UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO ROMANTIC POETRY

UNIT STRUCTURE

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1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will able to

- explain the ideals that shaped the intellectual background of the Romantic period
- give a detailed description of Romantic poetry in general with special emphasis on its literary features
- discuss the major Romantic poets of the period and their literary works
- gain a comprehensive idea of the poetical practices as well as their practitioners of the Romantic Age.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This is the first unit of Block 1 of the Course on English Poetry: Romantic to Victorian. This introductory unit entitled 'Introduction to Romantic Poetry' shall help you to understand the general background of the poetic developments during the Romantic period in English Literature. This unit shall further enable you to fully appreciate the Romantic poets as well as their poems prescribed for your course.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF ROMANTIC POETRY

It is known to us that literature down the ages has witnessed various changes with regard to the transforming literary trends and practices. In the same manner, a sweeping intellectual and artistic change had taken place all across Europe, at the tail end of the 18th century, known as the 'Romantic Movement'. The movement marked a transition from the ideals and conventions of its preceding age as an emerging literary, artistic and an intellectual movement. This age is often marked by an emphasis on the 'individual', the imagination, intuition, subjective experiences, passions, emotions, freedom, creativity, devotion to Beauty, reverence for Nature, sensory responses, spiritual experiences, fascination with myths, the gothic, exploration of the supernatural with a growing interest in the country side and rural life. These aspects were clearly reflected in the literatures of the period that greatly differed from the literary ideals of the preceding Neo-classical Age or the 'Age of Reason' in the history of English Literature.

As the Romantic Movement was a pan-European phenomenon and spanned across multiple cultures, the connotation of the term "Romantic" accounted for the subtle differences in the usage and meaning of the term itself from one country to another. To provide the learners with an example, the English term 'romantic' and the French term *romantique* were used as adjectives in admiration of nature. However, the French usage was devoid of the implied sensuality that was found in the English usage. In the context of England, the movement coincided with the Industrial Revolution that marked the end of the century. Although, England flourished as a wealthy nation with the prosperity of the nobility and the *nouveau riche* (new rich), the poor sections of the English society remained deprived and exploited. The emergence of radical thinkers and their seminal works such Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) or Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), ushered in major reforms in this regard.

Romanticism captures the spontaneous elements in man and nature, in all its essence. The romantic imagination delves into individual

and subjective experiences, the irrational and the fanciful, the mystical and the supernatural, the spiritual and the divine. These aspects reflect the ways in which the Romantic Age moved away from the ideals of the Enlightenment Age that characterised the importance of rationality and reason, skepticism and empirical enquiry, as well as, the advancement of knowledge through logical inquiry, scientific approach and critical methods. On the other hand, the Romantics asserted the importance of felt or emotional experiences and the freedom of imagination, with the firm belief that the great mysteries of life could never be explained with the limits of scientific knowledge.

Another significant aspect that inspired the Romantic period was the historical French Revolution that lasted for a decade from 1789 to 1799 in France. In the pages of history, this revolt is known to have begun as a rebellion against the conventional traditions and unjust practices of the Church and the monarchy in France. Thus, the ideals of the French Revolution captured in the motto, "*Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite*" that translates as 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' had inspired a revolutionary trend in the ideals of the Romantic Age as well. With this context in mind, let us then explore the most popular literary form of the Romantic Age i.e., the timeless literary treasures of Romantic Poetry.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: When is the Romantic Movement considered to have begun?

Q 2: Make a list of some of the defining characteristics of the Romantic Age.

Q 3: What is the essence of Romanticism?

Q 4: Mention some of the characteristic ideals of the Enlightenment Age.

Q 5: What is the motto of the French Revolution?

Q 6: Mention the reason that accounted for the subtle differences in the usage and connotation of the term 'Romantic'.

