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The Keats - Shelley Memorial House

and

British Council Educational Visit Project

Aims of the project

The project aims to enable teachers and students to get the most out of their visit to the Keats - Shelley Memorial House, which for school groups in Rome represents a unique opportunity for an educational museum visit in English.

It aims to do this in the following ways:

1. By providing teaching ideas and resource materials for teachers wishing to introduce Keats and Shelley to their students: their lives and poetry, their connections with Italy and with other writers and artists who were in Italy during the same period.
2. By helping teachers prepare their students for their visit to the Museum through carefully-designed pre-visit activities.
3. By structuring the visit to the Museum around a Student Task Sheet which places the emphasis on discovery tasks and student responsibility.

To the Teacher

Planning your visit

When you book your visit to the Museum remember to allow enough lesson time for preparation with the class. For example, if your class is already familiar with some of the background to Keats' and Shelley's lives and work, one preparatory lesson may be sufficient (see the section *Preparing your students for the visit* on page 17)

If you haven't introduced your students to the poets allow time before the visit for at least two lessons using ideas from the Resource Pack, plus the notes on page 17.

Alternatively, use the activities provided in your course book, and the notes on page 23.

Using the Resource Pack

The "Lesson Ideas" section is not intended to substitute work provided for by your course book, but to supplement it. For this reason the emphasis is not on literary analysis but on awakening the students' interest in the background to the poets' lives

and work, particularly in Italy. We hope it will generate some expectations and excitement about visiting the Museum.

The following materials are also available from the Museum to help you bring the lives and work of the poets alive for your students:

- colour postcards
- colour slides
- cassette recording of a selection of Keats' poems read by Gabriel Woolf
- cassette recording of a selection of Shelley's poems read by Gabriel Woolf
- a selection of books

A few words about students' ages and language level:

1. The material has been designed principally with Italian secondary school pupils with an intermediate level of English language competence in mind. Such classes (eg. Liceo Scientifico or Linguistico) will be studying English Romantic poetry at some stage, and they represent the majority of school groups visiting the Museum.

A pilot version of these materials has been tried out with groups of fourth and fifth year Liceo students and their teachers, and the Resource Pack has been revised with their help. We would like to thank all those who took part in trying out the pilot version.

2. For students with a more elementary level of English the teacher has two options to consider:

- more extensive language work to prepare students for the Task Sheets
- the Italian version of the Resource Pack

However, we strongly recommend that you try to use the original English version as this contributes to making the visit an authentic educational experience.

3. The materials can be used with a greater degree of autonomy by students whose first or second language is English. Such classes will require some preparation (please see the section "Preparing your students for the visit") but will be able to use the Resource Pack in a more flexible way. We would be delighted to have feedback from such groups and their teachers.

*Remember: whatever your students' age or language level the key to a successful visit lies in **preparation**.*

Lesson Ideas 1: John Keats

Teacher's notes: Using the timeline

(Information from the poster "Literary Portraits: John Keats © 1995 British Council"
This poster is available for purchase from the bookshop at the Keats-Shelley House.
The information on this poster is reproduced on the timeline on page 24.)

We suggest that you use the timeline as a way of introducing your students to the key dates and events in Keats' life and to some of the major works, themes and ideas.

The tasks and activities on the Student worksheet 1 are meant to be done in class by the students.

The John Keats Fact Sheet (A) focuses on information, from the timeline on Keats' earlier life and poetry.

There is a second John Keats Fact Sheet (B) together with the reading text "Three Months in Rome" relating to his time in Rome.

Student Worksheet 1

\photocopiable\

Task 1

Fill in the spaces using information you can find in the timeline:

John Keats Fact Sheet

1. Date of birth _____.
2. Place of birth _____.
3. 1810: his mother died from _____.
4. His favourite subject at school was _____.
5. His school friend's name was _____.
6. The first poem he wrote was _____.
7. In 1815 he began to study to be a _____.
8. In the year _____ he gave up his medical studies to write poetry.
9. In 1818 his brother, whose name was _____ emigrated to America.
10. Keats fell in love with a girl named _____.
11. His brother, whose name was _____, died from tuberculosis in
December 1818.
12. In the year _____ he produced his most famous poetry.

List Keats' poems you can find on the timeline and the dates they were written:

Title of Poem

Date

Task 2

On the timeline there is one drawing which you will also see in the Keats Shelley Memorial House.

What is the title of the drawing? _____

Who drew it? _____

Which poem by Keats does it remind you of? _____

Task 3

Two literary magazines are mentioned in the poster.

What are their names? _____

Which one published his first poem? _____

Which one attacked his poetry? _____

Lesson ideas 2: John Keats

Teacher's notes

Reading text: *"Three months in Rome"*

This is a longish reading text and may be suitable only for your older pupils in terms of language level.

It is a useful introduction to the visit to the Museum. With intermediate level groups you may only want to use the *John Keats Fact Sheet (B)* as an information transfer reading activity.

With fourth and fifth year classes try one of the activities below as well: these should help your students engage with the text on a more personal level.

