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Romantic Poets and Their Works Shankar Kumar Jayvardhan

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Abstract

The British Romantic movement (c.1780s–1832) was a literary revolution that emphasised emotion, nature, and individual creativity over Enlightenment rationalism. Key Romantic poets include Wordsworth (1770–1850), Coleridge (1772–1834), Byron (1788–1824), Shelley (1792–1822), and Keats (1795–1821). This paper presents succinct profiles of each poet – life dates, brief biography, major works (with dates), representative poems, and themes (e.g. nature, imagination, heroism, political idealism, beauty, mortality). We assume these five poets typify the period’s concerns. A comparative section analyses common Romantic elements (celebration of nature, emotion, revolution of language) and individual innovations (e.g. Wordsworth’s use of everyday speech, Coleridge’s supernatural imagery, Byron’s Byronic hero, Shelley’s radical politics, Keats’s odes and “negative capability”). The poets’ legacy (the rise of the personal lyric and modern poetry) is assessed, and a conclusion summarises the findings. A table compares poets across attributes, and a timeline (mermaid chart) maps major publications. Sources include primary poems and scholarly references (Britannica, Poetry Foundation, academic companions) to ensure accuracy and no plagiarism.

Introduction and Historical Context-

British Romanticism arose in a time of sweeping change. The late 18th century saw the American (1776) and French (1789) Revolutions, the Industrial Revolution, and social unrest in Europe. These political upheavals (e.g. calls for parliamentary reform, abolition of slavery) and the **French Revolution** in particular emboldened poets to write with revolutionary zeal. Britain itself avoided revolution, but events like the 1819 Peterloo Massacre (cavalry charging reform protesters) made political tensions palpable. This era also saw rapid urbanisation and class conflict. Romantic poets reacted by celebrating emotion, the sublime in nature, and the individual imagination, rejecting the formal decorum of 18th-century neoclassical verse. In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth famously argued that poets could “choose incidents and situations from common life” and use “a selection of language really used by men”.

Romanticism was a cultural revolution in poetry: its poets saw themselves as expressing inner feelings and universal truths, often in simple or folk-inspired forms.

Selection of Poets: We focus on five principal British Romantics – Wordsworth and Coleridge (the first-generation founders) and Byron, Shelley, Keats (the second generation)

–Because they exemplify the movement. All five were published between the 1790s and 1820s and shaped Romantic poetry. No single canon is prescribed for Romanticism, so this selection is based on historical prominence, the poets’ critical reputations, and the user’s prompt. (Other poets, like William Blake, are influential but beyond our scope). Our criterion

is: represent a range of voices within Romanticism (rural versus urban, conservative versus radical, elder versus younger poets) and to cover both masculine and (indirectly) feminine perspective via Dorothy Wordsworth's influence on William.

Profiles of Major Romantic Poets

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

William Wordsworth was an English poet of the Lake District, and with Coleridge, a pioneer of Romanticism. He helped launch the movement by co-authoring *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) with Coleridge, and by formulating Romantic poetic principles in its 1800 preface. Wordsworth's poetry values nature, memory, and ordinary people. He famously observed that poetry should be the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings... recollected in tranquility". Major works and dates include *Lyrical Ballads* (1st ed. 1798, 2nd ed. 1800) and *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807). He also wrote the long autobiographical poem *The Prelude* (completed 1805, published posthumously 1850). Representative poems are

"Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (1798) and "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (also called "Daffodils"), both emphasizing nature's beauty. Other key poems include "The Solitary Reaper", "Ode: Intimations of Immortality", and "Resolution and Independence." Wordsworth's themes are nature's healing power, the innocence of childhood, memory, and the lives of common people. He used common speech and often simple ballad forms. Underlying his work is a belief in the deep connection between nature and the human spirit (as seen in *Tintern Abbey*). His poetic style favored straightforward diction and blank verse. In summary, Wordsworth (1770–1850) reoriented English poetry toward personal emotion and everyday subjects.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)

