

Select Bibliography
Neo-Classicism and Romanticism

Stuff We Didn't Read But You Should: Neo-Classicism

Henry Fielding: Tom Jones, Amelia
Daniel Defoe: Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, A Journal of the Plague Year
Baruch Spinoza: A good introduction to his life and thought is Spinoza: A Life by Stephen Nadler
Matthew Stewart: The Courtier and The Heretic: Leibniz, Spinoza, and the Fate of God in the Modern World
Matthew Stewart: Nature's God: The Heretical Origins of the American Republic (although he reads Pope very differently than I do).
Iain Pears: The Instance of the Fingerpost – great novel about the early English Enlightenment
David McCullough: John Adams
James Gleick: Newton
Edmund S. Morgan: Benjamin Franklin
James Buchan: Crowded With Genius – about the Scottish Enlightenment (Hume, Smith and others)
Russell Shorto: Descartes' Bones: A Skeletal History of the Conflict Between Faith and Reason
Jenny Uglow: The Lunar Men: Five Friends Whose Curiosity Changed The World (including Erasmus Darwin, James Watt and Thomas Wedgewood among other liberal scientific geniuses)
Hugh Walpole: The Castle of Otranto: the first gothic novel: it's so bad, it's great: very Monty Python!

Stuff We Didn't Read But You Should: Romanticism

Ann Radcliffe: The Mysteries of Udolpho, The Italian (gothic novels)
"Monk" Lewis: The Monk (gothic novel)
Charles Robert Maurin: Melmouth the Wanderer – one of the weirdest books I have ever read – GOTHIC
Jane Austen: Northanger Abbey – a spoof of gothic novels that works as a gothic novel, but read some real ones first to fully enjoy it.
Mary Shelley: The Last Man, The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck
Muriel Spark: Mary Shelley: A Biography
Peter Ackroyd: Blake – fascinating biography by a great writer about a true original
Richard Holmes: Coleridge (2 volumes) – along with Richard Ellman's biographies of Joyce and Wilde, **among the best literary biographies ever**. He also has a biography of Shelley (Shelley: The Pursuit) and a good book called Sidetracks with short biographical pieces on the Romantics. He is our current leading expert on the Romantics as a whole.
Richard Holmes: The Age of Wonder: all about science during the Romantic period.
Steven Johnson: The Invention of Air: A Story Of Science, Faith, Revolution, And The Birth Of America
Juliet Becker: Wordsworth: A Life extremely well written and more interesting than I expected.
Frances Wilson: The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth: A Life – I haven't read it yet, but the reviews were good.
Lyndall Gordon: Vindication: A Life of Mary Wollstonecraft – excellent!
Fiona McCarthy: Byron: Life and Legend – excellent – details about the nursemaid!
Walter Jackson Bate: John Keats (an old but very good biography)
Andrew Motion: Keats (more recent – also very good)
Herman Melville: Moby Dick – by far the greatest American novel and very Romantic (capital R)
While you're at it, anything by Thoreau, Emerson, Poe and Hawthorne is Romantic even if it's often given the specialized name Transcendentalist. The latter two are highly influenced by gothic novels.
John Clare: Poetry - a country boy who wrote some very good poems and went crazy
George Gordon, Lord Byron: read the rest of Don Juan but definitely out loud!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge: His lectures on Shakespeare are still among the best.

William Hazlitt: The Spirit of the Age – an excellent contemporary commentator on the Romantic era

Thomas DeQuincy: Confessions of An English Opium Eater – worth reading but not emulating

Frances Wilson: Guilty Thing: A Life of Thomas De Quincey

Susan Tyler Hitchcock: Mad Mary Lamb: Lunacy and Murder In Literary London Nuff said

Peter Ackroyd (again): The Lambs of London – a novel about the same topic by a wonderful novelist.