

PART VIII REASON, REVOLUTION, ROMANTICISM: THE EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY  
NINETEENTH CENTURIES  
Chapter 27 From Revolution to Romanticism

I. The French Revolution

1. The French Revolution was an upheaval that changed the face of Europe forever.
2. The American Revolution, far less bloody, was a kind of prelude.
3. The American Revolution had demonstrated to the French philosophes that enlightened ideas could be realized in practice.
4. It seemed to hold out the possibility that limited government could in fact foster equality and liberty.

A. Causes of the Revolution

1. Both Louis XV and Louis XVI were weak disengaged leaders.
2. French life was dominated by a legally codified but outmoded social structure.
3. All French citizens, except the royal family, were legally divided into one of three classes—the clergy, the nobility, and the third estate (everyone else.)
4. The nobility, which paid nearly no taxes, held all the highest offices in government.
5. The national government was experiencing a financial crisis but the monarchy lacked the political power to impose taxes on the nobility.
6. When the king abolished the old court system so that he could tax the nobility, there was an aristocratic revolt, which the king lost.

B. Beginning of the Revolution

1. The aristocracy demanded a National Assembly, and the King agreed to it.
2. The aristocracy hoped to wrest more power from the monarch, but the third estate used the National Assembly for its own purposes.
3. The third-estate delegates defied the monarchy and demanded the abolition of the class system.
4. Festering discontent led to a Parisian mob storming the Bastille (a prison in Paris).
5. The King capitulated to the demands of the third estate.
6. The third-estate delegates hoped to establish a Constitutional monarchy similar to that of England, but the King fled and the Jacobins seized power.

C. The Jacobins

1. The Jacobins were a revolutionary group that wanted to eliminate the monarchy not only in France but throughout Europe.
2. Their position led to war and when the war went badly, a ruthless radical faction took control from the more moderate Jacobin leadership.

D. Maximilien Robespierre (1754–1794)

1. A leader of the radical Jacobins, Robespierre believed that a dictatorship must first be set up that would destroy all of the reactionaries before a democratic republic could be established.
2. The dictatorship he set up consisted of twelve men called the *Committee on Public Safety*.
3. Robespierre implemented the *Reign of Terror* with the guillotine being his chosen instrument.

4. The Reign of Terror lasted over a year, and the traitors who were executed included the king and queen.
5. Robespierre was himself guillotined after about a year, and the Reign of Terror ended.

#### E. Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821)

1. Napoleon was one of the revolutionary generals and quickly distinguished himself in battle.
2. He was a military genius and a great politician.
3. Napoleon believed that the French people wanted social equality more than political liberty and established meritocracy in the bureaucracy.
4. As Emperor, Napoleon nearly conquered the entire European continent.
5. His invasion of Russia proved to be a disaster—a half million French soldiers perished.
6. He abdicated power in 1814, returned briefly a year later, and lost a great battle at Waterloo.
7. He was exiled to the island of St. Helena, and the French monarchy was restored with a brother of Louis XVI made king.

#### F. Effects of the Revolution

1. The French Revolution and its aftermath left a lasting mark on Western Europe.
2. No longer could rulers depend on small professional armies.
3. The legal class structure was abolished.
4. Nationalism emerged as a powerful force and monarchs and other leaders became adept at using it for their own purposes.

#### II. The Art of the French Revolution: Jacques Louis David (1748–1825)

1. David was the foremost painter of the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras.
2. He rejected *rococo* and embraced the art of Rome and the Italian High Renaissance.
3. His figures are idealized but also possess an intense realism with an almost photographic rendering of flesh and muscle.
4. After returning from Italy, his style was immediately recognized in Paris as revolutionary.
5. He was commissioned by the Committee on Public Safety to produce three paintings of revolutionary heroes but completed only one.
6. Napoleon appointed David the “pageant master of the empire.”
7. In David’s *Napoleon Crosses the Alps*, the youthful general has become a romantic hero, comparable to Hannibal and Charlemagne.