1. Get your class to work in groups on writing a diary entry from Severn's (fictitious) diary taken from the early days of the time in Rome.
2. They might want to try to write one of Fanny's letters to Keats in Rome, which he actually never opened but were buried with him.
3. A more ambitious project would be to get the students to write the filmscript for the film of *"Three months in Rome"*. They would need to plan the scenes and dialogue. They could also try acting the parts, if you get to this stage! This would probably work best as a follow-up activity after the visit.

NB. You will need photocopies of the reading text for the students.

Three months in Rome

Keats arrived in Rome with his artist friend Joseph Severn in November 1820. Although he was just 25 years old he already knew he was suffering from tuberculosis. His English doctors had advised him to come to Italy in the hope that the Mediterranean sunshine might save him.

Keats and Severn had had a very difficult and tiring journey by sea to Naples. They spent ten days in quarantine on the ship in the Bay of Naples in terrible conditions which worsened Keats' physical and psychological health.

They finally arrived in Rome on 15 November 1820. They were welcomed by Dr. James Clark who was to be Keats' doctor and who had found them rooms to stay in at 26 Piazza di Spagna. Many foreign visitors took lodgings in the area at that time, especially artists, poets, musicians and architects. Both Shelley and Byron, at different times, rented rooms here.

Keats and Severn were pleased with their second-floor rooms. There was a big sitting room and a bedroom and also a tiny room where Severn could paint.

"The view from the windows, as he rested in the little bedroom, was a constant delight. The piazza was full of small workshops, mosaic-makers, engravers, sculptors and plaster-moulders. On the Steps lounged a continual crowd of artist's models in local costumes waiting for hire; their bright colours mingled with those of huge stalls of flowers, brought in for sale from the Campagna, whose scent floated up to Keats. By day the steps were alive with song, conversation, and the shuffle of innumerable sandals. By night, when the thronging people and the flocks of goats or cattle had departed the fountain in the piazza came into its own, Pietro Bernini's broken marble boat, the Barcaccia, with lion heads at prow and stern. Its quiet music sent Keats to sleep..... "

("John Keats" by Robert Gittings (1968) Heinemann Educational Books)

For three weeks Keats appeared to recover. He was able to walk and ride in the Villa Borghese and on the Pincio. His spirits also improved and he even considered starting a new poem. He had a remarkable spirit and love of life in those moments when he felt hopeful and well. Severn painted and played the piano and they enjoyed this brief time.

Then tragedy came. The doctor's cures could do little to fight the tuberculosis which was already quite advanced. On December 10 Keats had a severe tubercular haemorrhage from which he was never to recover. This was a devastating time for Severn too as Keats' mental condition also deteriorated. He frequently talked about

suicide. Yet Severn continued to nurse him, trying to persuade him to eat and drink and praying for him.

Keats also continued to suffer torment for his unfulfilled love for Fanny Brawne. He could not bear to see her handwriting, refusing to open the letters she sent to him in Rome. For hours the young poet lay gazing at the pale blue rosettes on the ceiling of his bedroom. Severn recorded Keats' words the day before he died:

"He assured me that he already seemed to feel the flowers growing over him".

Keats asked Severn to go to the cemetery for non-Catholics near the Pyramid of Caius Cestius where he knew he would be buried. He told Severn the words he wanted to appear on his gravestone:

Here lies one whose name was writ in water.

He died on 23 February 1821. He was 25. he was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome. Fanny's unopened letters were buried with him.

"Three months in Rome"

John Keats Fact Sheet (B)

1. Keats arrived in Rome on _____.
2. The name of his artist friend was _____.
3. His doctor in Rome was _____.
4. Keats' and Severn's address in Rome was _____.
5. Some of the places he visited in Rome were _____

_____.
6. His illness began to get worse in the month of _____.
7. He died on _____.
8. He is buried at _____.

Lesson ideas 3: Shelley

Teacher's notes

The Students' Worksheet refers to the timeline which is a transcription of the poster:

(Literary Portraits: Percy B. Shelley © British Council)

Please refer to the general advice on using the timeline given previously.

Get the class to work in groups: Group A has questions relating from 1792 – 1817 while Group B has questions relating from 1818 – 1820-21.

The questions are different for each group.

When they have finished, pair up the A's and B's and get them to tell each other their information. They can go back to check details on the poster at the end.

Group A (1792 - 1817)

1. Where was Shelley born? _____.
2. Where did he go to school? _____.
3. For how long did he go to University College Oxford? _____.
4. What was his first wife's name? _____.
5. Who did he run away with in 1814? _____.
6. Where did they go? _____.
7. Name two of the works by Mary Godwin: _____

8. When did Shelley marry her? _____.
9. Name three of the political and moral causes he was interested in:

Group B (1818 – 1820-21)

1. When did Shelley come to Italy? _____.
2. In 1821 when Keats died which poem did he write in his memory?

3. Which places did he and Mary visit in Italy?

4. Where was his last home in Italy?

5. How did Shelley die? _____.
6. Where did it happen? _____.
7. Where were Shelley's ashes placed? _____.
8. There is a picture of one work of art on the timeline which you will see in the Museum. What is it called? _____

Lesson ideas 4: Keats, Shelley and Byron in Italy

In May 1816 Percy Bysshe Shelley, his wife Mary and Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont were staying in a house on Lake Geneva. That spring George Gordon, the sixth Lord Byron, had left England in disgrace and in debt. He and Shelley met on the shores of the lake and this was to be the start of a friendship which developed during the years they both spent in Italy, years full of dramatic and sometimes tragic events, but above all the years during which both poets wrote some of their most important poetry.

