

# From Romanticism to Modernity: The Continuing Impact of Romantic Poetic Themes

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## Abstract

This study explores the major themes and literary characteristics of the Romantic Period, particularly focusing on the works of William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Emerging during the Age of Revolution, Romanticism developed as a reaction against the social, political, and industrial changes brought by the French and American Revolutions. Romantic poets emphasized imagination, emotion, nature, beauty, and individual expression in their poetry. The study examines the contribution of Wordsworth and Coleridge through their collaborative work *Lyrical Ballads* and analyzes important poems such as “Tintern Abbey,” “Kubla Khan,” and “Frost at Midnight.” Furthermore, it highlights the relevance of Romantic themes in the modern world, particularly the connection between nature and human spirituality. The research also discusses the role of imagination, symbolism, and supernatural elements in Romantic poetry and demonstrates how Romantic literature continues to influence contemporary thought and literary studies.

**Keywords:** Revolution, Romanticism, Tintern Abbey, Kubla Khan, Revolution

## Introduction

Romantic period and age of revolution occur at the same time. Due to the French revolution and American revolutions, there came changes in the society which were social, political and economic changes in the traditions of that time period. Romantic period or romantic age was on its peak from year 1798 to 1850. The poet like William Wordsworth and Coleridge started writing poetry. They wrote a book of poems named “*Lyrical Ballad*”. The rime of ancient mariner was the first poem of that book while Tintern Abbey as the last poem of that book. The style of their writing poem was different from others as they used supernatural imagination for

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creating a creative aesthetic. Their themes in the poetry were different from others. Theme of their poetry were based on love, nature, sensitivity, expression of thoughts, political aesthetics, sensibility and super-naturalism. They wrote different types of poetry in which includes; lyric, ode and sonnet. They used simple diction, free verses and blank verses in their poetry. Most of their poems were of shorter length.

Romanticists were the one who reacted against the traditions and practices of that particular time and adopted new ways. Romantic writers were the one who wrote on the subject of love, nature and beauty. William Wordsworth and Coleridge both were Romanticist. William Wordsworth talked about nature in his poems while Coleridge talked about imagination in his poem. That's why William Wordsworth is known as the poet of nature while Coleridge is known as the poet of imagination. Romanticist takes art as Art for the art sake. They deal "Nature" as a subject. They took and meant nature in many different ways. For example, in the poem "Tintern Abbey" written by William Wordsworth he says that "Nature leads us towards GOD" The more we became closer towards nature the more we became closer towards GOD. The things they observe in nature they write it done in the form of poetry. Nature is the greater source of inspiration for romanticist.

### **William Wordsworth Background as an Author (1770-1850)**

In 1770 William Wordsworth was in Cocker which is situated in the mouth of Cumberland in the lake district, he lived his life and grew up. The place where he grew up was full of beautiful mountains, flowing streams, many lakes were there. This place is situated in the area of the north west of England near the border of Scotland. The surrounding in which he grew up was full of natural beauty and later on this natural beauty become source of inspiration for him. He was very young when (at the age of eight years) his mother died and later on when he was thirteen years his father also died. So, in his childhood, he started facing a lot of problems. He had a lack of comfortable life and a happy home environment which is necessary for every child in his childhood to enjoy his life comfortably and happily.

Like his friend Samuel Coleridge, he also faced a lot of problems in his childhood. A very little amount of money was left by his parents for him. In 1787 William Wordsworth was unable to attend the Cambridge University because of boring curriculum of that university. In the year 1790, like a Peddler with his fellow students he travelled on foot and made a wonderful tour to the "ALPS" through the country of "FRANCE". He was a part of that revolutionary movement started from France in

the year 1802 the money which was left by his father for him was inherited by him. After getting that money, there was a female childhood friend of him who belong to lake district. He got married to her. In the year 1802 he suffered from a great loss and disaster. His brother was very near and dear to him. He was a captain of the ship and his ship drowned in the sea and he got died in this disaster.

The universality of being is represented by our existence upon the mind of the child. The undeniable laws of nature which the inner eye of the blind can see and the deaf is able to read because of universality of being. In the poem "We are Seven" written by William Wordsworth, he expresses the feeling of child beautifully that how child feel closer towards nature. He is unaware about the limits of time, space and thoughts. The child is unable to make a difference between the world of heaven and the world of earth. Those brothers and sisters who got died they are still the same in relation and a family people consider them a part of their family in the real sense of truth. Death is actually the new birth and within it there is a strength of being one. In the age of childhood, it is expressed unconsciously and this is a hint of immortality.

