ENGL 2122

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Glossary

**Romantic**: A literary era roughly spanning the 1780s to the 1830s.  This literary period was sharply defined and influenced by various social, political and economic forces of change, including the industrial revolution, the French Revolution, and the American Revolution.  It was a dynamic and chaotic time that also engendered the aesthetic revolution we now term *Romantic*.  Some of the most common Romantic themes include a focus on and interest in nature and the supernatural, childhood and youth, privileging of the individual, and a preoccupation with the inner workings of imagination and the creative process.  British Romantic poetry is often classified according to 3 distinct schools of practice: the Lake School (Wordsworth and Coleridge), the Satanic School (Byron and the Shelleys), and the Cockney School (Keats).

**Iambic**: a pair of syllables in which the second in the set is stressed

**Trochaic**: a pair of syllables in which the first in the set is stressed

**Tetrameter**: a line of poetry consisting of 4 pairs of syllables

**Pentameter**: a line of poetry consisting of 5 pairs of syllables

**Blank verse**: unrhymed iambic pentameter

**Sublime**: a combination of sensations of fear and awe, often the result in Romantic art of communion with natural splendor

**Circuitous Journey**: a recurrent pattern in Romantic poetry in which the poet journeys out to the natural world, is surprised, and ultimately transformed, by the experience, returning “home” (thus a circuit) and fundamentally changed.

**Apostrophe**: a poem framed as an address to an object, thing, idea, or absent other.

**Pastoral**: literally means “pertaining to shepherds.”  More broadly, it denotes a poetic tradition that highlights the simple pleasures of country life and rural beauty, focused on nature and sometimes critical of the complexities and complications of the city.  Blake’s world of Innocence and most of Wordsworth’s poetry are in the pastoral tradition.

**Byronic Hero**: Character type made famous by Byron in several of his works.  The Byronic Hero is a loner, usually in a state of extreme inner suffering or mental torment, much of which is self-inflicted.  Passionate to an extreme, he is usually depicted as “guilty” in one way or another, though not always clear just what his “crime” was.  He is almost always in love and suffers for it and has broken others’ hearts along the way.  Independent to a fault, the Byronic Hero is a loner whose despair is, mainly, self-contained.   Often depicted as physically attractive, yet dangerous.  As Byron himself was once labelled: “mad, bad, and dangerous to know.” The Byronic Hero is literature’s “bad boy.”

**Promethean**: like Prometheus, the Greek Titan who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans, punished by Zeus for doing so.  The figure and idea of Prometheus, the rebel whose disobedience is arguably a virtue, looms largely in the Romantic imagination.

**Satire**: a specific form of comedy, this literary genre has a particular didactic purpose of exposing human error, vice, and weakness, often accompanied with implications toward our improvement. Satire uses laughter as a weapon, laughing *at* not *with* its target, which is often all of us.

**Romantic Irony**: a poetic device in which a storyteller makes the reader aware of the fictional nature of the story. It is a method of surprising the reader out of his or her “willing suspension of disbelief,” as Coleridge termed the sensation of losing oneself in a fiction. The Romantic Ironist will pop that bubble.

**Ottava Rima**: An Italian stanza form that consists of eight lines of iambic pentameter with an abababcc rhyme scheme. Byron famously used it for *Don Juan*. The couplet at the end is particularly important for Byron as a rhetorical device.

**Negative Capability**: A term coined by John Keats, who described it as “when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” Keats intends this “negative” phrase as a positive quality. He is actually attacking the tendency to grasp at answers and conclusions to complex problems and questions that don’t lend themselves very well to any convenient answer. Keats enacts this very quality in many of his poems by refusing to answer questions conclusively or resolve conflicts.

**Midterm Point: material above this line will be included on the midterm exam; material below will be included on the final exam.**

**Gothic**: A genre that arose in the eighteenth century along with the popularity of novels. Its name is derived from Gothic architecture of the Middle Ages, denoting the kinds of settings and environments of many of the stories in this genre in its early formation, such as creepy old castles, ruins, and haunted mansions. Gothic literature always deals with matters supernatural in one way or another. It is what we now tend to call *horror*.

**Epistolary Novel:** a story structured as a series of letters. It was a popular convention with early novels.

**Bildungsroman**: German word that literally translates as “formation novel.”  Like Gothic, this genre was developed along with the novel itself.  These kinds of stories generally focus on a character’s education, formal or informal, the purpose of which is to show how the character was “formed,” for good or bad.  These stories can be cautionary tales, as in the case of *Frankenstein*, or they can be “how to” successes, as with *Jane Eyre*.

**Doppelganger**: Another German word that literally means “double.”  This is the “evil twin” motif, very popular in the Gothic genre.  Stories of metamorphosis, such as werewolves, employ this device.  Frankenstein and his “creature” are sometimes read as doppelgangers, though in this case it’s not easy to say which is the “evil” one.

**Impressionism**: Late Victorian art movement that emphasizes "broken" brush strokes, meaning that you can clearly see the strokes themselves. Impressionist works tend to focus on unusual depictions of light, shadow, and perspective. Claude Monet's "Soleil Levant" is often considered the first work of impressionism. Joseph Conrad's work is also read in an impressionist context.

**Separate Spheres**: A Victorian phrase that denotes the concept that men and women have distinct social responsibilities. This is where we get the cliche that "a woman's place is in the home." By contrast, a man's "sphere" is the rest of the world outside the home, to which he occasionally returns, having "brought home the bacon." A popular Victorian poem called "The Angel in the House" depicts the concept of the ideal woman as one who is wife, mother, and keeper of home.

**Imperialism/Colonialism**: Although closely related in meaning, the former term usually emphasizes the ideology behind empire building, much like Marlow describes the Roman conquest of Britain at the beginning of Heart of Darkness. Colonialism is usually distinguished as the actual practice of establishing settlements in foreign territories for the purpose of commerce and economic gain, basically what the company that Marlow works for is up to in the Congo.

**Modernism**:  a broad term denoting various movements and experiments in the arts, beginning in the latter decades of the 19th century and generally considered as ended by WWII.  One of the hallmarks of is a fierce rejection and break of traditional forms and overall past methods of expression.  As modernist Ezra Pound famously claimed, “Make it new!”  WWI is often seen as the pivotal world event that became the cause of some common modernist themes, such as the isolation and alienation of the self in an increasingly complex and disordered world.  To that end, many modernist writers’ experimentations on the page focus on new ways of conveying the concept of individuality.  The technique of “stream of consciousness, as a method of representing the inner workings of the self, is one example.

T.S. Eliot was at the forefront of the modernist movement in literature.  Heart of Darkness is often read in modernist contexts as well.

**Epiphany**: From Ancient Greek, the word means “manifestation or sudden occurrence.”  The Christian Epiphany is based on observance/celebration of the Magi.  In literature, epiphany means “sudden realization” of an idea, a moment of “Eureka.”  James Joyce is said to have organized his stories around specific epiphanies of his main characters.

**Allusion**: In literature, a reference, either direct or inferred, to another work of literature.  T.S. Eliot’s *The Wasteland* is an amalgamation of allusions.