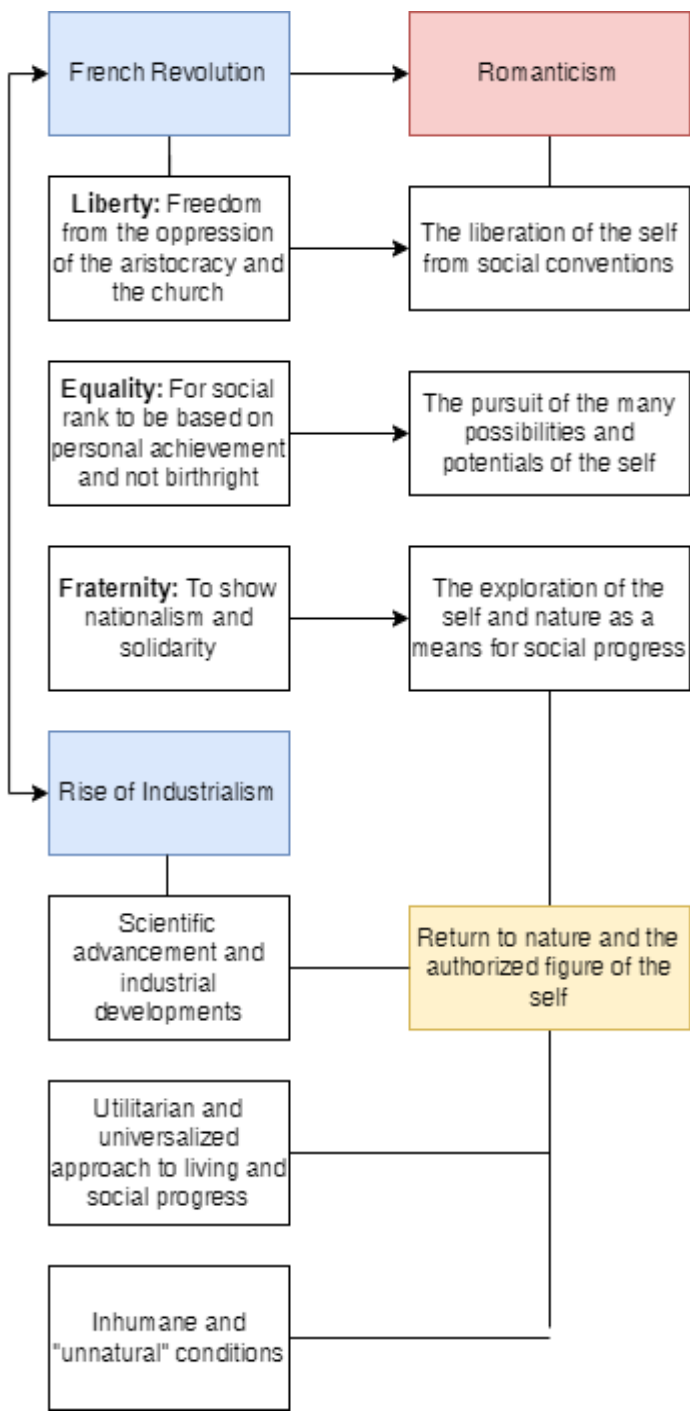


**FACT SHEET**  
**I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud**  
**(Age of Romanticism)**

**A Background to Romanticism**

The Romantic Period in English Literature was notable for one important contribution: the inclusion of individual thought and personal feeling -- an outright rejection of the coldness and impersonality of Neo-Classical and Enlightenment Periods.

According to Benin (2019), changes in philosophy, politics, religion, literature, painting, and music took place during this period and all these changes were represented, articulated, and symbolized by the English Romantic poets.



**Nature**  
There is a growing interest in scenery, especially its more untamed and disorderly manifestations. There is an association of human moods with the “moods” of nature.

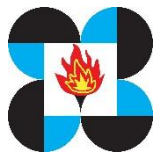
**Spontaneity and Natural Genius**  
There is an emphasis on the need for spontaneity in thought and action and in the expression of thought.

**Poet-prophet**  
The poet emerged as a person endowed with a special kind of faculty which set them apart from their fellows.

**Imagination**  
It became the peculiar gift of the poet and a person's important endeavor.

Romantic writers looked inwards to their souls and imaginations to find private truths for special readers. Romantic poets attached more importance to the role of the imagination in the creative processes. They believed imagination was an ability of the mind to apprehend a kind of truth and reality which lay beyond sensory impressions, reason, and rational intellect.

