

Romantic Literature Student Notes

Romanticism: artistic and intellectual movement originating in Europe in the late 18th century as a revolt from classicism

- American Romantics saw nature as holding the ultimate truths as opposed to reason, traditions, or other rigid forms of thought
- **Classicism:** movement in literature and art during the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe that favored rationality, restraint and strict forms

Characteristics of Romanticism

1. Distrust of Civilization

- cities as a place of moral corruption and danger
- civilization has expectations and rules imposed on the individual

2. Nostalgia (bittersweet longing) for the Past

- past as a purer time

- simple, innocence past was closer to God

3. Concern with Individual Freedom

- only individual thought/reaction could help man understand nature God

4. Interest in the Supernatural

- emotional reaction explained the unexplainable without reason

5. Profound Love for Beauties of Nature

- nature is the greatest work of God, created by and of Him

- natural patterns as the work of God; instinctively “understand” patterns, see and understand God

Ways Romanticism “Works”

1. Explore natural settings away from society
2. Consider natural world until it no longer made rational sense

Differences in American Romanticism

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Dark Romantics: term normally applied to authors whose world-view was very opposite to those of other Romantics/Transcendentals; where some focused on euphoria and sublimity, these authors say melancholy, insanity, sin, crime, and madness

- **Gothic Literature** (subgenera of Romantic literature)
 - ornate style of the architecture proved to be the ideal backdrop for both the physical and the psychological settings
 - plots typically involve people, as well as ghosts and other paranormal phenomena, becoming involved in complex and oftentimes evil schemes, usually against an innocent and helpless victim.

The Fireside Poets: group of American poets (centered in New England states) whose work rivaled the popularity of British poets

Characteristics of Fireside Poetry:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Legend

- Legends are vital to a culture because they give us a shared history and myth
 - **Folklore:** the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth.

Romantic Hero: archetypical character that rejects established society—and has been rejected by society—and has the inner self as the center of his or her own existence; thoughts are more important than actions

Epic/Classic Hero (Odysseus): noble or divine birth, perfect, must perform extraordinary deeds, suffers physically and dies in an unusual manner

Chivalric Hero (Sir Gawain—King Arthur): noble birth, follows a code (Chivalry), goes on a quest for some special/sacred object or task (usually for king, God, or a lady love)

Romantic Hero (Deer Slayer, Ponyboy)

Modern Hero (Jay Gatsby, Frederic Henry): “everyman”/ordinary person, “quest” usually involved overcome ordinary problem, philosophical quests for knowledge or self-discovery, journeys toward self-fulfillment or happiness

Characteristics of the Romantic Hero

1.

2.

3.

4.