



READING 3 Evaluate the changes in sound, form, and figurative language in poetry across literary time periods. **7** Analyze how the author's patterns of imagery reveal theme, set tone, and create meaning in metaphors, passages, and literary works.

The Lorelei

Poem by Heinrich Heine

Meet the Author

Heinrich Heine 1797–1856

Although Heinrich Heine (hīn'říKH hī'nə) was a controversial figure in his native Germany, he was celebrated as one of Europe's most renowned love poets. Like Blake, Heine wrote in a simple, musical style. However, Heine's skepticism and emphasis on suffering and loneliness link him to late romantic poets such as Byron.

Changes in Direction Born to a Jewish textile merchant, Heine grew up in modest circumstances in the city of Düsseldorf (then part of Prussia). When his father's business failed, Heine was sent to Hamburg, where a wealthy uncle tried, unsuccessfully, to make a businessman of him. Heine eventually earned a law degree but showed more interest in writing poetry. He reluctantly converted to Protestantism because government jobs were closed to Jews at the time. However, he was never offered any of the jobs he desired.

Love's Pain Heine established his international reputation as a poet with the publication of *The Book of Poems* (1827). Containing love songs, ballads, and sonnets, the volume explored, among other subjects, Heine's unrequited and unhappy love for his cousin Amalie. Several poems in the collection, including "The Lorelei," also grew out of his interest in German

folklore. According to legend, a maiden who drowned herself after a lover's betrayal sits upon the Lorelei rock high above the Rhine River, combing her hair in the moonlight and singing a haunting song that lures boatmen to their death.

Critic of Society Although best known for his lyric poetry, Heine also wrote essays and verse attacking social injustice and government corruption in Germany. Throughout his life, he searched for solutions to these evils, exploring ideas ranging from various forms of socialism to the communism espoused by Karl Marx, an acquaintance of his. None of these models totally satisfied Heine, however, since he believed they would not lead to a more joyful human society.

Heine moved to Paris in 1831 and devoted his creative energy to writing essays criticizing the policies of the French monarchy and the militant nationalism he saw developing in Germany. These essays infuriated the German people, who considered them unpatriotic and dangerous. In 1835, the German government banned Heine's work.

When he was 51, a serious illness confined Heine to what he called "his mattress grave." Despite tremendous pain and the slow loss of his vision, he continued to write until his death.

Author Online

Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML12-790



DID YOU KNOW?

Heinrich Heine ...

- first achieved fame for a series of travel books.
- inspired thousands of musical compositions through his verse.
- had his work banned by the German government for over 100 years.

LITERARY ANALYSIS: LYRIC POETRY

A **lyric poem** is a short poem in which a single speaker expresses personal thoughts and feelings. Most poems other than dramatic and narrative poems are lyric poems. The term comes from the word *lyre*, a stringed instrument that ancient Greek poets used to accompany their singing. Lyric poems can be in a variety of forms and can cover many subjects, from love and death to everyday experiences. They usually have the following characteristics:

- Although lyric poems are no longer sung, they often have a melodic rhythm.
- The poems may describe an incident, but the focus is on conveying emotions and thoughts rather than on telling a story.
- Lyric poems contain elements such as imagery and figurative language, which create a strong, unified impression.

Many of Heine's poems have a songlike quality that made it easy for composers to set them to music after his death. As you read "The Lorelei," notice its melodic rhythm and other lyric characteristics.

READING STRATEGY: VISUALIZE

The process of forming a mental picture from a written description is called **visualizing**. When reading poetry, it is important to try to "see" what the poet is describing through imagery and figurative language. Because lyric poets often use imagery to convey ideas, visualizing can also help you understand the meaning of a poem.

While reading Heine's "The Lorelei," look for

- **images** that elicit mental pictures
- language that suggests **spatial relationships**, such as *above*, *behind*, *here*, and *there*, which can help you picture the scene and its unfolding action

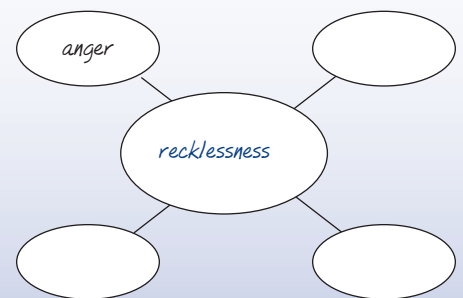


Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

What makes people RECKLESS?

Though we try to act rationally in most situations, we all fall prey sometimes to recklessness—whether it's doing something without thinking or consciously deciding to act against our better judgment. In "The Lorelei," you will encounter a man who is haunted by a tale of recklessness.

