

## British Romanticism

**Directions:** Read the following information, and answer the questions.

The literary movement called *British Romanticism* officially began in 1798 when William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge published the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* and revolutionized English poetry forever. Familiar as she was with Percy Bysshe Shelley and other Romantic poets, Mary Shelley was greatly influenced by the ideas fundamental to Romanticism, concepts that are very evident in *Frankenstein*.

Romanticism stresses emotions, powerful feelings, and values them above reason or logic. In fact, in *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth defined poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." This does not mean that the Romantics could not be logical; they just saw emotion as a higher faculty.

Romanticism also places a strong value on nature in its wild state. In Romantic works we often find that mountains, lakes, trees, and the sky have a restorative, healing power on the human mind, soul, and heart. On the other hand, Romantics distrust technology and science, which are essentially efforts to control nature.

Romanticism is often linked with ideals behind the American and French Revolutions near the end of the 1700s. Romantics extol the common man and woman above the nobility; they often glorify the simple lifestyle of country people.

Sometimes there is a mystical or supernatural aspect to Romanticism. In this way Romanticism can be linked with the genre referred to as the *Gothic novel*, which also developed in the second half of the eighteenth century. Gothic novels are characterized by haunted houses, eerie events, shrieks in the middle of the night, and often by frightened young women charged with the care of vulnerable children.

1. What are four emphases of British Romanticism?
2. Use print or online resources to identify three additional aspects of British Romanticism.
3. What do you think would be the opposite of a Romantic?
4. Imagine that a person inherited five acres of primal forest in Pennsylvania. What would a Romantic do with the land? What would the opposite kind of person do with it?

## A Modern Prometheus

**Directions:** Prometheus is a figure from classical mythology. Like many mythological figures, he is involved in a variety of tales, and the stories are not always exactly consistent with one another. Use print or online resources to discover information about Prometheus, and answer the following questions.

1. With what did the Roman writer Ovid credit Prometheus?
2. How, according to myth, did Zeus's and Prometheus's attitudes toward humans differ?
3. What gift did Prometheus give humankind? Why was this gift important?
4. What was Prometheus's punishment?
5. What does the story of Prometheus have in common with the biblical story of the Tower of Babel?
6. What does Prometheus have in common with the tragic King Oedipus?
7. What does the subtitle of the novel suggest about Mary Shelley's character, Frankenstein?