

# The Dark Romantics

## Challenge to the Transcendentalists

(Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century)

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# Comparing Literature Ages

Remember....

Each successive age is a reaction to the previous one.

Each previous age fails to see the achievement of the successive age.

Using the chart on the next slide, explain how the Age of Reason reacted to Puritanism.

# Comparing Literature Ages

Puritanism

Age of Reason

Faith

Reason

Authority

Skeptics

Theology

Science

Predestined Humanity

Self-made Humanity

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# The Romantic response to The Age of Reason and Industrialization...

Over-crowding

Urbanization

Factory life/work

Poverty

How do you think the Romantics would respond to these issues in their stories?

# Comparing Literature Ages

Puritanism

Age of Reason

Romanticism

Faith

Reason

Extreme Emotions,  
Insanity

Authority

Skepticism

Mystery, Suspense

Theology

Science

Supernatural, Occult  
Legends, Dreams,  
Wild Nature

Predestined  
Humanity

Self-made  
Humanity

Fate, Curses,  
Omens

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# Who Were the Transcendentalists?

- The Transcendentalists were a group of nineteenth-century writers and artists who believed in the goodness and ultimate perfectibility of human beings.
- The Transcendentalists valued self-reliance and individualism over custom and tradition.
- They saw the natural world as a doorway to a mystical or ideal reality.

# A Dark Romantic View

I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible.

From “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe

## Dark Romanticism Video



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# Who Were the Dark Romantics?

- The Dark Romantics were a group of nineteenth-century writers who explored the dark side of human nature.
- Dark Romantic writers explored the human potential for evil, including the psychological effects of guilt, sin, and madness.
- The Dark Romantic view countered the optimism of the Transcendentalist writers of the time.



# Differences Between Transcendentalists and Dark Romantics

## Transcendentalists

Saw divine goodness and beauty beneath everyday reality

Embraced the mystical and idealistic elements of Puritan thought

## Dark Romantics

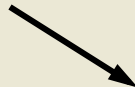
Believed spiritual truths may be ugly or frightening

Reintroduced the dark side of Puritan beliefs: the idea of Original Sin and the human potential for evil

# Similarities Between Transcendentalists and Dark Romantics

**Transcendentalists**

**Dark Romantics**



True reality is spiritual.

Intuition is superior to  
logic or reason.

Human events contain  
signs and symbols of  
spiritual truths.

# Elements of Dark Romanticism

Drafty, old, family houses/castles

Mystery and suspense, finding dark secrets

Supernatural: ghosts, curses, monsters, etc.

Grisly death and macabre murder

Omens, curses, dreams, legends

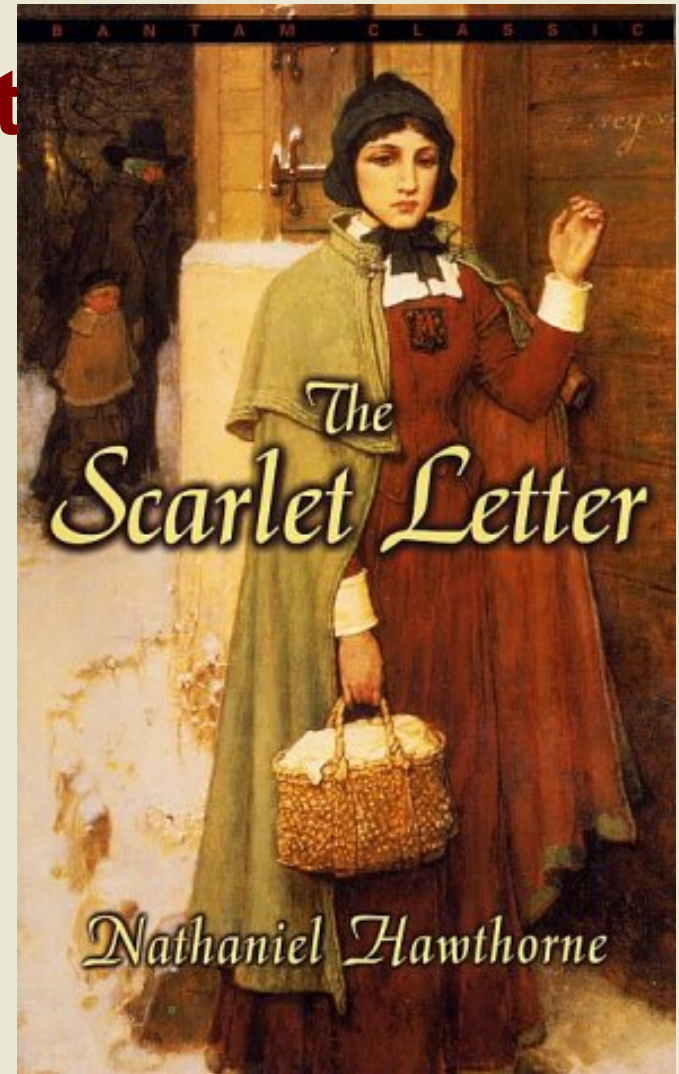
Extreme emotions of grief, passion, love