### **Background of Samuel Taylor Coleridge as an Author (1772-1834)**

In the year 1772, Samuel Coleridge was born in England. In the place Ottery St. Marry, Devon which is the town of England. The name of his father was Reverend John Coleridge. In the town, his father was a respected priest and he was also the head master of the school named Henry VIII's Free Grammar School. After his father's death, he was sent to the hospital named Christ's Hospital. It was a charity school which was in Grey Friars, in London and was founded in 16th century. In this school, all of his childhood days he lived there. While living there in the charity school, he was studying and writing poetry. In his whole life, Coleridge always thinks about his father as one of the innocent and the pious person. While the relationship of Coleridge was more problematic with his mother throughout his life.

While studying in the school, Coleridge wrote a poem named "Frost at Midnight" In this poem, he wrote about his loneliness. From the year 1791 to the year 1794 he studied at Jesus College at Cambridge. As he was a good poet, he wrote an Ode poem in the year 1792. This central theme of the poem was slave trade. He won The Brown Gold Medal for writing this piece of work. In the year 1798 Coleridge and William Wordsworth worked together and wrote a joint poetry volume named as "Lyrical Ballads" This volume of the poetry was proved as the beginning of an English Romantic Movement.

In his poetic career Coleridge started defining the poetry and practiced the art of poetry as a critic in the thirteen year. He promoted and supported the poetry of William Wordsworth. The new critical German philosophy of Friedrich von Schelling and Immanuel Kant Coleridge was responsible for importing that philosophy. The discussions of Coleridge on the imagination remain the clash for the other critics. In the year of 1920s the notations of Coleridge on the language played important role in the development and making foundation of the English of Cambridge.

As Coleridge was opium addicted so he also increased the use of opium and mostly he was dependent on opium. On the other hand, some tensions were also going on with his friend William Wordsworth. All these circumstances affected him badly and in his poetic power he felt lack of confidence. The things which gave strength to his work of sadness and miseries were an Ode and the rise in his studies of philosophy in the year 1834. He died on 25 of July at the place of High gate.

### **The Romantic Tenets in the Poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge “Kubla Khan”**

The poem “Kubla Khan” was written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It is one of the famous poems of the romantic time period. He was under opium effect when he wrote this poem. The poem title was a name of the ruler. The speaker explains about the Kubla Khan who was lived in Xanadu. The place where this stately joyful dome is built is in the place of the holy river ALPH. The poet explains the grandeur and the beauty of the great Mongol Emperor of China which is located in Xanadu.

### **“Frost at Midnight”**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote a lot of poems. Frost at Midnight is beautiful and famous poem written by him. In the poem, the poet begins by saying a perform of its covert or secret ministry. At that night, when the wind was not blowing, the cry of the owl disturbs the silence. The speaker inmate sits lonely. The speaker in the poem tells that he was a day dreamer about the place where he was born and the bell of the church tower when it rang its sound was so sweet in the fair day. It is basically Coleridge himself who talks about the abiding themes of romanticism of early English time period. He talks about the effect which is produced by nature. He considers nature as a good teacher.

### **Motifs, Themes and Symbols used in the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

Coleridge was of the belief that an active and strong imagination can become a cause of change in the bad situations. He wrote many poems and his poems are mostly based on the imaginative flights. It was a new concept at that time and it was against the tradition of that time. He wrote a poem "This lime-tree bower my prison" in the year 1797. He made a use of imagination which is not possible in ordinary life. It gives us pleasure when we imagine the power of pleasure. In the poetry of Coleridge, conflicts between religion and philosophy were discussed.

Many poems written by Coleridge addresses the single speaker in which it includes son, wife, friend and so on. He wrote some of his poems by using blank verse.

Close observation, and precise descriptions of color aptly demonstrate Coleridge's respect and delight. Some poems such as "Youth and Age" (1834) and "Frost at Midnight" mourn the speaker's physical isolation from the outside world. Other poems like "The Nightingale" (1798) simply praise nature's beauty. The poem which does not directly deal with nature including "Kubla Khan" and "The Rime of Ancient Mariner" derive some symbols and images from nature. However, Coleridge suffered from nightmares that sometimes his own screams would wake him, a phenomenon he details in "The Pains of Sleep", opium probably gave Coleridge a sense of well-being that allowed him to sleep without the threat of nightmares.

