

Example of essay on transition from neoclassicism to romanticism

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Between 1650 and 1789, Neoclassicism dominated Western literature, and thereafter it was dominated by Romanticism until 1850. Typically, neoclassical pieces of literature were written in English and French, while Romanticism was international. The term neoclassicism, which is the cluster of roughly allied trends, applies to aggressive secular rationalism that dominated France in the 18th century, as well as to the whole period from Discourse on Method (1637) to 1789, when the French Revolution broke out. According to many scholars, the neoclassical period of literature transitioned into the romantic period of literature in 1798 when the “ Lyrical Ballads” was published, which contained some of the most well-known works of poetry by Samuel Coleridge and William Wordsworth. However, according to other literary scholars, the Romantic period started out much earlier, somewhere around 1785. This was the period in which literary works such as Poems (1786) and Songs of Innocence (1789) were published. Works such as these and others are examples of how the neoclassical literary expression and political thought was transitioning towards romanticism. Charles Lamb and Jane Austin are also among the “ first generation” of Romantic authors. The Romantic Movement that began in the late 1700s was a direct result of opposition to the Neoclassical Period. The Neoclassical period was based on logic, harmony, rationale, restraint, science, etc. The transition from neoclassicism to romanticism was prompted in such an opposing manner because romanticism turned out into a movement of literature style, philosophies, political ideas, etc. Neoclassicism favored genius and passion, and thus, romanticism was a form of rebellion against it. Apart from Wordsworth and the other authors and poets mentioned above, poems by

Lord Byron and Frankenstein by Mary Shelly also give a good idea of what the romantic period was all about.

Discussing the transition from neoclassicism to romanticism is also difficult because romanticism included a second generation of authors and poets, including John Keats, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelly. It cannot be denied that these second generation romantics were geniuses, however, unfortunately they did not live long enough, and most of the first generation romantics outlived them. Mary Shelley, who has always been well-known for Frankenstein (1818), was among the second generation romantics who managed to live long enough.

As a result of the transition from neoclassicism to romanticism, literature during the 19th century was pervaded with a new focus on intense emotionalism. Plays that once addressed moral issues began addressing the development of Melodrama with a new power and vitality. Unlike neoclassicism, a sharp division found its way into the presentation of the issues of right and wrong, and melodramatic heroes, such as Davy Crockett and Rip Van Winkle, who would overcome the forces of evil, started finding their way into literary works. The fact that Romantic Novels had started becoming popular was another sign of the transition to romanticism, and the movement took its name from these novels. This pattern of romantic novels was first set up by Horace Walpole when he published Castle of Otranto in 1784, and in the process he also established the basic elements of this genre.

The transition from logic to melodrama during the period of romanticism greatly affected literature of that period. Romanticism also gave birth to

pieces of literature that depicted victimized characters that had to make their way through difficult or tragic situations. Maria Marten: Murder in the Red Barn written by an unknown author is an example of such a piece of literature. Other romantic authors who wrote such literary works include Douglas Jerrold and Thomas Dibben.

Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth were the most prominent authors and poets who were practically at the heels of the neoclassical period.

Another sign of the transition from neoclassicism to romanticism was the rise in popularity of witty and satirical works of poetry, such as those from Pope and Swift, during the final era of the neoclassical period. Thus, the dawn of the romantic period had made its impact on the world of poetry as well.

Romantic authors of the time were mostly trying to make their way into literary history; however, the French Revolution also affected these authors as well. In his book *The Spirit of the Age*, William Hazlit writes that William Wordsworth's school of poetry originated from the French Revolution, in a time when the renewal of the literary world looked promising.

While some romantic authors of that era embraced politics, but most of them turned to self-fulfillment through nature. The final sign of transition from neoclassicism to romanticism was the moving away from ideas and values of the neoclassical era to embrace new way to express feelings and imagination.

Unlike neoclassicism, romanticism was all about preferring the glory of imperfection. Although scholars do not seem to agree when exactly the transition from neoclassicism to romanticism actually took place, but they all generally agree that the romantic period came to an end in 1837 when

Queen Victoria was coronated. In fact, this marked the beginning of the Victorian period.

Works Cited

Hazlitt, William. *The Spirit of the Age*. 2010. Print.

Wilkie, Brian, and James Hurt. *Literature of the Western World, Volume II: Neoclassicism Through the Modern Period*. 5th ed. Harlow, England: Longman, 2000. Print.

Jarvis, Robin. *The Romantic Period: The Intellectual & Cultural Context of English Literature 1789-1830 (Longman Literature In English Series)*. 1st ed. Harlow, England: Longman, 2004. Print.