

Romanticism: A Very Short Introduction  
By Michael Ferber

Michael Ferber considers Romanticism in its time of growth in Western Europe, examining various types of Romantic literature, music, painting, religion, and philosophy. He provides examples and quotations throughout to demonstrate the diverse nature of the movement.

Questions for thought and discussion

- The word “Romantic” has an interesting etymology. What does it have to do with Rome?
- Is it right to call writers and artists Romantics if they did not call themselves that?
- What was “sympathy,” and why was it important to the “Sensibility” movement?
- How could melancholy be pleasurable?
- Why do you think educated people grew fascinated with ballads and other folk culture in the later eighteenth century? Why were so many people thrilled by “Ossian”?
- Why would the Romantics consider Moses a poet?
- Why did so many poets think the eagle was a good symbol for the poet, or for the power of the imagination?
- Why should suffering in life, and an early death, seem appropriate to a poet at this time?
- Why did women poets of the period tend to disparage the quest for poetic fame?
- Some scholars have called Romanticism a religious movement. Do you agree? Would it have a doctrine?
- Some have said that Romanticism turned religion into art. How might that be so?
- How does the faculty of imagination differ from sensation or perception?
- We sometimes think of Romanticism as hostile to the scientific worldview, yet many Romantics were fascinated with contemporary science. Why?
- What did the Romantics think of the French Revolution? Was there a common view?
- The industrial revolution was just getting started in Britain during the Romantic era. What would the Romantics think about the industrial world today?
- What was so appealing about the “Orient” and “Bohemia”?
- In what ways did music become the highest kind of art?
- After reading the book, do you think the author is right to refer to Romanticism as a single (if complicated) movement? Does his long definition of it on page 10 hold up?
- If this book were a little longer it might have had a chapter on the aftermath or later influence of Romanticism. What examples can you think of in literature, the arts, philosophy, or political and social movements today?

Other Books by Michael Ferber

*European Romantic Poetry*. New York: Pearson Longman, 2005.

*A Companion to European Romanticism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

A Dictionary of Literary Symbols (Second Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

*The Cambridge Introduction to English Romantic Poetry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

#### Further reading

Cranston, Maurice. *The Romantic Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994

Brown, David Blayney. *Romanticism*. London: Phaidon, 2001.

Vincent, Patrick. *The Romantic Poetess: European Culture, Politics and Gender, 1820-1840*. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2004

Breckman, Warren, ed. *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2008.