

## Definition of Romantic (from the Oxford English Dictionary, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

Also 7 **romantique**, 7-8 **romantick**. [ad. F. *romantique*, f. *romant*, older form of *roman* romance, novel.]

### A. adjective.

1. a. Of the nature of, having the qualities of, romance in respect of form or content.

1659 H. MORE *Immort. Soul* II .xi, I speak especially of that Imagination which is most free, such as we use in Romantick Inventions. 1665 BOYLE *Occas. Refl.* (1848) 351 Your Friend Mr. Boyle..was saying, that he had thoughts of making a short Romantic story. 1709 HEARNE *Collect.* (O.H.S.) II. 199 In the Bodl. Library is a Collection of old Romantick Pieces. 1749 *Power & Harm. Prosaic Numbers* 45 Romances and Novels are often writ in this mixt Language, between Poetry and Prose: and hence it is sometimes called the Romantick Stile. 1777 RICHARDSON *Arab. Dict.* Diss. p. xxix, Romantic Fiction has long been considered as of Eastern origin. 1829 SCOTT *Wav. Gen.* Pref., It was a step in my advance towards romantic composition. 1846 WRIGHT *Ess. Mid. Ages* II. 38 Nothing can be more erroneous than the attempt to trace the origin of romantic literature to one particular source.

b. *Mus.* Characterized by the subordination of form to theme, and by imagination and passion.

1885 J. C. F. ILLMORE *Pianof. Music* 80 In romantic music content is first and form subordinate. 1887 *Grove's Dict. Music* IV. 414 There were in romantic opera four principal elements the imaginative, the national, the comic, and the realistic.

c. Of a work of modern literature, etc.: having romance as its subject; treating of a love affair.

1960 R. REES *For Love or Money* ii. 30 The doctrine of D. H. Lawrence's *Fantasia of the Unconscious*: that sexual passion, unrelated to the religious impulse..leads to sterility and death as in *Anna Karenina*, in *Carmen*, and in the greater part of European 'romantic' literature. 1977 B. P. YM *Quartet in Autumn* i. 3 Unable to find what she needed in 'romantic' novels, Letty had turned to biographies of which there was no dearth. 1981 S. R. ADLEY *Chief Inspector's Daughter* i. 15, I get depressed because I write romantic fiction instead of straight novels.

2. a. Of a fabulous or fictitious character; having no foundation in fact.

1667 PEPYS *Diary* 10 Mar., These things are almost romantique, and yet true. 1673 *Vain Insolency Rome* 36, I marvel (though you read this, and much more as Romantick in the Popes Letters) that you can credit all this done by a person, about an hundred years since. 1728 MORGAN *Algiers* I. 62 Nicephorus relates that..S. Peter preached the Gospel in Mauritania: But this is looked upon to be intirely romantick. 1824 DIBDIN *Libr. Comp.* 672 The notion of an early-printed edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, by Wynkyn de Worde, is purely romantic.

b. Having no real existence; imaginary; purely ideal. *Obs.*

1660 TATHAM *Charac. Rump Dram. Wks.* (1878) 290 Upon the onely security of Mr. Harrington's romantick Commonwealth. 1690 T. B. URNET *Theory Earth* II. 171 We must not imagine that the prophets..feigned an idea of a romantick state, that never was nor ever will be. 1711 G. HICKES *Two Treat. Chr. Priesth.* (1847) I. 214 He must give them priests without human infirmities; if I may say it, romantic priests.

3. Of projects, etc.: Fantastic, extravagant, quixotic; going beyond what is customary or practical.

1671 SIR W. T. HOMPSON in *Feret Fulham* (1900) I. 50 The romantic and visionary scheme of building a bridge over the river at Putney. 1719 W. WOOD *Surv. Trade* 170 What is here

represented, will be treated by some of our Planters, as Romantick. 1746 *Rep. Conduct Sir J. Cope* 50 Few crediting so 'romantick' an Enterprize. 1800 E. H. ERVEY *Mourtray Fam.* II. 67 It is his intention equally to share his future inheritance with his brother. A most romantic idea. 1854 TRENCH *Synon.* (ed. 2) 66 A romantic scheme is one which is wild, impracticable, and yet contains something which captivates the fancy.

