

Romanticism (Regency Era)

The French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution changed the lives of many people near the end of the 1700s. Writers responded with a new spirit called romanticism. Writing became less formal. Imagination and the senses became more important than reason. Writers wanted to express their individuality. They wanted to be closer to nature and to the common people. One of the best-known writers of this period was Scottish poet Robert Burns. He expressed his love of nature and of freedom in many poems and songs. One of his most famous songs is “Auld Lang Syne.”

William Blake was one of the great romantics. He illustrated his poems with engravings. He wrote *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794). In the hands of poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, romanticism became mysterious and haunting. He wrote *Kubla Khan* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (both 1798). William Wordsworth was a poet who celebrated the beauties of nature and the charms of country life.

George Gordon, Lord Byron was a dashing young English nobleman who died helping Greece win independence from Turkey. His best-known poem, *Don Juan* (1819–24), tells of the adventures of a free-spirited young man. Percy Bysshe Shelley was a lyrical poet who wrote about nature as well as his ideas for social reform. In *Adonais* (1821), he honored John Keats, a poet who died at age 26.

Among the romantic novelists is Sir Walter Scott, whose *Ivanhoe* (1819) tells of heroes of the Middle Ages. Jane Austen, in such works as *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), brought the English middle class to life. Writers on scary and supernatural subjects made up the Gothic movement. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s Gothic classic is *Frankenstein* (1818).