In the present study, the researcher has concentrated and emphasized on the relevance and importance of the themes of the romantic poetry to the current world. A romanticist believes that by using the external and physical things we can change the internal world and working of man. In the natural land these all physical and external elements are seen. These all things are made beautifully and they look pure, peaceful and good.

The importance of current research is to justify that how the writers of the romantic time period has used imagery and thematic composition in their work. The themes of the romantic poetry were based on supernaturalism and nature. To convey the image to the reader romanticists used different literary and figurative devices like metaphors, personification and similes. So, the reader thinks that everything is happening in front of him.

## Review of the Literature

In the romantic time period the value was given to art and the self-creativity of the individual. More importance was given to the thoughts and emotions. The movement of romanticists was against enlightenment. Romanticist gave importance to nature while in empiricism and rationalism people go for the reason. George Wilhelm Frederic Hegel, Joseph Von Schelling were the writers and philosophers who supported the romanticist movement and they were also a part of that movement. The poet like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were also a part of romanticist movement in Britain. According to romantic poets they thought that nature is powerful and supreme. They said that if someone wants to see nature, it is in man and if someone wants to see man he is in nature.

The pleasure which mind gains through understanding of the universe is of great value to the poetic mind. William Wordsworth was a poet of nature and he calls himself that he is a worshiper of the nature. A time when we feel tired, nature is one which gives us the sweet feeling of calmness and our mind feel relax. (Tintern Abbey 28-31) Additionally, we have the organic theory of Samuel Taylor Coleridge which states that childhood governed by sensation, maturity governed by thoughts and sober reflection and youth govern by emotions and passions. Romanticist had an idea about nature that nature had the ability to influence the mind of the reader. In the poem "Michael" gave wonderful description about nature and its impact on the human mind and how it impressed the human mind with his beauty. It tells that whatever we experience in nature it has end with its own limit. Besides, in the year 1962, Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote, he is of the view that when the man was born he was free but now he is in chains.

Romanticism was movement against the mechanism and about the age of reason in which people went for reason behind everything. During the time period of 18th century in the modern industrialized culture in Europe mechanism remained an unresolved sub-text. It emerged for a short span of time. In the time period of certain era some of the writers think that mechanism makes individual unable to express personal freedom of thoughts. Walt Whitman, Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson in the perspective of American time period of change these writers were most active during the romanticist movement. There were some writers who were not much happy with this movement such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Melville. The acceptance of romanticism was unbearable for such writers.

## **William Wordsworth's Poetry Nature**

Different scholars have different views regarding the poetry of William Wordsworth poetry. The world book "Encyclopedia" (Vol. 16, 1990) tells that to the rest of the scientific knowledge research William Wordsworth refers to a reflective empty and thoughtful mood. According to a poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, he tells that like the art of God he considers nature as a religious observer. Thomas Hardy believes that universe is consist of man, rivers, seas, mountains, the sun and animals. It is considered as overpowering force. (Roman Selden, 1988) William Wordsworth is of the view that nature speak and talk to him and he respond to the nature. The nature of William Wordsworth makes us away from the postmodern world. Scholars and writers give a big tribute to the Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth on writing the beautiful volume of poem written by them with a title called (Lyrical Ballad, 1778)

William Wordsworth is someone who sees and thought about himself that whole world would learn from him. (Salvasen, 1976) At the end of the "Prelude" he addresses Coleridge as a prophet of the nature. He makes a conclusion that the remorse and guilt is a part of imagination. He also considers them a part of nature. Datches tells that the poetry of William Wordsworth gives us the view of the human being closeness towards nature. And how the internal nature of the human being is affected and influenced by the external nature which we see in the form of physical things around us. There are some poems of William Wordsworth in which he talked about the moral passion. William Wordsworth style influenced the reader with his conveying powerful thoughts. The style how he expresses his thought in the poem are in a great way. (Adewoye, 2006)