4. a. Having a bent or tendency towards romance; readily influenced by the imagination.

1700 ROWE *Amb. Step-Moth.* II .i, How great a good by me sincerely offer'd Thy dull Romantick Honour has refus'd. 1778 F. B. URNEY *Evelina* lxii, I am not romantic; I have not the least design of doing good to either of you. 1832 G. D. OWNES *Lett. Cont. Countries.* I. 37 The Wood of Boulogne is the favourite resort of the Parisian when he wishes to be romantic. 1849 MACAULAY *Hist. Eng.* ii. I. 199 To unhappy allies..he extended his protection with a romantic disinterestedness.

b. Tending towards, characterized by, romance as a basis or principle of literature or art. (Opposed to *classical*.) Also of ballet (see quot. 1957). Hence used of persons connected with, or things relating to, literature, art, etc. of this kind.

1812 H. C. R. OBINSON *Jrnl.* 19 May in E. J. Morley *Henry Crabb Robinson on Bks.* (1938) I. 84 We proceeded to Coleridge's first lecture... He spoke of religion, the spirit of chivalry...and a classification of poetry into ancient and romantic. 1813 *Edin. Rev.* Oct. 206 The poetry of the Spanish peninsula seems to have been more romantic and less subject to classical bondage than that of any other part of Europe. 1814 W. T. AYLOR in *Monthly Rev.* Apr. 364 The eleventh [chapter] divides European poetry into two schools, the classical, and the romantic. 1819 [see CLASSICAL a. 6]. 1833 W. M. AGINN in *Fraser's Mag.* VIII. 64 'The noticeable man [sc. Coleridge] with large grey eyes' the worthy old Platonist the founder of the romantic school of poetry. 1841 EMERSON *Ess., History Wks.* (Bohn) I. 11 The vaunted distinction between..Classic and Romantic schools, seems superficial and pedantic. 1851 GALLENGA *Italy* II. 65 That new school of literature to which the vague denomination of Romantic had been generally applied. 1878 DOWDEN *Stud. Lit.* 25 A leader of the Romantic movement. 1908 P. E. MORE *Shelburne Ess.* 5th Ser. 119 Like Friedrich Schlegel, he indulges in the romantic irony of smiling down upon himself and walking through life like a *Doppelgänger*. 1928 [see CLASSICAL a. 6d]. 1930 W. E. MPSON *Seven Types of Ambiguity* i. 27 Before the Romantic Revival the possibilities of not growing up had never been exploited so far as to become a subject for popular anxiety. 1937 D. B. USH *Mythology & Romantic Trad.* in *Eng. Poetry* p. xiii, The effect of both the romantic and the industrial movements was to make the artist, if not an anti-social figure, at any rate an isolated one. 1938 *Oxf. Compan. Mus.* 810/1 By the 'Romantic School' in music is meant the group of active spirits in that movement which began in Germany with Weber (born 1786)... Or it can be carried back as far as Schubert (born 1797) and Beethoven (born 1770). 1951 F. K. ERMODE *Romantic Image* vii. 132 The next step forward in Romantic aesthetic depended upon a new theory of language. 1957 G. B. L. WILSON *Penguin Dict. Ballet* 230 *Romantic ballet*, used, somewhat narrowly, to describe the ballets produced during the period of the Romantic revival in literature in the early nineteenth century, or roughly from 1830-1850, taking as their theme the odyssey of mortal man in love with some female spirit of the air or water or with some maiden risen from her tomb... The dividing line is a slender one, i.e. in the romantic ballet the

accent is on colour or mood rather than form and design which is predominant in the classical ballet. **1959** F. G ADAN et al. *Dict. Mod. Ballet* 329/1 Several other great Romantic dancers appeared as La Sylphide. **1960** BECKSON &GANZ *Reader's Guide Lit. Terms* (1961) 108 Romantic irony occurs when a writer builds up a serious emotional tone and then deliberately breaks it and laughs at his own solemnity. **1977** J. A. C UDDON *Dict. Lit. Terms* 573 *Romantic revival*, a term loosely applied to a movement in European literature (and other arts) during the last quarter of the 18th c. and the first twenty or thirty years of the 19th c.

