

## Module 6: The Power of the Mind in the Romantic Era

### Topic 1 Content: "Thanatopsis" by William Cullen Bryant

To him who in the love of Nature holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language; for his gayer hours  
She has a voice of gladness, and a smile  
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides  
Into his darker musings, with a mild  
And gentle sympathy, that steals away  
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts  
Of the last bitter hour come like a blight  
Over thy spirit, and sad images  
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,  
And breathless darkness, and the narrow house,  
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart;—  
Go forth under the open sky, and list  
To Nature's teachings, while from all around—  
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air,—  
Comes a still voice—Yet a few days, and thee  
The all-beholding sun shall see no more  
In all his course; nor yet in the cold ground,  
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears,  
Nor in the embrace of ocean shall exist  
Thy image. Earth, that hourished thee, shall claim  
Thy growth, to be resolv'd to earth again;  
And, lost each human trace, surrend'ring up  
Thine individual being, shalt thou go  
To mix forever with the elements,  
To be a brother to th' insensible rock  
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain  
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak  
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould.  
Yet not to thy eternal resting place  
Shalt thou retire alone—nor couldst thou wish  
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down  
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings  
The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,  
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,  
All in one mighty sepulchre.—The hills  
Rock-ribb'd and ancient as the sun,—the vales  
Stretching in pensive quietness between;  
The vernal woods—rivers that move  
  
In majesty, and the complaining brooks  
That make the meadows green; and pour'd round all,  
Old ocean's grey and melancholy waste,—

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Are but the solemn decorations all  
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,  
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,  
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,  
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread  
The globe are but a handful to the tribes  
That slumber in its bosom.—Take the wings  
Of morning—and the Barcan desert pierce,  
Or lost thyself in the continuous woods  
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,  
Save his own dashings—yet—the dead are there,  
And millions in those solitudes, since first  
The flight of years began, have laid them down  
In their last sleep—the dead reign there alone.—  
So shalt thou rest—and what if thou shalt fall  
Unnoticed by the living—and no friend  
Take note of thy departure? All that breathe  
Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh,  
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care  
Plod on, and each one as before will chase  
His favourite phantom; yet all these shall leave  
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come,  
And make their bed with thee. As the long train  
Of ages glide away, the sons of men,  
The youth in life's green spring, and he who goes  
In the full strength of years, matron, and maid,  
The bow'd with age, the infant in the smiles  
And beauty of its innocent age cut off,—  
Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,  
By those, who in their turn shall follow them.  
So live, that when thy summons comes to join  
The innumerable caravan, that moves  
To the pale realms of shade, where each shall take  
His chamber in the silent halls of death,  
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,  
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustain'd and sooth'd  
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,  
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.