#### III. Romanticism: A Revolutionary Movement

1. The political revolutions of the eighteenth century were followed by rapid changes in other spheres of life.
2. The varied cultural movements that swept over Europe and America became known as *romanticism*.
3. The individualism and feelings of alienation of the Renaissance and Reformation were cultivated by the Romantics.
4. Throughout Europe the term “romanticism” took on similar connotation—sentimental, picturesque, rugged, spontaneous, and sentimental.
5. For the romantics life and art were one.
6. Reason and the rules of society were subordinated to passion and imagination.

#### IV. Enlightened Ideas, Romantic Style

1. The French and American revolutions seemed to confirm the propositions of the philosophes.

2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau is the most important figure for understanding the transition from the Enlightenment to romanticism.
3. Rousseau's individualism seemed to be the foundation of the new American republic.

A. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

1. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity were the catchwords of the French Revolution.
2. These ideals took hold outside France as a cultural force and helped form the foundation of romanticism.
3. Schiller's poem *Ode to Joy* is a passionate statement of those beliefs.

B. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

1. German music and literature flowered in the late eighteenth century.
2. Beethoven, like Goethe and Schiller, is a gigantic figure whose work rises above categories like classical and romantic but includes elements of both.
3. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, a choral symphony, fuses classical and romantic styles.

V. Individualism and the Romantic Hero

1. From romanticism developed a new sense of the unique value of the individual human being.
2. Napoleon embodied the romantic doctrine of the unique, "titanic" genius.
3. The romantic hero could also be forlorn, solitary, and alienated.
4. Prometheus from Greek mythology was a favorite subject of the romantics.
5. In romantic literature, Prometheus is both a self-willed individual and a benefactor of humankind.

A. George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824)

1. Byron's poem *Prometheus* served as the model for what came to be known as the Byronic hero.
2. The heroes in Byron's poems are rebellious individuals with a passionate belief in individual freedom.
3. Byron also mocked his heroic types with a comic anti-hero, Don Juan.

B. Other Romantic Heroes

1. Other romantic types included the gothic hero and the mad scientist (Frankenstein).
2. Goethe's *Faust* is one of the most enduring romantic heroes.
3. The romantic period was the time when American literature came into its own.
4. Melville and Poe explored the darker side of the individual soul, while the poetry of Whitman and Dickinson asserts and celebrates individualism.

VI. Nature and "Natural People"

1. "Enlightened" Europeans and Americans had an abiding faith in civilization and its institutions.
2. While civilization brought many ills, civilization had the ability to improve and reform itself, they believed.
3. Beginning in the eighteenth century, however, disillusionment with civilization led to a "noble savage" craze and a yearning for a return to nature.

## VII. Influence of Rousseau

1. Rousseau who eulogized the free and natural life of American Indians was a pivotal figure in the “natural life” movement.
2. The romantic liberals championed the cause of the poor and the oppressed, and were contemptuous of the rich bourgeois.
3. Influenced by Rousseau, ideas such as returning to nature and living a natural life began in the romantic period.
4. The life of the simple peasant was elevated (in theory) over that of the sophisticated city dweller and the richness of sensation over that of intellect.

## VIII. Nature in Poetry, Music, and Art

1. Romantic artists depicted nature as reflecting the sensations of their own individualistic souls.
2. Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony (No. 6) renders a wide range of moods from the natural world.
3. Romantic poets and painters often attempted to render the communions between human emotion and nature.

### A. John Constable (1776–1837)

1. Humble, everyday aspects of nature held the interest of the painter Constable and the poet Wordsworth more than the mystical or sublime.
2. Constable’s pursuit of a means to capture the natural world led him to study clouds, rain, light, and the weather.
3. Constable loved the countryside, which became the primary subject of his work.

### B. William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

1. A primary theme of Wordsworth’s poems is man’s relationship to nature.
2. In his most famous poem, *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth paints a landscape in the first stanza and then describes the poet’s relationship to the landscape in the rest of it.
3. Beauty for Wordsworth could also be found in the simple people who inhabited the countryside.

### C. Jean-François Millet (1814–1875)

1. Millet portrayed the French peasantry as virtuous, humane, and enduring.
2. Millet emphasized the harmony of the workers of the field with their natural surroundings.

