

# English Literature in the Beginning of the 19th Century

## **ROMANTICISM**

The period of Romanticism covers approximately 30 years, beginning from the last decade of the 18th century and continuing up to the 1830s. Romanticism as a literary current can be regarded as a result of two 'great historical events: 1) the Industrial Revolution in England and 2) the French Bourgeois Revolution of 1789. The Industrial Revolution began with the invention of a weaving-machine which could do the work of 17 people. The weavers that were left without work thought that the machines were to blame for their misery. They began to destroy these machines, or frames as they were called. The frame-breaking movement was called the Luddite movement, because the name of the first man to break a frame was Ned Ludd.





The reactionary ruling class of England was against any progressive thought influenced by the French Revolution. The last decade of the 18th century became known as the "white terror". Progressive-minded people were persecuted and forced into exile.



the French Revolution







The Industrial Revolution in England, as well as the French Bourgeois Revolution, had a great influence on the cultural life of the country. Romanticists were dissatisfied with the present state of things in their country. Some of the writers were revolutionary: they denied the existing order, called upon the people to struggle for a better future, shared the people's desire for liberty and objected to colonial oppression. They supported the national liberation wars on the continent against feudal reaction. Such writers were George Gordon Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley

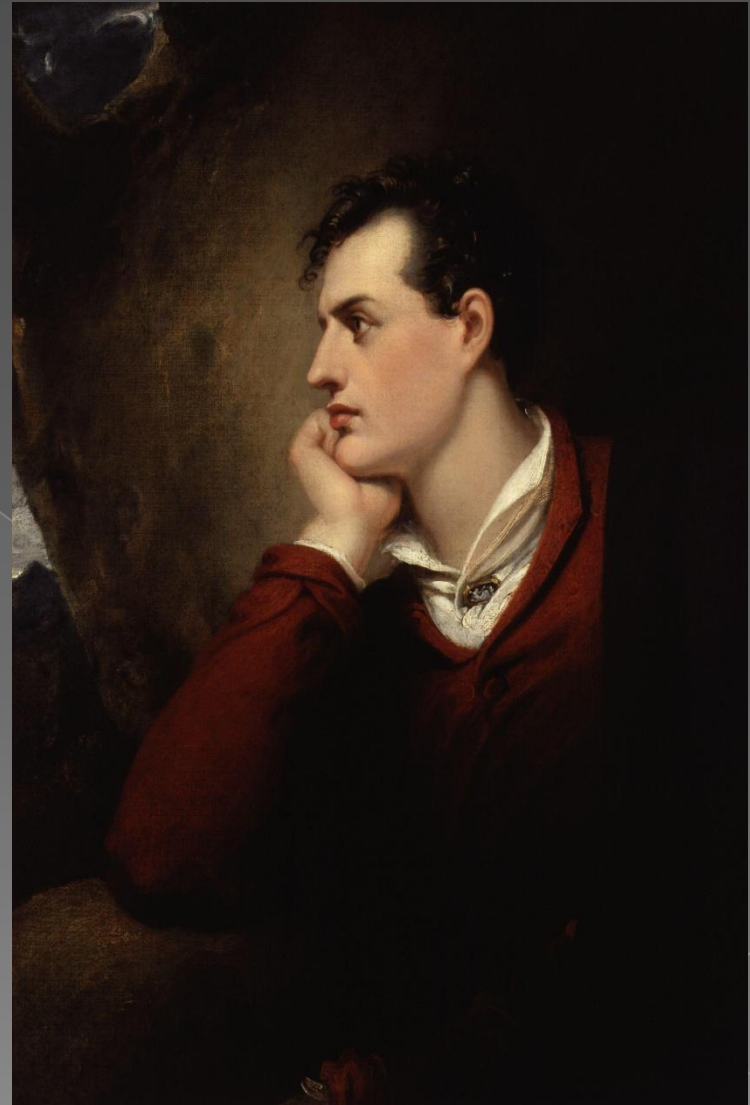


# Industrial Revolution





# George Gordon Byron

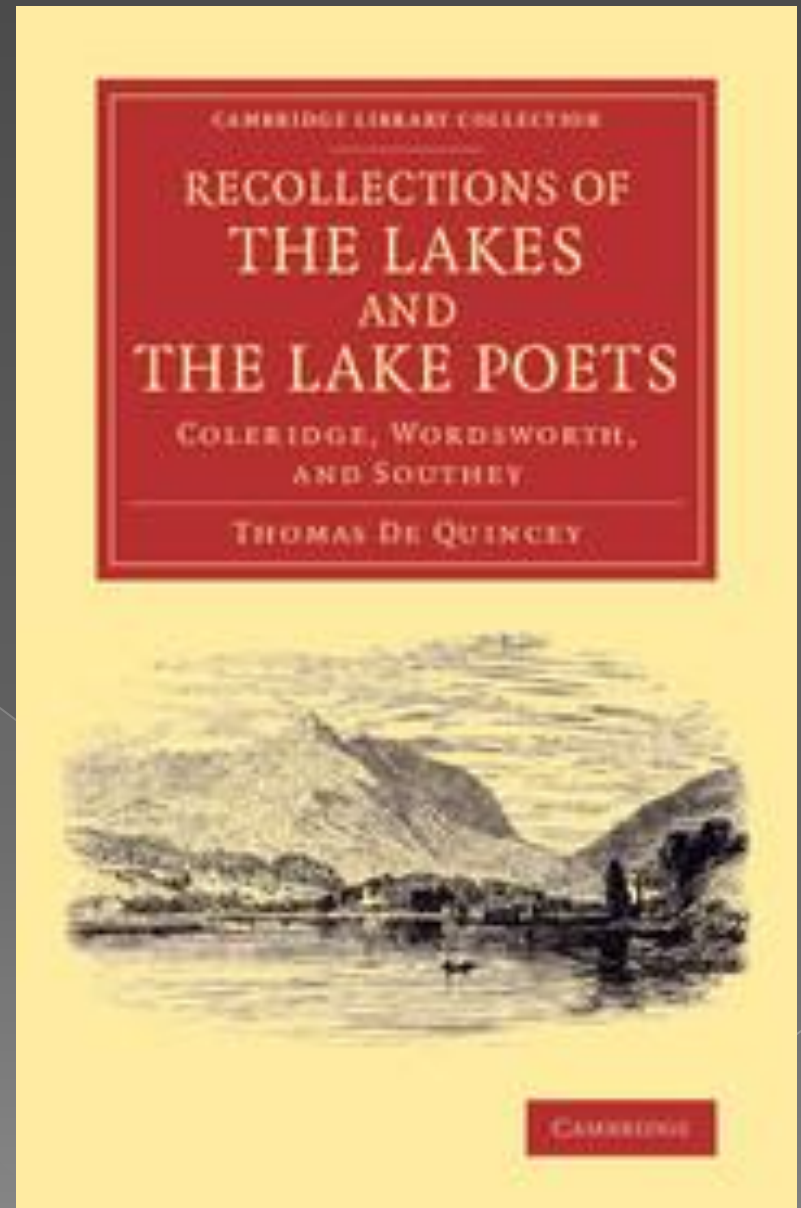


# Percy Bysshe Shelley





Others, though they had welcomed the French Revolution and the slogan of liberty, fraternity and equality, later abandoned revolutionary ideas. They turned their attention to nature and to the simple problems of life. They turned to the ideas of the feudal past by way of protest of capitalist reality. Among these writers were the poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, who formed the "Lake School", called so because they all lived for a time in the beautiful Lake District in the north-west of England. They dedicated much what they wrote to Nature. Legends, tales, songs and ballads became part of the creative method of the romanticists. The romanticists were talented poets and their contribution to English literature was very important.



