

Historical Highlights

To understand the enormous impact of Romanticism on the social and political life of Europe, it is important to know about the events that led up to and occurred during the movement.

Roots in the Enlightenment

Romanticism is rooted in the Enlightenment, a movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that championed science and reason. Enlightenment philosophers believed that the power to reason was equal in all people and defended human dignity and worth. The 17th-century English philosopher John Locke even declared that people had rights to life, liberty, and happiness.

In the 18th century, Locke's ideas were echoed by Jean Jacques Rousseau. The French philosopher believed that laws and government should reflect the people's will. Rousseau's ideas influenced the leaders of the French Revolution. With his belief in people's natural goodness and in the value of the individual, Rousseau also foreshadowed Romanticism.

Revolution in France

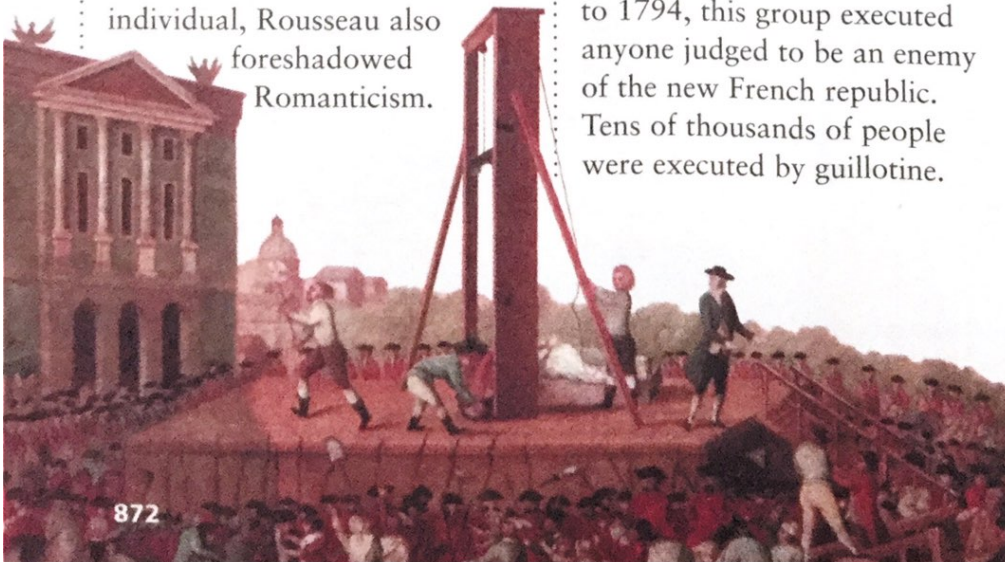
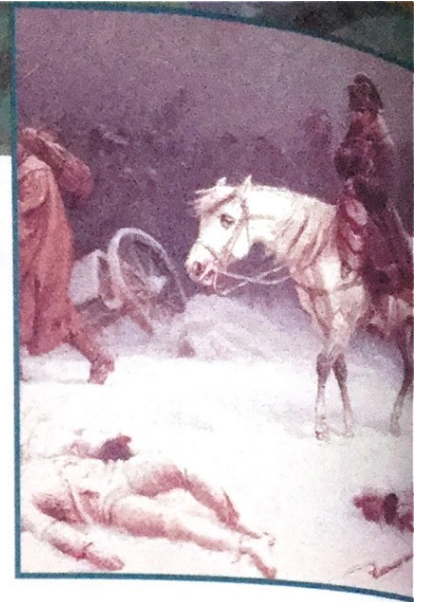
Although Rousseau's ideas helped inspire the French Revolution, outrage at the social and economic conditions in France in the second half of the 1700s actually ignited the conflict. In 1788, taxes on the poor were raised just when wages dropped and food supplies were scarce. Tensions finally exploded on July 14, 1789, when a mob of Parisians seized the Bastille. The French Revolution had begun.

