

## Question Sheet for Class #4: The Romantics

### Harriet's questions for three sonnets by Wordsworth

#### "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room" (p. 89)

1. Wordsworth has written a sonnet about sonnets. In what ways does this sonnet depart from the conventions of the Petrarchan sonnet? In what ways does it adhere to it? Volta? Rhyme scheme? Meter?
2. What is the tone of the poem? Reverent? Playful? Ironic?
3. Why is the solace "brief"?

#### "London, 1802" (p. 92)

1. What is the message of the poem? What is the historical context?
2. About Milton's sonnets, Wordsworth has written, "In the better half of his sonnets the sense does not close with the rhyme at the eighth line, but overflows into the second portion of the metre." Does Wordsworth follow this form?
3. Comments on the imagery? On the depiction of Milton?

#### "Surprised by Joy—impatient as the wind" (p. 93)

1. What is the tone of the poem?
2. What is its message? Does it describe anything you have felt? Do you think it could help you through times of grief?
3. Where is the volta?
4. What is the form of the poem? Note the departures from iambic pentameter. How closely does it adhere to the Petrarchan sonnet form?

### Debra's questions for two sonnets by Keats's

#### "On the Grasshopper and the Cricket," pg. 111

1. What is the theme of this sonnet? What feelings or thoughts does it bring about for you?
2. Are there specific images or patterns in the sonnet that are apparent and/or appealing?
3. Is the Volta subtle or powerful? In what way?
4. Keats created the doctrine of "Negative Capability," which "implies an engagement in the actual through imaginative identification that is simultaneously a kind of transcendence. The artist loses the Selfhood that demands a single perspective or meaning, identifies with the *experience* of his/her object, and lets that experience speak itself through him/her."
5. Is Negative Capability evident in the sonnet? Why is this term relevant to the Romantic poets?

#### "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" pg. 109

1. How is this sonnet similar or differ from "The Grasshopper and the Cricket," in form, tone, imagery, other? Which sonnet moves you more or is more appealing? Why?
2. Does Keats successfully convey his feelings of excitement of exploration in the sonnet? If so, how does he achieve this?
3. Why do you think this sonnet might represent one of Keats' early works?

### Karen's questions for three sonnets by Percy Bysshe Shelley.

1. **Ozymandias (p. 103)** Phillis Levin paired this poem with "The New Colossus" by Emma Lazarus on p. 153. What are the different messages that the old and new colossi convey?
2. **"Ode to the West Wind" (104-106)**
  - a. Read this aloud and listen to its music. Compare it to the sound patterns in our next poem, "England in 1819."
  - b. What does Shelley mean by "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" (stanza iv)?
  - c. The poem is addressed to the west wind. What does the poet hope the wind will do for him?
3. **"England in 1819" (p. 104)** First, listen to an actor reading the poem
  - a. Shelley turns the sonnet to political purposes. How does this use relate to the sonnet tradition?
  - b. What is the poem's grammatical structure? What effect does this have?
  - c. What literary devices shape this poem? Where is the turn? How would you evaluate the couplet?