Lesson 5  *Romanticism and Realism*

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

*How can innovation affect ways of life?*

*How does revolution bring about political and economic change?*

**Reading HELPDESK**

**Content Vocabulary**

**romanticism** an intellectual movement that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century in reaction to the ideas of the Enlightenment; it stressed feelings, emotion, and imagination as sources of knowing

**secularization** indifference to or rejection of religion or religious consideration

**natural selection** the principle that some organisms are more adaptable to the environment than others

**realism** mid-nineteenth century movement that rejected romanticism and sought to portray lower- and middle-class life as it actually was

**Academic Vocabulary**

**individuality** a total character that distinguishes an individual from others

**approach** the way or method one examines or studies an issue or a concept
TAKING NOTES: Listing Examples

ACTIVITY Use a table like this one to list examples of literature from the romantic and realist movements.

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<th>Romanticism</th>
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IT MATTERS BECAUSE
The intellectual movement called romanticism began as a reaction to the Enlightenment and to the Industrial Revolution. Romantics believed that emotions, not reason, should guide them. By the mid-nineteenth century, realism was taking romanticism’s place. This movement focused on the everyday world and ordinary people.

Romanticism
GUIDING QUESTION How did the idea of romanticism differ from those of the Enlightenment?

During the Enlightenment, reason was believed to be the way to find truth. Thinkers valued reason more than emotions. At the end of the 1700s, a new intellectual movement emerged as a reaction to these ideas. The movement was known as romanticism. Romantics placed importance on feelings, emotion, and imagination, which they viewed as the main way of knowing.

Romantics also valued individualism, the belief that each person is unique or special. To express individuality, many romantics rebelled against middle-class conventions. Men grew long hair and beards, and both men and women wore outrageous clothes.

Many romantics had a strong interest in the past, especially the Middle Ages. Romantic architects revived medieval styles, and they built castles, cathedrals, city halls, parliamentary buildings, and even railway stations in a style called neo-Gothic. The British Houses of Parliament in London are a major example of this architectural style.

Romanticism in Art and Music
Romantic artists shared at least two features. First, to them, all art reflected the artist’s inner feelings. A painting should mirror the way the artist viewed the world. It should be an instrument of the artist’s own imagination. Second, romantic artists abandoned classical reason for warmth and emotion.

Eugène Delacroix (deh•luh•KWAH) was one of the most famous romantic painters from France. His paintings often showed two chief characteristics: he was fascinated by the exotic, scenes and people from distant lands and unfamiliar
cultures, and he had a passion for color. His paintings clearly show his belief that “a painting should be a feast to the eye.”

Romantic trends also dominated music in the first half of the nineteenth century. One of the composers of this time period was Ludwig van Beethoven. Beethoven’s early work was written in the classical form of the eighteenth century. His Third Symphony, however, embodied the ideals of romanticism. It consists of powerful melodies that create intense feelings. Beethoven explained that he used music to express his deepest feelings. He said, “I must write [music]—for what weighs on my heart I must express.”

**Romanticism in Literature**

Literature was also deeply influenced by the romantics’ interest in the past. Sir Walter Scott’s Ivanhoe, a bestseller in the early 1800s, was a novel that told of clashes between knights in medieval England. Many romantic writers chose medieval subjects. They wrote stories that expressed their strong nationalism.

Many romantic writers shared an attraction to the exotic and unfamiliar. Gothic literature reflected this attraction. Mary Shelley’s novel Frankenstein (Britain) and Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories of horror (United States) are key examples of this kind of literature. Some romantics sought the unusual in their own lives. They explored their dreams and nightmares, and they looked for altered states of consciousness, which were different from the normal condition of being awake and which were thought to help artistic creation.

The romantics viewed poetry as the direct expression of the soul. Romantic poetry gave expression to one of the most important characteristics of romanticism—its love of nature. Romantics believed that nature was like a mirror in which humans could look to learn about themselves. This is especially clear in the poetry of William Wordsworth. He is the most important English romantic poet of nature. His experience with nature was a strong emotional one, almost like a religious experience. In one poem, Wordsworth wrote that walking through a wood in spring can teach a person more about good and evil than wise teachers can.

Wordsworth and other romantic poets were critical of eighteenth-century science. For scientists, nature became a cold object of study. Wordsworth and other romantics reacted to scientists’ dry, mathematical approach to life and learning. They believed this approach did not allow for imagination or for the human soul. Many romantics had negative reactions to industrialization as well. They believed the industrialization would separate people from their real emotions and from the natural world.

