

Romanticism Notes

Romanticism developed as a reaction against dominant ideas and standards of *Rationalism* (Age of Reason). The rationalists stressed logic and reason, while the Romantics emphasized emotions and the imagination.

The Romantic Period (1798 – 1832)

- A reaction, in part, to the Age of Reason
- A reaction, in part, to the Industrial Revolution

Romantic Elements

- A strong belief in democracy
- Interest in mystery and the supernatural
- A belief in excess and spontaneity
- A concern for the common people
- A love of nature

Romantic Traditions

- Nature as soothing to the soul
- Everlasting faithful love
- The ability to find a perfectly matched, kindred spirit (friend)
- The *quest* to solve mysteries of the universe (a fascination with the unknown)
- Selfless sacrifice (especially for the poor or ill)

- Intuition as a viable fact of nature (one could simply “know” things, such as when a loved one was ill or in danger)

Themes

- The Romantic Quest: the willingness to give up comfort and “normal life” to pursue an understanding of the mysteries of the universe
- Romantic nature: the individual of “quality” would be self-sacrificing for the good of others or in pursuit of knowledge, he/she is hypersensitive of mood, and nature loving
- Romantic notion of the artist: “above” or outside the “norm” – the artist usually suffers for art, rarely in or achieves wealth, follows his/ her “vision: at any cost

General Themes

- Undying love
- Nature as “pure” – a key to the soul
- Intuition versus science
- Love of the mysterious
- Loneliness and solitude
- Selfishness in one’s behavior (i.e. risking one’s life for a worthy cause)

Traits of the Romantic Hero

- Intellectual: self-educated
- Egocentric
- Lonely/alone in quest
- Obsessive in reaching their goal
- “Over-reacher”
- Elevated goals/desires
- Prone to melancholia (depression) – stems from superior knowledge and striving to reach the unreachable
- Curious
- Isolated (self-imposed)

Gothic Notes

Gothicism is formally defined by two elements – the historical and the “wonderful” or supernatural.

Gothic Theme

- A novel in which magic, mystery, and chivalry (knighthood), and unknown terror are the chief characteristics

Gothic Stories

- The author emphasizes the grotesque elements and mysterious
- Desolate environment
- Ghostly atmosphere
- Old-decaying mansions
- Unfamiliar surroundings
- Strange noises, shadows, trap doors
- Possibility of returning to life after death
- **All to create the sense of horror*

Gothic Elements

- Supernatural hours and an atmosphere of unknown terror pervades the action
- High emotion: pronounced anger, surprise and especially terror
- Use of words indicating fear, mystery, suspense, apparition, devil, ghost, haunted, terror, fright, fainting

Epistolary Novel

An *epistolary novel* is a novel in which the story is carried forward by letters written by one or more of the characters. It has the merit of giving the author an opportunity to present the characters and reactions without the intrusion of the author. It also enables the author to present multiple/varied points of view on the same event.