

NEO-CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC PERIOD

NEO-CLASSICAL PERIOD

1660 - 1798

1660 Begin Restoration. Monarchy restored with King Charles II, after 11 years as a republic.

The Restoration (1660 – 1700) brought about a revolutionary change in social life and literature.

The Glorious Revolution (1688; when the Catholic king James II was replaced by the Protestant Mary and the Dutch William of Orange) permanently established Parliament as the ruling power of England. Politically, the country was divided into two parties: the Whigs and the Tories.

1798 Beginning of Romantic Period with publication of *The Lyrical Ballads*

ALSO KNOWN AS

Neo-classical period: The classics represented the highest ideals in life, art and literature

Augustan Age: refers to emperor Augustus, during whose reign the Roman Empire enjoyed a period of prosperity

> England was doing really well economically

The Age of Reason: everything can be solved with the use of reason

> Rationalism (Descartes / Spinoza) and Empiricism (Locke / Hume: sensory experience = knowledge). Knowledge was important. Thinkers began to reject traditional ideals and began to apply natural laws and science to human behaviour and government

NEO-CLASSICAL LITERATURE

- **Characteristics:** order, structure, accuracy
- Man is portrayed as inherently flawed. (compare Renaissance attitude: man is basically good). Writers emphasize restraint, common sense, self control. Their writing has a didactic character: intended to teach.
- **Genres:**
 - Pamphlet: on changes in society, politics etc.
 - Novel (*roman*): about normal people instead of heroes. E.g. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*
 - Travel literature
 - **Satire:** writing that ridicules human vices and folly > Swift

SWIFT: ENGLAND VS IRELAND

By the middle of the 17th century, **Britain had established control over Ireland** after the Cromwellian War.

The impact of the war on the Irish population was severe. Cromwell passed a series of Penal Laws against Roman Catholics (the vast majority of the population) and confiscated large amounts of their land. Ireland's resources were exploited, which heightened resentment of English rule.

Up to a third of Ireland's population (4-600,000 people) died in these wars, either in fighting, or in the accompanying famine and plague.

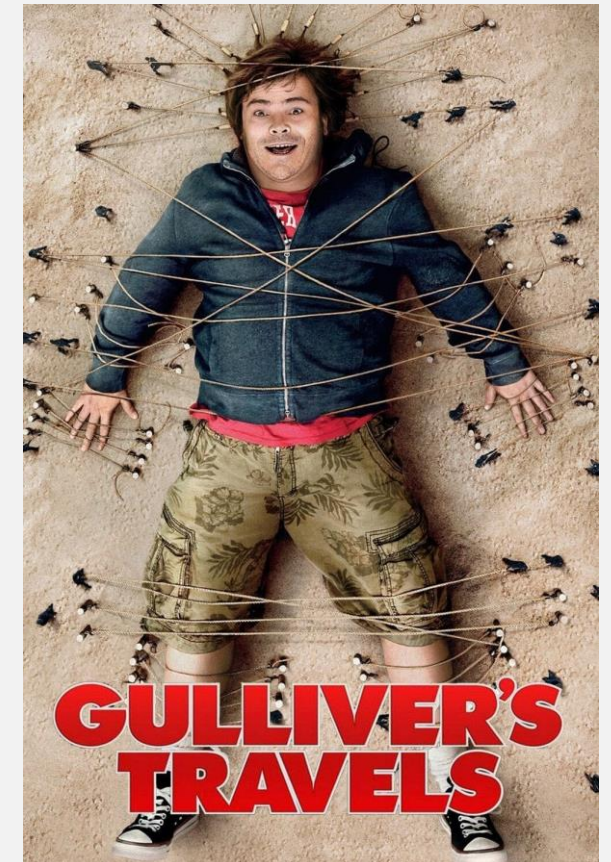
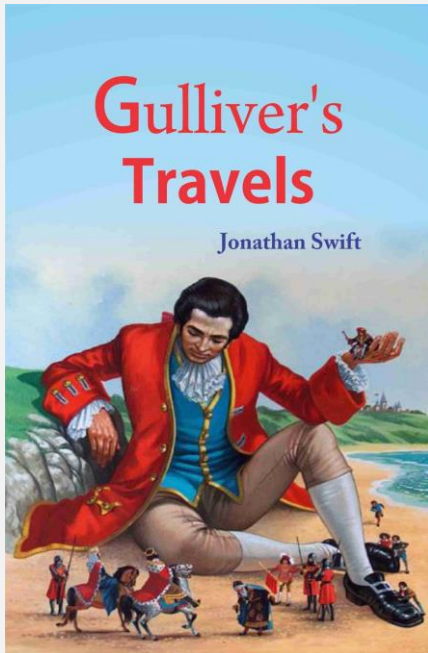
JONATHAN SWIFT (1667 – 1745)