**PROGRESS CHECK**

**Drawing Conclusions** How did science and industrialization contribute to the development of romanticism’s celebration of nature?

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New Age of Science

GUIDING QUESTION How did advances in science influence life during the Industrial Revolution?

The Scientific Revolution created a modern approach to the study of the natural world, which was based on reason. For a long time, only the educated elite understood the importance of science. The Industrial Revolution created more interest in scientific research. By the 1830s, new scientific discoveries led to benefits that affected all Europeans. People felt the impact of science in their everyday lives.

Louis Pasteur was a French biologist who proposed the germ theory of disease. He explained for the first time that small living things caused illness. This theory was of major importance in modern scientific medical practices. In the 1860s, the chemist Russian Dmitry Mendeleev classified all the material elements then known. He used their atomic weights as the basis for classification. In Great Britain, Michael Faraday built a simple generator, which was an early step in the use of electricity.

European faith in science grew as people experienced benefits like these. This faith in science made many people question their religious faith. As a result, the nineteenth century became an age of increasing secularization, which is indifference to religion or the rejection of religion. Many people believed that truth was now to be found in science and concrete things that could be seen and touched.

At the time, it was Charles Darwin who promoted the idea that humans are material beings that are a part of the natural world. In 1859 Charles Darwin published On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection. The basic idea of this book was that each species, or kind, of plant and animal had evolved, or developed slowly, over a long period of time from earlier, simpler forms of life. Darwin called this principle organic evolution.

How did this natural process work? Darwin proposed that not all individuals of a species can survive. More individuals are born than an environment can support. Some individuals are born with some differences that help them survive better. Darwin called this process natural selection.

Those individuals with characteristics that help them survive better will live and have young. This process is called “survival of the fittest.” They can then pass the helpful characteristics on to the next generation. In each generation, this process occurs. Eventually, a new species will emerge as a result of all these changes. In The Descent of Man, published in 1871, Darwin argued that human beings had animal origins and that they followed the same process of development as other species.

Darwin’s ideas raised a storm of controversy. Some people did not take Darwin’s ideas seriously. Other people argued that Darwin’s theory made human beings ordinary products of nature, not unique creations of God. Others were bothered by his idea of life as a mere struggle for survival. Some believers in religion felt Darwin did not recognize God’s role in creation. Some critics made fun of Darwin and showed him in a negative light in cartoons. Over time, however, many scientists and other intellectuals accepted Darwin’s theory. His theory changed the way of thinking in many other areas of study, from biology to anthropology.
Realism

GUIDING QUESTION What factors contributed to the movement known as realism?

After 1850, the belief that the world should be viewed realistically was often expressed. It was closely related to the scientific outlook. In politics, Bismarck practiced the "politics of reality." That is, he made decisions based on practical matters rather than on moral values. Realism also became a movement in the literary and visual arts. The artists in this movement tried to show life as it truly was.

Literary realists of the mid-nineteenth century rejected romanticism. They wrote about ordinary characters from everyday life. They were not interested in romantic heroes in exotic settings. They also tried to avoid emotional language by using precise description. They preferred novels to poems. Many of these writers combined their interest in everyday life with an examination of important social issues or problems. These artists expressed their social views through the characters they created in their novels.

The French author Gustave Flaubert was a leading novelist of the 1850s and 1860s. He perfected the realist novel. His work Madame Bovary presents a critical description of small-town life in France. In Great Britain, Charles Dickens became a huge success. His novels showed the realities of life for the lower and middle classes in the early Industrial Age. Novels such as Oliver Twist and David Copperfield created a vivid picture of the brutal life of London's poor.

Realism became dominant in art after 1850. Realist artists showed the everyday life of ordinary people and the world of nature in works that had the lifelike details of photographs. The French became leaders in realist painting.

The French painter Gustave Courbet was the most famous artist of the realist school. Like other realists, he loved to portray scenes from everyday life. Factory workers and peasants were often the subjects of his paintings. Courbet explained that he was interested in what he knew and saw, not in the things that are imagined like angels or gods. To Courbet, no subject was too ordinary.

PROGRESS CHECK

Predicting Consequences Why might the work of realists, like Charles Dickens, have inspired social reform?