1.4 LITERARY FEATURES OF ROMANTIC POETRY

Owing to the revolution of the printing press, the period from 1770 to 1830 witnessed wide dissemination of printed texts, as well as, a growing readership of imaginative or creative literature. In Victor Hugo's words, Romantic Literature defined "liberalism in literature" with its emphasis on the creative, the sublime and the supernatural. The earlier literary conventions were replaced by the new literary trends and practices as reflected in the literature of the Romantic period, the most prominent being Romantic Poetry. Further, the joint publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge in 1798 came to be considered a significant milestone that declared the arrival of the 'English Romantic Movement'. Let us now discuss the literary trends and basic characteristics that define English Romantic Poetry.

William Wordsworth famously stated that poetry is a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings", as he was comparing poetry to a "sensitive plant" that had to be nurtured. Significantly, various schools had emerged during this period forwarding their ideas and stirring debates on what truly comprised good poetry. It was seen that Romantic Poetry had turned into one of the most powerful vehicles of expression for the Romantics that not only represented or the experiences of man as an individual with a subjective consciousness but also explored certain elements that went beyond the realm of human experiences. Some of the defining characteristics of Romantic Poetry were the elements of sublimity and spontaneity, imagination and creativity, passion and spirit of celebration that captured human experiences, the world and beyond.

The defining characteristics of the Romantic Poetry were the celebration of the surrounding world in all its forms and moods, seeing ordinary situations and mundane objects in a new light, capturing the expressions of the common man, drawing inspiration from Nature and essentially romanticizing life in all its beauty. A spontaneous flow of creativity and inspiration characterised the poetry of this period without

any strict poetical conventions or limitations. When we look through the perspective or lenses of the Romantic poets, we shall find that their poetry was in sharp contrast to the literary ideals of the neo-classical age in its emphasis on the imagination and intuition over reason and logic. Hence, the romantic ideals gave a sense of artistic liberty to its poetical practitioners, who deeply felt that it was important to express one's subjective experiences or individuality, lay emphasis on one's feelings and emotions and to enjoy the freedom of exploring the sense perceptions, as well as, spiritual elements. In addition, they believed in exploring the realm of the unknown or supernatural, conveying moments of poetical vision, taking judicious recourse to fancy, extolling the beauty of nature and being conscious of the life with its lived experience.

The Romantic period saw the development of various poetical forms and practices such as epic poetry, lyric poetry, romantic sonnets and what came to be considered romantic fragments with a striking appeal of their own. The poets William Blake and Lord Byron were some of the leading practitioners of epic poetry. While Blake's poetry was filled with personal mythology ("Milton"), Byron experimented with the satiric tradition ("Don Juan"). It is important to note that epic or epic poetry was also practiced by women writers such as Anne Yearsley ("Brutus, A Fragment", 1796), Mary Linwood (*The Anglo- Cambrian*, 1818), Eleanor Ann Porden (*Third Crusade*, 1822) and Helen Maria Williams (*Peru* 1794). Also, John Keats' incomplete work *Hyperion* (written from 1818-1819) stands as a good example of an epic poem in blank verse. In all its musicality, lyrical poetry was widely practised during the Romantic period owing to its potential of carrying a dramatic appeal. Interestingly, in ancient Greece, lyrics were sung and accompanied by an instrument known as the 'lyre' with a soothing musical tone. Poets such as Byron (*Hebrew Melodies)*, Thomas Moore (*Irish Melodies*) and Robert Burns (lyrics for over 350 Scottish songs) practised lyrical poetry into which they aesthetically poured their musical sensibilities.

Similarly, the romantic sonnet saw a revival in between the years 1775-1777 after a long absence as a literary practice for over a century.

The romantic sonneteers experimented with the sonnet form through their portrayal of personal experiences through Nature or natural landscape. Some of the significant romantic sonnets are found in the works of Charlotte Smith (*Elegiac Sonnets*, 1784), William Lisle Bowles (*Sonnets, Written Chiefly on Picturesque Spots, During a Tour*, 1789), Mary Robinson (*Sappho and Phaon*, 1796), S.T. Coleridge's *Sonnets from Various Authors* (1796), William Wordsworth ('Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty' in his *Poems in Two Volumes*, 1807), as well as, the sonnets of Keats and Shelley. In addition, Romantic fragments became a common literary practise although these were completely abandoned pieces owing to various circumstances like sudden demise of poets or other factors. However, romantic fragments were somehow considered complete in themselves some of the examples being Lord Byron's unfinished *Don Juan*, S. T. Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", P. B. Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 7: How did Victor Hugo define Romantic Literature?