(Abrams, 1992) includes his opinion about William Wordsworth that he is the radical and fundamental poet who went against the tradition and norms. He uses different style while writing poetry than the traditional one. He thinks about the William Wordsworth that his thoughts are the traditional violations. He went against the tradition of the literary world. While going against the tradition he uses the common man language in his poetry. A common person was unable to understand. He changes the writing style of the classical poet by using simple and ordinary language. He went against the praise of the aristocratic class of the society. While other poets use high profile diction in their work and they wrote for the upper class of the society. William Wordsworth talked about the middle class and lower class of the society and they were the main subject of his poetry. (Ajibade; 2003)

## **The Nature of the Poetry of the Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a Romanticist. In the time period of Romanticism, he wrote a lot of poems. He was a romantic poet and as well as a good literary critic. He also had different opinions and views. He has published the volume of poems named as “Lyrical Ballad” with the collaboration of William Wordsworth. The both believed on the power of nature. According to them nature is powerful. But Samuel Taylor Coleridge was true towards his believes of Christianity.

In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge separated the imagination in the two. One is primary imagination and the other is secondary imagination. He tells about primary imagination. That primary imagination is universal and it is present in all human perception. The creation which man see in daily life tells about the power of God to the individual. And he became aware of the power of God by watching and observing them. Coleridge differentiate the work of the visualization that change their order and arrange the past incidents and memories through imagination. In the English poetry Coleridge is considered one of the important figures. Whatever he wrote in his poetry, it influenced the poets of that era. Coleridge’s philosophy of poetry had great influence in the field of criticism.

## **Methodology**

### **❖ Quantitative Research**

The method which is used in this research is quantitative. It is mainly an exploratory research. That is applied to attain the understanding of the opinions and motivations as well as the underlying reasons. It gives us the description of the problem and helps in developing ideas and the hypothesis for the quantitative research.

### **❖ Population**

The targeted population who were selected for conducting research was the learner of the romantic poetic themes.

### **❖ Sample**

A convenience sample of 40 learners of M.A English romantic poetry were chosen by means of convenience sampling. Students for both male and female were selected equally and all were of the age 20-25.

### ❖ Data Collection

The data for this research is collected from the internet sources and some of the data is collected from the text. The text which was related to the romantic poetry themes to the modern world.

### Data Analysis

Q.1: Do you enjoy nature after reading Wordsworth's poetry?

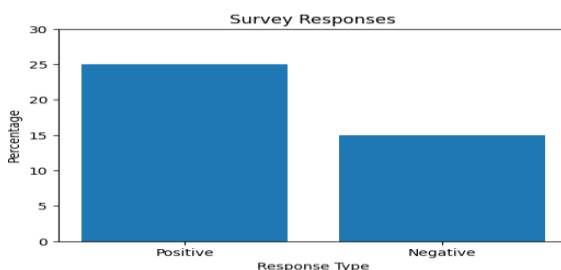


Figure: 1

It indicates that most of the students replied positively that they feel change about how they enjoyed and how they should enjoy nature. They started to enjoy nature after reading the poems of Wordsworth. It enhances a person's enjoyment of nature and transforming more emotional experience. His works enable readers to think beyond superficial observation and perceive the spiritual power of the natural world.

Q. 2: After reading the poem "Daffodil", do you see any such image if you visit the park?

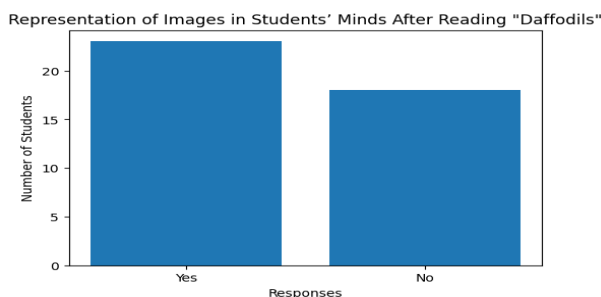


Figure: 2

It indicates that the researcher found an interesting situation that some of the students claimed that they found difference in their visit to the park but many of

them remained to say that they felt no change. After reading this poem, the reader feels a sense of joy, bringing a wealth of happiness, enjoyment.

Q.3: Can you imagine things or feel positive difference in your imagination after reading the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge?