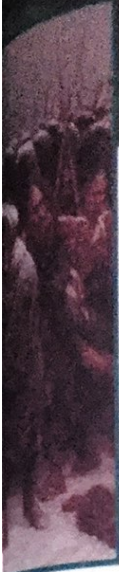
At first, the revolution brought about positive change. Feudalism in France was ended, the country was declared a republic, and a new constitution was drafted. Tragically, the revolution also produced the **Reign of Terror**, led by a group of revolutionaries. From 1793 to 1794, this group executed anyone judged to be an enemy of the new French republic. Tens of thousands of people were executed by guillotine.

Rise and Fall of Napoleon

Beginning in 1792, the new republic engaged in a series of wars to defend and spread the ideas of the French Revolution. With all citizens involved in the war effort, a sense of nationalism arose throughout the French republic. Leading the battles was the young, heroic general Napoleon Bonaparte, who would crown himself emperor of France in 1804.

In time, it became clear that Napoleon's ambitions extended well beyond the borders of France. He wanted to conquer all of Europe. To prevent French domination, European allies mobilized forces against Napoleon. Fearful that Russia would join the alliance, Napoleon invaded that country in 1812. The decision proved disastrous. Napoleon lost more than 500,000 men. His losses encouraged his enemies to attack. In 1815, Napoleon suffered a decisive defeat at the **Battle of Waterloo** in Belgium.





Napoleon's army retreats from Russia.

Struggles for Independence

Inspired first by the French Revolution's ideals of freedom and later by opposition to the Napoleonic invasions, national movements gained momentum in 19th-century Europe. These movements often led to revolutions for independence.

Greece waged the first successful revolution in 1830. That same year, Belgium also gained its independence. Not all of the bids for freedom were successful, however. When a group of young Russian aristocrats called the Decembrists led a rebellion against Czar Nicholas I in December 1825, the uprising was quickly crushed.

Revolutionary fervor was rekindled in 1848, when France once again rose up against its king. Soon, ethnic uprisings had swept across Europe, sparking revolts in Austria, Hungary, and Germany. Although these uprisings were suppressed by the ruling powers, people's dreams of freedom were not crushed.

Revolution in Industry

While political and social revolutions erupted in France and swept across Europe, rebellion was repressed in Great Britain. Those in power had moved decisively to keep Britain from falling victim to the violence and anarchy they saw in France. Instead, Great Britain was involved in a different kind of revolution that had begun in the 1700s—an industrial revolution, which changed the economy from one mainly centered on agriculture to one driven by industry.

Industrialization would eventually greatly improve people's standards of living and opportunities. In the early 1800s, however, the rapid pace of

industrialization caused many serious problems, including unsafe working conditions, child labor, and unhealthy urban living conditions. Reformers sought to correct the labor and social problems caused by industrialization, but their efforts were often equated with revolution and crushed. Largely as a result of these reformist efforts, Romanticism faded in England, and a new movement called **realism** began to emerge. Realists focused on everyday life, often bringing social problems to public attention.

History to Literature

Events that occurred during the Romantic age inspired writers of the time as well as writers throughout the 19th century.

EVENT IN HISTORY

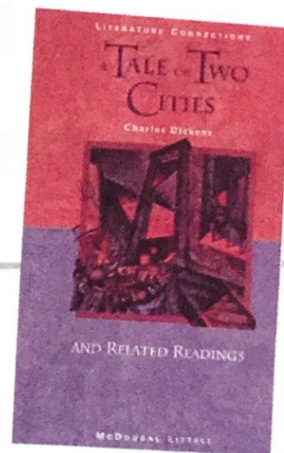
French Revolution

Napoleon's invasion of Russia

EVENT IN LITERATURE

English novelist Charles Dickens uses the French Revolution as the background of his 1859 novel *A Tale of Two Cities*, which is set in London and Paris.

In a narrative poem called "The Expiation," about the career of Napoleon Bonaparte, French writer Victor Hugo vividly describes the French army's retreat from Moscow.



Arts and Culture

Romanticism dominated European intellectual and artistic life in the first half of the 19th century. The Romantics created a new movement of individual freedom and self-expression in literature, art, and music.

