Across Literary Eras

Compare American Romanticism and Victorian literature.

10.T.PM.1.b "Identify and discuss major authors and works of two periods of English and American literary history, including key themes and stylistic features. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each author's name, circle each work title, and write R or V beside details that describe a theme or stylistic feature from the American Romantic or Victorian period.

Two Views of Change

1. Literary periods are shaped by the questions writers face. In the American Romantic period, roughly 1830 to 1865, writers often explored nature, intuition, individual freedom, and the hidden mind. Across the Atlantic, Victorian literature, produced during Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901, examined a rapidly changing Britain. Industrial cities, class divisions, empire, and new scientific ideas led many Victorian writers to question whether social progress also improved human lives.

2. American Romantic writers gave emotion and imagination unusual authority. Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance" urges readers to trust their own judgment, a central Romantic value. Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel The Scarlet Letter uses symbolic details, including the embroidered A, to explore sin, shame, and moral judgment in a Puritan community. Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" uses a disturbed first-person speaker and intense suspense to expose fear and guilt. These works favor symbolism, psychological conflict, and heightened language over ordinary realism.

3. Victorian authors frequently turned fiction into a lens for social conditions. Charles Dickens's novel Hard Times portrays a factory town and criticizes an education system that values facts while neglecting imagination. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "The Cry of the Children" uses emotional appeals and repeated cries to protest child labor. In "Dover Beach," Matthew Arnold's melancholy speaker reflects on fading religious certainty. Victorian works often use detailed settings, social criticism, and moral debate to show the costs of modern change.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Emerson's "Self-Reliance" urge readers to do?

2. Name one stylistic feature Poe uses in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and the idea it exposes.

3. What issue does Browning protest in "The Cry of the Children," and what technique does she use?

4. How does the main focus of American Romantic literature differ from the main focus of Victorian literature?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose one American Romantic work and one Victorian work from the passage. Write exactly two sentences comparing a theme and a stylistic feature in the two works.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each author's name, circle each work title, and write R or V beside details that describe a theme or stylistic feature from the American Romantic or Victorian period. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Emerson's "Self-Reliance" urge readers to do?	**Trust their own judgment.**
2	Name one stylistic feature Poe uses in "The Tell-Tale Heart" and the idea it exposes.	**A disturbed first-person speaker or intense suspense, exposing fear and guilt.**
3	What issue does Browning protest in "The Cry of the Children," and what technique does she use?	**Child labor, using emotional appeals and repeated cries.**
4	How does the main focus of American Romantic literature differ from the main focus of Victorian literature?	**American Romantic literature emphasizes emotion, imagination, nature, and the individual mind. Victorian literature emphasizes social conditions and the costs of modern change.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" uses a disturbed first-person narrator to reveal fear and guilt, while Dickens's Hard Times uses a detailed factory-town setting to criticize an education system focused only on facts. Both works question harmful ways of thinking, but Poe focuses on a troubled mind and Dickens focuses on society.

Accept equivalent wording for themes and stylistic features that is supported by the passage. For Part 3, responses must name one work from each period and make a clear comparison in exactly two sentences.