



Banha University
Faculty of Arts
English Department

A Guiding Model Answer for
Third Grade
Neo-Classical & Romantic Poetry Exam

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Faculty of Arts

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Third Grade
Department of English

Second Term (June 2014)
Time Allowed: 2 hours

Neo-Classical & Romantic Poetry

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries Poetry Exam

Respond to the following questions:

Note: In each answer, you should refer closely to *at least TWO* relevant works studied. Do not repeat substantially the same material in both answers. Time limit for each question is 30 minutes and Grade for each is 4 except for the second which is 3.

1. Select a poet with a strong satiric voice and examine as specifically as possible that poet's targets and poetic methods?
2. "Men, some to Bus'ness, some to Pleasure take; / But ev'ry Woman is at heart a Rake" (Alexander Pope, *Epistle to A Lady*). In the light of this couplet, consider attitudes towards femininity and/or masculinity in the period. You should refer to at least two writers?
3. Select three Romantic poets among the ones read in class. Using examples from the poetry, point out salient differences in their poetic styles and subject matter, and yet determine what it is they all have in common that makes them all "Romantic"?
4. Through close reference to specific poems which you have read, compare the use made by Shelley and Keats of the Sonnet?

Good Luck
Mohammad Al-Hussini Arab



1. Select a poet with a strong satiric voice and examine as specifically as possible that poet's targets and poetic methods?

Answer:

Jonathan Swift remains the premier satirist in the English language. Swift's harsh, critical, unpoetic poetry emerges as the vehicle of an endlessly fascinating, sly, and passionate personality. Besides a powerful intelligence and an essential dissatisfaction with the human condition, the satirist must possess an eye keen enough to discern the follies that so often arise from confusing appearance and reality—which is precisely what eighteenth century pastoral poetry routinely did. The facts of 18th century rural life were cold and hard. Farmers and rural workers lived lives at the other end of the spectrum from the hazily romantic imaginings of pastoral poetry. Like their lower-class counterparts in the city, they worked long, back-breaking hours, usually for little more than a subsistence wage. No amount of flowery language or elaborate, classical imagery could improve their lot or effectively substitute fantasy for reality.

The time during which Swift lived and wrote has often been termed the neoclassical age because the period witnessed a sweeping revival of classical literature. The works of Greek and Roman writers were studied, praised, and frequently imitated, and most educated English readers of Swift's day would have been familiar with the poetic genres of the ancient world. One very popular and often imitated classical genre was pastoral poetry, which celebrated rural life and often contrasted the simple, unspoiled life of herdsman and farmers with the hectic, corrupt, and overly civilized life of city dwellers.

The primary purpose of art, according to neoclassical literary theory, was to provide moral instruction, and moral instruction could hardly proceed from what was essentially a lie. Although Swift, in "A Description of a City Shower," certainly provides a vivid enough description of a turbulent rain shower rolling through the streets of early eighteenth century London, the poem's central concern is with the city's inhabitants who are caught by Swift in a series of comic vignettes as they scurry to avoid the impending "flood."

This London is a city packed with perfectly ordinary people, all of them—like Susan taking down her clothes from the clothesline and the foppish young law student (the "Templer spruce") waiting for a break in the rain—doing perfectly ordinary things. Yet the poem's language—ornate, elevated, and rich with classical allusions—suggests that this seemingly every day event is anything but ordinary.

In "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," Swift aims at stripping away such obfuscation by depicting the rank grossness of human flesh when it is divested of all ornament and is operating in its natural state. Indeed, any temptation to sympathize with the downtrodden, much-victimized Corinna inevitably runs up against Swift's conception of both God and humankind. For Swift, God is a largely unapproachable, unspeakably transcendent being who created the world and left behind certain commandments, laws that establish minimal requirements of human behavior. In Swift's view, Corinna and her clients clearly fall short of those moral standards, to the point that the harlot poses an outright danger to the community.

