

# Wordsworth



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English Draft - William Holbrook Not even the Romantics agreed on a definition of Romanticism. Were the six great figures of Romanticism; Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, and Keats, to be put in a room together they would probably have falling outs - so different were they philosophically, personally, and artistically. Yet there is a common element, a binding element - and one expressed most clearly in the poetry of William Wordsworth. What all the Romantics shared was a reaction against a conception of poetry conceived by the Classicists a century earlier and based on laws of poetry laid down by the Ancient Greeks.

For the Classicists, namely Dryden, Swift, and Pope, the poet was more an interpreter than a creator. More concerned with showing the attractions of what we already know than with expeditions into the unfamiliar and the unseen. They wished to speak in general terms for the common experience of men, not to indulge personal whims in creating new worlds. However, the Romantics saw that the power of poetry is strongest when the creative impulse works untransformed. At the same time they were writing, the French Revolution bore the hopes of millions against the tyranny of monarchy.

Just as in politics men turned their minds away from the existing order to vast prospects of a reformed humanity, so in the arts they abandoned the conventional plan of existence for private adventures which had an inspiring glory. Wordsworth's poetry is a perfect expression of the defining aspects of this new age in art: he places feeling over intellect and gives significance to the most commonplace objects and meanest of characters - themes born out of the French Revolution, his close collaboration with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the tragedies of his personal life.

His poetry, especially the poems "The Prelude", "Tintern Abbey", and "The Old Cumberland Beggar", is an expression of the feelings in a turbulent time in both politics and art. Para 1: The artistic revolution of the Romantic era, and how "Tintern Abbey" and "The Prelude" represent shifts away from the mythological and historical to the natural. Wordsworth's poetry expresses something new, raising seemingly insignificant objects of nature to supreme significance.

He is capable of seeing the profundity, conveying the effect on the heart. Of a "daisy or a periwinkle", thus lifting poetry from the ground, "creating a sentiment out of nothing." Byron, according to Hazlitt, does not show this kind of originality. Para 2: The connection between Wordsworth's poetry, particularly "The Old Cumberland Beggar", and the French Revolution and the ensuing Terror under Robespierre. Para 3: The impact Wordsworth's friendship with Coleridge and the deaths of his children had on his poetry.

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