

Romantic Classification Essay

Name: _____ per. ____

Prewriting due on _____. Essay is due on _____.

You will classify two romantics—an optimist and a pessimist—based on your personal observations. One could be yourself: “I am a romantic optimist.” One could be a musician: “Kurt Cobain is a romantic pessimist.” Submit this sheet with the final essay.

Prewriting

Intro

In America the Age of Reason (c.1750-1785) preceded the Age of Romanticism (c.1785-1875). What are the main characteristics that mark each period? (See article and then put the ideas into your own words.)

Age of Reason: _____

Age of Romanticism: _____

Two types of American writers emerged during the Romantic Period: Romantic Optimists (R.O.) and Romantic Pessimists (R.P.). List one writer and his work that represents each type:

R.O. _____

R.P. _____

What is the difference between a romantic optimist (R.O.) and a romantic pessimist (R.P.)?

R.O.? _____

R.P.? _____

List two current day musicians, directors, celebrities, characters, or people you know: one being a R.O. & and one being a R.P.: _____

Your thesis: _____

Sample thesis: *Santa Clause is a romantic optimist whereas the Grinch is a romantic pessimist.*

Choose 3 characteristics that would support your 1st topic sentence. (i.e. Santa is a romantic optimist.)

Positive emotion, passion to do good deeds, idealistic, loves the beauty of nature or exotic places, spirituality bring enlightenment, the supernatural can enrich us, creativity inspires, imagination solves problems, music and movies lift us up.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

(i.e. 1. Santa lives in an exotic place.)

Add at least one specific example to support or prove each characteristic.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

(i.e. 1. small elves and reindeer that fly)

Choose 3 characteristics that fit your romantic pessimist for the 2nd body paragraph:

Dark emotions, passion to get revenge, focuses on destructive power of nature, likes the exotic nature of hallucinatory drugs, supernatural will most likely harm us, creativity challenges the status quo, art should make viewers uncomfortable, music and film mirrors dark emotions, forms of escapism include violent or dark video games.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

(i.e. 1. The Grinch wants revenge)

Add at least one specific example to support or prove each characteristic.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

(i.e. 1. The Grinch tries to eliminate Christmas)

Teacher Signature _____ On time? _____ (6pts)

Grading Rubric

Prewriting

Student has had feedback from the teacher after completing the prewriting sheet. _____/6

Student has pre-write sheet attached to final. _____/1

Introduction

Left side heading: your name, my name, course, date, and an interesting title. _____/1

Student includes background information that reveals a clear **understanding** between the Age of Reason and the Age of Romance, romantic optimist and pessimist, and transitions into the modern _____/4
'Romantic' articulating a strong **thesis**. _____/2

First Body Paragraph

Topic sentence supports thesis and clearly establishes the class. _____/2

Student uses characteristics supported with specifics to clearly describe the first type of romantic _____/8

Second Body Paragraph

Topic/transitional sentence supports thesis and clearly establishes the class. _____/2

Student uses characteristics supported with specifics to clearly describe the second type of romantic _____/8

Conclusion

Writer restates thesis and main points, creating a thought-provoking resolution through further interpretation of the ideas presented. _____/5

Words/Syntax

Writing is fluent and uses strong word choice. _____/5

Conventions

Writer uses conventions correctly. _____/6
(Every 3 errors can mean a 1 pt. deduction)

Total _____/50

50—A+ 48—A 45—A- 43—B+ 42—B 40—B-

38—C+ 37—C 35—C- 33—D+ 32—D 30—D-

Sample for the Romantic Classification Essay

Jane Student

Frericks

November 15, 2014

LA 11 Per. 9

Daniel Meets Robert

Intro
Paragraph

The Age of Reason, a time where reason trumped passion, gave way to the Age of Romance. Romanticism, a reaction to Classicism, was a time when writers and artists stressed the importance of personal experience. Emerson wrote, “Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of our mind.” This emphasis on individuality and imagination gave strong public support to romantic writers like Edgar Allen Poe and James Fenimore Cooper. Though Poe and Cooper’s styles differ, both writers incorporated nature and creativity into their literature. Whether having a pessimistic bent like Poe’s or an optimistic outlook like Cooper’s, romantics still can be easily identified in our modern day. Two such polar romantics are actors Daniel Day-Lewis and Robert Downey Jr.