Coleridge was an English poet, critic and philosopher, youngest of ten children. Along with Wordsworth he revolutionized literature by publishing *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. He is known as a "poet-critic" who deeply influenced literary thought. Coleridge's most famous poems are "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798) and "Kubla Khan" (composed 1797, published 1816). **Ancient Mariner* is a long supernatural ballad about a cursed sailor; *Kubla Khan* is a visionary fragment inspired by opium. Another notable poem is "Frost at Midnight", a personal lyric. He also wrote the literary study *Biographia Literaria* (1817), a landmark in criticism. Coleridge's themes include the power of imagination, the unconscious (dream), spirituality and metaphysics. He explored the exotic and mystical (often Eastern imagery) and the sublime mysteries of mind. Coleridge used complex forms: long narrative ballads, lyrical fragments, sonnets. His style is ornate and philosophical. Although he gave up writing much poetry after 1800 to become a critic, his early works set a model for Romantic verse. In short, Coleridge (1772–1834) expanded Romanticism with rich supernatural imagery and pioneering criticism.

Lord Byron (George Gordon Byron, 1788–1824)

George Gordon Byron (later Baron Byron) was a British poet and satirist whose fame and scandal made him Europe's first literary celebrity. He suffered a clubfoot from birth, was educated at Harrow and Cambridge, and became famous in his twenties. His first major poem was "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" (Cant I–IV, 1812–1818), a long narrative describing a world-weary young traveler. Byron's other major work is the satirical epic "Don Juan" (Cantos I–XVI, 1819–1824), in ottava rima, which recounts the adventures of a legendary libertine. He also published lyric poems like "She Walks in Beauty" (1814) and "Manfred." Byron's themes include romantic melancholy, heroic individualism, defiance, nature, love and satire. He created the archetype of the Byronic hero - a brooding, defiant outcast with secret guilt (Harold in *Childe Harold** is a prototypical example). His style is bold and dramatic: he used Spenserian stanzas (for *Childe Harold*), ottava rima (for *Don Juan*), and lyrical couplets. Byron's verse often blends wit and passion, and he was influential for his vivid narratives

and charismatic persona. In Byron's words, he "awoke one morning and found [himself] famous" after *Childe Harold*'s publication in 1812. To modern readers he is best known for Don Juan's satiric realism. Byron (1788–1824) remains remembered for his passionate, defiant poetry and his contribution of the Romantic rebel figure.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

Percy Bysshe Shelley was an English poet known for his radical politics and idealistic verse. He was a contemporary and friend of Byron. Shelley's major poems include the lyric "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and "Mont Blanc" (both written in 1816), the sonnet "Ozymandias" (1818), and the ode "Ode to the West Wind" (1819). He also wrote the drama Prometheus Unbound (1820) and Queen Mab (a long satirical poem, 1813). Shelley's poetry is visionary, emphasizing freedom, human perfectibility, and awe of nature. He championed political reform, atheism, and the imagination. Of the second-generation Romantics, Shelley was the most politically radical. His works are suffused with idealism, longing for social justice and beauty. He often wrote in lyrical forms (e.g. odes and sonnets) and experimented with exotic diction. Shelley died young at 29 by drowning (1822) but left a body of lyrical masterpieces. In summary, Shelley (1792–1822) exemplified Romantic intensity and idealism, with poems that stirred emotional and political passions.

John Keats (1795–1821)

John Keats was an English poet of the second Romantic generation. Born to modest London parents, he trained as a doctor but devoted himself to poetry. Though his career lasted only about four years (1816–1820), he became "one of the major figures of Romanticism". Keats's famous works include the long poem *Endymion* (1818) and the 1820 collection *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. His most famous shorter poems are the 1819 odes: "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode to Autumn", and "To Autumn". Keats's poetry is known for rich sensory imagery, exploration of beauty, transience, and melancholy. He valued "Negative Capability" embracing ambiguity and doubt. His style is lush and elegant: he used varied forms (narrative romance in *Endymion*, dramatic monologue in *Hyperion*, lyric odes) but always with musical language. Keats died of tuberculosis in Rome in 1821. His death deeply affected Shelley (who wrote the elegy "Adonais"). In brief, Keats (1795–1821) epitomized Romantic imagination and the pursuit of beauty despite tragedy.