Philosophy

Before the Romantic movement, most philosophers emphasized intellect and reason over instincts and emotion. This philosophical tradition began to change with Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose ideas about the individual and the power of the imagination inspired Romantic philosophers in the 19th century.

One of these was the German philosopher **Arthur Schopenhauer**, who rejected the idea that reason could be used to explain the world. Instead, he believed that people experience the world through their senses. As a result, Schopenhauer claimed, people experience the world not as it is, but as their senses perceive it. Such ideas inspired Romantic artists, writers, and composers to use their senses and emotions to describe the world and to convey a poetic wonder about nature and life.



In this painting, Delacroix represents a Moroccan chief greeting members of his tribe.

Painting

Romantic artists broke with conventional subject matter to paint subjects that were dramatic and imaginative. These artists were united by their desire to express their individual feelings and beliefs.

Many Romantic artists painted landscapes to convey their feelings about nature. The two most important English landscape artists were John Constable and **J. M. W. Turner**. Constable expressed his love for the English countryside by portraying its beauty and harmony. Turner, on the other hand, emphasized the energy and destructive force of the natural world. **Caspar David Friedrich**, considered the greatest German Romantic painter, also focused on the power of nature. The otherworldly quality of Friedrich's work inspires the viewer with a sense of mystery and awe. (See page 878 for an example of Friedrich's work.)

The greatest French Romantic painter, **Eugène Delacroix**, broke away from the landscape artists to depict more exotic subject matter. Many of his paintings reflect his fascination with the people and history of other cultures. Delacroix created a sense of mood and mystery in these works through the use of rich color and deep shadow.



Turner used color and indistinct shapes to convey the power and energy of nature.

Literature

Romanticism deeply influenced the literature of England, France, and Germany. While the Romantic movement and literature of each country had unique features, they also shared many defining characteristics, such as an emphasis on emotion, imagination, the individual, and nature.

In England, critics traditionally mark the beginning of the Romantic movement with the publication in 1798 of the poetry collection *Lyrical Ballads* by **William Wordsworth** and **Samuel Taylor Coleridge**. In France, Romanticism began around the time of the French Revolution. **Victor Hugo** eventually emerged as the leading Romantic writer in France. One of the leaders of the early Romantic movement in Germany was **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**. In their poetry, all of these Romantic writers explored the intricate workings of their own minds and the complexities of their emotions.

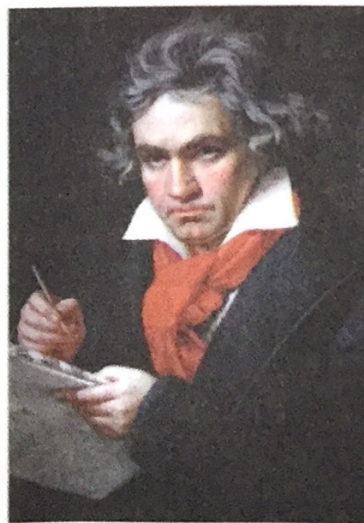
You can learn more about Romantic literature in *Learning the Language of Literature* on pages 878–879.

Music

In the early years of the 19th century, composers began to experiment with classical musical forms, adding intense personal feeling. Their music reflected the Romantic emphasis on originality, individuality, and emotion. German composer **Ludwig van Beethoven** helped bridge the classical and Romantic periods in music. Although his formal musical techniques were classical, the passion and dramatic expressiveness of his music made it a model for Romantic composers.

Strongly sympathetic to the ideals of the French Revolution, Beethoven composed his Symphony No. 3, the *Eroica* (“Heroic”), and dedicated it to Napoleon with these words: “a grand symphony dedicated to Bonaparte.” However, after hearing that Napoleon had declared himself emperor, Beethoven tore up the original inscription and replaced it with the words “composed to celebrate the memory of a great man.”