Q 8: Name the joint publication by Wordsworth and Coleridge that was published in 1798. Mention the significance of the work.

Q 9: What is the most memorable phrase of William Wordsworth with regard to his opinions on poetry?

1.5 MAJOR ROMANTIC POETS AND THEIR WORKS

The following subsection will acquaint a learner like you with some of the major poets of the Romantic Age who are widely considered to have represented the 'spirit of the age' through their poetical works. A brief sketch on the life and works of the major poets namely, William Blake, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats has been provided for your study and reference.

William Blake (28 November 1757–12 August 1827):

The works of William Blake are considered to have left an everlasting impression in the literary treasures of the Romantic Age. Blake was considered both a 'visionary' and a 'prophetic' poet, owing to the extraordinary visions that he was frequently subjected to during his lifetime. Blake was an English poet, writer, painter and engraver who was born and brought up in London. He was trained as a professional draughtsman and engraver at an early age, which eventually proved to be an added advantage in the layout of his literary works as well.

Blake illustrated several of his works with what he called 'illuminated printing' or 'relief etching' by using copper plates to etch every single design on paper, in keeping with the theme of the respective poems. His artistic creations or illustrations added a unique charm to the presentation of literary volumes. Moreover, he found great strength and support in his wife Catherine Hermitage who jointly helped him in creating some of the best illustrations for his works. Blake drew his inspiration from his constant companion, the 'Bible' and thus, his religious, philosophical and spiritual inclinations found considerable reflection in the thematic aspects of his written works. Some of the emergent themes in his poetry are elements of the spiritual and the religious, the mythical and the mysterious, the moral and the philosophical, the realm of divinity, as well as, the world of human experiences. His poetical works are layered with symbolic images and meanings that call for in-depth readings.

Among his major literary works, the important are the volumes of poetry including epic or narrative poems like *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), *Poetical Sketches* (1783), *Tiriel* (1789), *The Book of Thel* (1789), *The Song of Los* (1795), *Jerusalem* (1804-1820), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), *Milton: A Poem,* and *Song of Liberty* (1804-1810). Moreover, his works namely, *America: A Prophecy* (1794), *Europe: A Prophecy* (1794), *The Four Zoas* (unfinished) (1797), *The Book of Urizen* (1794), *The Book of Ahania* (1795) and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in parts composed between 1790 to 1793 are considered his prophetic books.

William Wordsworth (7 April 1770 – 23 April 1850):

William Wordsworth is known to have ushered in winds of change in the literary scenario of the Romantic period along with his fellow-poet S. T. Coleridge with their joint publication titled *Lyrical Ballads with a Few Other Poems* in the year 1798 which is considered the 'manifesto' of the Romantic Age. Born in a privileged family in a small town of Lake District, Wordsworth was exposed to a good school education with some of the best tutors of their time. However, the loss of his parents at an early age and the compulsions of depending on his immediate relatives saw him struggle through the years of his childhood.

Wordsworth discovered his love of poetry at the age of 15, and published his first sonnet in the *European Magazine* at the age of 16, just after having graduated from St. John's College, Cambridge. From an early age, he cultivated a love for books that he found in his father's library and hence, he was familiar with the poetry of Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton. Some of his major volumes of poetical works were *Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems* (1800), *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807), *Guide to the Lakes* (1810), *The Excursion* (1814), *Laodamia* (1815), *Borderers* (1842) "a verse play and *The Prelude* (1845). Among his widely anthologised poems are: "Lines Written in Early Spring", "The Solitary Reaper", "The Daffodil" and "Ode on Intimations of Immortality". He was a well-travelled poet, always rooted to his home and shared a close relationship with his fellow-poet and sister Dorothy Wordsworth.



