Revolutions and the Romantic Spirit
American revolution: American War of Independence (1775-83) and Declaration of Independence from British rule (1776).

French revolution (1789): new ideas of freedom and social justice spread all over Europe.

Industrial (and agrarian) revolution: it brought about many social changes.
1. The Industrial Revolution

**CAUSES**

- Great increase in population towards 1750
- Greater demand for pots, beer and clothes
- Need for more efficient production. England changed from a farming to an industrial country
The ‘Revolution’ implied

- New technologies and inventions
- The development of the factory system
- New sources of power and transport

It also implied unemployment because fewer people were needed for the production of goods.
1. The Industrial Revolution

James Watt’s **steam engine** was a very important invention → factories were built on **coal and iron fields** of Lancashire, Yorkshire, South Scotland and South Wales.

**Changes in transport**
- transport was made more efficient;
- new waterways were built;
- road conditions were improved.

cloth manufactured more cheaply
2. The Agrarian Revolution

The enclosure of ‘open fields’ and common land aimed at making larger, more efficient farms.

- improvements in farming techniques such as crop rotation and mechanisation

The English Leicester, a breed of sheep Coke introduced into Norfolk and cross-bred with the native Norfolk Horn
3. Industrial society

‘Mushroom towns’ ➔ small towns built near the factories to house the workers

Terrible living conditions

- People lived in slums
- Lack of elementary public services;
- Air and water pollution;
- Houses built in endless rows;
- Overcrowding.
Working conditions

- women and children were exploited (paid less and easier to control);
- long working hours;
- rational division of labour;
- Mechanisation and alienation

- Very short life expectancy.
- High unemployment
4. The Luddites (see page 124)

Poverty

Deteriorating working conditions

Mechanical looms and spinners replacing skilled craftsmen

led to outbursts of machine-breaking culminating in the ‘Luddites Riots’ of 1811-1812.

They caused so much alarm that the government made machine-breaking punishable by death.
In 1819, during a peaceful public meeting in Manchester, soldiers fired into a crowd and eleven people were killed ➔ the so-called ‘Peterloo Massacre’.
Causes

• New taxes to the American colonies. One tax was on the importation of tea.

Consequences

• The ‘Boston Tea Party’ (1773) ➔ the rebels threw tea imported from Britain into the harbour.
• Their motto ‘No taxation without representation’.
5. The American War of Independence

July 4th, 1776 American Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson

stated that

- the colonies = a new nation
- all men have a natural right to ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’
- governments can claim the right to rule if they have ‘the consent of the governed’
5. The American War of Independence

**Treaty of Versailles 1783**

- Britain recognised the independence of its former colonies.

- The republic of the United States of America adopted a federal constitution in 1787.

- George Washington became the first President.
6. The word ‘Romantic’

The Romantic Age
(from the French Revolution to the
 coronation of Queen Victoria 1837)

the period in which new ideas and attitudes arose in **reaction to the** dominant 18th-century ideals of order, calm, harmony, balance, rationality

Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*, 1818
7. English Romanticism

Romanticism in England expressed itself especially in poetry. Novels were mainly of two kinds: realistic/ fantastic (the Gothic novels). No Drama.

The Romantics:
• expressed a **negative attitude towards the existing social or political conditions**;
• placed the **individual** at the **centre of art**;
• argued that **poetry** should be **free from all rules**.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Augustan</th>
<th>Romantic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason and order</td>
<td>Feeling, intuition, emotion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control of emotion and imagination</td>
<td>Free play of imagination, desire to go beyond human limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are treated as little adults, they must be civilised.</td>
<td>Children are sacred, close to God.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Society more important than individual; poet expresses social order and follows authority.</td>
<td>Importance of the poet’s inner life (introspection); he is a rebel but also a prophet and a creator. He looks for freedom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophisticated, literary language</td>
<td>Everyday language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>References to Classical world</td>
<td>Observation of nature and everyday situations; reference to the Middle-Ages. Fascination with the mysterious, the exotic.</td>
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</tbody>
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8. Nature for the Romantics

- **Opposed to reason.**
- **A substitute for traditional religion.**
- A way to discover the inner self.
- **A source of sensations.**
- An encouragement to imagination and vision.
- **An expressive language:** natural images are connected to human feelings and the self.

J. M. Turner, *Landscape with Distant River and Bay*, c. 1840-50; Musée du Louvre, Paris
9. The Romantic imagination

- A **creative power** superior to reason.

- A **dynamic, active**, rather than passive **power**.

- Allows human beings to ‘read’ nature as a system of symbols.