Instances of madness and insanity

References wild, dangerous nature

Mood: creepy, doom and gloom, terror

# Nathaniel Hawthorne



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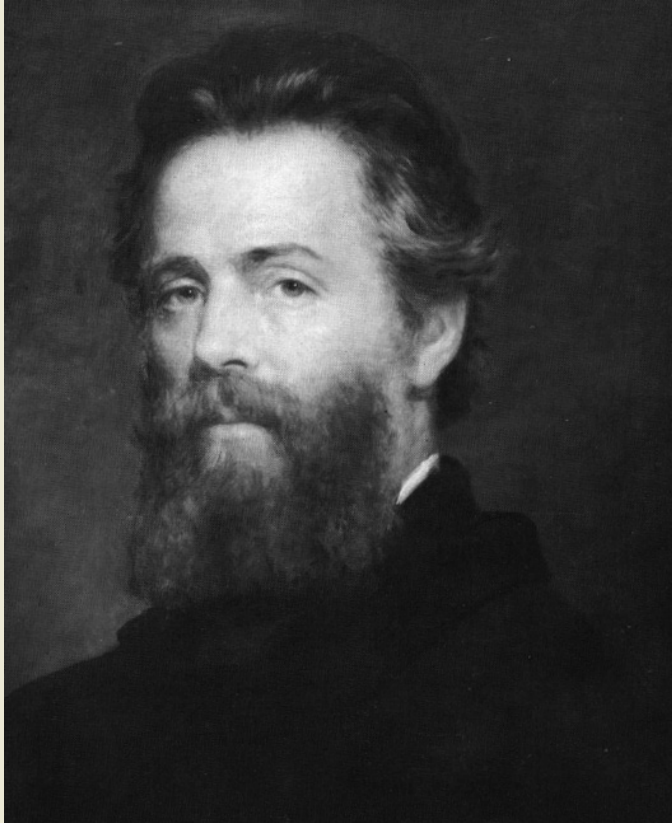
# Nathaniel Hawthorne

## (1804–1864)

Hawthorne's short stories and novels reflect Dark Romantic views of humanity.

- In “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment,” four people drink a magical elixir and choose the foolishness of false youth over the wisdom of age and experience.
- In “The Minister’s Black Veil,” a Puritan minister decides to wear a black veil for the rest of his life to represent the universality of sorrow and secret sin.
- The novel *The Scarlet Letter* tells a story of sin and redemption and explores the evil of hypocrisy.

# Herman Melville



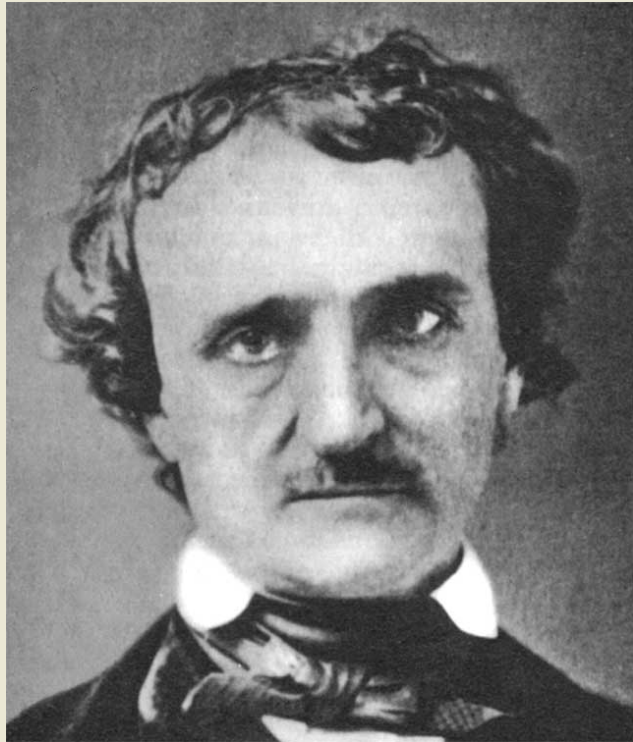
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# Herman Melville (1819–1891)

Herman Melville's short stories and novels also reflect a Dark Romantic view of nature and humanity.

