

**American Romanticism 1800-1860**

**Study Questions**

**Directions: Use the following questions to guide your note-taking. Be sure to take good notes, as there will be TWO grades based on this reading.**

1. What point is Arpin making with contrasting Franklin’s journey with Brown’s? What really is Arpin contrasting? Why? It is a quest for opportunity. It was an expression of personal goals and the goals of the 18th century America. A reaching out for independence, prosperity, and commerce.

2. What is “The Romantic Sensibility”? The Romantics believed the imagination could discover truths the rational mind could not reach.

3. How do the Romantics “Celebrat[e] Imagination”? Why? They celebrated through literature, music, and painting. Romanticism developed as a reaction against rationalism.

4. What is the “Romantic Escapism”? Romantics wanted to rise above dull realities to the realm of higher truths.

5. In what two ways do the Romantics move “From Dull Realities to Higher Truths”? Writings that included exotic settings and a world pictured away from the grimy industrial age.

6. How does “The American Novel” intertwine with “[T]he Wilderness Experience”? The development of the American novel coincided with westward expansion, with the growth of nationalist spirit, and the rapid spread of cities.

7. What is the “New Kind of Hero”? A heroic, virtuous, skillful frontiersman whose simple morality, love of nature, distrust of town life, superhuman resourcefulness- mark him as a true Romantic hero.

8. Why is “American Romantic Poetry” “Read at Every Fireside”? Explain. These poems were read a lot for family entertainment. Sometimes called Schoolroom Poets.

9. Who are “The Transcendentalists?” and how is the “True Reality […] Spiritual? Led by Emerson…American who were idealists but in a broader, more practical sense. They believed in human perfectibility and worked to achieve that goal.

10. What is Transcendentalism? Refers to the idea that in determining the ultimate reality of God, the universe, the self, and other important matters, one must transcend or go beyond, everyday human experience in the physical world.

11. Who is Emerson, and how does he figure into Transcendentalism? He was a sceptic but most influential and best known because of his lectures and books. He grafted ideas from Europe and Asia onto a homegrown American philosophical stem.

12. What is “Emerson’s Optimistic Outlook”? Emerson’s mystical view of the world sprang not from logic, but from intuition.

13. What are two similarities between Puritans and Transcendentalists? Both believed God could be experienced directly by individual and did not need to be filtered through others; both valued self-reliance, industriousness, education, and simplicity; both were visionary, idealistic and reformist systems of thought.

14. What is a difference between the two groups? Puritans looked to the Bible and Trans. Looked to nature; Puritans divided people into the saved and the damned while trans believed all people were connected to a divine source.

15. Who are “The Dark Romantics”? How do they differ from the rest? Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe. They are perceived as anti-Transcendentalists because their views of the world seem opposed to the optimistic views of Emerson. They explored the conflict between good and evil, the psychological effects of guilt and sin, and even the “madness” of the human psyche. They saw the horrors of evil.

16. Read Poe’s quote found on page 142. Explain the meaning. People who dream by day are imaginative, emotionally sensitive, and “other-worldly” as opposed to those who only dream at night are hardheaded, unsentimental, and unaffected by the darker side of their inner self.

17. Define archetype. A reoccurring symbol or motif in literature, art, or mythology.

18. One archetype is the JOURNEY. What are the characteristics of the Romantic journey? The romantic journey is a flight both FROM something and TO something.

* Physical – it is a journey to the countryside which is associated with independence, moral clarity, and healthful living.
* Psychological – a journey to the imagination

19. List the Characteristics of American Romanticism. Valued feelings over intuition and reason, seeks unspoiled nature, prefers youthful innocence to educated sophistication, finds beauty on exotic locales and the supernatural realm, seeks poetry as the highest form of expression, finds inspiration in myth, legend, and folklore.

20. List the Characteristics of the American Romantic Hero. Possesses youthful qualities, has a sense of honor based on a higher principal, has knowledge of people based on intuition not on formal learning, loves nature and avoids town life, quests for higher truth in the natural world.

21. List the Transcendental View of the World. Everything in the world including human beings is a reflection of the Divine Soul, the physical facts of the natural world are a doorway to the spiritual, self-reliance and individualism must outweigh external authority and blind conformity to custom and tradition, spontaneous feelings and intuition are superior to rationality.

**Reading Check: “American Romanticism: 1800 – 1860”**

**Directions:** Using the information found in your notes and textbook, complete the following passage.

The Romantics believe primarily in feelings and intuition over reason. This way of thinking went against reason, which is the belief that everyone can arrive at truth through order and that things in life can be proven and tested. Romanticism, on the other hand, celebrated the \_imagination and creativity through the arts: poetry, music, and literature were encouraged. During the Romantic period, a movement called Transcendentalists grew in popularity. It was during this time where writers tried to move away from their industrialized worlds and explore a supernatural realm, a beautiful new natural place, or the wilderness of the American frontiers. It was here that the American Romantic Hero character was first born. Now we have many of these, such as Indiana Jones, Davy Crocket, Superman, and even Luke Skywalker. At the same time, a group of poets, commonly referred to as the Fireside Poets were growing in popularity. These men (Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, and Lowell) came from Boston, and although they kept to the European poetic traditions, they paved the way for the future writers. The future came in the form of poetry which became popularized by the famous writer, Ralph Waldo Emerson. Transcendentalists believed that in order to truly become one with God and understand Him, one must transcend or go beyond everyday life. The followers of transcendentalism were extremely idealistic and usually believed that God could be found directly in every aspect of human experience, whether it is something beautiful, like new life or something tragic, like death. No matter what, it could be explained on a spiritual level. However, not all writers or people in the Romantic period agreed with the optimism of the transcendentalists. A group of writers, known as the Dark Romantics did believe in the same basic beliefs as the transcendentalists, but they chose to realize life’s dark side. Writers, such as Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, explored the imagination as well as good and evil and the psychological effects of guilt and sin. They did not ignore humanity’s potential evil side, and this shaped some uniquely American literary pieces.