



Why the Romantics Matter (Why X Matters Series)

Peter Gay

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With his usual wit and élan, esteemed historian Peter Gay enters the contentious, long-standing debates over the romantic period. Here, in this concise and inviting volume, he reformulates the definition of romanticism and provides a fresh account of the immense achievements of romantic writers and artists in all media.

Gay's scope is wide, his insights sharp. He takes on the recurring questions about how to interpret romantic figures and their works. Who qualifies to be a romantic? What ties together romantic figures who practice in different countries, employ different media, even live in different centuries? How is modernism indebted to romanticism, if at all?

Guiding readers through the history of the romantic movement across Britain, France, Germany, and Switzerland, Gay argues that the best way to conceptualize romanticism is to accept its complicated nature and acknowledge that there is no "single basket" to contain it. Gay conceives of romantics in "families," whose individual members share fundamental values but retain unique qualities. He concludes by demonstrating that romanticism extends well into the twentieth century, where its deep and lasting impact may be measured in the work of writers such as T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf.

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