- In the novel *Moby-Dick*, Captain Ahab doubts whether there is any real truth or meaning behind the appearances of nature.
- In “Bartleby the Scrivener,” a lawyer watches his copyist withdraw completely from the material world.

# Edgar A



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# Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)

Poe's masterful short stories told tales of madness, revenge, and tragic fate.

- In “The Cask of Amontillado,” the mad narrator takes deadly revenge on a man who insulted him.
- In the classic horror tale “The Pit and the Pendulum,” the narrator barely escapes a horrible death in a dark dungeon.
- In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” a man commits murder and is driven to confess by the imaginary beating of the dead man's heart.

# Bram Stoker



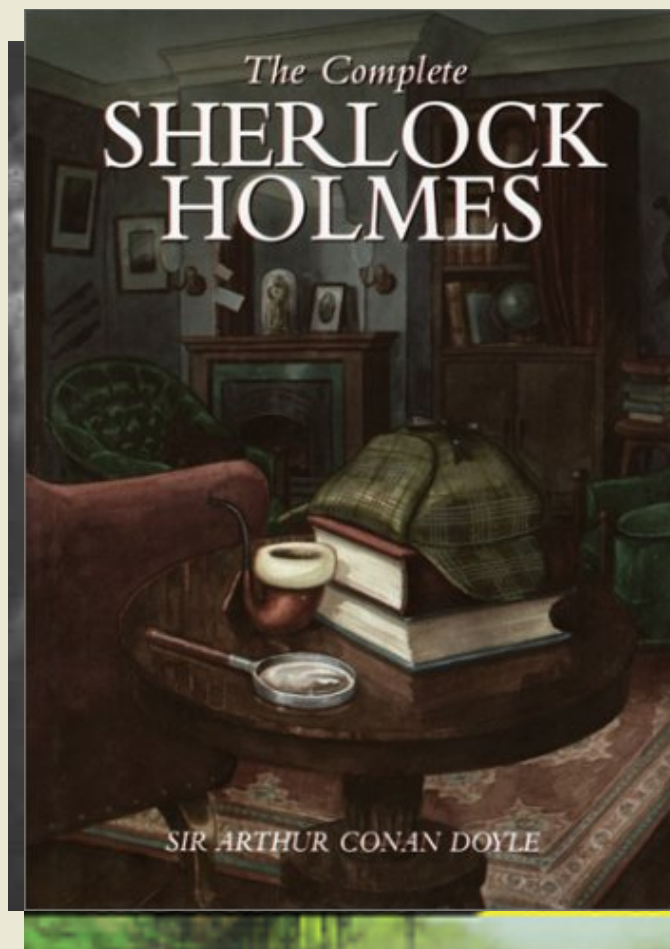
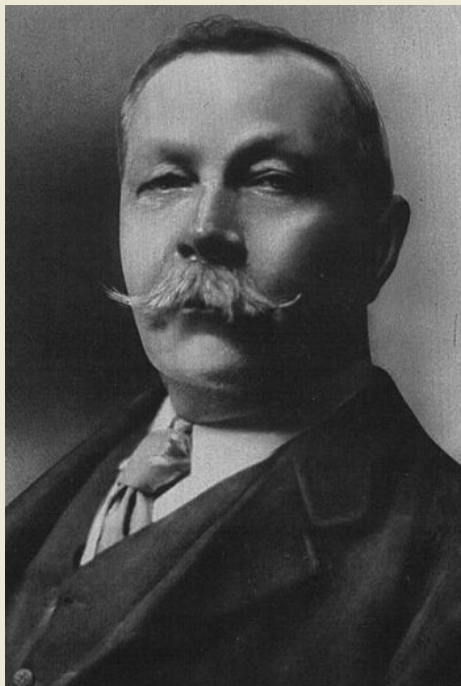
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# Mary Sh