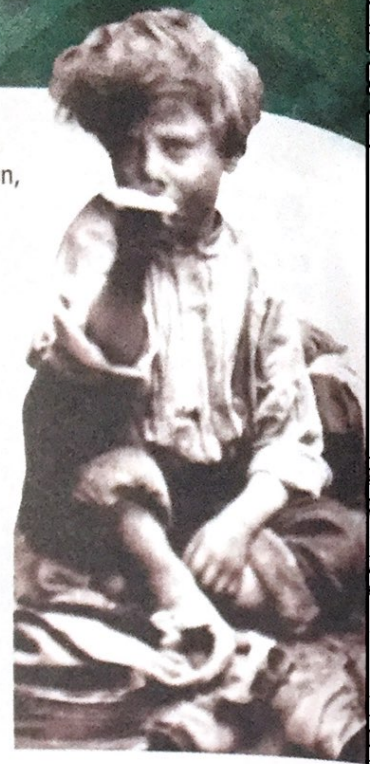
Ludwig van Beethoven



Historical Highlights

The second half of the 19th century in Europe has been called the Second Industrial Revolution, the Age of Imperialism, and the Age of Reform. Regardless of the title, the events of this time period had a global impact and far-reaching consequences. We are still feeling the effects today.

Children living in poverty in London, about 1860



Development of Nations

One of the ideas unleashed by the French Revolution was **nationalism**, the belief that people who share a common culture and history make up a nation. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, three major empires remained on the European continent: the Austrian Empire, the Russian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire. In the mid-1800s, ethnic groups within these empires demanded nationhood and democratic reforms in an outburst of revolts. During this same period, independent

A



Flags of Germany and Italy, 1848

German and Italian states also unified into two nations. But the eventual cost of German unification was dictatorship and two world wars. Though tattered, the Russian Empire remained intact until the communist revolution of 1917.

Imperialism

To improve their economies, the industrialized nations of Europe began to look for new sources of raw materials. The Europeans descended on resource-rich Africa and expanded their holdings in Asia. By the turn of the century, they had carved up Africa into colonies, with Britain and France having the largest share. In addition, the British controlled India and joined the French, Dutch, and Americans in dividing Southeast Asia. This process of taking over and then dominating another country is called **imperialism**. Its effect in the 19th century, for the most part, was to increase the wealth of the imperialist nations at the expense of the colonies.



Queen Victoria

Mass Production

The Industrial Revolution changed the nature of work. What used to be made by hand could now be produced faster and cheaper by machines. The operation of the machines was divided among the factory workers, who each specialized in some function of the production process. Mass production of textiles and pottery made inexpensive clothes and dishes available for the first time.

Mass production, and industrialization in general, benefited people of the middle class more than anyone else. Many factory owners, merchants, and bankers got rich. The standard of living also rose for shop owners, accountants, factory managers, architects, office workers, and carpenters.



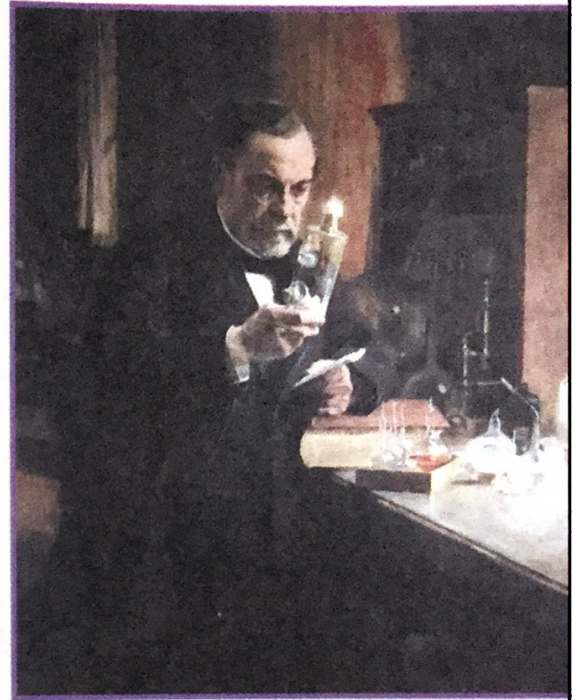
Need for Reform

The working class lived and worked under terrible conditions. Children as young as five often had to work. The British Parliament did pass some laws restricting the age of child laborers and limiting the workday in factories to ten hours for women and children. Workers also formed unions to negotiate for improved working conditions. One successful reform effort was the spread of free public education in most European nations by the late 1800s.

