

Year 8 – Romantic Poetry

ROMANTICISM AND THE SUBLIME

Romanticism was a movement in art, music and literature which began in the 18th century, in part as a reaction against the Industrial Revolution. Romantic poetry celebrated **nature**, the **imagination**, and **individuality**.

For Romantics, **the sublime** was the feeling of **awe and wonder** that nature inspires in people, a sense of being overwhelmed by the power and magnificence of the natural world.

STRUCTURAL FEATURES

caesura – punctuation in the middle of a line.
end-stopping – punctuation at the end of a line.
enjambment – one line flows into the next.
free verse – no rhythm or rhyme scheme.
rhythm – the beat of a line in a poem created by the pattern of stressed & unstressed syllables.
rhyme scheme – the pattern of rhyming words.
stanza – a group of lines in a poem (a verse).
volta – a turning point in a poem when the tone or message changes dramatically.

LANGUAGE FEATURES

alliteration – words placed close together that start with the same sound.
connotations – the associations we have with words.
imagery – language that creates pictures in your mind.
metaphor – describing something as being something else.
onomatopoeia – word sounds like its meaning, e.g. slap.
personification – human traits given to something non-human.
plosive – words that start with hard sounds: b, d, g, k, p, t.
sibilance – repetition of the ‘s’ sound.
simile – describing something as being like something else.

QR Codes

BBC Bitesize: What to look for in a poem



YouTube Video: An Introduction to British Romantic Poetry



The Poetry Foundation: Collection of the Best British Romantic Poems



Title: Uses the first line of the poem. Solitude is personified – Keats is speaking to loneliness as if it were a person.

Imagery of the town or city as disorganised and unattractive through the noun phrase ‘*jumbled heap of murky buildings*.’

Contrasting imagery of nature as beautiful and pure created with the adjective ‘crystal’.

Sibilance through the word choices ‘slopes, river’s, swell, seem, span’ create a smooth sonic effect, mirroring the flow of the water.

Connotations of the verb ‘pavilion’d’ implies an attractively designed structure – nature is better at ‘building’ than man.

The **connectives** ‘But’ and ‘Yet’ signal a shift in Keats’ feelings: it’s good to enjoy nature in solitude, but it’s even better to experience it with another like-minded friend.

Superlative ‘highest’ emphasises the sense of the sublime Keats’ feels when he is admiring view of nature from the top of a ‘steep’ (hill/mountain).

O Solitude! If I must with thee dwell

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,
Let it not be among the jumbled heap
Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep,—
Nature’s observatory—whence the dell,
Its flowery slopes, its river’s crystal swell,
May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
‘Mongst boughs pavilion’d, where the deer’s swift leap
Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell.
But though I’ll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
Whose words are images of thoughts refin’d,
Is my soul’s pleasure; and it sure must be
Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

John Keats, 1817

Structure: The particular form of the poem is a sonnet which always has 14 lines and is always about love of some kind. Sonnets are usually in two parts with a shift in tone or turning point at the start of the 9th line.

The voice in the poem is Keats’ own and it is clear that he is feeling strong, passionate emotions from the use of the exclamation mark in the first line.

Rhyme scheme: In common with many sonnets, the poem follows an ABAB rhyme scheme for the first eight lines (the octet) and then CDDCDC for the final 6 lines (the sestet).

Enjambment is used in lines 2, 6, 7 and 12 to mirror the overflow of emotion that Keats is feeling.

Rhythm: The poem is written in iambic pentameter (5 pairs of unstressed/stressed syllables). This rhythm is said to mirror the human heartbeat, suggesting that Keats feels his heart beats in time with the natural world.