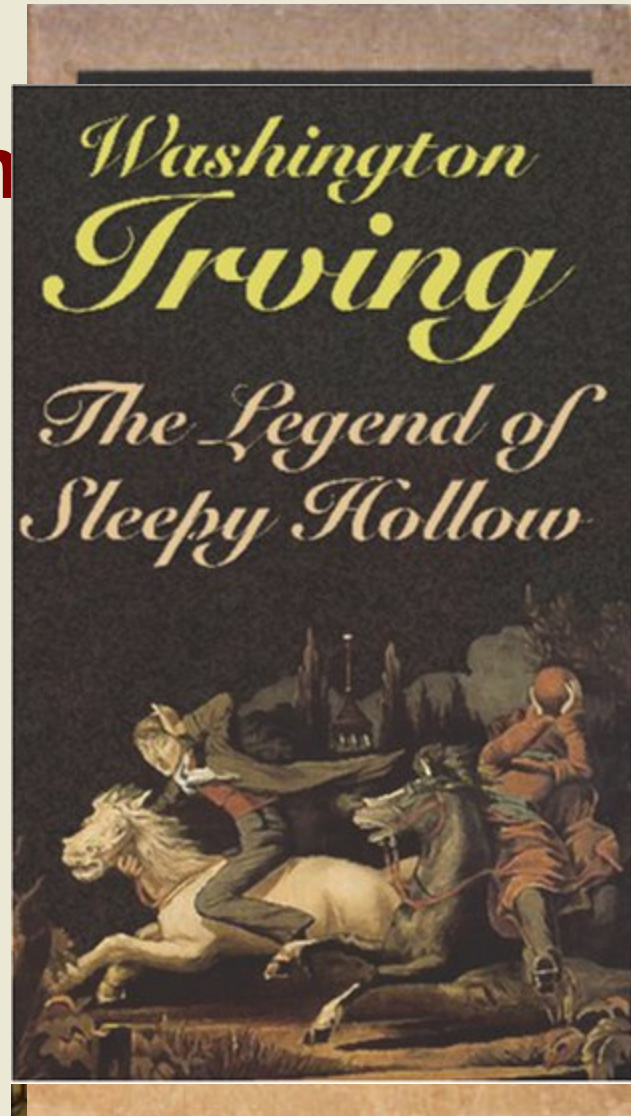
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# Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



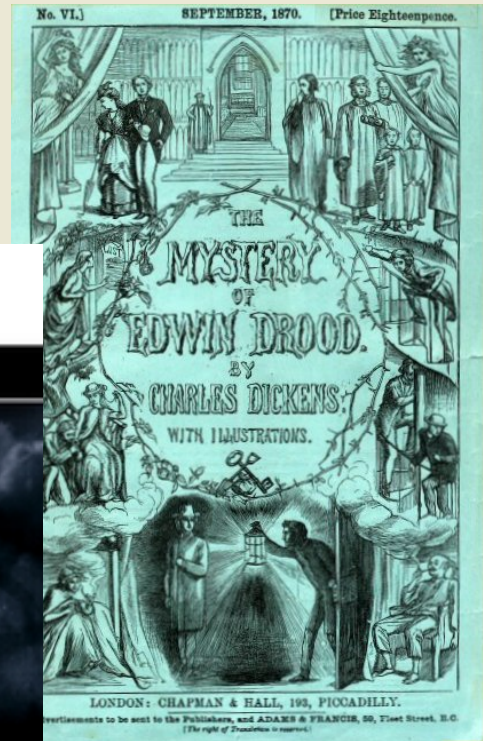
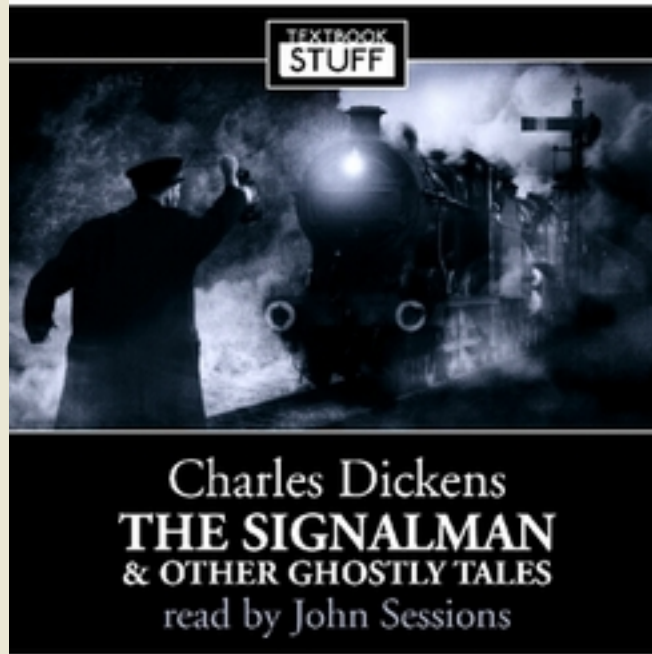
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# Washington