As more men won voting rights, women started organizing to get the vote as well, especially in Britain. Despite women's protests, however, no European countries gave women the vote at this time.

Scientific Breakthroughs

The amazing scientific and technological achievements of the 19th century would eventually revolutionize people's lives. Experiments with electricity introduced a new kind of power and made electric inventions such as the light bulb possible. The full impact of such inventions as the telephone and the automobile wouldn't be felt until the next century, but discoveries in the field of biology had more immediate effects. Working in the mid-1800s, French chemist **Louis Pasteur** discovered that bacteria caused disease. This discovery led not only to the development of pasteurization, a process for killing harmful bacteria in milk and other foods, but also to the use of germ-killing antiseptics in hospitals. New vaccines for many serious diseases, such as typhoid fever were also developed during this time.



Louis Pasteur

History to Literature

EVENT IN HISTORY

Czar Alexander II frees Russian serfs.

The Industrial Revolution causes changes among the social classes.

EVENT IN LITERATURE

Novelist Leo Tolstoy portrays peasant life in *Anna Karenina*.

Short-story writer Guy de Maupassant examines moral conflicts of the French middle class and peasants.

Arts and Culture

With people crowding into industrial cities and more voices calling for reform, troubling social and political realities became impossible to ignore. Artists and intellectuals faced the issues directly. Scientists, meanwhile, tried to better understand the physical world.

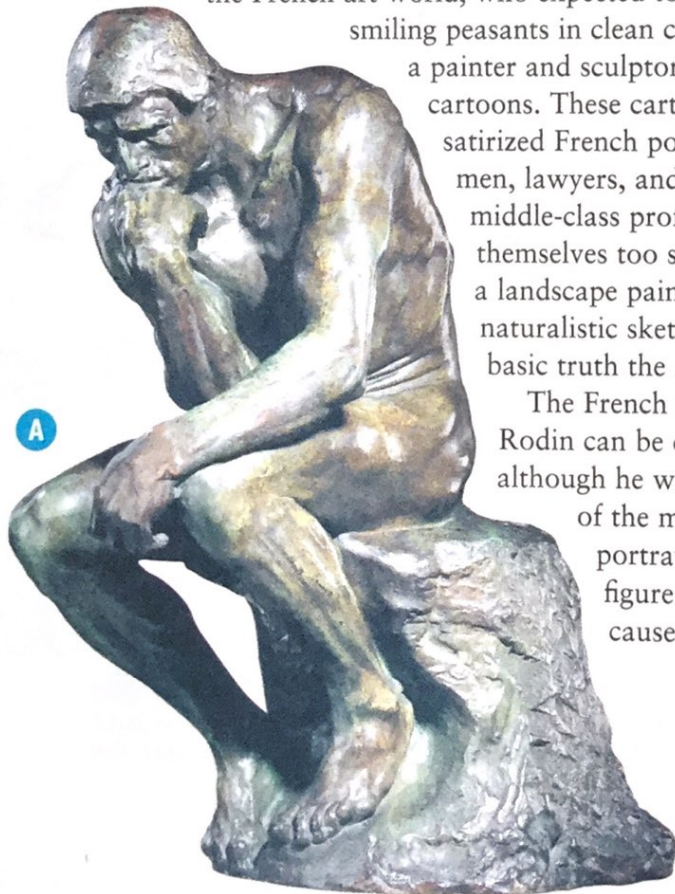
Visual Arts

When a 19th-century French painter examined early photographs, he boldly declared: “From today painting is dead.” He was wrong. The camera’s factual accuracy actually inspired realist art.

