

Discussion Questions for Week Four

The sonnet is an old poetic form, consisting of 14 lines written in iambic pentameter with a particular rhyme scheme. Because of its brevity and intensity, many consider it the most lyrical of lyric poems. It is most commonly a love poem, but many Romantic poets began experimenting with different themes and topics.

- (1) Wordsworth's "London, 1802" deals with the revolutionary politics we've discussed the first few weeks of the semester. What kind of political argument does this sonnet make?
- (2) Who is Milton, and why does Wordsworth address his sonnet to him?
- (3) Wordsworth typically writes about the natural world. Why does he write a sonnet on the city of London? How does he depict the relationship between city and country in this poem?
- (4) What is Keats most afraid of when he thinks about mortality?
- (5) Keats wrote "Bright Star" about his fiancée, Fanny Brawne, to whom he was secretly engaged when he died in 1821. How does this sonnet work as a love song? Consider especially the central comparison of Keats to the bright star.
- (6) Is Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" a Greater Romantic Lyric? Why or why not?
- (7) Why does Keats write an ode to an urn? What seems to be his purpose?
- (8) Why does Keats write about a nightingale? (Hint: look up natural, historical, and mythological connotations of the nightingale.) What seems to be his goal? How does he describe the bird?