In the summer of 1816 Byron invented a ghost story competition which inspired Mary to write the story *Frankenstein* which would become a classic of the Romantic period. Mary finished writing *Frankenstein* in May 1817 when she and Shelley were back in England. She was 19 years old. She had their first child, Clara, in September.

It was not long before she and Shelley were back on the Continent again, and this time they took a house on Lake Como. They wrote to Byron to invite him to stay but he declined, probably because Claire was living with them. He had had an affair with Claire and she had had a daughter, Allegra. Byron did not want the affair to continue but he insisted on having custody of the child.

Byron had spent the year in Italy and had visited Milan, Verona and then Venice, where he arrived in November 1818. His period of residence in Venice greatly contributed to the scandalous reputation he had gained both in Italy and England. He wrote some of his greatest poetry here, including *Don Juan*.

In the meantime the Shelleys had visited Pisa and Leghorn (Livorno) and had rented the Casa Bertini in Bagni di Lucca. Shelley's health was not good but he enjoyed the peace of his new surroundings. Unfortunately their happiness did not last long because their child Clara died in September 1818. The Shelleys moved again, visiting Rome and Naples and then returning to stay in Rome in March 1819. Shelley wrote *Prometheus Unbound* during his visits to the ruins of the Roman Baths of Caracalla. Tragedy soon came again: their son William died of malaria in Rome. The

Shelleys returned to Pisa. Keats arrived in Rome in November 1820 and Shelley wrote to invite him to visit them. Keats promised he would come in the spring but he died in February. It was April before Shelley heard of his death, which inspired one of his greatest poems, *Adonais*. Little more than a year later, in July 1822, Shelley was drowned while sailing off the coast of Viareggio. The Shelleys were living in Lerici and the bay is still known as the Bay of the Poets. Shelley's body was identified by a book of Keats' poems which was in his pocket. His friends Trelawny and Byron made arrangements for his body to be cremated on the sea shore, and his ashes were transported to Rome and buried in the Protestant Cemetery, the same cemetery where Keats' grave was.

Byron did not stay in Italy much longer. He felt the need to devote himself to a great cause, and had decided to go to help Greece in the fight for liberation. So ended the extraordinary period in which some of the greatest Romantic poets lived in Italy.

Lesson ideas 4: Teacher's notes

The reading text "Keats, Shelley and Byron in Italy" has been included for the teacher's information as well as being a useful resource for the students. Since it is a fact-based text it does not lend itself to "reading comprehension" questions in class, which would be rather tedious for the students.

There are several ways in which it could be used as a reference text for students while they are working on projects (see page 23) or other activities . If you would like to use it as a reading text here are some suggested tasks for the students:

1. Write a chronology of the events in the lives of the three poets, with separate columns for each, and the years and months in a vertical column on the left. Compare what was happening in their lives e.g. "While Shelley was living in Pisa".

2. Find the Italian cities in the text on a map of Italy and trace the routes that Byron and the Shelleys took from one place to another. Discuss what these places might have been like in those days and how they might have travelled. Speculate on the reasons for the Shelleys having moved house ten times in the area around Livorno, Pisa and Florence.

See page 23 for a more complex project on a "Romantic Poets in Italy" itinerary.

Preparing your students for the Museum visit

It is very important that you give instructions during this lesson for the TASKS the students will be asked to perform at the Museum. During the visit we want them to work fairly independently, and a little preparation now will save time. You won't have time to explain the Task Sheet at the Museum: you have approximately one hour for your visit and all this time will be needed by the students to do their tasks.

Your responsibility at the Museum

Obviously you will need to be available to remind the students which groups start where (this is all explained below) and get them started. You may need to “direct the traffic” if students get confused or get distracted from their tasks (watch the Terrace Room for this!) You should keep a time check and remind students when they have 10 minutes to finish and then conclude the activity.

Students should use the clipboards provided and avoid resting on the furniture in the Museum.

There probably won't be time to go over the students' Task Sheets inside the Museum, but it would be a good idea to do this immediately afterwards outside (weather permitting) or at your next lesson. The last task (Section 4) requires the students to look at the outside of the building so this would be a good moment. There are many opportunities for follow-up work: see the last section for some ideas.

What to do in the preparatory lesson

1. Give out copies of the floor plan of the house

Draw students' attention to the names of the rooms and where they will be in relation to the entrance. This will save time at the Museum.

2. Explain they will be divided into groups (A, B or C)

Groups will follow different routes through the Museum, all performing the same tasks but in a different order. This is because the House is very small and we are trying to avoid "traffic jams". They will need to work fairly independently, consulting and helping each other in their groups.

3. Give out the task sheets

You will need to supply photocopies of all the pages of the Task Sheet for each student (or one between two would be sufficient). We are not able to do the photocopying for you.

We suggest you work through the Task Sheet with the whole class, checking they understand the questions and what they will be looking for. Do one or two examples with them to show they should write short note-form answers (it isn't a writing test). You could also encourage some anticipation work e.g. "How big do you think the painting will be?"

4. Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 and call them A, B or C

The number of groups you have will depend on the size of your class.

Check the groups know where they will be starting and the route they will take on the floor plan.

Remind students to bring with them to the Museum:

- task sheet - floor plan - pens

During the visit the groups all fill in all the tasks. Each group begins with a different theme:

Group A Pictures

Group B Letters

Group C Objects

Then the groups rotate until they have completed the tasks. All groups: The House past and present

Some information will be given by staff at the start of the visit to help them fill this in. Students who helped with the pilot project all said they would like more time alone to browse after completing the tasks. Please allow those who wish to have a few moments' quiet time to themselves.

STUDENTS' TASK SHEET

1. PICTURES

GROUP A, STARTS HERE

START IN THE SALONE

- A) There is a large picture of Shelley in the Salone.
Where is he sitting?
Who is the artist?
- B) Find the illustration of Shelley's cremation
Where did this take place?
Is it a real or fictional account?
Who was actually present?

NOW GO TO THE TERRACE ROOM

- C) Can you find a portrait of Shelley's second wife?
What is her name?
- D) Find the painting of a room in the house where Shelley was born and grew up.
Who painted it?
Can you describe it?

NOW GO TO THE SEVERN ROOM

- E) Can you find portraits of Keats' brothers, Tom and George, by Severn?
How old do you think they were here?
- F) There is a picture of Fanny Brawne.
What kind of picture is it?

NOW GO TO THE KEATS ROOM

- F) There is a portrait of Keats's sister, Fanny, on the wall.
Which country did she move to? In which year?
Who did she meet (for the first time) in Piazza di Spagna?

STUDENTS' TASK SHEET

2. LETTERS

GROUP B, STARTS HERE

START IN THE SEVERN ROOM

- A) Find the letter by John Keats to Joseph Severn.
What is it about?

NOW GO TO THE KEATS ROOM

- B) Find the letter by Joseph Severn to Charles Armitage Brown.
What does it say?
- C) Find the letter by Joseph Severn dated 3 March 1821.
What does he say about the Italians?

NOW GO TO THE TERRACE ROOM

- D) Find the letter in which Shelley describes his relationship with Byron.
What analogy does he use?
- E) What date is the letter by Mary Shelley written to Edward Trelawny?
Whose death does she write about?

NOW GO TO THE SALONE

- F) Find the letter about Keats from Oscar Wilde to Mrs Speed.
What is the title of the sonnet he sends her?

STUDENTS' TASK SHEET

3. OBJECTS

GROUP C, START HERE

START IN THE KEATS ROOM

First read the information panel on the wall.

This is the room where Keats spent the last days of his illness and where he died.

- A. Look out of the window at the fountain and imagine Piazza di Spagna in 1821.
What could he hear as he was lying in bed?
- B. Look at the ceiling.
What could he see?
- C. Why is there no original furniture in the room?
One of the letters by Severn will help you.

GO BACK TO THE SEVERN ROOM

- D. In the glass case there is a drawing by Keats of the Sosibios vase.
Which ode by Keats does this remind you of?
- E. Who made Keats's life mask?

GO TO THE TERRACE ROOM

- F. What does the shell-shaped reliquary contain?
- G. There is a dagger on display. To whom did it belong?
How did the dagger come into his possession?
- H. Which object was worn by Byron in Ravenna during February 1820?

STUDENTS' TASK SHEET

ALL GROUPS

4. THE HOUSE PAST AND PRESENT

- A) When was the house built?
- B) What is the name of the fountain in the Piazza?
- C) What is the name of the church at the top of the scalinata?
- D) How many other writers do you know of who lived in the Piazza di Spagna area in the 18th and 19th centuries?
- E) When you leave the house look for the plaque on the side of the house on the scalinata. What does it say?

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS

Make your own notes on your visit to the Museum:

- how would you describe the Museum to a friend who hasn't been there?
- what impression did you have of Keats' time there?
- what was your favourite object/ letter/ picture?

Keep your notes for future lessons on Keats and Shelley.

Follow-up activities and projects

1. Post -visit feedback:

Immediately after the visit, give the class an opportunity to check their worksheets with each other and to share their personal impressions of the Museum.

Here are some other ideas for follow-up which you could try, depending on how much time you have available. They all involve language practice in English of one or more skills, as well as getting the students to use the new knowledge they have acquired in a creative and stimulating way.

2. A "Romantic Poets in Italy" itinerary:

Students work in groups to plan and write out a travel itinerary for tourists who want to visit the places associated with the poets. Students will need maps of Italy and some visual material they can use to illustrate their itineraries. The finished product should look as similar as possible to a travel agent's brochure, so it would be useful to look at some real examples first and notice the language register used

3. A history of the House at 26 Piazza di Spagna:

Using the information in the handouts and books available at the Museum the students can reconstruct a history of the House up to the present day.

4. "Three months in Rome"- the film:

On page 7 we suggest a project for writing the screenplay of the story of Keats' last three months spent in Rome.

5. Write a poem:

Try getting the students to write poems in English inspired by their visit to the Museum . Take a relevant theme (e.g. friendship) and encourage a discussion to generate\activate\teach some useful vocabulary.