Further, any sympathetic response to Corinna and her troubles must first be grounded in seeing her as a real human being. However, this particular prostitute's ills are so calamitous—and her prosthetic efforts



after beauty are so patently absurd—that she calls forth much more laughter than empathy. While any person might rightly respond sympathetically toward a "beautiful nymph" with, say, a glass eye, that milk becomes distinctly clabbered when the reader learns that the same woman is bald, crafts her eyebrows from mouse skins, has no teeth, props up her breasts with rags, and wears a steel-ribbed corset and artificial hips. In short, her farcical portrayal in the poem is so purposefully and grotesquely overdone as to effectively block any empathetic response. However, while Corinna may not be "real," the hazards that she poses certainly are; paradoxically, the unreality of the harlot allows Corinna to be betrayed for what she really is—namely, a social menace. After all, her morning-after attempt to restore her mechanical, absurdly artificial body ultimately represents an effort at general contagion: "Corinna in the morning dizen'd, / Who sees, will spew; who smells, be poison'd."

Swift here presents a pure invective against vice and the wages of sin like a preacher shouting hell-fire and brimstone, or the photographs in a medical treatise. Indeed, to the degree that Swift succeeds in disgusting his audience through his graphic depiction of Corinna, he succeeds as well in accomplishing his thematic and moral purposes in this disturbing poem.

2. "Men, some to Bus'ness, some to Pleasure take; / But ev'ry Woman is at heart a Rake" (Alexander Pope, *Epistle to A Lady*). In the light of this couplet, consider attitudes towards femininity and/or masculinity in the period. You should refer to at least two writers?

Answer:

Poets of the 18th century were concerned about stating their attitudes towards femininity and/or masculinity. Alexander Pope's *An Essay On Man* concentrates on the characters of men while *Epistle II. To a Lady* contains a brilliantly formed series of female portraits exemplifying the thesis "Women's at best a Contradiction still." Samuel Johnson's poem *London*, presents the masculine idealistic outsider's view of England's corrupt capital city. The poem is turned against the masculine lawlessness of the streets, against the masculine corruption and cowardice of the government, and, more personally, against the poor man's lot.

Pope's *Epistle to a Lady* is a masterpiece of satire in its stereotypical view of women as exemplars of inconsistencies, whose proper sphere is in domestic life. It does not really indulge in hatred of women, but ends on a note of praise for the sex, with a presentation of a feminine ideal of goodness to be respected by male and female alike. Morality may be ultimately gender-neutral; a good woman, like a good man, is ultimately a sensible, well-rounded, and self-possessed human being. The epistle is especially directed at female readers: for their moral instruction, to prevent their destruction, and to promote their well-being.

The poem opens with the poet in the guise of a painter taking readers on a tour through a gallery of portraits of women who demonstrate that the entire sex is more incredibly inconsistent than males are. The survey begins with a procession of foolish females. Pseudo-intellectual Rufa illustrates affectation, with a sarcastic Swiftian comparison to Mary Wortley Montagu as "Sappho." Soft-spoken Silia next appears, in a sudden rage over a pimple; impossible Papillia wants shade but hates trees; unattractive Calypso attracts by cunning; whimsical Narcissa lacks mental or moral stability; lively Flavia plays the fashionable wit prone to



melancholy and radical ideas, and, following a brief study of silly triflers, violent Atossa—alias the Duchess of Buckinghamshire—and heartless Cloe close the ranks of the female fools.

It begins by introducing the premise of the changeableness of human character, which it proceeds to elaborate in its long central section. It turns near its conclusion to the efficacious category of the ruling passion, which serves as the basis for a final generalization. And it ends with a predictable but in some respects extraneous tribute to the exemplary character to whom the epistle is addressed. The hypothesis of a ruling passion does appear as a significant element in *An Epistle To A Lady*. The lady of the title was Martha Blount, whom Pope had met early in life and who became his lifelong intimate companion. The imaginary setting for part of the poem is an art gallery, with the speaker a cicerone who conducts the reader past portraits of various female characters exemplifying the notion that, "good as well as ill, / Woman's at best a Contradiction still." There is the flirtatious Rufa (a redhead), who studies the philosopher John Locke; the timid Silia (snub-nosed?), who flies into a rage over a pimple; Papillia (butterfly), who longs for a country estate but cannot stand the "odious, odious Trees"; and Narcissa—"A very Heathen in the carnal Part, / Yet still a sad, good Christian at her heart." Five or six more portraits are also designed to enforce Pope's thesis that women in general, and in contrast to men, are governed by only two "Ruling Passions": the "Love of Pleasure, and the Love of Sway." The poem's conclusion, in contrast to the unflattering female characterizations and the highly suspect maxim just quoted, offers a tender, affectionate, admiring portrayal of Blount (never mentioned in the poem by name), to whom Phoebus Apollo, the god of poetry, has given "good Sense, Good-Humour, and a Poet."

