"We will walk with our own feet. We will work with our own hands. We will speak our own minds." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

*The Headless Horseman Pursuing Ichabod Crane* (1858) by John Quidor
Collection Three
The Individual and Society:
A Distinctly American Voice
1810 to 1850
• Romantic writers
• Fireside Poets
• Transcendentalists
• *Dark Romantics*
Before we look at what Romanticism IS, we have to think about what it IS NOT!

- Despite the name of the literary period, Romanticism does not deal with sappy love stories.

This is NOT the kind of literature that we are going to study!
So what IS Romanticism?

- Literary and culture period from 1800-1860
- Followed the Age of Reason (The Revolutionary Period) in America; Reaction to reason
- Due to the fact that the country was now established, writers moved their focus away from political matters and revolutionary governmental ideas, and began to focus on other aspects of life (emotions, possibilities, imagination etc…)
- Wrote about American people in American places, dealing with American problems
A sample of American Romantic art- note the wild landscape, no hint of civilization and ominous clouds.
Characteristics of American Romanticism

- Inspired by nature
- Individual human spirit
- Values intuition over reason

- Inspired by myth, legend, folklore
  - Setting in exotic or supernatural places
  - **Folklore:** traditional beliefs or legends of a people; often unconfirmed
• Romantic VIEW OF MAN: Focus on the individual and his inner world (imagination and emotions).
• Romantic VIEW OF NATURE: Nature is beautiful, mysterious, and symbolic. God can be seen in nature.
• Romantic GUIDE TO TRUTH: Intuition (inner voice or gut feeling) and imagination guides each individual to understanding.
Types of literature prevalent in Romanticism...

• Short stories
• Novels
• Poetry
• Essays

Representative writers

Romantic Writers:
• Washington Irving
• James Fenimore Cooper
American Hero
Characteristics

- youthful and innocent
- has a strong sense of honor
- knowledge based on experience
- loves nature
- quest for higher truth
Dark Romantics

• Romantic Characteristics:
  • focus on the individual
  • magical, supernatural, exotic past found in setting, events

• Dark Romantic Characteristics:
  ▪ nature isn't perfect
  ▪ good and evil in the world
  ▪ life's mysterious
  ▪ Gothic: the dark, irrational side of the imagination
  ▪ Terror: intense, overpowering fear; great fear, panic or dread
Literary Terms

• Allegory: a tale in which characters or objects represent certain abstract qualities; an allegory usually teaches a moral principle

• Symbol: something that has meaning in itself but also stands for something more than itself

• Mood: the overall emotion created by a work of literature
Dark Romantics

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Edgar Allan Poe

Herman Melville