Realism began in France with the work of three painters: Gustave Courbet, Honoré Daumier, and Camille Corot. Courbet headed the movement away from idealized Romantic painting and toward an accurate record of contemporary life. One of his greatest works, *The Stone Breakers*, shows two men laboring in a stark rural landscape. The raw honesty of Courbet’s painting shocked the French art world, who expected to see pictures of

smiling peasants in clean clothes. Daumier, a painter and sculptor, also drew cartoons. These cartoons ruthlessly satirized French politicians, businessmen, lawyers, and other rising middle-class professionals who took themselves too seriously. Corot was a landscape painter whose small, naturalistic sketches captured the basic truth the realists aimed for.

The French sculptor Auguste Rodin can be considered a realist, although he wasn’t officially part of the movement. His portrayals of the human figure were so lifelike they caused scandals.



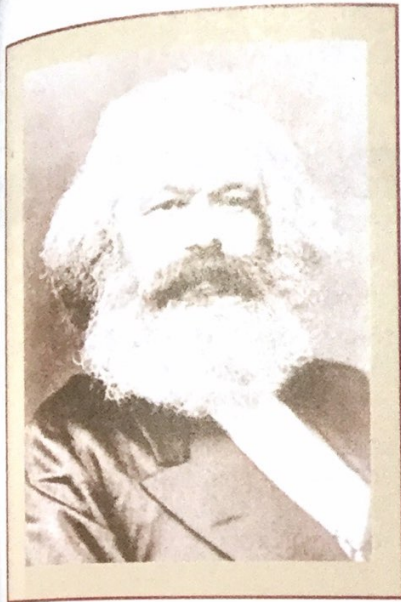
Rodin's *The Thinker*

Literature

Realist writers also rebelled against Romanticism as too emotional and idealistic. Influenced by the real-world emphasis of photography and science, they took a hard look at the people around them—such as peasants, coal miners, clerks, middle-class wives, orphans, and thieves.

Novels were particularly well suited to examining contemporary life because they could show development over time and extensive interaction among characters. Many great novelists were writing during this period: Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, and Émile Zola in France; George Eliot in Britain; and Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoyevsky in Russia. Guy de Maupassant and Anton Chekhov mastered the **short story** form to capture brief but meaningful glimpses into characters’ everyday lives.

Drama also underwent drastic changes. Scandinavian playwrights August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen produced brutally insightful plays about class conflict, women’s roles, and middle-class hypocrisy. Such issues unsettled middle-class audiences, who were used to happy endings in the theater.



Karl Marx

Political Thought

One response to the economic inequities and harsh working conditions of the 19th century was *The Communist Manifesto*, a pamphlet published in 1848 by Karl Marx and his friend Friedrich Engels. In it, Marx argued that the workers, whom he called the proletariat, should overthrow the greedy business owners, or capitalists, and take control of the industries. The ultimate goal Marx set was the establishment of justice and equality in a classless society with no private property and no government. Marx's ideas led to major revolutions in the 20th century before declining in influence late in the century.

Scientific Theories

The development of science and scientific theory, with its focus on the physical world, was one of the important influences on realism in the 19th century. One of the most controversial scientific ideas was proposed in 1859 by Charles Darwin in his book *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin theorized that the great diversity of species on earth resulted from what he called natural selection: As members of a species compete for food, only those whose traits give them an advantage will survive long enough to reproduce. These survivors in turn pass the traits on to their offspring. Darwin's theory came to be known as the theory of evolution.

During the same period, an Austrian botanist, Gregor Mendel, C was exploring the question of how physical traits are passed on from one generation to another. In his work, Mendel studied the differences in pea plants. He theorized that similar traits passed from the parent plants to their descendants occurred on paired hereditary units, now called genes. Mendel's experiments established the laws of heredity and began the science of genetics.

Connect to Today

In the 21st century, we are still living with ideas and perspectives generated in the latter half of the 19th century.

- Realism has had a direct influence on film. This influence is seen in the use of realistic settings and true-to-life portrayals of people and situations.
- Although weakened, communism is still a revolutionary force in parts of Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia.
- Refinements of Mendel's original discoveries have made further genetic research possible. Breakthroughs are leading to new treatments for diseases such as cancer.