LET US KNOW

It is significant to note that Wordsworth in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, regarded poetry as the "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" that took "its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity". In fact, this was spelled out as one of the prominent ideas that defined Romantic Poetry. Wordsworth was also greatly inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution but he found himself greatly disillusioned with the mindless violence and practices that followed

during the later stage of the revolution. Considered one of the foremost of Romantic poets, Wordsworth was appointed the Poet Laureate after the demise of the poet Robert Southey in 1843, and he also received honorary degrees from Durham and Oxford University in 1843.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (21 October 1772 – 25 July 1834):

A man with a strikingly sharp intellect and a rebellious bent of mind, S.T. Coleridge is considered one of the most prominent poets of the Romantic Age. He was also a literary critic and philosopher who built an association with the Lake Poets, most importantly with William Wordsworth, in founding the Romantic Movement in England. Born in a reputed family, he spent most of his childhood years reading books and jotting down poetry. His readings of the classical masters, the poetry of Shakespeare and Milton inspired in him a love for poetry and its intricacies. His years at the charity school made him prone to loneliness as also reflected in his early poems and it was at school that he met his lifelong friend Charles Lamb. He went on to matriculate from Jesus College, Cambridge in 1791 where he discovered his political and philosophical thoughts that he shared with his fellow-poet and friend Robert Southey. Coleridge also studied the German language and had an interest in German philosophy.

His collaboration with William Wordsworth saw the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) which featured the poem, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” in the first edition. The poems that are considered his literary masterpieces are: “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, “Christabel” and “Kubla Khan”. Among his ‘conversation’ poems are: “The Eolian Harp”, “Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement’, “This Lime-Tree Bower my Prison”, “Frost at Midnight”, ‘Fears in Solitude’, “The Nightingale: A Conversation Poem”, “Dejection: An Ode” and “To William Wordsworth”. Another autobiographical work titled *Biographia Literaria* or *Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions* (1817) is also considered to be one of the most significant contributions to English literary criticism.

Transcendentalism: A philosophy that inspired the literary, socio-political and philosophical movement known as the transcendental movement.

Barony: Barony refers to administrative division of a country in Scotland, Ireland or various parts of England.



LET US KNOW

The poetry or rather poetical fragments of Coleridge explore the realm of the unknown, the mysterious and the supernatural that at once tends to capture as well as, haunt the reader's imagination thereby, distinguishing his poetry from that of his contemporaries. Coleridge had inspired writers like Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein* (1818) and the literary genre of Gothic fiction as well as, philosophers like Ralph Waldo Emerson who founded the philosophy of transcendentalism in America. His opium addiction often gave flight to his creative imagination but it also interrupted the flow of his creative genius, which also accounts for the fragments of his poetical verses. On the improvement of his health during the later phase of his life, he came up with prose works namely *The Statesman Manual* (1816), *Aids to Reflection* (1825), *On the Constitution and Church* (1830) and a series of lectures noted down with the help of an aiding assistant.

Lord Byron (22 January 1788–19 April 1824):

Lord Byron had significantly contributed to the literature of the romantic age as a poet who also had a fair share of political experience and influence in the society of his times. Although, he is popularly known as Lord Byron, his complete name was George Gordon Byron and he held the title of '6th Baron' in the English **Barony** that he had inherited from his great-uncle at the tender age of 10. Born of noble parentage, Byron received the privilege of a good education and excelled during his years at Trinity. In his early years, he had also experienced the ideal life of the Scottish countryside at Aberdeenshire, which was his mother's native place. Byron was a voracious reader who had read about 4,000 books by the time he was 19 years of age.

Although, he was born with a 'club foot' for which he called himself a 'limping devil', he excelled in swimming, athletics and horse riding. During his years at Trinity, he became a part of the Cambridge Whig Club, which spelled his early interests in politics. He also penned several

elegies and significantly formed close associations with John Cam Hobhouse and Francis Hodgson who eventually became his lifelong friends. His first poetical compilation was *Hours of Idleness* (1807), followed by his satirical work *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). One of his best-known works is *Child Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812) which was a semi-autobiographical narrative poem portraying a young man who finds himself exhausted with worldly pleasures and thereby sets out on his own adventures.

