

# John Keats - (son of a hostler)

31 October 1795 - 23 February 1821  
Moorgate, London

Frances Keats - Frances Jennings

School: - John Clarke's School in Enfield, Apprentice - Thomas Hammon  
Friends: - Caution Clarke introduced 'Tasso, Spenser and Chapman's',  
Edmund Holmes described him 'always in extremes'  
Hessey (publisher friend), Wentworth Place of his friend Charles  
Armitage where he composed five of his six best sonnets (Keats Museum)  
Severn in whose lap Keats dies

Greek Mythology through 'Lamprius's Dictionary'

Registered as a medical student at 'Guy's Hospital'  
First letter - 'Calidore'

Critics: - <sup>(1817)</sup> 'Poems first collection of Keats' poems, publishers  
Charles and James 'Alliers' ashamed of the book.  
Publishers Taylor and Hessey (Supporters) met Keats to lawyer  
Richard Woodhouse (Keatsiana), Hunt's 'Three Young Poets' -  
Shelley, Keats, Reynolds, Hunt introduced Keats to Thomas Barnes,  
Editor of 'The Times', Charles Lamb Hunt called a 'new school of  
poetry'. Keats said to his friend Bailey "---- Beauty must be truth."  
First Poem - 'O Solitude' (Sonnet May 1816), 'The Imitation of Spenser' <sup>(1814)</sup>  
C. Clarke described it 'friend's first red letter day' (first extant poem)

Critics: - harsh reviews by John Wilson Croker, John Gibson Lockhart, Blackwood  
'the Quarterly Review'  
Main Compositions: - Endymion (1818)  
Major Odes (1819)  
'Lamia', 'Isabella', 'The Eve of St. Agnes' - (1820)  
(Pot of Basil)  
'Sleep and Poetry', 'I Stood Tip-toe' (1817)  
'The Eve of St. Agnes' (a story of love triumphing)  
Middleton Murray called him 'pure poet'  
Arnold said that "He is, he is with Shakespeare."  
Shelley said that "he was a Greek."  
Eliot said "The Odes ---- are enough for his  
reputation" compared Keats with Shakespeare.

The poetry of Keats is characterised by sensual imagery, most notably in the series of odes. This is typical of romantic poets, as they aimed to accentuate extreme emotion through an emphasis on natural imagery. Today his poems and letters are some of the most popular and most analysed in English literature. Some of the most acclaimed works of Keats are "Ode to a Nightingale", "Sleep and Poetry", and the famous sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer".

### **Hellenism**

- 1.ancient Greek culture or ideals.
- 2.the imitation or adoption of ancient Greek language, thought, customs, art, etc.:*the Hellenism of Alexandrian Jews.*
- 3.the characteristics of Greek culture, especially after the time of Alexander the Great; civilization of the Hellenistic period.

The word “Hellenism” is derived from the word “Hellene” which means Greek. So, Hellenism means Greek temperament, quality, culture, manner, Greek spirit and Greek idioms. English literature sustained its greatest loss due to the premature death of John Keats. He was not only the last but also the most perfect of the Romantics. Keats among the Romantics was different in many ways, especially in mood, temperament, spirit and love of Greek art, culture and mythology. Keats’ “Hellenism” on his love for Greek arts, Sculpture and mythology has made him distinct in the gallery of Romantics. It was Shelley who first expressed his opinion that “Keats was a Greek” though, Keats was not an English man or not an English poet. His passion for Greek ideas and idols was very great which vividly expressed his poems. The Greek influence came to him through his reading of translation of Greek classics, Lempriere’s classical dictionary and through Greek Sculpture. One of his friends lent him a copy of Chapman’s translation of Homer. He was fascinated by the new world of wonder and delight, which Homer revealed to him. He felt as he had

discovered a new planet. Then felt I like some watcher of the skies, when a new planet swims into his ken.

#### KEATS HELLENISM IN HIS ODES.

Keats, as is well known, was not a classical scholar, yet he has been famous for his Hellenism, a term which may be defined as a love of Greek art, literature, culture and way of life. Keats had an inborn love for the Greek spirit, their religion of joy and their religion of beauty. In fact, he was driven to the world of Greek beauty because he wanted to escape imaginatively from the harsh realities of his present. It should, however, be noted that Keats was a Greek because he could enter lovingly and imaginatively into the world of the ancients, and not because his knowledge of it was accurate and scholarly. His presentation of Hellenism is romantic and not realistic. Keats' mind was saturated with Greek literature and mythology. He habitually chooses Greek stories for his poetry. Endymion, Hyperion, Lamia, Grecian urn, Psyche etc., - all have the themes borrowed from the Greeks. The Grecian urn is a moment of the poet's power of entering imaginatively into another world. We as readers feel that we have been transported entirely to the Hellenic world of beauty, love, festivity and ritual. It is presented through and through with the Greek spirit. It may also be noted that the „ode“ form, which he made particularly his own and in which he excels all other English poets, is typically Greek verse form. The Greek temper of Keats is also revealed particularly in his joy in the beauty of nature and his zest for an outdoor life lived in her midst. Like the Greeks, Keats also takes a sensuous, childlike pleasure in the forms, colors, scents and sounds of nature and sees a god or goddess behind every object and phenomena of the external world. The following lines can be cited in this regard: And happily the queen – moon is on her throne, Clustered around by all her starry lays; The Greeks had a zest for life in nature and loved the activities of such life; but they also loved the serenity and quiet of pastoral life. But these aspects are combined vividly in the ode on a Grecian urn. In fact, in his worship of beauty, Keats justifies the remark of Shelley that he was a Greek.

## References:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Keats](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Keats)

<http://data.conferenceworld.in/IETEOCTOBER2017/49.pdf>