Chapter 1: The Elements of English Romanticism

1. General Characteristics of Romantic Literature
   by Thomas McFarland
   Romanticism was a reaction to the Classicism movement, which had desired reason and objectivity. As a result, key characteristics of Romantic literature are imagination and an escape from the constrictions of modern life.

2. The Importance of Imagination
   by James Engell
   For the Romantics, imagination was a powerful force that could unite man with nature and was a central element to their poetry and philosophy. The Romantics embraced imagination as a response to the sterile and mechanistic philosophies that were common in the eighteenth century.

3. Nature as Inspiration
   by Heather Coombs
   Nature was important to the Romantics. Their poems and novels reflect the belief that natural scenery was a source of intense feelings and moral inspiration. The Romantics also believed that man should try to be in harmony with nature.

4. The Meditative Qualities of Romantic Poetry
   by M.H. Abrams
   Eighteenth-century Romantic lyrics—short poems that express personal emotion—place considerable emphasis on meditation. The meditative quality associated with the lyric typifies the Romantic poems, but is actually a device borrowed from metaphysical poems and local poems of the previous century.

5. The Religious Views of the Romantic Poets
   by Hoxie Neale Fairchild
   Romantic poets were helped and hindered by efforts to explain religion in their works. For many of these poets, religion was self-deifying—they tended to worship themselves as much as any god.
Chapter 2: The Romantic Poets

1. The Imagination of William Blake
   by Mark Richard Barna
   William Blake championed the power of imagination and divine inspiration in art. His poems are a reaction to the progress of science and industry that characterized the Age of Reason.

2. The Greatness of Wordsworth’s “The Prelude”
   by Frank N. Magill
   William Wordsworth’s “The Prelude” is one of the most important poems in English Romanticism. Its power derives from being both a deeply personal, autobiographical statement as well as a philosophical treatise that delineates key Romantic beliefs.

3. Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” Is a Superior Romantic Ballad by John Spencer Hill
   “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is part of a tradition of Romantic ballads. However, Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s mastery of theme and language makes the poem far superior to its predecessors.

4. A Critique of the Byronic Hero in Manfred
   by Andrew Rutherford
   The title character of Manfred is another in the long line of Byronic heroes. However, while Lord Byron wants Manfred to be seen as a defiant hero, the character does not represent mankind at its finest; like the heroes of other Byron poems, Manfred’s behavior should be censured, not emulated.

5. The Power of Nature in Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” by Harold Bloom
   Percy Bysshe Shelley’s veneration of nature can be seen in “Ode to the West Wind.” Shelley acknowledges that the wind can be a destructive force, but he still desires to experience its power.

6. Medieval Influences in Keats’s “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” by Stuart M. Sperry
   References to Celtic mythology and Arthurian legend can be found throughout John Keats’s poem “La Belle Dame Sans Merci.” Keats incorporates many elements found in these medieval tales into his own poem, yet these elements take on a deeper meaning as the magic of the fantasy worlds reflects the enchanting power of poetry in Keats’s reality.

Chapter 3: Romantic Novelists and Essayists

1. Romantic and Anti-Romantic Elements in Scott’s Waverley by Robin Mayhead
   Waverley, a novel written by Sir Walter Scott, is simultaneously a Romantic work and a critique of Romanticism.
Scott's interest in wilderness and the supernatural links him with his contemporaries. However, the title character also exhibits detrimental Romantic qualities, such as an impressionable nature, that can lead to trouble or ruin.

2. A Cautious Acceptance of Romanticism in Austen’s 
   *Persuasion* by June Dwyer  
   Jane Austen's final completed novel, *Persuasion*, shows a greater acceptance of Romanticism than her earlier works. An openness to Romantic qualities is commended, but Austen remains critical of those who overindulge in Romantic feelings.

3. Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein* by Muriel Spark  
   By centering her novel *Frankenstein* on the back-and-forth pursuit of the Romantic Frankenstein and his rationalist monster, Mary Shelley is able to address the conflict between intellect and emotion common to eighteenth-century philosophies. Though she grants neither supremacy, Shelley is clearly questioning Romantic ideals while at the same time being drawn to the drama and imaginative power of the Romantic outlook.

4. The Plain-Speaking Intimacy of Hazlitt's Essays 
   by Christopher Salvesen  
   William Hazlitt is the greatest essayist of the Romantic era. Although his essays are lengthy, his conversational writing style gives them an intimate quality.

Chapter 4: Critiquing the Movement

1. The Decline of English Romanticism 
   by Derek Colville  
   As some of the older Romantics reached middle age, they began to reject their earlier, more radical views. Romanticism declined as authors such as William Wordsworth and Thomas Carlyle began to adopt more conservative and Victorian beliefs.

2. Romantic Poetry Is Aesthetically Trite 
   by T.E. Hulme  
   Romantic poetry is flawed because it is too emotional and obsessed with finding beauty in the infinite and unbelievable. A return to neoclassic poetry is desirable, because such poems show that beauty can be found in small things.

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