In addition, *Don Juan* (1819) was one of his masterpieces which was not which without its set of controversies. This particular work had introduced the great Spanish legend Don Juan, which also was the source of what, came to be known as the 'Byronic hero' in English Literature. The Byronic hero was represented as the popular anti-hero with his charm as well as, his flaws and contradictory ideals that considerably characterised Byron's own life and personality as well. Lord Byron is also considered to have significantly influenced gothic fiction that was popular during the period and the few practitioners of this literary genre.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (4 August 1792 – 8 July 1822):

P.B. Shelley is considered one of the finest English lyric poets with a significant contribution to the literature and socio-political life of the times in which he lived. He was born into a noble family of London, and was mostly tutored at home by Reverend Evan Edwards in his early years. He went on to study at the Eton College and University College, Oxford where he is known to have stirred controversy that ended with his expulsion from the institution. The reason behind this was the circulation of his **radical pamphlet** titled *The Necessity of Atheism* (1811) and his refusal to admit his authorship of the same to the concerned administration. He even had a secret elopement with Mary Shelley, the daughter of his mentor William Godwin.



Radical: non-conforming or diverting from traditional practices

Pamphlet: a small booklet containing important ideas and arguments on a single subject

Some of his early publications included gothic novel titled *Zastrozzi* (1810), *Rosicrucian: A Romance* (1811) together with the joint publications of poetry titled *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazie* (1810)

and *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* (1810). Shelley's poetry reflected his zeal as a reformer and other that was one with the spirit of Nature. Some of his widely read poems are "Ozymandias" (1818), "Ode to the West Wind" (1819), "To a Skylark" (1820), "When Soft Voices Die', "The Cloud" (1820), *Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude* (1815)*, The Masque of Anarchy* (1819) and *Adonaïs* (1821) written in the memory of John Keats. Among his revolutionary works are his poems such as *Queen Mab* (1813), *Alastor* (1815), *Hellas (1822)*, *The Revolt of Islam* (1817) and *The Witch of Atlas* (1819) are also considered as his visionary poems.

Some of his other literary works include *Laon and Cynthia* (1817), *History of Six Weeks' Tour* (1817), *Rosalind and Helen: A Modern Eclogue* (1819), *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), based on the Greek myth of Prometheus, *Oedipus Tyrant* (1820), *Epipsychidion* (1821), *Wolfstein* (1822) and an incomplete work titled *The Triumph of Life* (1822). In his *A Defense of Poetry* (1840), Shelley significantly likens the poets to prophets or prophetic figures, famously declaring, "poets are the unacknowledged **legislators** of the world". His *Defense* is considered one of the major works in the area of English literary criticism that focuses on the significant role of poets, critical views on poetical practices and his defined poetical ideas. Shelley held the firm belief that poetry brought out the best in a poet and inspired a sense of moral goodness, which uplifted humanity.

John Keats (31 October 1795 – 23 February 1821):

John Keats is one of the finest English poets and names to be reckoned with the Romantic period although received wide acclaim only after his early demise. Keats was born in a humble family in London. He received a liberal education at Enfield where he discovered his love for the classics, history and Renaissance literature in the shelves of the school library. He suffered the loss of his parents at a very young age and was brought up under the care of his grandmother at Edmonton. Having experienced financial crises from an early age, he worked hard as an apprentice to a medical surgeon and established himself as a medical

assistant at Guy's Hospital. However, he always desired and felt that he was destined to be a poet in life and so it was.

Keats drew poetical inspiration from his fellow poets such as Leigh Hunt and Lord Byron. Although, he found himself in a dilemma having to choose between his medical profession and writing career, after having received his hard-earned medical license, he eventually found himself giving into his passion for poetry. It is true that he had met with a few failures at the beginning of his writing career owing to the poor reception of his works; nevertheless, there were writers and publishers who believed in his credibility as a poet. Today, he is remembered for his odes titled: "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode to Psyche", "Ode on Melancholy", "Ode on Indolence" and "Ode on Fancy". Among his widely anthologised poems and ballads are: "The Eve of St. Agnes", "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and sonnets like "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer".

