOWED AN INTEREST IN UNUSUAL MODES OF EXPERIENCE, SUCH AS VISIONARY STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS, HYPNOTISM, DREAMS, DRUG-INDUCED STATES, AND SO FORTH.

PINK ROMANTICISM

(A MISS MCCALISTER TERM, NOT SCHOLARLY TERM)

- **THE REGENCY OF GEORGE III**
 - (HIS SON IS REGENT)
- **NOVELS OF MANNERS**
- **FOCUS MARRIAGE & SOCIETY**
 - **JANE AUSTEN, PRIDE AND PREJUDICE, EMMA**
- **CHANGING ROLES OF WOMEN**
- **LARGE ESTATES AND COUNTRY HOUSES**
- **SCANDAL AND GOSSIP OF THE UPPER CLASS**
- **SOMEWHAT BROODING HERO**
- **UNLIKELY HEROINE**
- **HAPPY ENDINGS**
- **BLURS LINES BETWEEN NEOCLASSICS AND ROMANTICS**

ROMANTICISM

- **RETURN TO A CHILD-LIKE STATE**
- **IMAGINATION IS THE FOCUS**
- **MORE POETRY THAN PROSE**
- **NATURE AND PASTORAL LIFE**
- **INDIVIDUAL OVER SOCIETY**
- **EMPHASIZED SELF-EXPRESSION**
- **POET AS A PROPHET**
- **EMOTION OVER REASON**
- **INNER FEELINGS**
- **PERSONIFICATION OF NATURE**
- **REPRESENTS THE SIMPLE LIFE**
- **MAKES THE OLD NEW AGAIN**

DARK ROMANTICISM

- **SUB-GENRE OF ROMANTICISM**
- **ESPECIALLY POPULAR IN AMERICA**
- **BLURS LINES INTO VICTORIANS**
- **GOTHIC NOVEL**
- **THE GRAVEYARD POETRY**
- **MELANCHOLY AND MANIA**
- **POE, HAWTHORNE, BRONTE SISTERS, SHELLEY**
- **FRANKENSTEIN, DRACULA, ETC**
- **SUPERNATURAL; AGAINST THE ORDINARY**
- **SEEING THINGS ANEW**
- **NATURE AS BEAUTIFUL AND DANGEROUS**