This negative portraiture gives way, in the final third of the poem, to positive glimpses of the good woman, as personified by an overly glorified Queen Caroline and an understated Duchess of Queensbury. The poem concludes on an upbeat if extremely chauvinistic note, insisting that women's delicately complex personality suits them for domesticity rather than for a public life, driven as they are by two ruling passions: "The Love of Pleasure, and the Love of Sway" (lines 207-248). Let women, therefore, emulate the life of Martha Blount, being addressed throughout the poem. Let them cultivate good sense and good humor in order to transform the contradictions of their divided nature into an integrated personality ("a softer Man") that is an ideal synthesis of male and female traits. The *epistle* is a poem about the need for women to cultivate a rounded and rational perspective on life in order to overcome the contradictory shortcomings of their nature that, unrestrained by reason, true love, and common sense, can lead to emotional and immoral excesses. As a satire modeled on the casual Horatian verse letter, or epistle, the poem inculcates this theme through ridicule of excessive female types and through closing praise of female norms of right conduct for the edification of female readers.

Samuel Johnson's poem *London*, presents the masculine idealistic outsider's view of England's corrupt capital city. The poem is turned against the masculine lawlessness of the streets, against the masculine corruption and cowardice of the government, and, more personally, against the poor man's lot.

Johnson, who was 32 when he came to the city, surely felt neglect and endured poverty as a journalist-editor for Edward Cave's *The Gentleman's Magazine*. Part of the poem's bitterness stemmed from



the encouragement of his natural rebelliousness by his friendship with the compelling and unstable minor poet Richard Savage, who is sometimes equated with Thales. Savage, too, was an erudite, hypersensitive, and poverty-stricken author who, like Thales, had to escape to Wales, and who, unlike Johnson, died in 1743 without achieving enduring fame and fortune in the big city.

The poem opens with an unnamed narrator expressing mixed emotions about the pending departure of his friend, "Thales," from Greenwich, England, by boat to some rural retreat of primitive innocence in Wales. Thales is about to exile himself to the "purer air" of primitive Wales. The narrator may regret losing Thales to "Cambria's solitary shore" but fully sympathizes with his friend's disgust of a physically and morally dangerous London. Thus, *London* is a diatribe on the life of that city by one masculine Thales, as Thales utters a powerful diatribe against the city and makes use of all the commonplaces of contemporary opposition propaganda against the administration of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. The poem is an extremely political work. Its implied thesis is that Walpole's government was in the process of corrupting every aspect of English life. Lamenting a city preoccupied with "vice and gain," in which learning goes unrewarded, Thales prays for his escape to an Edenic "happier place" far from pensioned politicians in the pay of Walpole's regime. Parliament itself is a major wellspring of national corruption, tainting the already "poison'd youth" of the land, spreading lies as truths, seeking a coward's peace with Spanish marauders of English trade who dared to cut off an ear of Captain Robert Jenkins, and enriching itself by controlling the populace through the government newspaper *The Daily Gazetteer* and the recent Stage Licensing Act, which was causing liberty-loving English drama to be displaced by depraved Italian opera. In rapid succession Johnson goes on to criticize masculine pretense, elimination, flattery, unrewarded learning, pensioned, politicians, submissive and pushing French immigrants, the builder of huge and tasteless mansions, poets laureate, the current crime wave, the parliamentary Committee of Ways and Means, George II's annual visits to his mistress in Hanover—"Much could I add, but see the boat at hand," Thales concludes, breathless. By contrast, Thales is the truth-telling good man found in classical satire, a faithful Protestant Englishman who despises the corrupting invasion of foreigners—especially slavish Frenchmen, who win preferment by flattery, deceit, and an unprincipled readiness to do anything for the ruling class. In a money-hungry metropolis of chaotic values, poverty is the only crime that provokes universal ridicule and neglect, whereas wealth causes an admiring nation to help rebuild rich Orgilio's mansion, gutted by fire. So widespread is urban violence from drunkards, street gangs, and murdering burglars that the amount of rope needed to hang this growing mass of criminals would use up all the reserves of hemp needed to rig the ships for King George II's annual visits to his royal mistress in Hanover, Germany. Consequently, Thales must bid farewell to London, and he promises that if his narrator-friend should ever retire to rural innocence in Kent, then Thales will leave Wales and join him there to help inspire the creation of satires against the vices of the age.

