

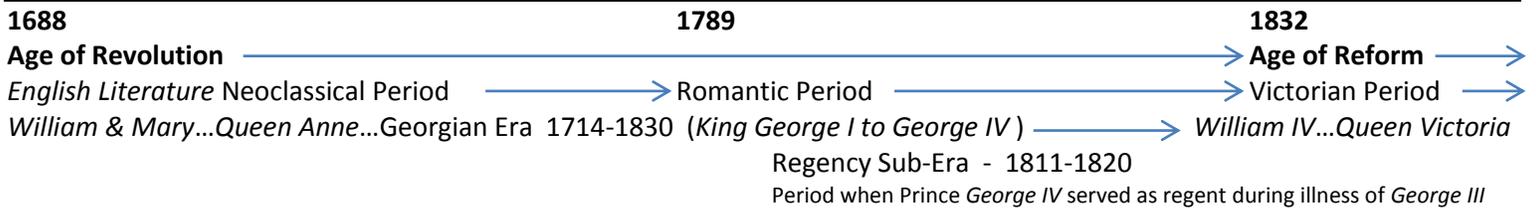
# BRITISH LITERATURE LECTURE

## ROMANTIC PERIOD



**Romantic Period** was the *second* half of the Age of Revolution in England  
Age of Revolution - 1688-1832

- ❖ Neoclassical Period - 1688-1789
  - From the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (beginning of the reign of William & Mary)
  - To the end of the American Revolution
- ❖ Romantic Period - 1789-1832
  - From French Revolution
  - To the passage of the First Reform Bill in England – expanded voting privileges beyond the noble class



## Features of Romanticism

- ❖ Imagination, emotion, and freedom are certainly the focal points of romanticism
- ❖ Subjectivity and an emphasis on individualism
- ❖ Spontaneity; freedom from rules
- ❖ Solitary life rather than life in society
- ❖ The beliefs that imagination is superior to reason and devotion to beauty
- ❖ Love of and worship of nature
- ❖ Primitivism – the preference for an “uncivilized” life – led to the myth of the noble savage
- ❖ Fascination with the past, especially the myths and mysticism of the middle ages.



## England’s Historic Timeline of Romantic Era

What happened that turned people away from the Reason and Rationalism of the Neoclassical Era?

There were **Two Main Factors**:

### I. The French Revolution in France influenced the whole world and made people disillusioned with Reason

What was the French Revolution?

- Based on the Reason and Rationalism of the Enlightenment Era (known as the Neoclassical Era in Literature & Art)
- An attempt to copy the American Revolution - BUT - without God’s guidance
- Led by a group of atheists intent upon engineering a perfect rational society

How did it proceed?

- The leaders incited the anger of the working class, then staged a revolution.
- When they took power, they called themselves the “French Republic” - It was NOT actually a republic!
- They tried implementing their social engineering plan to create the perfect rational society.
- Not everyone supported what they were doing, so the leaders killed all the dissenters using the GUILLOTINE!
- The time of killing was called The Reign of Terror

The Reign of Terror was seen as the result of Reason and Rationalism...so disillusioned, people turned to Romanticism!

Then France went from a false republic to an Empire:

- France was in chaos from the Reign of Terror and eventually Napoleon came to power as an Emperor
- People traded their freedom for security – a recurring theme in human life!!

### II. The Industrial Revolution

Industrial Growth was changing the nature of human life:

- \* Workers and factory life – rote, monotonous, uncreative work
- \*The rise of cities – bleak and stark factory towns
- \*Life becoming less rural

All these changes created a longing for \*nature and \*creativity and \*imagination and \*”uncivilized” life

### George III ruled England 1760-1820

- ❖ Grandson of George II – son of Frederick
- ❖ Became king at age 22 – rushed to find a wife & marry before coronation
- ❖ Happily married even though he met his wife on their wedding day 15 children!
- ❖ Very devout – spent hours in prayer each day
- ❖ The English king during the **American Revolution!** :-D
- ❖ Ruled during the conflicts with France after French Revolution (1789) and Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815)
- ❖ Oft remembered as “The Mad King”
- ❖ Suffered from a mysterious mental illness
- ❖ Samples of his hair studied in 2005 revealed high levels of arsenic, possible trigger for the disease
- ❖ Bad bout of the disease from 1788-1789 / Afflicted again in 1804 for several months
- ❖ By end of 1811, George III had become permanently insane - lived in seclusion at Windsor Castle until his death.
- ❖ Son George IV ruled as regent from 1811 due to George III’s mental illness
- ❖ George was succeeded by two of his sons George IV and William IV - both died without children, leaving the throne to niece **Victoria** - last monarch of the House of Hanover! :-D
- ❖ George III lived for 81 years and 239 days and reigned for 59 years and 96 days - Only Queen Victoria and Elizabeth II lived and reigned longer.
- ❖ The Declaration of Independence's wording has contributed to the American public's perception of George as a tyrant.