## IX. Art: Revolution, Individualism, and Nature

1. The revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity influenced the development of romanticism in the visual arts as well as literature.
2. Jacques Louis David turned from neo-classicism to portray Napoleon as a romantic hero.
3. Photography, the industrial revolution, and the opening of China and Japan to the West also had repercussion for the visual arts and architecture.

### A. Francisco Goya (1746–1828)

1. While serving as court painter Goya witnessed the invasion of Spain by France and the ensuing chaos.
2. He recorded this dark period in a series of etchings called *The Disasters of War*.

3. Goya's *The Third of May, 1808 at Madrid*, commemorates the slaughter of innocent civilians by the French as an act of reprisal against Spanish guerilla fighters.
4. In Goya's depiction of the romantic revolt against tyranny, Napoleon is the villain, not the hero.

B. Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863)

1. Delacroix's paintings were considered revolutionary by his peers.
2. He was condemned for the intensity of his work, which was in marked contrast to the hard coldness of Jacques-Louis David and his followers.
3. His work was considered a direct threat to the classicism of the academy.
4. Delacroix's work represents a romantic response to the strictures of the past.
5. His work was reserved and controlled compared to Goya.
6. Delacroix's work exemplifies the split between reverence for the past and a passion for new ways of thinking, seeing, and feeling that characterized the romantic period.

C. J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851)

1. Turner began by painting studied landscapes typical of the early nineteenth century.
2. His work showed an intense interest in light.
3. Turner took his inspiration from the natural world.
4. Not until the Impressionists or perhaps the nonobjective painters of the twentieth century did there exist work that could form a basis for comparison with that of Turner.

X. The Romantic Woman and Romantic Love

1. Romanticism had a fervent interest in questions regarding the nature of women and romantic love.
2. Women assumed a new importance yet their image in romantic art seems varied and contradictory from a modern standpoint.

A. Romantic Women Writers

1. The work of Mary (Wollstonecraft Godwin) Shelley typified the shift from the Enlightenment to romanticism.
2. Her *Frankenstein* was a classic in its genre.
3. Many women writers struggled for an opportunity to live and express themselves outside of their traditional roles at this time.
4. Some female writers wrote under male pen names.
5. The Brontë sisters, Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot), Margaret Fuller, and Emily Dickinson are some of the noteworthy authors from this period.
6. Two Frenchwomen in particular, Germaine Necker (Madame de Staël) and Aurore Dupin (Georges Sand), explored the nature and destinies of women in their writings.

B. Romantic Love and Female Types

1. It is primarily woman as viewed by men, however, that provides most of the prevailing images of women from the romantic period.
2. These images include the simple and virtuous girl and mother, the inspiring and unattainable ethereal beauty, and the she-devil temptress (femme fatale).
3. In the conventions of American romantic fiction, blonde heroines inspire chaste love while brunettes bring out "darker" passions.

4. In Germany poets and composers collaborated to create a new art form—the *lied* (art song).
5. Romantic love was a frequent topic in the *lied*, generally with tragic consequences for the heroes and heroines.

C. Romantic Love in Music: The Example of Frédéric François Chopin (1810–1849)

1. Chopin was the quintessential romantic figure.
2. His intuitive and inventive approach to composing was linked to important nonmusical events in his life.
3. He grew up in a time of revolution and turmoil in Poland and later incorporated elements from Polish folk and popular music.
4. Chopin's *Revolutionary Etude* was written in a fit of despair over Russia's occupation of Poland in 1831, according to some biographers.
5. In exile, he became part of Parisian society and had an affair with the novelist Aurore Dupin (Georges Sand).
6. Chopin was the supreme master of subtlety and *rubato*.

D. The Romantic Ballet: *Giselle*

1. The romantic ballet emerged as an art form that incorporated an important role for women both as artists and as mythical figures.
2. It also gave romantic love importance with the female lead serving as the foremost character.
3. Romantic ballet as with other art forms stressed exoticism, fantasy, nature, and an unrealizable love.