

American Romanticism



- America's first great creative period, aka the American Renaissance.
- A reaction to The Enlightenment/Age of Reason, the Industrial Revolution
- Growing tension between the North & South

- American writers looked to westward expansion and the frontier for inspiration, creating a break with European tradition.
- Folktales by regional writers offered glimpses of the supernatural. For example...

**Paul Bunyan

**Pecos Bill

**Johnny Appleseed

- Basically, this is when American writers set themselves apart from the British. American literature had distinct characteristics, different from British literature.

The Age of Reason / The Enlightenment

Founded on

- Deism - belief in the existence of a god on the evidence of reason and nature only, with rejection of supernatural revelation
- Logic
- Inalienable rights

It also brought

- Industrialization, growth of cities, and factories
- American expansion (Lewis and Clark and Manifest Destiny)
- More encounters with Native Americans

Romanticism: a reaction to the Age of Reason

Age of Reason	Romanticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Realism• Patrician Classicism (\$ Patricians were the wealthy, upper class)• Dominion (power) over the Native American• Logic, always facts to counter fear and doubt	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Idealism/Utopia• Glorification of the common man• Recognition of the nobility of the primitive – the “noble savage”• Imagination to engender faith and hope

The City was a Place of ...

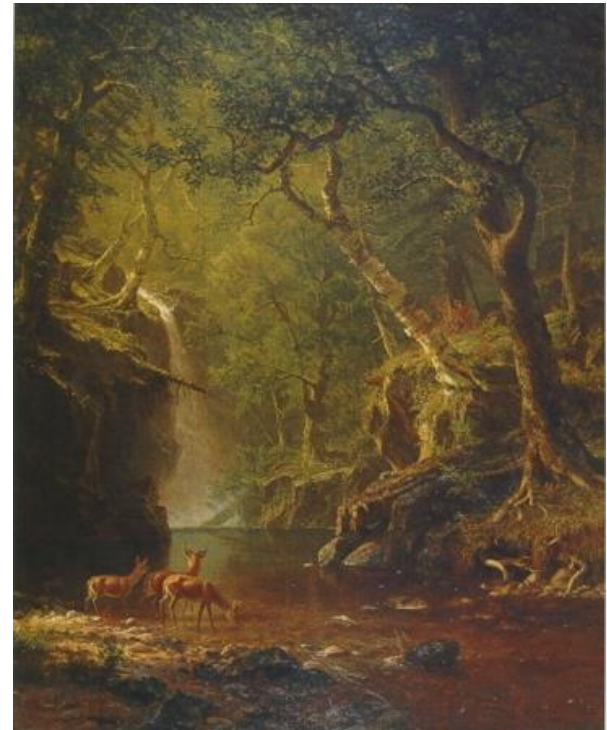
- The Rationalists saw the city as a place of industry, success, self realization, and civilization.
- The Romantics saw the city as a place of poor work conditions, moral ambiguity, corruption, and death.



The Journey:

Romanticism was often seen as a journey.

- The journey from the city to the country
- The journey from rational thought to the imagination



Tenets (characteristics) of Romanticism

The 5 - I's

I is for Imagination

- Imagination was emphasized over reason (more important than reason)
- Imagination was considered necessary for all art.

I is for Intuition

- Feelings & instincts were more valued than reason
- Emotions were important

I is for Idealism

- Idealism is the concept that we can make the world a better place
- Looking at life through “rose-colored glasses”

I is for Inspiration

- The Romantic is an “inspired creator” rather than a “technical master.”
- Being spontaneous is more important than getting it exactly right.

I is for **I**ndividuality

- **Romantics celebrated the individual**
- **The individual is at center of Life and Experience**
- **Women's rights & the abolition movement were taking root during this time.**

Other characteristics of Romantic literature

1. **The Past:** Romantics were fascinated by the past.
2. **Mystery & the Supernatural**
3. **Common Man** & the glorification of common life
4. **Nature:** nature reveals truth
5. **Emotion:** literature is about emotion & feelings