**Romantic Period (1798 -1832)**

Some disagreement w/beg. point

-- 1798 w/ publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge

-- 1789—French Revolution, Burns and Blake’s lit more like Rom. than Rest. lit

ADJ = turbulent, violent, revolutionary,

idealistic, frustrating

**Radical changes in life and thinking**

--Reforms, sometimes peaceful, other times violent

-- New focus on COMMON MAN (more democratic outlook)

-- searching for ways to improve

**6 ROMANTIC CHARACTERISTIC/TRAITS**

**IDEAL** = a perfect situation

Romantics admired the pursuit of perfection, trying to perfect what they could

**INDIVIDUAL** = belief in the importance of every single person

Romantics believed that one person

could make a difference (good or bad)

in people’s lives and the world.

**IMAGINATION** = the power of the mind to create something new (outside of logic)

Romantics believed that the imagination was a very POWERFUL force, that a person is the most imaginative when he is a child, so the attempt was to keep the mind more “childlike.”

**INTUITION** = the FEELING one has that cannot be explained through logical reasoning, “gut” feeling

Romantics believed that this is

powerful and that people should be in tune with it and listen to it more

**NATURE** = outdoors

Romantics believed that Nature

should be respected, revered, and even worshiped, power to heal

People should seek a “oneness” with Nature, and that most of our problems come from a “disconnectedness” that occurs when the unity/union between humanity and Nature is broken.

Romantics believed that this “disconnect” carries over into human relationships. If allowed to continue, a breakdown of society would happen.

**SUPERNATURAL** = things that are “above” the natural world, in other words spiritual

Romantics believed that forces beyond human comprehension exist and cannot be explained through logic (anything religious or spiritual falls into this category)

**Two poems considered among the best/most important in Eng. Lit** --- are fm *Lyrical Ballads*

*---*“Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern

Abbey” by Wm. Wordsworth

---*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel

Taylor Coleridge

**6 main authors** dominated the Rom. Era

(Burns), Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge,

Byron, Shelley, Keats

BWC= 1st Generation Rom. poets (lived to be old)

BSK = 2nd Generation Rom. poets (died young)

**AGE OF REVOLUTION**

**1) 1775 – AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

Rev. spirit spread across Western Europe,

bringing political, economic, and social

forces that produced radical changes

SPECIFICALLY affected Eng. by their loss of economy, loss of prestige, and confidence.

**2) 1789 -- FRENCH REVOLUTION** impacted Eng. more bec. it created an unstable Europe and was CLOSER to Eng.

Represented Eng.’s worst fear: the overthrow of an anointed king by democratic rabble

Not all Eng. hated Fr. Rev.

Democratic idealists and liberals like WORDSWORTH supported it BUT became disillusioned by SEPT. MASSACRE (the killing of 100’s of Fr. aristocrats by guillotine; commoners became tyrants)

Napolean Bonaparte emerged first as dictator of France & then as emperor, name is synonymous with TYRANT, ruthless as the executed king himself.

(Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette = king and queen of France during Fr. Rev.)

Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo, Belgium by English/British allies

**3) INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION**

-- a shift in how products were manufactured, population in cities increased, appalling living conditions (slums)

-- communal land was taken over by individual/private landowners, resulted in large #s of homeless/ landless people 🡪 migrated to cities

-- POLLUTION fm factories hurt environment & Romantic poets rebelled against this

**ECONOMIC POLICY**/philosophy that kept misery going was called **LAISSEZ-FAIRE**, which means “let it alone.” Let people do as they please, VERY limited govt. involvement

Result of this policy was that the RICH grew RICHER and the POOR grew POORER.

Romantic poets became FRUSTRATED w/ Eng.’s resistance to political and social change, so they turned away from the formal, public verse of the 18th century Augustans (Restoration/Regency poetry) and to a more private, spontaneous **LYRIC POETRY**.

**ROMANTIC DEFINITIONS**

3 useful meanings of the term ROMANTIC

1) term signifies a **fascination w/ youth**

**and innocence,** with “growing up” by

exploring and learning to trust emotions (**intuition**) and their sense of will and dignity

2) term refers to a stage in the cyclical development of societies; stage when people begin to question authority and tradition in order to “imagine better.” This definition is associated w/ IDEALISM and IMAGINATION.

3) Western societies reached the conditions for industrialization, demanding that people acquire a stronger awareness of change and find ways to adapt to it (if you don’t learn to adapt, you die)

**Romantic poets** often called **NATURE POETS**, but they didn’t just write about Nature; they wrote about **Nature AND its effects on people**.

Romantic idea of **NATURE is NOT HOSTILE**; poets had a strong sense of the mysterious qualities/ forces of the natural world.

Could be considered **PSYCHOLOGICAL** because Nature can influence the mind, emotions, etc. They believe that mind of man is a MIRROR (reflection) of the best and most interesting properties of Nature.

**IMAGINATION** is a kind of desire, a motive that drives the mind to learn and know things it cannot learn by rational/logical thinking.

**POET**

Wordsworth defined the poet as **a man SPEAKING to humanity in order to accomplish something** **else** (understand content, believe, change mind, appreciate Nature, etc.)(tied to the theme)

**SPEAKER is DIFFERENT from POET**; poet uses the speaker to convey certain ideas and truths. Audience uses IMAGINATION to understand the speaker and the situation and what KIND of speaking is happening. Speaking has to be convincing/ believable.

**Speaker seen as ORDINARY MAN**

(very democratic idea)

**POET has EXTRAORDINARY insights** (more sensitive, more aware, wiser, etc.).

-- special and adored person

-- bard, an inspired revealer and teacher

-- a physician who pours out a balm (soothing

ointment) upon the world

-- brings the whole soul of man into

activity by employing the magical power of the IMAGINATION

**People cannot survive without the poet.**

**LYRIC POETRY =** poetry that **focuses on expressing emotions and thoughts rather than on telling a story;** it is **melodious,** its musical qualities activated **through rhyme, alliteration, and onomatopoeia.**

**PASSIONATE, speaking from the heart** (seen as opposite of Augustan/18th century poetry)