Don't forget to find out about the Keats-Shelley Memorial House Poetry Prize from the Museum and encourage your students to send in a poem.

JOHN KEATS 1795 - 1821



1795

Born 31 October in Moorfields London, into a prosperous middle class family, owners of livery stables. He was the eldest of five children, one of whom died in infancy.

1803-1804

Sent with his brother George to Clarke's, a small private school in Enfield, north of London. Death of their father in a riding accident.

Keats was happy at the school which fostered his interest in literature; the headmaster's son Charles Cowden Clarke became a lifelong friend and mentor, introducing Keats to

politics and literature through the journal *The Examiner*.

1810-1811

Death of Keats' mother from tuberculosis. Left school and was apprenticed to Thomas Hammond, a local doctor, continuing his reading with Cowden Clarke.

1812 - 1813

Wrote his first poem *Imitation of Spenser*.

Keats was enchanted by the imagery of the great 16th century poet, a dominant influence on his early work. His interest in the epic form dated from this period

1815

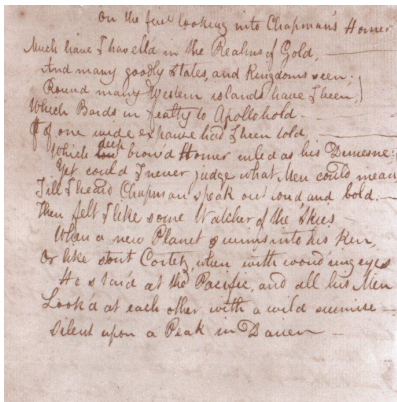
Registered at Guy's Hospital to train as a surgeon. Keats appeared to have been initially an enthusiastic medical student, attending lectures and passing the Society of Apothecaries' examinations.

1816

MAY Keats' first published poem appeared in *The Examiner*.



An amputation at a London hospital



Manuscript of "Chapman's Homer"

OCTOBER Wrote his first major poem, the sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*.

Keats wrote this poem after spending a day with Cowden Clarke reading the 17th century dramatist George Chapman's translation of Homer. Only one line (the seventh) was rewritten for publication.

Met Leigh Hunt, the editor of *The Examiner* and the painter Benjamin Haydon, a friend and admirer of poets. Began the long poem *Sleep and Poetry*, in which he resolved to deepen his work beyond pretty images.

*Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life
Where I may find the agonies, the strife,
Of human hearts...*

DECEMBER Included, with Shelley, in Leigh Hunt's article

on 'Young Poets'; met Shelley.

1817



The Elgin Marbles

MARCH Keats' first book of poems was published. Moved to Hampstead in north London. Keats first visited Hampstead, then a country village, as a guest of Leigh Hunt, who had a house on the Heath.



Keats's House in Hampstead

In the week of the *Poems* publication Haydon took Keats to see the Greek sculptures from the Pantheon in the British Museum. Here was the classicism he needed for *Endymion*.

APRIL-NOVEMBER Gave up his medical studies and left London to write *Endymion*, the poem which marks the transition to his mature style.

DECEMBER Met Wordsworth back in London. Keats initially admired Wordsworth greatly, although it is doubtful whether the admiration was fully reciprocated. At the age of 21 Keats already knew himself a poet. He planned to abandon surgery, grew his hair long and cultivated a disordered dress.



A view of Hampstead



William Wordsworth

1818

APRIL Publication of *Endymion*. Wrote *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, based on Boccaccio.

JUNE Keats's brother George and his wife emigrated to North America. Keats accompanied them to Liverpool and then went on a walking tour through the Lake District and Scotland. Keats was astounded by the scenery of the English Lake District, exclaiming at his first view 'How can I believe in that? Surely it cannot be!' He climbed Skiddaw on 29 June.



A view of the Lake District

AUGUST Returned to London exhausted to find his brother Tom seriously ill with tuberculosis. The 'Cockney School' of poetry (including Keats' work) was viciously attacked in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER Met Fanny Brawne and fell in love. Began *Hyperion*, the first major poem of his maturity and his attempt at the epic form. There was a further attack in the *Quarterly Review*.

With little money and an insecure future, marriage to Fanny was impossible. Keats described their love as for so long 'my pleasure and my torment'.

DECEMBER Death of Tom Keats. Keats had nursed him tirelessly.



Fanny Brawne

1819

JANUARY Wrote *The Eve of St Agnes*.

Haydon owned an engraving of the medieval Italian painting. Keats noted its combination of beauty, romance and grotesquerie, all of which appear in *The Eve of St Agnes*.

APRIL Wrote the ballad *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* and the *Ode to Psyche*.

MAY Wrote the *Ode on Indolence*, *Ode on Melancholy*, *Ode to a Nightingale* and *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, which have been called 'the greatest short poems in Romantic Literature.'