Keats' poetry was exceptional in its sensual imagery and appeal that almost brought alive his verses as living experiences to his readers. Some of his other works include the poetic romance titled "Endymion" (1818), an epic poem *Hyperion* (written in between 1818-1819), a narrative poem *Lamia* (1820) and a drama named *Otho The Great* (1819) written jointly with his lifelong friend Charles Armitage Brown. He also shared a close relationship with his brothers George and Tom that finds a reflection in his personal letters. These letters were later published in 1848 and 1878. In addition, these letters were compiled into two volumes titled *The Letters of John Keats 814-1821* (1958) reflecting his literary ideas and personal thoughts both a poet and a person. His remarkable literary journey that had only begun was cut short with his untimely demise at the age of 25. However, at the turn of the 19th century, his poetry and the depth of his poetical reflections made him a much beloved English poet.

In the discussions above, the poets William Blake, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were the first generation and Lord Byron, Percy B. Shelley and John Keats were the second-generation Romantic poets. Here, it may be noted that the Romantic

period reached its peak in the years 1800 to 1850. The words 'romantic' or 'romanticism' to refer to this period were used only in the mid 19th century. In this way, this particular period came to be referred to as the 'Romantic Age' in the history of English Literature. Interestingly, the poets and writers who wrote during that period did not really know that they would be remembered as 'Romantic' writers or poets in the pages of history.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 10. Answer the following short questions:

a. Why was Blake known as a visionary or prophetic poet?

b. When did Wordsworth first discover his love for poetry? When did he first publish his poetry?

c. What distinguishes Coleridge's poetry from that of other contemporaries?

d. Mention the complete name of Lord Byron and his inherited title.

e. What was the reason for Shelley's expulsion from Oxford?

f. Highlight the exceptional quality or characteristic of Keats' poetry.

1.6 CRITICAL RECEPTION

Maurice Bowra in *The Romantic Imagination* (2009) opines thus, "[t]he Romantics were concerned with the things of the spirit and hoped that through imagination and inspired insight they could both understand them and present them in compelling poetry". They were inclined towards exploring the realm of 'imagination' and in the artistic liberty of representing the world in a new light. The prominent poets of the age such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, John Keats and Lord Byron had their own distinct style and subtle variations in their poetical practices, nevertheless, their works shaped some of the theoretical trends of the age. For an instance, we could consider the theory of 'fancy and imagination' or the theory of 'negative capability'.



LET US KNOW

S. T. Coleridge in his *Biographia Litereria* (1817) highlighted the difference between the two faculties of the mind i.e., 'fancy' and 'imagination'. Imagination which was considered the active and vital source of creation, was divided into the 'primary imagination' and the 'secondary imagination'. While the primary imagination, "automatically balances and fuses the innate capacities and powers of the mind with the external presence of the objective world that the mind receives through the senses", the secondary imagination or the 'free will', "dissolves, dissipates in order to recreate" according to Coleridge. On the other hand, 'Fancy' was considered a passive source of creation much associated with the memory, accumulating all that was seen or experienced.

The term "negative capability" first came up in one of the letters (dated 21 December 1817) of John Keats that was written to his brothers George and Tom. In this significant letter, Keats described the artist's experience of nature and the outer world without formulating and imposing theories of knowledge on them. According to Keats, an artist who 'negated' himself in the creation of something would experience artistic freedom in his or her creative pursuits, instead of being tied to the limitations of reality or rationality.