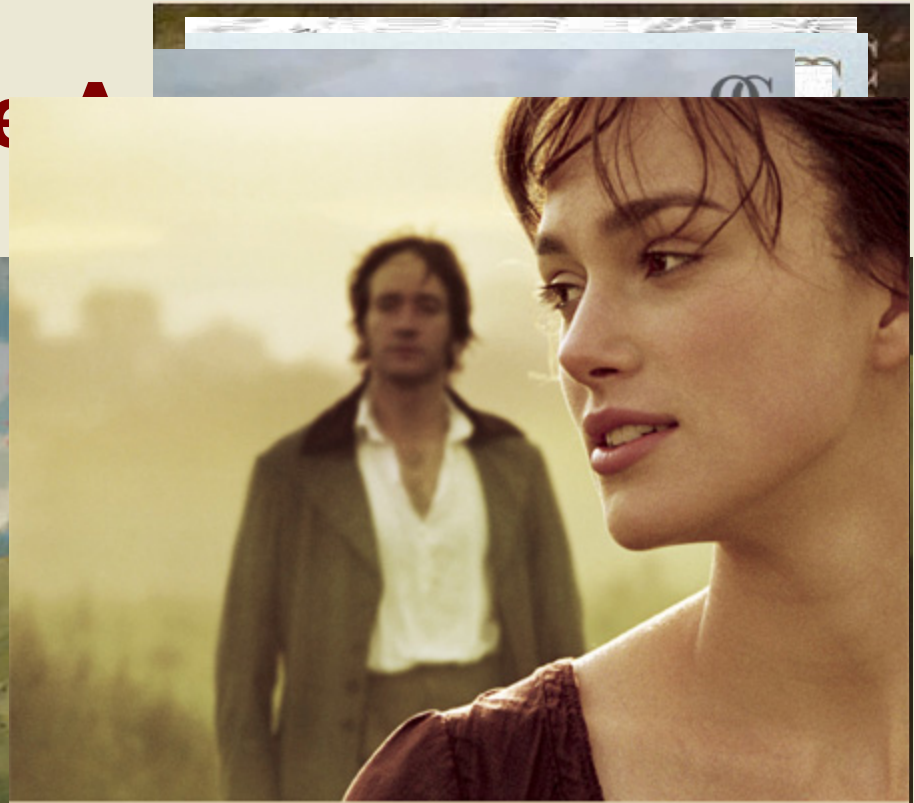


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# Charles Dickens



# Jane Austen



Keira Knightley  
**PRIDE & PREJUDICE**

BY JANE AUSTEN AND BEN H. WINTERS

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# The Dark Romantic Legacy

Dark Romantic themes still appear in stories, books, movies, TV shows, and comic books.

- Present-day horror stories and movies borrow images and themes from the original master of horror, Edgar Allan Poe.
- The conflict between good and evil and the effects of guilt and sin are major themes in current literature, popular writing, and television.



# Dark Romantic Heroes

Conflicted

Loner

Misunderstood by society

Spiritual

Talented or gifted in some way

Inspired by creativity and imagination rather than society norms

# Modern Dark/Gothic Romanticism

1. Think of a modern movie or film that has Gothic/Dark Romance traits. Write it down in your notes.
2. Moving around the room, get three modern Dark/Gothic Romance titles from three different people. Write them down in your notes. Others will ask you for your title.
3. Sit in your seat when you have three titles.

## What Have You Learned?

1. The Transcendentalists had a dark vision of the world.  
a. true                      **b. false**
  
2. Hawthorne was a Transcendentalist.  
a. true                      **b. false**
  
3. The Dark Romantics believed in spiritual but not necessarily optimistic truths behind nature.  
**a. true**                      b. false

**The End**

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