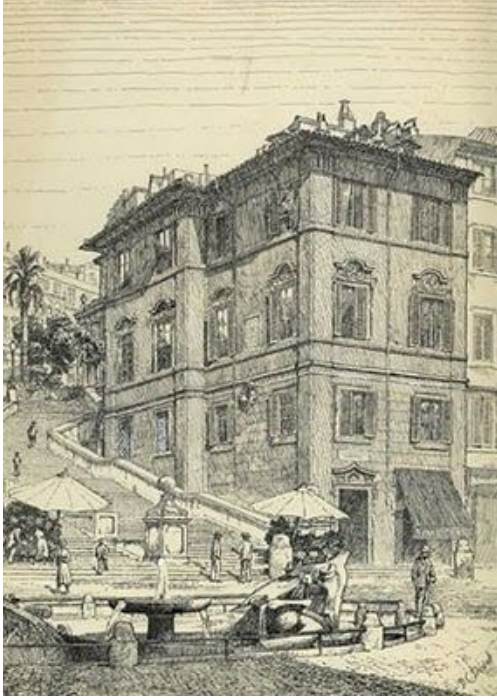
JULY Began *Lamia* and also the plays *Otho the Great* and *King Stephen*, which were attempts to make money from writing.

AUGUST Finished *Lamia*. Began writing *The Fall of Hyperion*, a dream of death, a subject which increasingly preoccupied Keats after his brother's fatal illness.

SEPTEMBER Wrote *To Autumn*. The odes reflect Keats' idea of 'Negative Capability': the poet's imagination is receptive 'when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.'



Keat's sketch of the Sosobios Vase at the Keats-Shelley House



The apartment which contains the rooms Keats rented with Joseph Severn

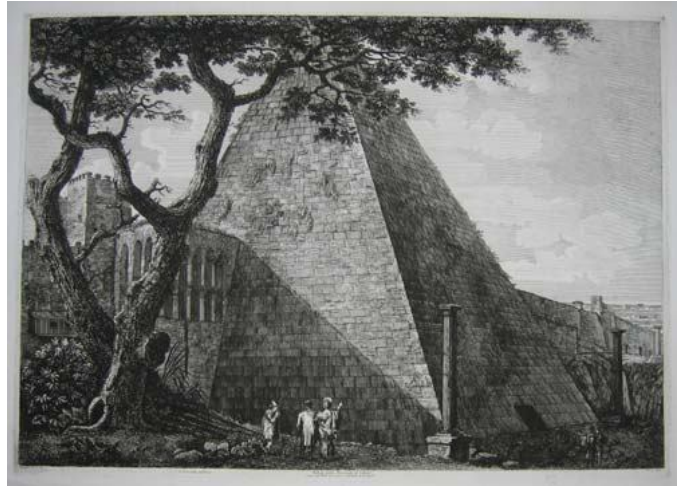
1820

FEBRUARY Keats had his first tubercular haemorrhage: he was soon too ill to write.

JULY His second volume of poems was published.

SEPTEMBER In the forlorn hope of recovery, Keats sailed for Italy accompanied by a painter friend, Joseph Severn. They reached Rome in November.

Keats' room was on the second floor of no. 26 Piazza di Spagna. From early December, Keats never left the apartment: the final stages of his illness came quickly.



The Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome

1821

23 FEBRUARY Keats died. He was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, near the Pyramid.

Keats asked that his gravestone should say only:

'Here lies one whose name is writ in water.'

'I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination....O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts....'

TO AUTUMN

SEPTEMBER 1819

I

Seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to lad and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er brimm'd their clammy cells.

II

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting carelessly on a granary floor,
thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fumes of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

III

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too.
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river swallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

To Autumn came after the great odes of May 1819. Its simplicity and calm contrast with the fevered and questioning mood of the earlier poems. 'The great beauty of poetry', Keats wrote at this time, 'is that it makes everything interesting'.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY 1792 - 1822



Shelley as a child

1792

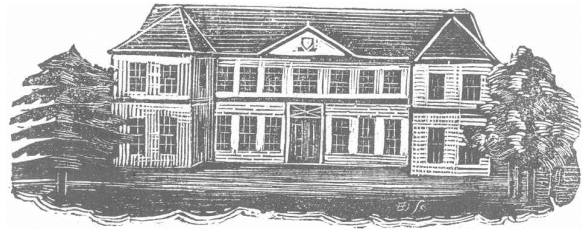
Born 4 August into the landed nobility at Field Place near Horsham, Sussex. Shelley's grandfather, Sir Bysshe, had made his fortune by eloping successively with two heiresses. The first two years of Shelley's life were spent at home with his younger sisters, perhaps the source of his constant need for the company of women. At the age of 10 he wrote his first known poem, *A Cat in Distress*.

1802-1810

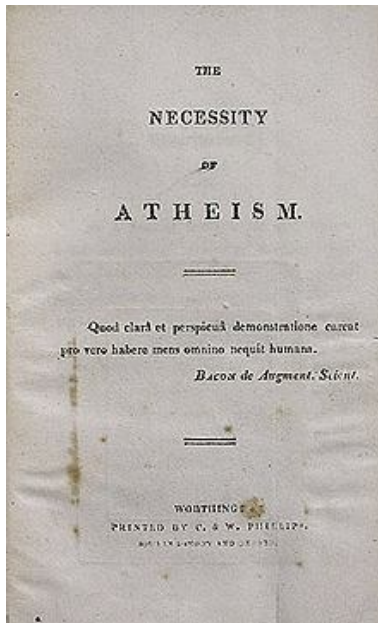
Away at school, the final six years at Eton College, where he was persecuted as 'mad

Shelley'. In his last year there he produced stories and poems of Gothic horror; he was always fascinated by the supernatural and the substance of dreams.

Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare* was one of the most notorious images of the day.



Field Place



The Necessity of Atheism

1810-1811

At University College Oxford for two terms. Developed his political views, embracing egalitarianism and rejecting religion and marriage. Shelley's pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*, resulted in his expulsion from Oxford University and permanent estrangement from his family.

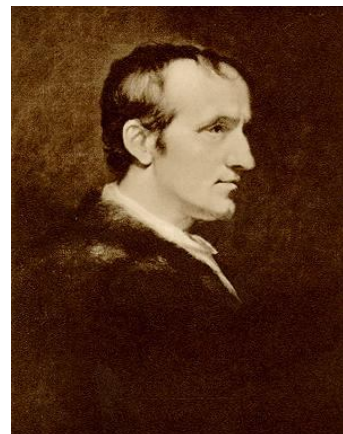
1811-1812

Eloped to Scotland with Harriet Westbrook, marrying her on 29 August 1811.

1812

Travelled to Ireland and Wales. Developed a social radicalism to add to his theological and moral positions. Began a correspondence with the philosopher, William Godwin. The author of *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* has been called an 'extreme

anarchist idealist' and was the greatest single influence on Shelley's political views.



William Godwin

1813-1815

1813 Published first major poetical and political work, *Queen Mab*.

27 July 1814

Eloped with Mary Godwin and travelled to France and Switzerland. Returned to England and lived with Mary in London and Windsor.

The daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft (the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*), and famous in her own right as the author of *Frankenstein*, Mary was an able and supportive critic of Shelley's work, but their life together was strained by constant travel and the deaths of their children.



Mary Godwin

1816

Travelled to Switzerland, staying on Lake Geneva, where he began a friendship with Lord Byron. Published *Alastor, Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* and *Mont Blanc*. Like every other artist of note in the Romantic period, Shelley was profoundly impressed by the grandeur of the Alps. His poem *Mont Blanc* is an atheist's meditation on this experience, concluding that nature is a remote, monstrous and impersonal force.

Suicides of Mary's half-sister Fanny Imlay and of Harriet Shelley. Married Mary Godwin in London 30 December.

1817

Back in England, published *The Revolt of Islam*, political pamphlets and shorter poems, including *Ozymandias*. Shelley's health deteriorating.



Mont Blanc in the Alps



Shelley's sketch of boats

1818

In March Shelley left England for Italy. He began translations of Plato, whose ideas influenced his conception of ideal love. He ended the year in Naples having produced *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills* and act I of *Prometheus Unbound*.

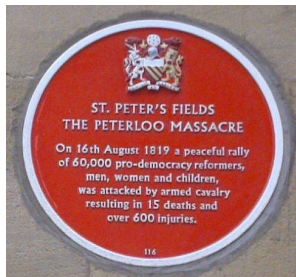
1819

Stayed in Rome, moving on to Livorno and then to Florence, where Mary's sole surviving child, Percy Florence, was born. Wrote *The Cenci*, *The Mask of Anarchy*, *Ode to the West Wind* and *Peter Bell the Third*, and finished *Prometheus Unbound*. Entranced by the ruins of ancient Rome, Shelley wrote most of acts 2 and 3 of *Prometheus Unbound* during daily visits to the Baths of Caracalla.



Shelley at The Baths of Caracalla

In August 1819 in Manchester, at a peaceful demonstration for parliamentary reform, troops killed eleven people and seriously injured over 400. Shelley heard of this in Livorno and it inspired some of his angriest political poems including *England in 1819* and *The Mask of Anarchy*.



A memorial of the Peterloo Massacre

1820-1821

1820 In Pisa, wrote *The Witch of Atlas*.

1821 Death of Keats, wrote *Adonais* in his memory. Exchanged visits with Byron. Wrote *The Defence of Poetry* and *Epipsychidion*, a poem celebrating his Platonic and idealised love for Emilia Viviani, but which also expresses his ideas on free love.

1822

Moved to Lerici with his friends Edward and Jane Williams. Shelley's last home was a bleak former convent and boathouse built on the seashore in the Gulf of La Spezia. Mary hated it and was desperately ill there when she miscarried her last baby.

On 8 July Shelley, Williams and a young sailor set sail in the *Don Juan* from Livorno to Lerici in unsettled weather. That evening, caught in a storm, it is said Shelley refused to shorten sail; there were also rumours of a piratical attack. The boat sank swiftly 10 miles off Viareggio. The bodies of Shelley and Williams were recovered ten days after the shipwreck. Quarantine laws forbade their removal from the beach, so they were cremated there and Shelley's ashes were placed in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, where Keats is buried.



Shelley's cremation at Viareggio

1824 *Posthumous Poems* published by Mary Shelley

1832 *The Mask of Anarchy* published by Leigh Hunt

1834 *The Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* published by Mary Shelley

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me: my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given:
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Adonais final stanza

OZYMANDIAS

In 1817 the British Museum received a huge head of Ramesses II from a temple in Thebes; this inspired *Ozymandias*, a powerful sonnet which attacks tyranny and demonstrates its inevitable decay.