3. Select three Romantic poets among the ones read in class. Using examples from the poetry, point out salient differences in their poetic styles and subject matter, and yet determine what it is they all have in common that makes them all "Romantic"?



Answer:

The Romantic poets believed strongly in a revolution of ideas—not only about how poets should write, but also about how poets should see and experience the world. In his "Defence of Poetry," Shelley writes, "Poetry reproduces the common universe, but purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being." In other words, poems, by recreating the real in a new and refreshing way, allow us better access at "wonder," or that energetic curiosity that keeps children moving and smiling.

William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Lord Byron are three Romantic poets who are similar and dissimilar in their poetic styles and subject matter. In "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known," Wordsworth uses the ballad stanza form to achieve a note of rustic simplicity. His technique is deliberate and has a historical explanation: In the eighteenth century, most poets relied on elevated language and formal devices that reflected the influence of classical literature. Wordsworth and Coleridge made a conscious effort to transform poetry into something more simple and direct, in which human emotions could be expressed directly in language that all people would understand. Wordsworth states these principles in his famous Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800); there, he describes poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings ... recollected in tranquillity." A poet is not some seer invested with special divine powers; rather, Wordsworth says, he is "a man speaking to men." In this poem, the language is direct and virtually free of literary tropes. Much of that action is simple mental reverie, but the growing state of anxiety which the speaker feels as he approaches Lucy's cottage is made apparent to the reader through the simple language and rustic form of this ballad.

"Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known" is one of several poems in which Wordsworth explores the experiences of solitude and loss. Personifying the idea of solitary beauty in the figure of his chief character, Lucy, the poet uses his reactions to the girl's growth in the country and her death to examine his own attitudes about the value of life and the importance of nature in shaping life.

The tenets of Romantic poetry include a recognition of the power of unadorned speech. The direct statements concerning the speaker's idle reverie have an immediacy of impact that makes the poet's central ideas easily understandable. This poem is about the simple joys of love and the intensity of feeling that one person can have for another; it emphasizes the tremendous sense of attachment such a feeling provokes. At the same time, the poem serves to remind readers of the tremendous sense of loss that follows the death of a beloved. Wordsworth has carefully woven into his lover's reverie the possibility of such impending doom through his consistent references to the descending moon; its path through the night sky serves as a symbol for the fading lover whose death is foreseen at the end of the poem.

John Keats also uses the ballad form in "La Belle Dame sans Merci," but benefits from the subject matter of the traditional ballad, which often concerns itself with meetings between mortal men and spirits, which Wordsworth does not use. In this case the spirit is a woman who completely fulfills the knight's desires, which suggests that she exists only as a projection of his desires. This story of a perfect fulfillment



of fantasy and desire leads in the end to the destruction of the knight. The poem is also about the dream inside the fantasy that wakes the dreamer up to a cold reality.

Romantic poets are famous for describing the world as a subjective experience, one in which the important things happen in the human heart. There is certainly plenty of that in "La Belle Dame sans Merci," with the knight-in-arms either creating a fantasy love affair or not, creating his own tuberculosis within his mind, and then warning himself about the dangers of going beyond his own mind by entering into a relationship with another person. There is also a strong representation of the objective world, in the unnamed stranger who encounters the knight in the woods. The poem provides no clear-cut answers about how the world of emotion affects or is affected by the physical world, but it does raise substantive questions that cannot be easily ignored.

The poem is told in the form of a dialogue and recounts the experience of loving dangerously and fully, of remaining loyal to that love despite warnings to the contrary, and of suffering the living death of one who has glimpsed immortality. At the beginning and end of the poem, the knight remains on "a cold hill's side," a world devoid of happiness or beauty, waiting for his love to return. Some readers maintain that the poem is really about Keats's confused feelings for Fanny Brawne, his fiancée. Others claim the story is symbolic of the plight of the artist, who, having "fallen in love" with beauty, can never fully accept the mundane. Either way, the conclusion is similar: however self-destructive intense love may be, the lover has little choice in the matter. Further, the more one entertains feelings of beauty and love, the more desolate and more painful the world becomes.

