

Jane Austen &
The Romantic Period

In

Sense and Sensibility



Jane Austen

Biography

- Jane Austen born 1775, died 1817

- Charles Dickens 1812-1870

- Jane's birthplace: England (Steventon in Hampshire)
- Her father was a clergyman / her mother from the upper-class
- Jane well-educated for a woman of her time/read extensively/parents encouraged Jane and her siblings in their reading, writing, and productions of plays and charades/ Family ardently supported her writing efforts and publication of work
- Jane's talent as a writer is recognized early on. But, it is not until later in life that she publishes 4 of her novels which receive wide recognition before she succumbs to Addison's disease (a serious ailment affecting the cortex of the adrenal glands)

More biography

Jane Austen never married.

[She is reported to have fallen in love with a young man whose family of high social standing did not approve of her as a match for him. His family desired that he marry a very wealthy young woman and separated the two. Also, reported to have fallen in love with a young clergyman who died suddenly. And, agreed to marry a wealthy man but broke off the engagement the next morning.]

Austen's Novels

Settings: English countryside, London, Bath [upper middle class English country environment]

Subjects: All novels center around a young heroine, her courtship, and marriage. All novels end with at least one marriage.

Plots: do not depend on coincidence or exciting events-(a.k.a. Dickens's plotlines) Austen shows how much meaning and drama can result from misunderstood feelings, the neglect of social obligations, and ordinary human weaknesses.



The Regency Period

The Regency period lasted a mere nine years, from February 1811 until January 1820. (In 1810, George III was taken seriously ill. He was declared incapable of ruling because of mental incapacity and the Regency Act was passed the following year making his son George Prince Regent to rule in his stead. The Regency lasted until George III's death in 1820 when the Regent became King George IV and was able to rule in his own right.

The Regency period is epitomized by the Regent himself. As a young man, George IV was a handsome and personable figure, described as “the first gentleman of England”. The romantic figure of Pranny had almost disappeared by the time the long-awaited Regency started. He had become fat and his extravagant habits had made him unpopular and, as the years progressed, he became more and more reclusive.

But to the modern reader, the Regent in his youth represents the world of glamorous elegance, extravagant follies and romantic liaisons. It is this image of George IV as a young man that embodies the Regency, an image that was established long before he ever became Regent. **Jane Austen had no respect for the Prince Regent.**

More about the Regency Period

- The era 1795-1830 , a dramatic period in history, a time of war, gaiety, sorrow, pain, hedonism.
- Social manners to an ultimate degree
10 ways to be considered vulgar in the Regency
Period
- 1. Broadcast your knowledge and opinions widely.

More...

- 2. Remember: what happens in Scotland, stays in Scotland. It's the place of choice for hasty marriages and elopements.
- 3. Be cutting edge with fashion. Put some plums on your bonnet, even if no one else is doing it.
- Carry on a conversation with someone to whom you have not been introduced.
- Have a prominent relative? Be sure to spread the word so everyone knows your influence in society.

6. Gossip!! And use slang when you do!

7. Hey fellas! Do you fancy a special lady? Take her for a ride in your carriage..without an escort!

8. Laugh. Loudly! And as often as you can.

- 9. Touch a member of the opposite anywhere in public.
- 10. As a woman, write and publish a novel- and take credit for your work.

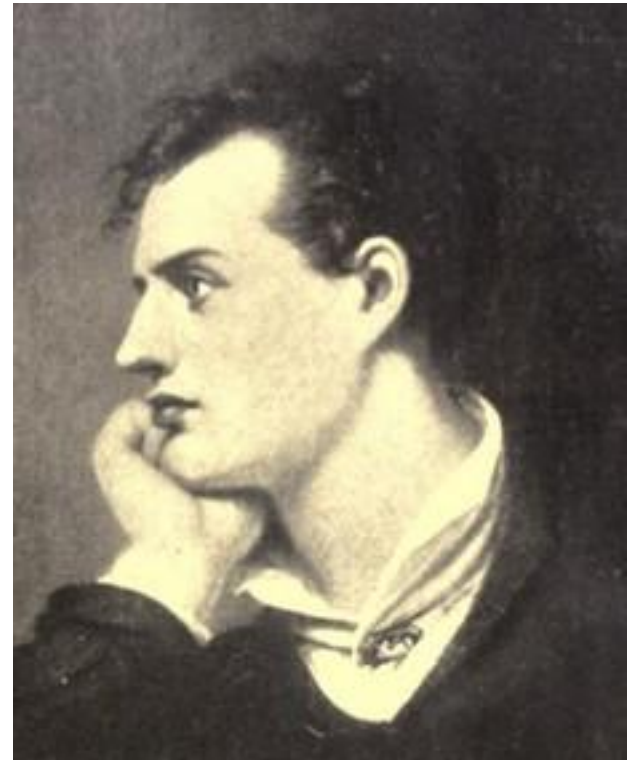
Romanticism

The Romantic Movement was well-established by the time the Regency started. **This was a time that was rich in literature, both poetry and prose. It was the time of the Romantic poets like Wordsworth, Byron, Coleridge and Shelley and the Romantic novelist, Sir Walter Scott. Constable and Turner were painting and Beethoven was composing. The Regency finished, but the Romantics went on.**

