***AMERICAN ROMANTICISM OVERVIEW***

**Basics:**

* Response to and Revolt against “The Age of Reason”
* Roughly 1770-1860
* Contains separate movement: Transcendentalism
* Before the “Age of Realism”

**Values and Types of Expression:**

Very generally, we also distinguish "Romantic" from "Classical" (Seen in Victorian Lit, “Age of Reason”, Puritan Lit, etc.)

**ROMANTIC NON-ROMANTIC/CLASSICAL**

Emotional                                        Reasonable and Practical

Individualistic                                      Public Responsibility

Revolutionary Conservative

Loves Solitude & Nature    Loves Public, Urban Life

Fantasy/Introspection External Reality

The Particular The Universal

Subjective Perception Objective Science

Right Brain Left Brain

Satisfaction of Desire  Desire Repressed

Organic  Mechanical

Creative Energy/Power Form

Exotic Mundane

"Noble Savage" / Outcasts Bourgeois Family

 Idealist Philosophy Materialist/Empirical Philosophy

**Problems in Defining Literary Movements:**

* Authors seldom fit into one category
  + Hawthorne = Romantic & Victorian
  + Emerson & Thoreau = Romantic & Transcendental
  + Poe = Romantic but NOT Transcendental but IS Gothic
  + Bryant, Dickinson & Douglass = Romantic

**Typical American Romantics tend to:**

* venerate Nature
* champion spiritual intuition or self-reliant individualism
* illustrate the egotistic, futile, and destructive aspects of their questing heroes.
* highlight how such self-reliance or intuitions conflict with conventional social and religious dogma
* be radically egalitarian and politically progressive
* use symbols, myths, or fantastic elements as the focus
* be very original and not rule/convention oriented

**Characteristics:**

* Imagination and Subjectivity
* Emotional Intensity
* Common man as hero
* Nature as a refuge, source of knowledge and/or spirituality
* Individuality
* Universe is mysterious; irrational; incomprehensible
* Formal language
* Good receive justice; nature can also punish or reward
* Universal rather than learned truths
* Plot demonstrates
  + romantic love
  + honor and integrity
  + idealism of self
  + importance of nature and the self
* Description provides a "feeling" of the scene

**Sub Genre:**

* Slave narrative
* Domestic (sentimental)
* Female gothic
* Women's fiction
* Bildungsroman: initiation novel