The way in which Byron describes the subject matter in "The Destruction of Sennacherib" is what is significant about the poem. In that sense, the poem is an example of the Romantic philosophy in both its revolutionary subject matter and in how Byron, by using vivid details and descriptive language, purges the "film of familiarity" from a commonly told story.

The poem is based on a brief story in II Chronicles 32: 21 that records in one sentence the defeat of the Assyrians by God's Angel of Death. What details are missing in the biblical version, however, Byron provides: through metrical invention, description, powerful imagery, and parallelism the poet makes the dismal scene come to life. The destruction of the Assyrian invaders by the Angel of Death is not given any religious significance by Byron; instead, he concentrates on seeing the scene clearly, imagining it so specifically that the reader can see the foam coming from the dying horse's mouth, and the "withered," "distorted" bodies of the Assyrian army. Byron also uses similes based on natural processes--summer turning to fall, snow melting, armor rusting--to suggest the transitory nature of all life.

"The Destruction of Sennacherib" is the most famous poem on a biblical subject to come out of the English Romantic movement. Although Byron's fellow poets William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge both became professed Christians in the later portions of their careers, neither wrote a biblical poem as famous or as memorable as that written by Byron, so often castigated in conservative quarters as an unreliable freethinker.



Byron's poem takes completely the position found in the Old Testament. Sennacherib is an evil tyrant, and Judah's delivery from him was a result of miraculous divine intervention. If anything, Byron's poem could be criticized for taking an overly Christian view of what was originally a Jewish subject. This Christianizing is also seen in the final line of the first stanza, where the mention of Galilee alludes to Jesus Christ. As a geographical term for the lake near the head of the Jordan River, the word "Galilee" was not in use until the third or second century b.c.e., so its presence here is anachronistic. However, its strong Christian associations—Galilee being the region where Jesus Christ grew up and began his ministry—were clearly important to Byron, even though his musical collaborator, Isaac Nathan, was a Jew.

4. Through close reference to specific poems which you have read, compare the use made by Shelley and Keats of the Sonnet?

In their sonnets, Shelley and Keats use the form of the Italian sonnet with some changes. Invented by the Italian poet Petrarch and first made popular in English by the sixteenth century lyricists Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Italian sonnet is divided into two parts: An eight-line quatrain usually sets forth a problem or a dilemma, and the six-line sestet offers some resolution.

The Italian sonnet presents the poet with the challenge of using an utterly familiar form in an innovative or provocative way. The chief variables within this form involve rhyme scheme. The traditional Italian sonnet features an *abba, abba, cde, cde* rhyme scheme, each letter representing a different end rhyme that is repeated in pattern. In "Ozymandias," which is about the vanity and futility of human ambition in the face of eternity Shelley chooses to forgo the conventional scheme and employs a more eccentric *abab, acdc, ece, fef* pattern that creates the immediate effect of a woven tapestry of sound and rhythm that helps to underscore the poem's essential irony. As the reader's expectations are unmet, the very syntax forced by the unusual rhyme of the poem creates tension that matches that of the theme.

Shelley's "Ozymandias" follows the structure of the 14-line Italian sonnet, featuring an opening octave of 8 lines that presents a conflict or dilemma, followed by a sestet of 6 lines that offers some resolution or commentary upon the proposition introduced in the octave. The traditional Italian sonnet features an *abba, abba, cde, cde* rhyme scheme. However, Shelley uses a more unconventional *abab, acdc, ece, fef* pattern. That unconventionality, which does not meet the reader's expectations, succeeds in creating the ironic and tense effect that matches that of the theme. Each line of the poem, from first to last, reveals successively one more layer of the narrative's essential irony. One learns first something of the poet's conversation with the mysterious traveler "from an antique land." The poet, in turn, reports but one piece of that conversation, "Who said—," in the very words of the traveler. Arduously, the speaker then moves through each wave of recognition and interpretation of what he has encountered, climaxing with the presentation of Ozymandias' inscription.