Comparative Analysis

All five poets share core Romantic traits: valuing emotion over reason, the importance of individual imagination, and a love of nature and the sublime. They rebelled against 18th-century decorum by writing in personal, expressive style (the lyric) became dominant in Romantic poetry. Yet each poet had distinct themes and forms:

Common themes: Nature as spiritual refuge (especially Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats), human emotion and mortality (Shelley, Keats), individualism and the genius of the poet (Byron, Shelley, Keats), social and political freedom (Shelley, Byron), and the supernatural or exotic (Coleridge, Byron). Many wrote about loss and longing (Keats mourning his brother; Wordsworth's childhood losses, etc.).

Influence and Legacy

The Romantic poets profoundly shaped later literature. They popularized the lyric I and the idea of the poet as an individual genius. Their experiments opened the way for Victorian and Modern poetry. Wordsworth and Coleridge shifted poetry toward personal emotion and nature, influencing Victorian poets like Tennyson and Arnold. Byron's Byronic hero became a stock figure (seen later in figures like Heathcliff or Mr. Rochester). Shelley's political and idealistic spirit inspired reformers and later revolutionaries (he was celebrated by 19th-century liberals and romantics alike). Keats's emphasis on beauty and sensory richness influenced later symbolist and aesthetic poets.

Romanticism also left a cultural legacy beyond literature. Its emphasis on folk tradition led to the revival of ballads and interest in medieval culture. Politically, its ideals of liberty, equality and brotherhood continued to resonate (Shelley and Byron even fought for Greek independence). Critics note that Romanticism introduced subjective self-expression as a literary goal, a trend that dominates modern art and poetry. The poets' own writings (prefaces, letters) also provided influential literary criticism (e.g. Wordsworth's Preface, Shelley's essays). In short, Romantic poets forged a new poetic ethos of feeling and imagination.

Timeline title: Timeline of Major Romantic Poetry Publications

- 1798: Wordsworth & Coleridge – Lyrical Ballads (1st edition)
- 1798: Coleridge – The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
- 1800: Wordsworth & Coleridge – Lyrical Ballads (2nd ed, preface by Wordsworth)
- 1805: Wordsworth – The Prelude (first version)
- 1812: Byron – Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (Cantos I-II, 1st editions)
- 1813: Shelley – Queen Mab (long poem)
- 1816: Coleridge – Kubla Khan (first published)
- 1817: Coleridge – Biographia Literaria
- 1818: Keats – Endymion ; Shelley – Ozymandias
- 1819: Shelley – Ode to the West Wind ; Keats – odes ("Nightingale," "Grecian Urn")
- 1819: Byron – Don Juan (Canto I)
- 1820: Shelley – Prometheus Unbound ; Keats – *Lamia, Isabella... (and "Ode to Autumn")
- 1824: Byron – *Don Juan (Cantos VI–XVI, final publication)

Conclusion

The Romantic poets redefined English poetry by centring emotion, nature, and the individual imagination. This survey has shown how Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats each contributed uniquely: from Wordsworth's use of common speech and nature poetry to Shelley's political odes and Keats's exquisite sensuous lyrics. Together they display the range of Romanticism – blending folk traditions and formal innovation, the personal lyric and social protest. Their legacy endures in the lyric first-person voice that dominates modern poetry, in the idea of the poet as a creative visionary, and in the continued popularity of their poems. No single poet can represent all Romanticism, but these five exemplify its main strands. In sum, British Romanticism married personal feeling with grandeur, giving birth to poetic forms and themes that shaped the 19th century and beyond. works.

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