

an imaginative recreation of life is a mingling of tragic and comic elements, which throw each other into greater relief by contrast. Therefore there is nothing, whatsoever, or inartistic in a tragic-comedy.

M.A. Ind. Seto 12.4.20

L-1

The Romantic Critics and Their Works

Name of the Critic	His Critical Works
1. William Wordsworth (1770-1850) ✓	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertisement of the Lyrical Ballads, 1798 2. Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads, 1802 3. Appendix to the above Edition, 1802 4. Essay Supplementary to the Edition of 1815
2. S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834) X	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biographia Literaria 2. Lectures on Shakespeare 3. The Table Talk 4. Miscellaneous Critical Articles in different Journals
3. P.B. Shelley (1792-1822) X	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Defence of Poetry

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Q. 56. Why did Wordsworth write such a long Preface to his Lyrical Ballads?
Or

Wordsworth lays down the basic tenets of his poetry in the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads. Discuss.

Ans. When the first edition of Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads was published, it was discovered that Wordsworth's poems were diametrically opposite to the standard poetical norms as preached and practised by the Neo-classical poets like Ben Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Gray, and Dr. Johnson. There was a sort of uproar in literary circles. Thereupon some of Wordsworth's friends advised him to publish a detailed Preface to the Second Edition of his Lyrical Ballads explaining the basic tenets of his poetry. Wordsworth says, "They have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written." Hence he published a detailed preface to the second edition of his Lyrical Ballads.

In the Preface, Wordsworth begins with the precept that poetry should be a 'spontaneous overflow' of powerful feelings, not a laboured exercise. Secondly, the subject-matter of poetry should be the life of the common men, because poets do not

write their poetry for poets only but for the common public to read and enjoy. For the same reason, poetry should be written, as far as possible, in the language of the common men really used by them, and not in the highly artificial and stilted 'Poetic diction'. There should be no difference between the language of prose and that of poetry. These are the basic tenets of Wordsworth's theory of poetry.

Q. 57. Give Wordsworth's definition of Poetry. How would you reconcile the two apparent contradictions in it ?

Ans. In the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth defines Poetry thus : "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity." In this definition of poetry there are two apparent contradictions. The "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" on one side and "emotion recollected in tranquillity" on the other side are apparently two contradictory statements. "Spontaneous overflow" must be immediate and unrestricted without any interval of time between feeling and its expression. The expression "recollected in tranquillity" would suggest intervention of time between feeling and its expression. "Recollection" means remembering some impression after some lapse of time. Wordsworth himself has tried to reconcile this apparent contradiction in his further elucidation of his definition. Immediate impression has a blending of both important and unimportant impressions. When they are allowed to rest for some time, only the important impressions remain in the memory, and the unimportant ones wash away. The poet would then express those powerful impressions spontaneously with ease and felicity without any imposition of restriction in point of language or poetic diction. The poet's expression of those powerful feelings must be easy, smooth and natural.

Q. 58. Why does Wordsworth choose the life of rustics and common men for the subject of his poetry ?

Ans. In the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth says that the life of the rustics and common men is the fittest subject for poetry. This concept is just contrary to the concept of Neo-classical poets who chose the life and manners and morals of the urban people, specially of the aristocratic class, to be the fittest subject for poetry. Pope's *Rape of the Lock* is the best example of this class of poetry. Against this concept, Wordsworth chose the life of humble and rustic people for the subject of his poetry. Wordsworth was basically a poet of Nature, and he considered the humble and innocent villagers to be a part of Nature. He writes, "Humble and rustic life was generally chosen because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature."

On the same ground, Wordsworth also decried the fashion of writing poetry in the poetic diction patronised by the Neo-classical poets. He not only chose the life of the rural folk for his subject, but also their language for writing his poetry. He writes, "The language, too, of these men has been adopted because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived." But in spite of all these considerations Wordsworth remains fully conscious that his poetry may not sink to the level of triviality and meanness. —

Q. 59. Discuss Wordsworth's views on the language in which poetry should be written.

Ans. In the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth says that principally the subject matter of his poetry was the life, manners, interests and occupations of the