**5. a.** Characterized or marked by, invested or environed with, romance or imaginative appeal. The examples given here illustrating the collocation of the adjective with *love, lover, friendship*, and the like, provide evidence of the emergence of its common present-day use to convey the idealistic character or quality of a love affair. Cf. ROMANCE *n.* 5b.

**1666** PEPYS *Diary* 13 June, There happened this extraordinary case one of the most romantique that ever I heard of in my life, and could not have believed [etc.]. **1728** F. H UTCHESON *Ess. Passions* Liv. 94 A Romantick Lover has..no Notion of Life without his Mistress, all Virtue and Merit are summed up in his inviolable Fidelity. **1754** R. B ERENGER in *World* 4 July 474, I know several unmarried ladies, who in all probability had been..good wives and..mothers, if their imaginations had not been early perverted with the chimerical ideas of romantic love,..upon which principle, a footman may as well be the hero as his master. **1766** GOLDSM *.Vic. W. i*, The girl was..called Sophia; so that we had two romantic names in the family. **1769** J. U SHER *Clio* (ed. 2) 82 Innocent and virtuous love..inspires us with heroic sentiments,..a contempt of life, a boldness for enterprize, chastity, and purity of sentiment... People whose breasts are dulled with vice, or stupified by nature, call this passion romantic love; but when it was the mode, it was the diagnostic of a virtuous age. **1778** S. T IGHE *Let.* 2 Apr. in G. H. Bell *Hamwood Papers* (1930) 27 There were no gentlemen concerned, nor does it appear to be anything more than a scheme of Romantic Friendship. **1806** BYRON *Fugitive Pieces* 23 And friendships were form'd, too romantic to last. **1813** SCOTT *Trierm.* Lxix, Yet e'en in that romantic age, Ne'er were such charms by mortal seen. **1854** RUSKIN *Lect. Archit.* ii. 65 You feel that armour is romantic, because it is a beautiful dress, and you are not used to it. **1858** LYTTON *What will he do with It?* (1859) III. VII. xiv. 135 (*heading*) Romantic Love pathologically regarded by Frank Vance and Alban Morley. **1866** C. M. Y ONGE *Dove in Eagle's Nest* II. ii. 41 Good substantial wedded affection was not lacking, but romantic love was thought an unnecessary preliminary, and found a vent in extravagant adoration not always in reputable quarters. **1874** GREEN *Short Hist.* vii. §6. 407 The romantic daring of Drake's voyage..roused a general enthusiasm throughout England. **1942** T. B AILEY *Pink Camellia* vii. 50 The lovemaking was of the purely romantic kind, for Cecily would have no other. **1945** *New Statesman* 23 June 408/3 The book opens with a tale of romantic friendship at Oxford in the years following the first great war. **1966** *Listener* 7 Apr. 509/3 Nowadays, however, educated young West Africans have discovered the alleged virtues of romantic love. They stress the idea of marriage being a true union of husband and wife as well as an economic partnership. Love will be the most important thing when they marry. **1971** E. M AVOR *Ladies of Llangollen* v. 96 The strange ambivalence of the pre-Freudian romantic friendships. **1975** J. P LAMENATZ *Karl Marx's Philos. of Man* xiv. 400 The idea of romantic love has flourished in the same kind of society as the small family. Indeed, this family is quite often seen as the creature of romantic love: it is set up by a man and a woman who come to love one another and who choose each other as life partners. **1978** *Morecambe Guardian* 14 Mar. 17/2 Partnerships flourish. A romantic attachment is possible, but do not take it too

seriously.

