BEGC-109
ASSIGNMENT: British Romantic Literature

Programme: BAEGH/2026-2027
Course Code: BEGC-109

Answer any **five questions.** All questions carry equal marks. (20 × 5 = 100)

1. What do you understand by the term ‘Romanticism’? Discuss the historical and intellectual background of the British Romantic movement.
2. Would you consider Thomas Gray and William Collins precursors of the Romantic movement? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Compare and contrast the two ‘contrary states of the human soul’ as presented in Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*.
4. Discuss Wordsworth’s views on the language of poetry and poetic diction as set out in the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*.
5. Discuss the role of the supernatural in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”.
6. Critically analyse the theme of sin, suffering and redemption in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”.
7. Write a critical appreciation of Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind”.
8. Attempt a critical appreciation of any one ode of John Keats prescribed in your course.
9. Discuss *Frankenstein* as a Gothic novel.
10. Comment on the theme of scientific ambition and its consequences in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

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Answer

Romanticism was a broad literary, artistic and intellectual movement that gave special importance to imagination, emotion, nature and individual freedom. In British literature it is usually associated with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, particularly the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge’s Lyrical Ballads in 1798. Romantic writers questioned the belief that reason, formal rules and inherited social authority could explain every part of human experience. They valued intense feeling, creative originality, personal vision and the mysterious aspects of life. However, Romanticism was not simply a rejection of reason. It developed through an argument with the intellectual and political changes of its age.

The movement arose during a period of dramatic political upheaval. The American Revolution demonstrated that an established political order could be challenged, while the French Revolution of 1789 initially inspired hopes for liberty, equality and social renewal. Younger poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge welcomed its promise that ordinary people could shape history. The subsequent violence of the Revolution, the Reign of Terror and the Napoleonic wars complicated that enthusiasm. Wordsworth’s early revolutionary idealism gradually developed into a more reflective concern with memory, nature and the moral life. Shelley, in a later generation, retained a radical hope that poetry and human imagination could transform oppressive institutions. Thus Romantic literature often combines political aspiration with disappointment and uncertainty.

Britain was also being transformed by the Industrial Revolution. Expanding factories, industrial towns and mechanised production brought new wealth but also harsh labour conditions, poverty and social displacement. Enclosure and agricultural changes weakened older rural communities. Romantic poets responded by paying fresh attention to landscapes, village life, childhood and the lives of marginalised people. Wordsworth’s interest in humble rural characters challenged conventional ideas about whose experience deserved poetic treatment. Blake’s criticism of child labour and oppressive institutions likewise exposed the human cost of supposedly progressive society. Nature became not merely attractive scenery but a possible source of ethical reflection and resistance to a narrowly commercial view of life.