Swift was Anglo-Irish. His parents were English (his father died before he was born) but his mother left him with an uncle in Ireland. He grew up in Ireland and moved to London when he was 18, to live with an English diplomat, Sir William Temple.

He wanted to move up in life, but when he couldn't, he became a priest in Ireland. For the rest of his life he moved back and forth between England and Ireland, seeing the poverty in his parish in Ireland and being among the rich and influential in England.

He wrote political pamphlets and essays, but is mostly remembered for his satire.

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS



GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

See introduction p 1.

Fragment 1: *A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, etc.* is a satire on the abuse of science and unpractical scholarship. Science should be a means to an end, to help mankind solve problems.

Fragment 2: *A Voyage to the country of the Houyhnhnms* is a satire on mankind in general, especially the moral aspect. The horses Gulliver visits are governed by Reason, Nature and Truth. By contrast, the Yahoos (in which Gulliver recognizes man) are irrational and governed by instinct and strong emotions.

ROMANTIC PERIOD

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

- What do you know of the Industrial Revolution?
- When?
- What was it?
- What did it change? (technology? Society? Culturally?)

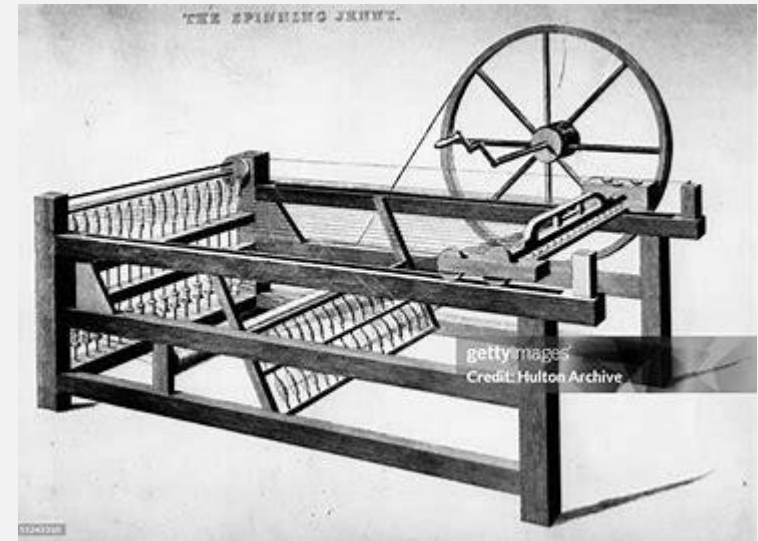
THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

1760 – 1840 First Industrial Revolution in Britain

Transformation of economies dominated by agriculture and handicraft to economies dominated by industry and machine manufacturing

➤ **Technological changes**

- the use of new materials like iron and steel
- the intensified use of energy sources
- new inventions (steam engine, Spinning Jenny)



THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

➤ **Socioeconomic changes**

- Introduction of factory system
- Wider distribution of wealth
 - > a small group with a lot of money, many were poor
 - > new middle class with money (*burgerij*)

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

➤ **Cultural changes**

- Growth of cities
 - > intellectuals, writers, politicians exchanged ideas
- Development of workers' rights movements
- Devaluation of skilled work, dangerous working conditions, child labour

ROMANTIC PERIOD 1798 - 1837

- 1798 Publication of *The Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge
lyric = emotion (↔ epic = about the deeds of a hero)
- 1837 Start Queen Victoria's reign

The industrial revolution led to social changes and growing unrest in society.

Dissatisfaction and disillusionment: people were unhappy with their lives, wanted change. They no longer believed reason and intellect could change things for the better.



CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTIC PERIOD

Interests:

- everything **non-rational**: emotion, love, intuition, imagination, dreams, the supernatural, nature, religion
- **anti-civilization**: people felt that modern civilization and progress had caused problems. So they idealized Nature and people living closest to it (children, still innocent, uncorrupted and shepherds)

CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTIC PERIOD

Escapism: people wanted to escape from their lives. They turned to

- The past. They idealized the past, when people didn't live in cities but closer to nature
- The future. Interest in science-fiction
- Other cultures. Interest in exotic cultures and distant countries
- Drugs
- Suicide

CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTIC PERIOD

Rebellion:

- Against circumstances at home or away. E.g. French Revolution, American War of Independence

Nationalism:

- Belief in the existence of a historical ethnic culture which met the romantic ideal
- Product of a sense of self-determination and the need for a new political order

ROMANTIC LITERATURE

Literature

- About romantic themes (emotions, the supernatural, rebelling)
- Romantic poetry was more **individual** than 18th c. poetry
- Authors object to strong literary laws -> **freer form**
- Authors object to specific poetic language -> **simple language**

Genres

Folklore, fairy-tales, mythology

Romantic novels (ghost stories)

Ballads

Poetry

EXTRA

Literatuur volgt ontwikkelingen in de maatschappij. Periodes wisselen elkaar af, zichtbaar in variaties in vorm en inhoud. In Engelse poëzie:

Elizabethan Age Vorm belangrijk (sonnet, poëtisch taalgebruik)

2nd half 16th c. Inhoud ondergeschikt (zelfde thema's)

Metaphysicals Vorm vrijer (alledaags woordgebruik)

1st half 17th c. Inhoud belangrijk (conceits)

Age of Reason Vorm belangrijk (structuur, orde, poëtisch taalgebruik)

1660 – 1798

Romanticism Vorm vrijer (simpele taal, persoonlijk)

1st half 19th c.

WILLIAM BLAKE

- <https://youtu.be/PVjiKRfKpPI?si=WMwQRR6jyrGaOwzy>

While watching and listening, decide who or what is being criticized in this song? What is the message?

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757 – 1827)

Blake was a mystic, a poet and a painter.

Blake was completely different from other 18th century poets:

No heroic couplets (pairs of rhyming lines, 10 syllables, iambic) – no poetic diction – not clever, but:

- Very simple poems with profound meaning and a lot of imagery.
- He wrote *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794)

He was religious, but hostile to the Church of England because he felt it encouraged suppression of natural desires and discouraged earthly joy.



WILLIAM BLAKE

“If the doors of
perception were cleansed,
everything would appear
to man as it is: infinite.”

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770 – 1850)

With Coleridge he wrote *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798), which marked the beginning of the English Romantic movement in literature.

In the preface they describe their principles: poetry should be accessible and written in everyday language.

Wordsworth is called the **Nature Poet**, because most of his poems are about nature. Like Spinoza, he felt God showed himself in Nature (Nature = God). Nature enabled him to experience and enjoy the underlying oneness of things.

JOHN KEATS (1795 – 1821)

‘A thing of beauty is a joy forever’

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that’s all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know’

That was his religion. He sought beauty in nature, mankind and art.

His poetry is characterised by sensual imagery.

<https://youtu.be/tBpvfFiy4WQ>

KENMERKEN BALLAD

Ballad (oorspr. 13/14^e eeuw) = simpel verhalend gedicht, bedoeld om te zingen

- Vertelt een verhaal (episch)
- Simpel (verhaal + taalgebruik)
- Drama: verraad, verbroken liefde, wraak, dood
- Dialoog
- Bovennatuurlijke elementen
- Herhaling
- Strofes van 4 regels
- ABCB
- 1^e + 3^e regel: 8 lettergrepen
- 2^e + 4^e regel: 6 lettergrepen
- Jambisch (jambe = versvoet van twee lettergrepen, klemtoon op de tweede)
- Geen uitgebreide beschrijvingen

BALLADS

How can the renewed interest in this verse form be explained?

1. It is a verse form from the past and the past was idealised.
2. It is a verse form that belongs to 'common people' (who couldn't read at the time when the ballad was popular) and simple people, not yet corrupted by civilization, were idealised during the Romantic period.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792 – 1822)

Shelley protests against the abuses resulting from the Industrial Revolution in England. He is much more of a revolutionary than his contemporaries.

He wrote a lot of essays on political and social issues, expressing radical ideas, which put him under government surveillance.

He is the poet of oppressed mankind but, though he sympathized with rebels, he didn't believe in violent rebellion.

