

Romanticism Explained

Artistic and intellectual movement that originated in the late 18th century and stressed strong emotion, imagination, freedom from classical correctness in art forms, and rebellion against social conventions.

Romanticism, attitude or intellectual orientation that characterized many works of literature, painting, music, architecture, criticism, and historiography in Western civilization over a period from the late 18th to the mid-19th century. Romanticism can be seen as a rejection of the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization, and rationality that typified Classicism in general and late 18th-century Neoclassicism in particular. It was also to some extent a reaction against the Enlightenment and against 18th-century rationalism and physical materialism in general.

Romanticism emphasized the individual, the subjective, the irrational, the imaginative, the personal, the spontaneous, the emotional, the visionary, and the transcendental.

Among the characteristic attitudes of Romanticism were the following: a deepened appreciation of the beauties of nature; a general exaltation of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect; a turning in upon the self and a heightened examination of human personality and its moods and mental potentialities; a preoccupation with the genius, the hero, and the exceptional figure in general, and a focus on his passions and inner struggles; a new view of the artist as a supremely individual creator, whose creative spirit is more important than strict adherence to formal rules and traditional procedures; an emphasis upon imagination as a gateway to transcendent experience and spiritual truth; an obsessive interest in folk culture, national and ethnic cultural origins, and the medieval era; and a predilection for the exotic, the remote, the mysterious, the weird, the occult, the monstrous, the diseased, and even the satanic.

Homework: #1 Before you begin this homework, you need to find some time to sit in a “natural” place. You might want to wait until it is dark out and go outside for at least 20 minutes. Make sure you are by yourself and look at the sky and your natural surroundings. This can be done in your backyard, or if you can get to a nearby park etc. Simply look at the sky or your surroundings for 20 mins. If you can’t wait until dark you may do this during the day. You must be alone and quiet.

#2 When you get home/go inside, write a quick response about what you thought about, how the stars made you feel, how being alone makes you feel, what role nature plays in your life. Did you learn anything? You should write/type a page about your experience. Bring the page to class on Monday.

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