- b.** Of places: Redolent or suggestive of romance; appealing to the imagination and feelings.
- 1705** ADDISON *Italy* 2 It is so Romantic a Scene, that it has always probably given occasion to such Chimerical Relations. **1748** *Anson's Voy.* III. v. 337 An Island, which..may in all these views be truly stiled romantic. **1816** PEACOCK *Headlong Hall* iii, To put his romantic pleasure-grounds under a process of improvement. **1864** SKEAT tr. *Uhland's Poems* 57 Still my heart no quiet knows; With him..Tow'rds romantic isles it goes.
- Comb.* **1828** *Sporting Mag.* XXI. 224 The hunting events of the romantic-scened county. **1849** J. F ORBES *Physician's Holiday* xiii. (1850) 123 It is a romantic-looking spot.
- c.** Similarly of persons, their character, etc.
- 1846** GROTE *Greece* Lxvii. (1862) I. 395 The exploits of many of these romantic heroes. **1856** STANLEY *Sinai & Pal.* (1858) 328 The grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced, Elijah the Tishbite.
- Comb.* **1847** H. M ELVILLE *Omoo* lxxviii, He was a sunburnt, romantic-looking European.

### B. noun.

- 1.** A feature, characteristic, idea, etc., belonging to, or suggestive of, romance.
- 1679** V. A LSOP *Melius Inquirendum* II. vi. 324 Some Legendary Fabler, that has stufft a Farce with Romanticks. **1846** A. R ODGER *Poems, Lo'e me little* (1897) 12 Quat your romantics, your airs, and your antics, Tak' truth's honest track, and ye'll seldom gae wrang. **1887** BLACK *Sabina Zembra* 221 There you are with your romantics again.
- 2.** A romantic person; *esp.* an adherent of romanticism in literature; a romanticist. Also, a composer of romantic music.
- 1827** CARLYLE in C. E. Norton *Two Notebks. of T. Carlyle* (1898) 111 Grossi..has written a new Epic... Grossi is a Romantic. **1865** *Reader* 3 June 619/1 This enthusiasm for enthusiasm..was natural to the whole race of romantics of that day. **1882** STEVENSON in *Longnan's Mag.* I. 77 Walter Scott is out and away the king of the romantics. **1898** L. S TEPHEN *Stud. Biogr.* II. iv. 142 The same view..made him dislike Carlyle and Froude as romantics, if not charlatans. **1927** R. H. W ILENSKI *Mod. Movement in Art* 30 Nineteenth-century romantics deliberately left out all the features which the admirers of classical painting were accustomed to regard as indispensable to art. **1932** W. B. Y EATS *Words for Music* 11 We were the last romantics, chose for theme Traditional sanctity and loveliness. **1933** A. D AVIDSON tr. *Praz's Romantic Agony* 4 The thirst for the infinite..animates the lines of the Romantics. **1938** *Oxf. Compan. Mus.* 113/1 Despite their sheer musical beauty, his [*sc.* Brahms's] compositions are strongly charged with what may be called an extra-musical emotion; hence the classification of their composer as a romantic. **1960** A. O. L OVEJOY in M. H. Abrams *Eng. Romantic Poets* 15 To be unsophisticated, to revert to the mental state of 'simple Indian swains', was the least of the ambitions of a German Romantic... The greatness of Shakespeare, in the eyes of these Romantics, lay in his Universalität. **1961** C. C LUTTON in A. Baines *Mus. Instruments* ii. 66 The [organ] works of Liszt and Franck,..and of such late romantics as Reger, Jongen, and Elgar, rely upon a very large instrument. **1966** H. G. S CHENK *Mind of European Romantics* i. 6 Rationalism was attacked by the Romantics not on the grounds that the intellectual results yielded by it were false, but rather on the grounds that they were inadequate. **1977** *Times* 18 Oct. 24/9 White tuxedos are occasionally supplied to shipboard romantics.