# William Wordsworth





# Samuel Taylor Coleridge



# Robert Southey





# William Wordsworth (1770-1850)



William Wordsworth was the greatest representative of the Lake School Poets. He was born in a lawyer's family and grew up in the Lake District, a place of mountains and lakes. Soon after mother's death in 1788 he was sent to Hawkshead Grammar School, situated in a lovely village near Lake Windermere . The boy was allowed plenty of leisure: to go boating and fishing on the lake and studying wild life in the woods. There William came to know and love the world of nature.







the Lake District



William Wordsworth's mother





Hawkshead Grammar  
School



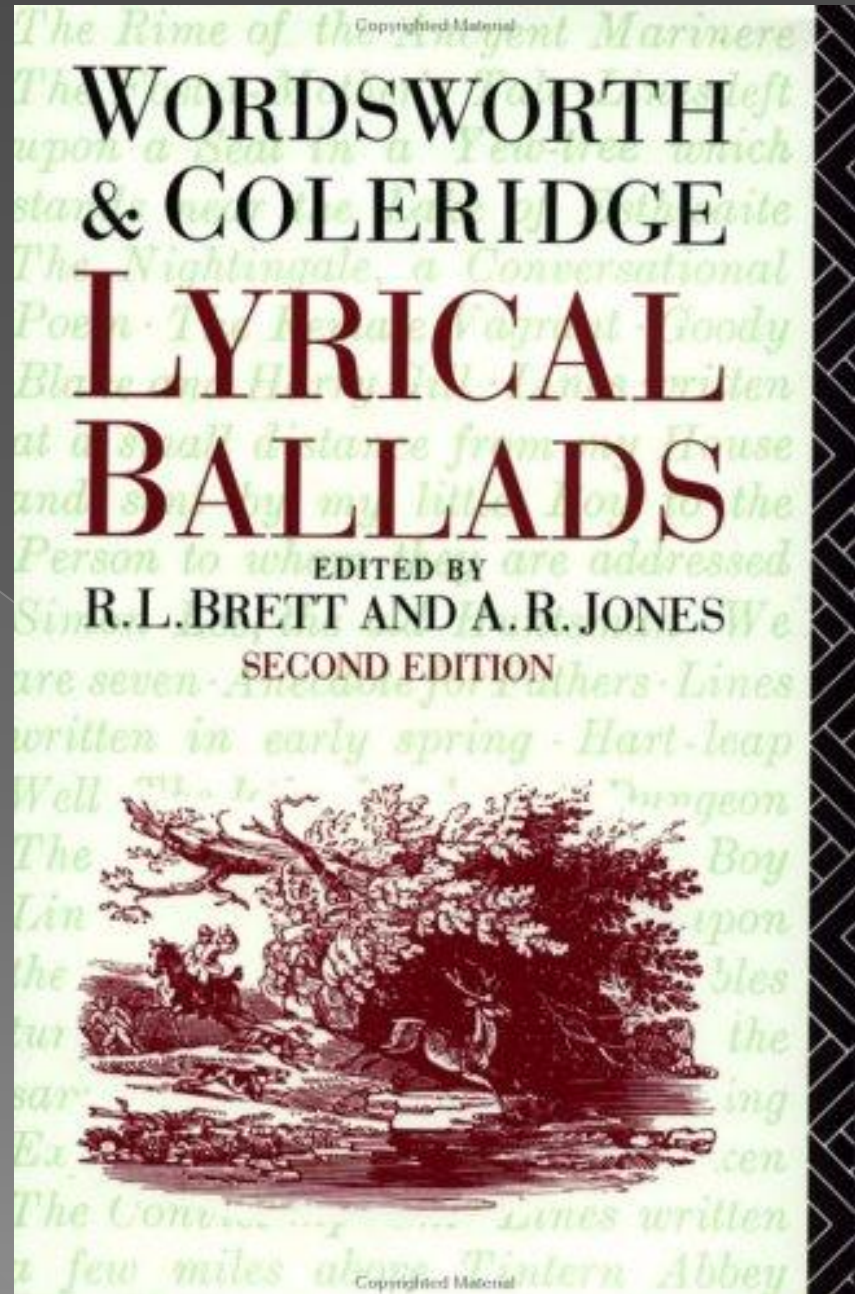
Lake Windermere

His father died leaving him an orphan at the age of thirteen. His two uncles sent him to Cambridge University. During his college days William took a walking tour in France, Switzerland and Italy. After graduating he toured Wales and France and became deeply involved in the cause of the French Revolution in which he saw a great movement for human freedom. Later he was greatly disappointed at the outcome of the Revolution. He thought that it had brought only cruelty and bloodshed. William withdrew into the quiet of the country.