In the poem, the narrator relates what someone else described to him about pieces of a broken statue lying in a desert. Shelley, thus, increases the distance between the mighty figure that once was Ozymandias and the present. The remaining 13 lines show that if the statue was once a great symbol of power and strength, it has become a metaphor for the ultimate powerlessness of man. Time and the elements have



reduced the great statue to a pile of debris. The octave thus confronts the reader with an ironic portrait of an ancient monarch whose fame and stature have been immortalized in a fixed gaze that connotes paradoxically both celebrity and dissolution. In the sestet, the poet imagines, through the testimony of the traveler, the fate of arrogant men.

Neither the great man nor the work of the artist remains in credible shape to challenge or delight the imagination of those who would encounter it. King and artisan, mover and maker, share the same destiny. The poem ends with the reader/observer's gaze fixed upon this pathetic legacy, contemplating his own mortality.

Consequently, the compression of the sonnet form, the unconventional rhyme scheme, the chosen point of view, and the carefully wrought diction of the poem achieve the effect the poet was seeking. Amid vast stretches of unbroken semblance, the traveler—followed by the poet, then the reader—comes upon a bleak personage whose severed limbs and head first shock and dismay, then elicit reluctant mockery for the egotism of its subject.

Keats also follows this rhetorical pattern in his sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," which describes the excitement experienced by the narrator upon reading a translation of Homer's *Iliad* by the sixteenth century poet George Chapman. Using the first eight lines to describe his experiences in reading poetry by comparing them to the wanderings of a traveler to many small islands, he then follows in the sestet with an analysis of the joy he felt in discovering Homer's poetry by comparing it to the feelings of elation a scientist or explorer might feel upon first encountering a strange phenomenon. Keats follows the strict rhyme scheme of the Italian sonnet, using only four rhymes for the entire poem: *abba, abba, cdcddc*.

The focus throughout the poem is on the feelings engendered in a person when a discovery is made. The narrator expresses himself directly to the reader, attempting to find parallels to explain what it feels like to make a great discovery for oneself. To make that feeling clear, the narrator speaks of himself as a traveler who has set out to explore uncharted lands—at least, uncharted by him. He portrays himself as someone experienced in visiting exotic places ("realms of gold," in line 1) and as having seen "many goodly states and kingdoms" (line 2) among the "western islands" (line 3) that are inhabited by "bards" who pay homage to the god "Apollo" (line 4). The conscious reference to poets and to the Greek patron of poetry should suggest to readers that this is not a literal journey; instead, it is intended to represent the mental travel one undergoes when one enters the imaginative world of literature.

The narrator describes his journey around those imaginary islands, noting finally that, though he is quite a veteran of such traveling, he had never set foot on the land ruled by the revered Homer until introduced there by Chapman, who serves as a kind of herald into the epic bard's court. Through Chapman's introduction, the narrator is able to breathe in the "pure serene" (line 8)—literally, the stimulating quality of the air in that favored land, but metaphorically, the exhilarating atmosphere that Homer's poetry creates.

The results of the narrator's arrival in the land of Homer are almost overwhelming. He feels himself like a scientist who discovers a new planet or like an explorer setting foot in the new world of America and seeing the hitherto unknown sights there. He compares himself specifically to Hernando Cortés, the



conqueror of Mexico: The experience of being enveloped in the land of Homer (the environment created by Homer within his epic poem) is much like that felt by Cortés and his men when they first saw the Pacific Ocean; it leaves the traveler speechless.

On a larger scale, the poem deals with the process of discovery itself, a human activity that has excited men since the dawn of recorded history (and before, no doubt). It is important to note that "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" is about the process of discovery that every individual goes through when having any kind of experience for the first time—no matter how many people have had the experience before. This distinction is important, for it explains what many critics have considered the great "mistake" in the final lines of the poem: the apparent misidentification of Cortés as the first European to "discover" the Pacific Ocean. Because historians usually attribute the "discovery" of the Pacific to Vasco Núñez de Balboa, some scholars have accused Keats of not knowing his history. That may be true, but it would have no bearing on the meaning of this poem. There is no suggestion in the poem that Cortés or his men (both mentioned in lines 11-12) are the first to see the Pacific; rather, the implication is that they are viewing it for the first time in their lives. Similarly, Keats is suggesting, the reader who comes upon great works of literature for the first time will experience a sense of awe and wonder at the power of literature to excite them and to make a difference in their lives.