DISCUSS What circumstances or emotions make us act recklessly? Record your ideas in a word web, with the word *recklessness* in the center. Then, with a partner, discuss some of the reasons people act this way. Come up with some solutions for how people can avoid making a reckless decision.





The Lorelei

Heinrich Heine

I cannot explain the sadness
That's fallen on my breast.
An old, old fable haunts me,
And will not let me rest. **A**

5 The air grows cool in the twilight,
And softly the Rhine flows on;
The peak of a mountain sparkles
Beneath the setting sun.

More lovely than a vision,
10 A girl sits high up there;
Her golden jewelry glistens,
She combs her golden hair. **B**

With a comb of gold she combs it,
And sings an evensong;
15 The wonderful melody reaches
A boat, as it sails along.

The boatman hears, with an anguish
More wild than was ever known;
He's blind to the rocks around him;
20 His eyes are for her alone.

—At last the waves devoured
The boat, and the boatman's cry;
And this she did with her singing,
The golden Lorelei.

Translated by Aaron Kramer

A LYRIC POETRY

What does the speaker convey about his thoughts and emotions in lines 1–4?

6 Rhine: a river that begins in Switzerland and flows through Germany and the Netherlands to the North Sea.

B VISUALIZE

Describe what you visualized as you read lines 9–12. Consider the **images** and **spatial relationship** Heine provides.

Language Coach

Connotations Look up *anguish* (line 17), *distress*, and *suffering* in a dictionary. Then place each synonym on a scale where 1 is “least intense” and 10 is “most intense.” Explain your choices.

Analyze Visuals ►

Which details in this painting suggest the otherworldly nature of the Lorelei?



Comprehension

1. **Recall** What does the boatman encounter as he sails?
2. **Recall** What is the woman in the poem doing?
3. **Clarify** Why does the boatman crash into the rocks?

Literary Analysis

4. **Make Inferences** Reread lines 1–4. Why might the speaker feel haunted by the legend of the Lorelei?
5. **Analyze Lyric Poetry** Review the description of lyric poetry on page 791. Then identify the characteristics of a lyric poem found in “The Lorelei.”
6. **Visualize** Many of the images Heine uses elicit a visual picture when you read them. For the following examples from the poem, describe the mental picture you see when you read the lines:
 - “The peak of a mountain sparkles / Beneath the setting sun.” (lines 7–8)
 - “With a comb of gold she combs it, / And sings an evensong;” (lines 13–14)
 - “He’s blind to the rocks around him; / His eyes are for her alone.” (lines 19–20)
7. **Make Judgments** What is more responsible for the boatman’s death—the allure of the Lorelei’s voice and beauty or the boatman’s own recklessness? Explain your reasoning.
8. **Compare Texts** Compare Heine’s “The Lorelei” with Blake’s “The Tyger,” noting similarities and differences you see in each of the following elements:
 - structure
 - imagery
 - mood

Literary Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** Literary critic Lowell Bangerter wrote that Heine’s “ability to convey, with penetrating exactitude, feelings, existential problems, and elements of the human condition . . . enabled him to generate lyrics that belong more to the poetry of ideas than to the poetry of experience.” Do you think this description applies to “The Lorelei”? Explain why or why not.



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What makes people **RECKLESS?**

When people act without thinking, their impulsive decisions often have dire consequences. However, are there any times when recklessness might be necessary? Why might some people need to forgo thinking before they act?

Romantic Mavericks

Although they are often referred to as early romantics, William Blake and Robert Burns cannot be neatly classified with other romantic writers. It is true that like later romantics, they tended to emphasize emotion over reason and to feature both the everyday as well as the supernatural. But unlike the rich, majestic poems of the later romantics, Blake and Burns wrote gentle, rhyming verses that could almost masquerade as nursery rhymes.

However, these verses are not as simple as they seem. Hidden beneath the charming, playful images of lambs, children, and field mice lie startling truths and, sometimes, harsh commentary. Far from composers of light verse, Blake and Burns were serious, philosophical poets.

Writing to Evaluate

Reread the poems by Blake and Burns in this unit. Then, choosing the works of one of the poets, write about the contrast between the light tone and subject matter and the underlying truths conveyed. In your opinion, how does this contrast affect the impact? Cite specific examples from the text to support your views.

Consider

- what the poems seem to be about at first glance
- the underlying themes represented
- your own response to the poems after considering their deeper meanings



Extension Online

VIEWING & REPRESENTING

William Blake was a printmaker as well as a poet; his technique of illuminated printing brought the two art forms together. Look at the illuminated print of "The Tyger," shown here and on page 775. In your opinion, how does the illustration emphasize or alter the poem's impact? Discuss your reaction with a partner.



WRITING 15C Write an interpretation of a literary text.