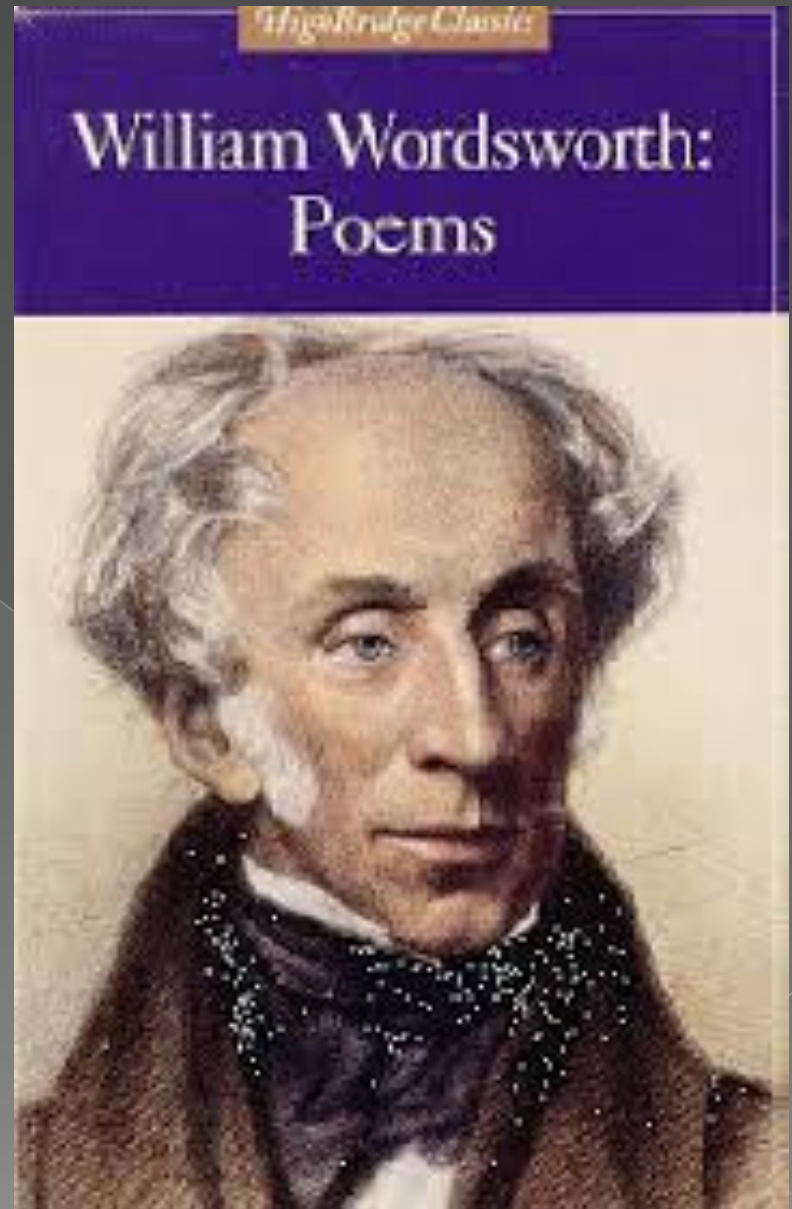


In about 1795 William Wordsworth met the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who became one of his closest friends. In 1797 the two poets published their best work *Lyrical Ballads*.





William Wordsworth wrote sonnets and ballads. The most characteristic themes of Wordsworth's poetry were the defense of the common country people, their feelings and beliefs, the beauty of nature. Every object in nature was in his eyes a source of poetry. His fame grew worldwide. When he died he was buried in the little church at Grasmere in the Lake District.







IN MEMORY OF  
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH  
THAT OF WILLIAM AND DOROTHY  
WENT FOR A CHILD IN DORSET  
AND OF THIS VALLEY FOR A DOG  
HE DIED AT THE AGE OF 80 UNDER  
THE LAUREL OF ABBEY WENT A CHILD  
SWEETHEARTS THE END OF A CHILD  
THEY WERE BURIED AT  
MAY 1850

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.  
1850.  
MARY WORDSWORTH.  
1859.

DORA QUILLINAN,  
9<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF JULY  
1847.

Him that cometh to me  
I will in no wise cast out.  
St. JOHN 6:37 V.

The  
End