During this period, a group of poets residing in the scenic Lake District of North West England came to be known as the 'Lake Poets'. The leading figures of the group were William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey. Several other poets and writers such as Dorothy Wordsworth, Charles Lloyd, Hartley Coleridge, John Wilson, and Thomas De Quincey were associated with the group. Moreover, a few writers who were not part of the 'Lake Poets' yet were 'inspired' through the writings produced by the group were Felicia Hemans, Walter Scott, James Payn, Bryan Procter and Norman Nicholson. It may also be noted that some of the significant women poets of the period were Anna Seward, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Hannah More,

Charlotte Smith, Anne Yearsley, Mary Robinson, Helen Maria Williams, Dorothy Wordsworth, Felicia Dorothea Hemans, Mary Shelley and Latitia Elizabeth Landon who poured their feminine sensibilities and experiences through their poetry.



ACTIVITY

In this activity, the learner is to pause for a moment and try to concentrate on his/her breathing pattern in a relaxed sitting position with eye closed. This will certainly unnerve the level of stress that he/she may have within and enable him/her to be more sensitive and grateful for the gift of life that we carry in us. As the learner experiences the sensitivity of his/her sensory perceptions of the immediate surroundings and their beings bubbling with energy and emotions, it is expected that he/she will be more inclined to their innate creative sensibilities. The learner is to then jot down the following:

- Reflections on his/her childhood days
- Subjective or personal experiences on a picnic/excursion/ journey/trek/expedition/tour
- A few verses inspired from the literary characteristics of Romantic Poetry
- A piece of appreciation on the natural surroundings or beauty of Nature
- Make a list of things that you would like to celebrate through any mode of expression.
- It could be anything under the sun that strikes your mind.



1.7 LET US SUM UP

After a thorough study of the unit, you have gained a good idea on the development and context of the Romantic Age in the history of English Literature. By this time, you must be able to grasp the ideals that

shaped the intellectual period called the 'Romantic', and further illuminated the literary forms and characteristics of Romantic poetry. In addition, you should be able to discuss the life and works of selected poets who are considered the major Romantic poets of English Literature. The unit has enabled you to appreciate and further explore some of the most memorable works of Romantic poetry.



1.8 FURTHER READING

Bowra, Maurice. (2009). *The Romantic Imagination* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Roe, Nicholas. (ed). (2007). *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Wu, Duncan. (ed). (2006). *Romanticism: An Anthology.* Cowley Road, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Web Resource:

http://www.bloomsburyacademic.com/



1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: At the tail end of the 18th century…

Ans to Q No 2: Emphasis on the various aspects…..

Ans to Q No 3: The spontaneous elements in man and nature……..

Ans to Q No 4: Ideals…… rationality and reason, skepticism and empirical enquiry, as well as, the advancement of knowledge through logical inquiry, scientific approach and critical methods.

Ans to Q No 5: "*Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite*" ….

Ans to Q No 6: A pan-European phenomenon….spanned across multiple cultures, the connotation of the term "Romantic."

Ans to Q No 7: Romantic Literature defined "liberalism in literature" with its emphasis on …..

Ans to Q No 8: *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge in 1798 came to be considered as a significant milestone……..

Ans to Q No 9: "Spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"

Ans to Q No 10:

a. visions that he was frequently subjected to during his lifetime….
b. ….age of 15 and published his first sonnet in the *European Magazine* at the age of 16
c. the realm of the unknown, the mysterious and the supernatural that at once tends to capture as well as, haunt the reader's imagination….
d. George Gordon Byron …. Inherited title of '6th Baron' in the English Barony…..at the tender age of 10.
e. …..his refusal to admit his authorship of the same to the concerned administration.
f. ….exceptional in its sensual imagery and appeal that almost brought alive his verses as living experiences to his readers



1.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Give an introduction to the Romantic Age in the history of English Literature with special reference to the poets.

Q 2: Discuss the major literary forms and their characteristics in the context of Romantic Poetry.

Q 3: Discuss the critical reception of Romantic Poetry in the history of English Literature.

Q 4: Explain the main ideals that shaped the intellectual background of the Romantic period.

Q 5: Write short notes on the following poets of the Romantic Age.

a. William Blake
b. William Wordsworth
c. S.T. Coleridge
d. P.B. Shelley
e. Lord Byron
f. John Keats

Q 6: What is meant by the term Romanticism? Discuss the important characteristics of Romantic literature, especially Poetry.

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