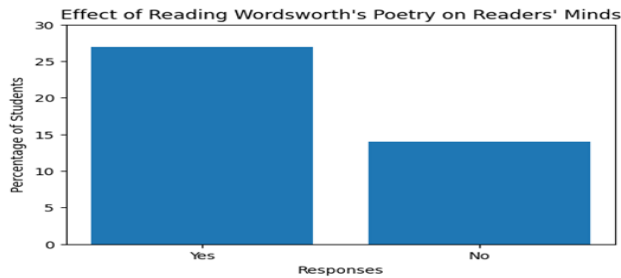


Figure: 3

A lot of students claimed that they feel positive difference in their imagination and their imagination has been increased after reading the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge significantly enhances the reader's sense of imagination and create a positive sense among the readers that how they perceive the world because his poetry contain imagery, dream like visions and supernatural elements. These elements encourage an active rather than passive mental state.

Q.4: Do you agree with the idea of William Wordsworth that nature is manifestation of God?

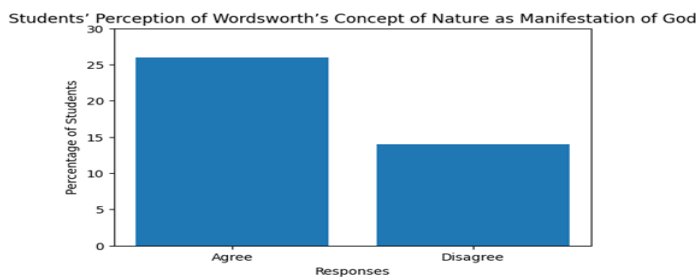


Figure: 4

It indicates that many students went in favor of the idea presented by Wordsworth that nature is manifestation of God. William Wordsworth often known as the "High

Priest of Nature” evolved from simply loving the external beauty of nature to perceive a divine spirit pervading all objects of the universe.

Q.5: Can you visualize the beauty and greatness of the palace and rule of Kublai Khan?

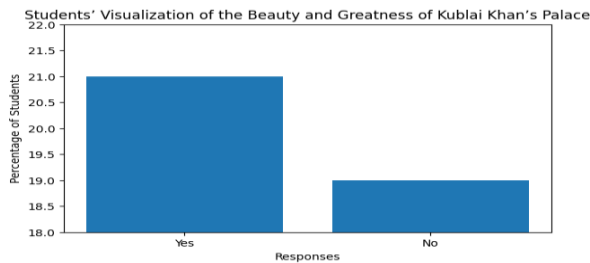


Figure: 5

Most of the students were of the view that they can have an idea how great and how much beautiful it was? The halls of palace were gilded and decorated with paintings of animals, birds, and flowers. It included a “cane palace” an ornate bamboo structure that could be taken apart, combining nomadic design with Chinese craftsmanship. The grounds featured 16 miles of parks, fountains, and rivers, filled with wildlife for hunting. The “Green Hill” Grove: Kublai created an artificial hill covered with evergreens brought in by elephants. The top was adorned with green lapis lazuli. Dadu (The Main Capital): Dadu was a marvel of city planning. It was laid out in a strict grid planning. It was laid out in a strict grid pattern.

Q.6: Do you think that imagination has power?

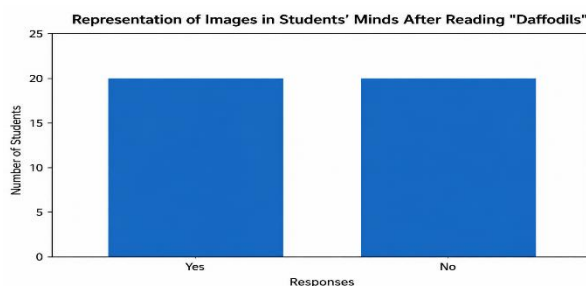


Figure: 6

Half of the students replied yes that imagination has power and half others denied this idea.

Q.7: Do you think that we learn from nature?

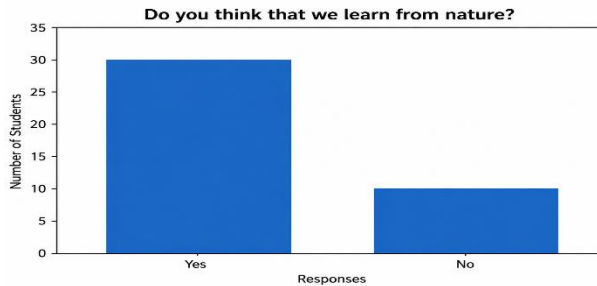


Figure: 7

Yes, we learn from nature. This was the view  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total sample. They said that we learn many things from nature.

Q.8: Do you think that poetry influences lives of people especially romantic poetry?

