

# English literature: romanticism and victorian assignment

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Romantic era is the historical period of literature in which modern readers most begin to see themselves and their own conflicts and desires. As what was mentioned in the class and as what I have researched, English Romanticism in terms of literature is a shift from faith in reason to faith in the senses, feelings, and imagination; a shift from interest in urban society to an interest in the rural and natural; a shift from public, impersonal poetry to subjective poetry; and from concern with the scientific and mundane to interest in the mysterious and infinite.

There are various themes on how the authors of romantic literary pieces composed their works. Those themes were based on the main idea of the revolutionary movement initiated during that time which was CHANGE. These people want to veer away from what was ordinary and stale and they came up with this radical change. I do not know if my idea regarding the themes used by romantic poets and writers is correct that is why I made further research. As I went through the research, I came up with these insights regarding the subjects used by romantic writers.

Imagination and emotion are more important than reason and formal rules; imagination is a gateway to transcendent experience and truth. Imagination was one of the keys used by romantic poets and writers to effectively stress out and reveal what they want to convey their readers. They treat imagination with high importance because it was their belief that the only way to attain the highest form of art is to use your imagination. Sometimes, some of the writers do not only rely on their "usual/ ordinary" imagination.

Sometimes they use other means like taking addictive drugs which allows hallucination to happen. For example, Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* was written when Coleridge was high with laudanum, a solution of opium in alcohol used for pain relief. In the last lines, "Weave a circle round him thrice, and close your eyes with holy dread, for he on honeydew hath fed, and drunk the milk of Paradise", he is implying that writers like him would be feared for their power to make such poems with the use of extraordinary imagination.

Since change is the main idea and reason for the Romantic movement, having an exceptional kind of imagination was one of their vital components. Romantic literature tends to emphasize a love of nature, a respect for romanticism, and a valuing of the common, "natural" man; Romantics idealize country life and believe that many of the ills of society are a result of civilization. The Romantics inclined more to the natural aspect of the world rather than the urbanized and modernized sector because they have high respect for these entities.

For example, Wordsworth's sonnet *Composed upon Westminster Bridge* accentuates the beauty of nature before man had touched and exploited it based on their needs. The lines "Earth has not anything to show more fair: Dull would he be soul who could pass by, A sight so touching in its majesty... Show the majesty of nature. The poem stresses out the reclaiming of nature's own from what man has taken away from it. The poem also emphasizes the silence and stillness of nature which makes it great and marvelous.

Change is what Romantics aim for but they did not veer away from what natural things/nature should be. They treat nature with divinity and respect. Romantics were attracted to rebellion and revolution, especially concerned with human rights, individualism, and freedom from oppression. Since change is the main reason for Romanticism to upsurge, rebellion and revolution is evident in their works. For example, Blake's *The Chimney Sweeper* talks about the abuse experienced by children who were chimney sweepers during that time.

The lines " That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned and Jack, Were all of them locked up in coffins of black" shows that children who were chimney sweepers suffered a lot of harm and their only escape was death. Blake's work was an effective eye opener of what was happening during that time especially when it comes to child labor. Somehow, it ignites the fire of revolution but the thing about this poem was Blake ended it not with revolutionary kind of movement but with some sort of faith in God.

Still, he managed to emphasize the oppression that was happening during that time which may call and did call for upheaval. There was emphasis on introspection, psychology, melancholy, and sadness. Since the Classics tend to feature the theme of mock heroic epic (which was said to be a craft and " forced"), the Romantics deviate away from it. One of the emphases of the Romantic writers' works was melancholy. For example, Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper* has a tone of mystery, loss, nostalgia and loneliness. It was shown in the lines " Some natural sorrow, loss or pain, that has been ND maybe again? . Sadness was featured on the Romantic works because it was

(somehow) the inspiration of the writers for not all of them lived joyfully and vibrantly. Sadness was also one of the keys for an effective Romantic literary piece. Romantics were interested in the Medieval past, the supernatural, the mystical, the “ gothic,” and the exotic. These things were also featured in the Romantic works. Authors were very interested in the supernatural, the mystical, the “ gothic,” and the exotic. Most of the literary pieces do contain these things. For example, Coleridge

Rime of the Ancient Mariner highlighted these things. The lines “ Her lips were red, her looks were free, her locks were yellow as gold: Her skin was white as leprosy. The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she, who thick’s man’s blood with cold” clearly depicts a mysterious woman who appeared out of nowhere aboard in a ship which was already wrecked. These lines (and this poem) lucidly depict the mystery that the Romantic poets’ aim to show the readers the beauty behind mystery and bizarre things which were part of their aim for change. II. Analysis of Romantic and Victorian Poems

Victorian period, which encompasses the optimism and progress of Englishmen, was the perpetuation of the Romantic period’s success in fulfilling its aim to obtain change and transformation. Romantic period was the time where the Englishmen perpetuated movement for literature, characterized by reliance on the imagination and subjectivity of approach, freedom of thought and expression, and an idealization of nature. This was also a call for drastic difference and divergence from what was ordinary and normal. This was also a way for the authors to show the reality behind the blindness of oppression and abuse.

One good example is Blake's *The Chimney Sweeper*. The poem encompasses the details of the truth behind child labor and the cruelty experienced by the children who were employed in this job. One can see that the poem shows how helpless the children were and there was no escape for them but death itself. It has a tragic and melancholic mode for children who should be given the right to have a good life and a chance to study and improve their condition were exploited and deprived. Blake's approach was effective for the poem will surely catch the reader's attention and emotion regarding the focus of the poem.

But even though he was successful in establishing these moods for the reader, his ending does not seem to fit the aim of Romantics for change because his ending was stated like "there would be angels who would open the coffins of these poor children and would accompany them to the Heavenly Father". Nonetheless, the poem showed what should be changed in his society during his time and somehow, it is an eye-opener and it calls for a revolutionary change. A lot of poems during that time also embody this kind of theme. They, during their time, wanted freedom and transformation.

These literary pieces were their weapon, their defense. Movements made for change during Romantic era was successful. Freedom of expression was propagated, change was established. The Englishmen had the chance to grasp the power they were aiming for. They believed they were invincible and this led them to the Victorian period. Victorian period was the period of optimism. Since the Englishmen had the power in their hands, they will do

everything to maintain the power that they have. Their craving for improvement, industrialization and education was fulfilled.

This is clearly seen in some of the Victorian poems created during that time. Kipling's 'Gung Din' is a very good example. A lot of analysis given regarding this poem was focused on Gung Din, who was an Indian water carrier who serves water for British Soldiers. But one aspect that I saw regarding this poem was it entails the power that the Englishmen have. The poem shows that they were superior and even an Indian was very submissive to them even they were just soldiers (disregarding the ending of the poem wherein the soldier says 'I'm a better man than I am, Gung Din').

All throughout the poem, Gung Din was described as a poor, low and abused slave and this also indicates that these British soldiers have the power over Gung Din and they can do whatever they want to do on Gung Din and they can ask him to serve them wherever and whenever. Although what I analyzed regarding the poem when relating it to the power and optimism that the Victorians have was negative, still, it exemplifies such. This poem also shows appearances which the Englishmen is trying to do during Victorian period. The soldiers in this poem show power and prudish, unceasing their weaknesses in use of Gung Din.