1st Body
Paragraph

Daniel Day-Lewis is a deeply romantic optimist with a strong value system. He’s drawn to see great values in simple things. He’s somebody who eschews celebrity. He and his wife Rebecca have a strong family and a literary sensibility. For part of the acting break he took between *The Boxer* and *Gangs of New York*, he apprenticed under a cobbler in Florence for no practical reason. “I like taking a long time over things, and I believe that it’s the time spent away from the work that allows me to do the work itself,” Day Lewis says. “If you’re lurching from one film set or one theater to the other, I’m not sure what your resources would be as a human being.” Much like the romantic Ralph Waldo Emerson, Day-Lewis’s optimistic nature adds to his desire to continually look for opportunities to see what the world has to teach.

While Robert Downey Jr. shares Day-Lewis’s passion for the art of acting, his romantic spirit is colored by his pessimism. **[Note this transitional topic sentence for 2nd body paragraph.]**

Concl.
Paragraph

Day-Lewis and Downey Jr. express their romanticism in how they live their lives. They both most likely became actors because they enjoy getting in touch with human emotions. Like the rest of us, they are a part of this time period, which influences what they feel and what movies get made. Their personalities can determine who they know and consequently what movies they star in. While the world needs realists as well as romantics, romantics use their passion and creativity to make art. As Thoreau says, one must “step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.”

The Romantic Writers

We cannot think about Irving, Cooper, Bryant, and Poe as if they were all writing about the same things in the same way. We should recognize, however, that all four writers shared some of the characteristics of Romanticism, a literary movement that began in Europe in the late eighteenth century and dominated literature on both sides of the Atlantic in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Romanticism was a reaction to Classicism, the Age of Reason movement in the arts that attempted to duplicate the order and balance in the art of Greece and Rome. While Classicism stressed reason over emotion and social concerns over personal ones, Romantic writers stressed personal experience and were often highly emotional. Among the earliest Romantic writers were the British poet William Wordsworth and the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The qualities of Romanticism vary from place to place, and few Romantic writers exhibit all of them. But there are six characteristics that can give us a general definition of Romanticism:

1. A profound love of nature
2. A focus on the self and the individual
3. A fascination with the supernatural, the mysterious, and the gothic
4. A yearning for the picturesque and the exotic
5. A deep-rooted idealism
6. A passionate nationalism or love of country.

One quality of Romantic writers, then, is a deep feeling for nature. Close observation of the natural world usually gives a Romantic writer an insight into all life, especially human life. We can find this kind of detailed observation of nature in Irving, Cooper, and Bryant—particularly in Bryant’s poems and in Cooper’s breadth of feeling for the unspoiled wilderness.

Romantic writers also reveal with emotion their own personal visions and delve deeply into the individual personalities of their characters. Poe is the best representative of this strain of Romanticism, for he often displays the tortured minds and hearts of inward-looking characters. It is Poe also who demonstrates a fascination with the gothic—the dark, irrational side of the imagination. One generalization about Romantic writing fits all four of the authors in this unit. Romantic writers were often interested in the picturesque and the exotic, in times and places other than their own, especially the past. Sometimes this interest in the past offers an escape from oppressive or unromantic present. Irving’s “Devil and Tom Walker” is set in and around a Boston that had vanished a century before the tale was written, and the story is wrapped in legend, rumor, suggestion, and fantasy. Similar characteristics apply to his short story “Rip Van Winkle.” Cooper’s hero, the frontiersman Natty Bumppo, lived in an America that was already a legendary past for Cooper’s readers. Bryant’s “Thanatopsis” moves deep into the past of the human race. Poe’s story, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” is not set in any country at all or in any time that we can easily recognize.

Irving, Cooper, and Bryant often wrote with a fervent idealism, a belief in a heroic mode of behavior that would make life worthwhile. Nationalism, too, was a part of the imaginative lives of these writers—men who were completely aware of the importance of establishing an American literary art.

These writers of the first half of the nineteenth century began an American Romantic tradition that would be developed by Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, and Faulkner, writers you will meet later in the semester. We continue to read these writers, however, not only because of their historical importance, but because they still offer exciting and meaningful experiences.