His themes are Beauty, Freedom and Love.

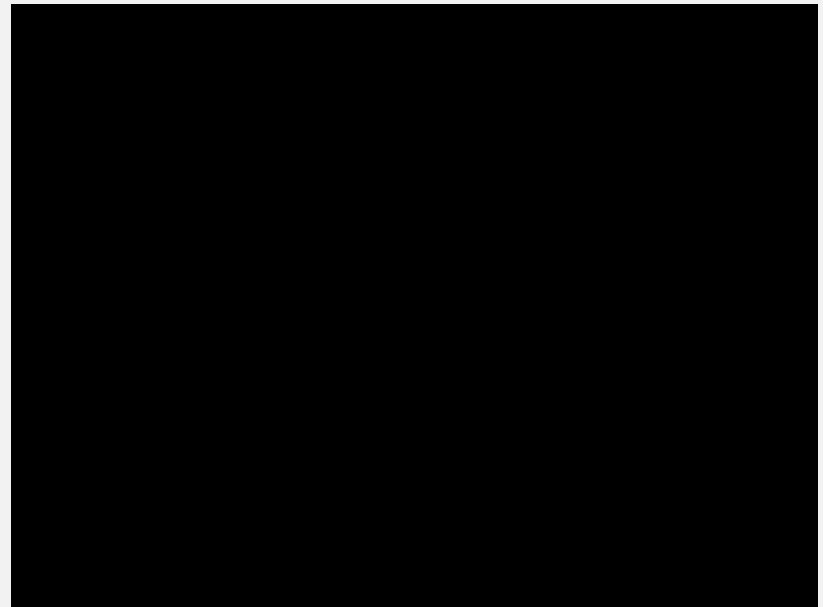
EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809 – 1849)

Poe was a writer, poet and literary critic.

His dark romantic fiction is called gothic fiction and deals with death and horror.

His stories mark him as one of the originators of both horror and detective fiction. He also wrote science-fiction works.

Many anthologies credit him as the "architect" of the modern short story.



EMILY BRONTE (1818 – 1848)

Wuthering Heights is a one-of-a-kind example of Romantic literature.

<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/w/wuthering-heights/book-summary>

Themes: love and revenge, freedom and restrictions, life and death

It contains many traditional elements of Romanticism:

- A strong interest in nature *
- Strong emotions (Heathcliff and Catherine's passion, Heathcliff's anger, despair and revenge)
- Elements of the supernatural (Catherine's ghost coming back to haunt Heathcliff)
- A strong interest in death (many characters die)
- A portrayal of opposites*

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

*Nature is extremely important in the novel >

Pathetic fallacy = external nature and weather conditions reflect the inner state of mind of the characters.

Example: the night Lockwood is visited by Catherine's ghost the storm outside reflects the turmoil inside the house. Bad weather > something terrible will happen.

Oneness with nature = the novel suggests that oneness with nature offers both freedom and an eternal, elemental connection that transcends societal norms and mortality.

THE HOUSES

Wuthering Heights

Nature: Isolated, high up on the moors

Heath – cliff (hei – klif)

Weather: Wild, windy, extreme

People:

dark-haired

extreme, violent, passionate

wild

rough

led by emotion and passion

Thrushcross Grange

in a valley, surrounded by a beautiful garden, sheltered

calm

blond

stable

gentle

refined, cultivated

governed by reason

The houses (surroundings, natural conditions) symbolize the inhabitants

freedom

ruled/restrained by society

nature

civilization

LINKS

<https://youtu.be/u5XTvXfPVs0?si=7NvZCgsBTafAq7Wd>

Full movie on YouTube. Go to minute 58 to see the 2nd fragment (it differs from the book, though)

Go to 2:05 to see Catherine's ghost at the window.

<https://youtu.be/-IpMMle4hb4?si=BfTVGbNlkHW5CREt>

Listen to the song 'Wuthering Heights' by Kate Bush.

QUESTIONS

Think of as many questions as you can, and write down the answers on a separate page. Use the booklet, the PowerPoint and your notes.

1. Background Neo-Classical Period + Neo-Classical Literature
2. Swift – Gulliver’s Travels
3. Swift – A Modest Proposal
4. Background The Romantic Period + Romantic Literature
5. Blake
6. Wordsworth
7. Keats + Ballads
8. Shelley
9. Poe
10. Bronte