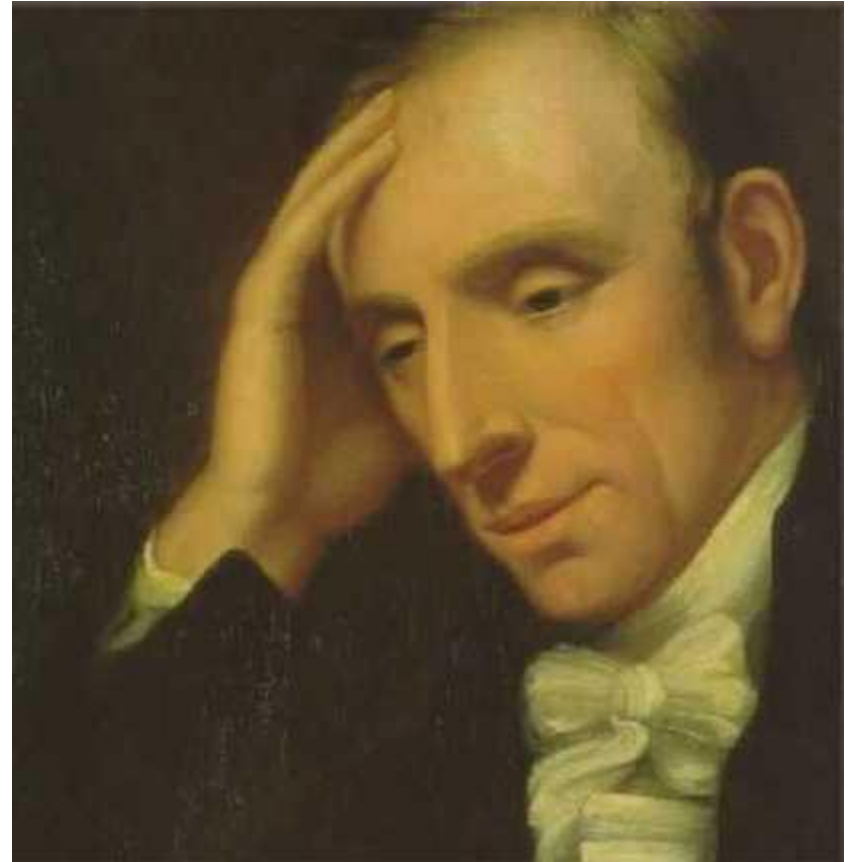
The Romantics



Romantic Poets



More Romantic Poets



Characteristics of the Romantic Era

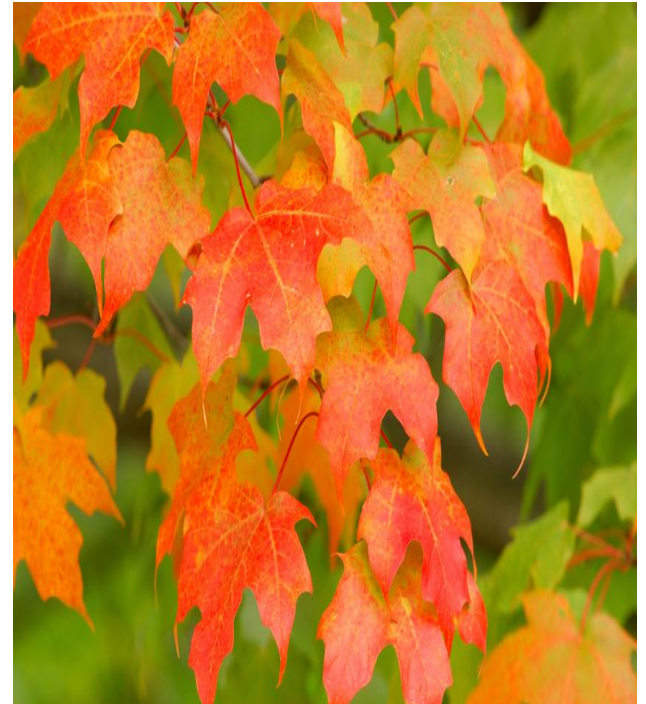
- Emphasizes passion rather than reason
- Imagination and intuition take precedence over logic
- Full expression of emotion, free spontaneous action rather than restraint and order “If it feels good, it must be right?”
- A yearning for the infinite- William Blake thought he could “see a world in a grain of sand.”
- View nature as a living spirit, attuned to human feelings of love and compassion

More about the Romantics

- Rejects restricting social conventions and unjust political rule.
- One must be in harmony with nature, must contemplate, celebrate nature

Austen on Romanticism

Austen disliked sensibility, or romantic hysteria, a distinct perspective that characterized much of her later writing.



Sense and Sensibility

Sense-possessing judgment and intelligence



Sensibility-capacity for refined emotional response to feelings and experiences, involving delicate sensitivity to moral and aesthetic issues



Realities of Austen's World

- Women must marry to be supported financially (rare exceptions)
- One does not marry outside his/her social class
- Result? Some unhappy marriages
- Much pressure for women to marry- families could not always support the unmarried daughters

What to do in this society?

- Middle to upper class: Social parties and balls were held often. Dancing was a favorite pastime.
- Outings/picnics in the countryside
- Men- hunting, seeing about your landholdings
- Reading/ women and men
- Women-embroidery, painting, play music