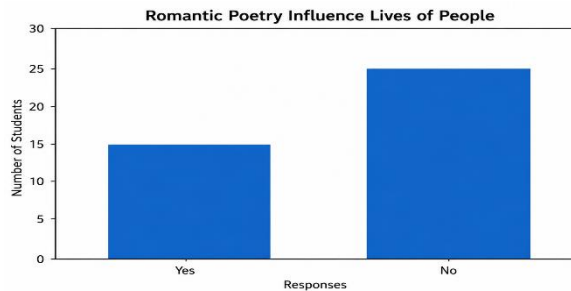


Figure: 8

The students are of the view that poetry especially romantic poetry does not change the lives of people. It does not influence on the lives of readers.

## Conclusion

The very first thing noticeable about the Romantic era is the focus from the upper class to the common men. The nobles are no longer important because they represent the agents of oppression. Romanticism also marks the conflict between imagination and dialectics. Romanticism associated with the rejection of imagination and also associated reason with dialectics. City landscape was condemned and regarded to be filled with crimes and materialism.

William Wordsworth as romantics urges that a union with nature is what frees the mind from the stir and thrust of its own dark emotions. William Wordsworth himself felt that whatever is abiding in the composesures of the mind attained was the

result of its being linked with nature. An embrace with nature and its aesthetics gives man the required happiness and joy.

Obviously, nature's formative control operates most powerfully when the mind is openly receptive. At this point, it is good to point out that only when the mind is undisrupted by worldly things, then it can receive the stamp and tone of nature. The scope of the Romantic tenets encompasses genre like lyrical ballads, idylls, sonnets, dream-visions and odes. Lyrical Ballads are another class of genre in the romantic compositions. They are usually folk songs and are popular known. Idylls are sentimental compositions that deal with the description of some picturesque scene or incident. With this definition, two poems of Wordsworth readily come to mind. They are "Tintern Abbey" and Composed upon "Westminster Bridge" These poems give descriptive scenes with natural beauty which touch the mind of the poet. "Kubla-Khan" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge is a good example of dream vision poetry as a genre in Romantic compositions. The poet tells us about an unconscious experience when human brain is supposed to work actively. Whereas in the situation of sleep the images where are deposited in the unconscious part of mind are associated with the previous experience. Behind this exercise the concept and idea is that the human mind apart from the brain power they formed compositions which create forms which are more based on reality than imaginative lie.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge tells us about his poetic thoughts which are serious, sober, and mystical and they are about the unseen elements in nature and man. The writers of the time period of romanticism react against the literacy practices and thoughts of that time. The major subject of romanticism was the beauty and the satisfaction that they gained through nature. Romantic writer believes in the naturalism. In place of morality they also believe in realism. They are of the thought that man should not stick to one tradition. Without naturalism Romanticism cannot exist. And that is the central idea of the romantic work. It was a movement which was started in contrast of classical movement to show the emotions and feelings and experiences of the people of that era. William Wordsworth has written Lyrical Ballads in which he explained and summarized about the romantic poetry very well. He wrote that the lyrical ballads were based on the principle of taking incidents and situations from the ordinary life. Most of the poetry of William Wordsworth connects man with the nature because man has the peace of mind with nature and he sees himself as a complete being. He tried to convey his message to people that the world in which people are living is polluted but the beauty and hold of nature makes man able to joy and to connect with that world. He believed that all the truth

and goodness is due to the harmony with nature. Searching for scientific knowledge is not mandatory. An individual should learn from nature. If man have a time to enjoy the nature in which he sees the clouds. To felt the cold breeze and to listen the melodious singing of birds than he will be away from all complexities which he face in life. By reading the poem of William Wordsworth reader can enjoy the desire of coming back toward nature and supernatural life. Romanticist says that if man had a friendship with nature than this world is a good place for him to live. William Wordsworth is one of the great tragic poets among all tragic poets. He had a great concern with the suffering of human.

During the romantic time period Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth were the most famous and important poet. Samuel Coleridge is known as a poet of imagination. He talks about the relationship of mind and nature. In his poems like Kubla Khan and The Rime of Ancient Mariner he talks about supernaturalism. While in poems like Dejection: An Ode and Frost at Midnight, he talks about human mind. Samuel Taylor Coleridge praise and worship to the nature. He took delight from nature and he shows respect for natural beauty and nature in his poems.

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