### George IV ruled England 1820-1830

- ❖ Son of George III
- ❖ From 1811, ruled as Prince Regent due to father’s mental illness – THE REGENCY ERA
- ❖ Known for extravagant lifestyle that contributed to the fashions of the British Regency Period
- ❖ Commissioned the building of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton
- ❖ Instrumental in the formation of the National Gallery
- ❖ Did not get along with his wife and even tried to come up with legislation to divorce her
- ❖ His charm and culture earned him the title "the first gentleman of England”
- ❖ His dissolute way of life earned him the contempt of the people and dimmed the prestige of the monarchy



### William IV ruled England 1830-1837

- ❖ Third son of George III and younger brother to George IV
- ❖ He fell in love with an actress who he was not allowed to marry – he lived with her for 20 years and they had 10 children
- ❖ Later in an attempt to produce an heir in the next generation, he married Princess Adelaide when he was 50 and she was 25 – they were married 20 years and happy!
- ❖ He was frugal and home-loving – not extravagant like his older brother had been
- ❖ His two older brothers died without legitimate heirs, so he became king at age 64
- ❖ His reign saw several reforms: the poor law was updated, child labour restricted, **slavery abolished in nearly all the British Empire**, and the Reform Act 1832 refashioned the British electoral system.
- ❖ He & his wife liked their niece Victoria – but they did not like her mother!! Victoria was the daughter of William IV’s younger brother Edward (the only one to have a legitimate living child at that point).
- ❖ He hoped to live until Victoria was 18 so that her mother would never rule as regent!!
- ❖ He said, "I trust to God that my life may be spared for nine months longer ... I should then have the satisfaction of leaving the exercise of the Royal authority to the personal authority of that young lady, heiress presumptive to the Crown, and not in the hands of a person now near me, who is surrounded by evil advisers and is herself incompetent to act with propriety in the situation in which she would be placed." The speech was so shocking that Victoria burst into tears, while her mother sat in silence. The two left the next day.
- ❖ He lived until one month after she came of age!



# This Chapter's Authors

\* POETS OF THE ROMANTIC TRIUMVIRATE

## WILLIAM BLAKE

*The Lamb / The Tyger / London*  
*The Clod and the Pebble*  
*The Garden of Love*

- ❖ Believed that society is what corrupted man from state of perfection
- ❖ Studied mysticism and occult; had psychic experiences



William Blake



William Wordsworth

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

*Expostulation and Reply / Tintern Abbey*  
*The Tables Turned / The Lucy Poems*  
*I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*  
*The World Is Too Much With Us*

- ❖ Boyhood was filled with nature
- ❖ Supportive of the French Revolution – then transformed by German Transcendental philosophy

## SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner / Kubla Khan*

- ❖ Lifelong friend of Charles Lamb and William Wordsworth
- ❖ Transcendentalist - Helped form utopian community in Pennsylvania
- ❖ Opium addiction



Samuel Coleridge



Charles Lamb

## CHARLES LAMB

*Old China / Tales from Shakespeare*

- ❖ "Prince of English Essayists"
- ❖ Met Coleridge during school days
- ❖ Mentally ill sister Mary co-wrote *Tales from Shakespeare*
- ❖ Passed all his days in London contentedly

## GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON \*

*On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year*  
*She Walks In Beauty*  
*Destruction of Sennacherib*

- ❖ A puzzle to literary historians and psychologists
- ❖ Wealthy, rebellious, immoral, moody, charming
- ❖ Went to Italy and joined other literary expatriates such as the Shelley's



Lord Byron



Percy Bysshe Shelley

## PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY \*

*Ozymandias / England in 1819*  
*Ode to the West Wind*

- ❖ Effeminate, odd, school outcast
- ❖ Saw the world through a "victims-being-oppressed lens"
- ❖ Expelled from Oxford for writing a paper *The Necessity of Atheism*
- ❖ Joined Byron in social exile
- ❖ Unfaithful as a husband

## JOHN KEATS \*

*On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer*  
*The Eve of St. Agnes*

- ❖ Not a rebellious lifestyle
- ❖ Believed that the world is hostile to human happiness, and purpose of art is to remind people of higher reality
- ❖ Orphaned young, struggled with poverty due to greedy guardian
- ❖ Died of tuberculosis



John Keats



Mary Shelley

## MARY GODWIN WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY

- Frankenstein*
- ❖ Her mother was a very famous feminist
  - ❖ Her father was writer & political journalist in circles of Lamb, Coleridge, Shelley
  - ❖ Ran away with Shelley @ age 16
  - ❖ Married 4 years later after Shelley's wife Harriet committed suicide
  - ❖ Wrote *Frankenstein* when Lord Byron challenged her to write a ghost story
  - ❖ *Frankenstein* published @ age 21

## JANE AUSTEN

*Sense and Sensibility (1811)*  
*Pride and Prejudice (1813)*  
*Mansfield Park (1814)*  
*Emma (1815)*  
*Northanger Abbey (1818 – posthumously)*  
*Persuasion (1818 - posthumously)*

- ❖ More to come... :-D



Jane Austen



Sir Walter Scott

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

- Lady of the Lake / Ivanhoe*
- ❖ Scottish - first successful as a poet
  - ❖ Began writing early novels anonymously because the novel had lower social value
  - ❖ Future George IV, Prince Regent, loved the novels! Gave Scott honors!

## OLAUDAH EQUIANO

*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano (1789)*

- ❖ Born in Benin (now Nigeria), kidnapped and enslaved
- ❖ Bought his freedom in 1766 and got involved in abolition movement, writing bestselling book!



Olaudah Equiano



William Wilberforce

## WILLIAM WILBERFORCE

- Speech Condemning the Slave Trade*
- ❖ Abolitionist & member of Parliament