At its core, Romanticism is the defiance of the establishment and the buttressing of individualism. Romanticism in poetry can be defined as the development of individualism and an embrace of the natural world in poetic form. Many Romantic poets revered idealism, emotional passion, and mysticism in their works.



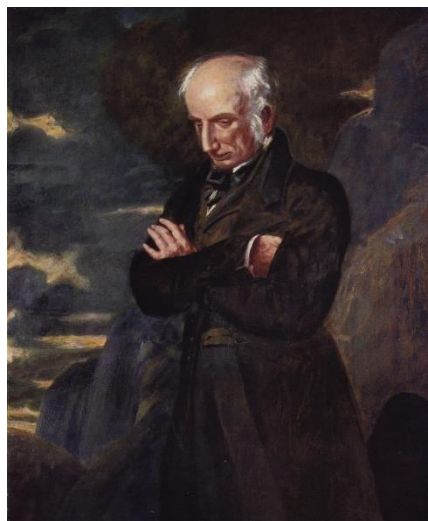
### Reason versus Imagination

1. Reason is limited to the selfish constraints of the liberal self but is not necessarily dismissed as a binary counterpart of imagination.
2. Imagination has the power to place the self in a "larger empathetic scheme" and is used to perceive beyond material and commercial efficiency.
3. Irony is not merely a literary device but a medium to view many irreconcilable perspectives in the world rejected by logic and reason because of their arrogant claims, and absolutist and definitive manner of making meaning.

### The self and nature

1. Supports intense individualism based on experience and perception when interacting with nature and the outside world
2. Resulted in the value of originality, uniqueness, and boundaries of human experience rather than filtered experience through historical lenses
3. The capacity to explore boundaries and unify one's complex understanding of the world is possible through a poet's imagination

Major poets who ascribed to Romantic principles in their poetry were William Blake, Samuel Coleridge, and William Wordsworth.



#### William Wordsworth

- Known for his lyric poetry
- Used simple, democratic language
- Believed nature elevates the soul and has a positive influence on human thoughts and feelings

Disillusioned by the grave effects of the French Revolution, Wordsworth founded his identity as a poet by returning to nature (one's true self). He said:

"...all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings... our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings..."

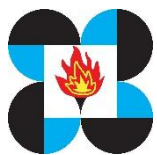
### Lyric Poetry

A **lyric poem** expresses the speaker's emotions or thoughts, just like the songs of today. Just like songs, lyric poems always have a musical quality, or a specific melody which makes it easy to set them to music. Lyric poetry, for the most part, is short and written from the first-person point of view. To speak from a first-person point of view, the poet takes on a dramatic character or persona, who is the speaker of the poem.

Lyric poetry comes from the ancient Greek word lyre, which refers to the instrument that often accompanied the reading of the poems in the Ancient world.

#### Form of the poem / *Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*

- Four sestets
- Iambic tetrameter
- Rhyme scheme of ABABCC with internal and terminal rhymes
- Past tense in the first three stanzas and present tense in the fourth stanza



## Figures of Speech

- **Assonance**  
*A host, of golden daffodils;*
- **Alliteration**  
*Beside the lake, beneath the trees,*
- **Simile**  
*I wandered lonely as a cloud*
- **Hyperbole**  
*They stretched in never-ending line*
- **Personification**  
*Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*
- **Caesura**  
*I gazed—and gazed—but little thought*
- **Enjambment**  
*The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:*

## In summary, Romanticism:

- Aims to accommodate the conflicting perspectives of human nature through imagination and nature
- Responds to utilitarian, mechanistic, and commercialized understanding of the self in the Enlightenment Period and the rise of Industrialism
- Supports individual liberation but this individualism is not the same as the self being an economic unit rather a more authentic ego beyond social conventions

### Did you know?

Taylor Swift's song "the lakes" references to the Romantic poets, specifically the Lake Poets of England which includes William Wordsworth. Lyrics below:

*Take me to the lakes where all the poets went to die  
I don't belong, and my beloved, neither do you  
Those Windermere peaks look like a perfect place to cry  
I'm setting off, but not without my muse  
What should be over burrowed under my skin  
In heart-stopping waves of hurt  
I've come too far to watch some namedropping sleaze  
Tell me what are my words worth*

#

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Sources not cited here are found in the SLGs.