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert.... Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and a sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless
things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that
fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:

'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

First Stanza

O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's
being
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves
dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow and black and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:
Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

TEACHER'S ANSWER SHEET

TASK SHEET

1. PICTURES

- A. Shelley is sitting in the Baths of Caracalla. It is a posthumous painting by Joseph Severn.
- B. The cremation took place on the beach at Viareggio where the body was washed up. It is a fictional account. In the picture, Mary Shelley, Byron, Trelawny and Leigh Hunt are represented. In reality, Mary Shelley was too distraught to attend the cremation and Byron felt sick and had swum to his schooner *The Bolivar* which was anchored offshore.
- C. Mary Shelley.
- D. It is a watercolour by Elizabeth Shelley of Field Place depicting an opulent regency interior reflecting Shelley's affluent background.
- E. Tom was about 18 and George was in his mid 30s.
- F. The picture of Fanny Brawne is a silhouette picture.
- G. Fanny Keats married Valentin Maria Llanos and moved to Spain with him in 1833. In the spring of 1861 Fanny visited Rome and met Joseph Severn, by chance, in Piazza di Spagna. 'For a long time we remained without being able to speak', remembered Severn. 'Twas like a brother and sister who had parted in early life meeting after forty years. How singular that we should meet in the very place where Keats died.'

2 LETTERS

- A. The letter is about Keats' condition; the doctor says he cannot go out as he is not well.
- B. The letter by Joseph Severn to Charles Armitage Brown is dated 27 February 1821 and describes Keats' death: "My Dear Brown, He is gone - he died with the most perfect ease - he seemed to sleep (on the 23rd Friday) at 1/2 past four the approaches of death came on ... 'Severn - S - lift me up for I am dying. I shall die easy - don't be frightened - thank God it has come' - I lifted him up in my arms and the phlegm seemed boiling in his throat - this increased until 11 at night when he gradually sank into death - so quiet that I still thought he slept."
- C. This letter is addressed to Mrs. Brawne (Fanny Brawne's mother). It describes bureaucratic events after Keats' death. It begins: "Those brutal Italians have nearly done their monstrous business they have burnt the furniture and racked him in his most painful moments ...".
- D. Shelley describes his relationship with Byron in the following way: -
*"I have lived too long near Lord Byron and the sun has extinguished the glow-worm."
By this stage he has lost inspiration to write creatively and is clearly very depressed, particularly in relation to his lack of success compared to Byron's glittering achievements.
There are inevitable doubts about the nature of Shelley's death.*
- E. The letter by Mary Shelley is dated 28 July 1824. She writes about the death of Byron.
- F. The title of the sonnet is 'The Grave of Keats'.

3. OBJECTS

- A. Piazza di Spagna in Keats' day was a very popular meeting place and a noisy and colourful atmosphere would have prevailed. The Steps were frequented by street vendors, painters, mosaic makers, artists' models and flower sellers. Keats also found comfort in the sound of water from the "Barcaccia".
- B. Keats would have seen the daisy rosettes that can still be seen on the original ceiling.
- C. There is no original furniture left in the room because all of Keats' personal belongings and furniture, as well as the doors and window frames, were burnt in the Piazza after his death in accordance with the papal decree of the time in order to prevent further contagion.
- D. The drawing of the Sosibios Vase inspired Keats' "*Ode on a Grecian Urn*".
- E. This life-mask was made by Benjamin Robert Haydon (painter and friend of Keats) in 1816. Fanny Keats said that this mask was 'a perfect copy of the features of my dear brother'.
- F. The reliquary contains a lock of Milton's and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's hair.
- G. The dagger belonged to Edward Trelawny. He claimed that it was given to him by a blind beggar during a scuffle in Pisa, in which Byron and Shelley were also involved.
- H. The object worn by Byron in 1820 in Ravenna is a wax carnival mask.

4 THE HOUSE PAST AND PRESENT

- A. The house was built in 1725 at the same time as the construction of the Spanish Steps.
- B. The name of the fountain in the Piazza is "La Barcaccia".

The connection between the fountain and the inscription of John Keats' tombstone is the following: The inscription on the tombstone is "*Here lies one whose name is writ in water*". One of the last sounds Keats would have heard as he lay waiting for death was the constant flow of water from the fountain below. Water flowing constantly can perhaps be associated with Keats' idea that poetry remains a timeless concept not dependent on events of history. However, he was also aware that his poetry might not survive the ravages of time and that it might be forgotten altogether.

- C. The name of the church at the top of the Scalinata is 'La Chiesa della Trinità dei Monti'.
- D. Other writers who lived in the Piazza di Spagna area in the 18th and 19th centuries are:

Alcott, Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Longfellow, Henry James, Herman Melville, Coleridge, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charles Dickens, Robert Browning and Thomas Trollope.

- E. The plaque on the side of the house above the Scalinata contains the following inscription:

The young English poet John Keats died in the house on 24th February 1821 aged 25.

L'Inglese poeta Giovanni Keats mente meravigliosa quanto precoce morì in questa casa li 24 febbraio 1821 ventesimo sesto dell'età sua.

(He was in fact twenty five when he died).