

Byron's Childe Harold Pilgrimage: An Overview

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Q. When was Byron's *Childe Harold Pilgrimage* published?

A. The first two cantos of Byron's *Childe Harold Pilgrimage* was first published in 1812 though Byron started it back in 1809 in Albania. Canto III was published in 1816 and Canto IV in 1818.

Q. Write a note a genre and style of Byron's *Childe Harold Pilgrimage*.

At the outset the poem is a long narrative poem modelled on the medieval metrical romances . It purports to describe the travels and reflections of a pilgrim who being disgusted with the life of pleasure and revelry, seeks distraction in a foreign land. It contains all the different branches of poetry. Its continuity is epical, at least in the style of an episodic epic-poem like the *Odyssey*, or the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. Its descriptions of scenery and sketches of life are idyllic.

Q. Write a note on the notions of a Byronic hero as you find on *Childe Harold Pilgrimage*.

Byronic hero often refers to the character of an angry, self-exiled, melancholic and conceited young man that recurs Byron's works like *Childe Harold Pilgrimage*, *Manfred* and *Cain*, *Don Juan*. Idea of such a character could be first viewed in *Childe Harold Pilgrimage* (in the MS the name was first written as Childe Burun, an old form of Byron) through the projection of Childe Harold, a deemed-to-be knight who finds the old order of morality and chivalric code to be redundant. These characters are proud, self-centred, tortured outcast in revolt against the tyranny of social order and authority which are typical characteristic of Byron himself, who was considered the most subjective even among the romantics.

Q. Characteristics of Byron's Poetry

1. **Byron as a revolutionary and a poet of Sensation**-One of the supreme poets of revolutionary and liberty, Byron's poetry voices the spirit of revolution which captured the imagination of Europe in the earlier years of the 19th century. Byron's poems are very sensuous to the extent of being prone to every sensation that a human mind can capture. A rebel against the society, Byron often challenges the very conditions of human life and the supreme exponent of the distinctive forces of revolution.
2. **The Byronic Hero**
3. **Byron as the Satirist**
4. **Byron as the Poet of Nature.**
5. **Byron's narrative genius.**
6. **Byron's lyrical faculty**-Byron's is more rhetorical than lyrical. His lyric exudes his moods. He is a master of passionate self-expression.
7. **Byron-the Romantic Paradox.**

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage Short Summary

Inspired by Byron's years of wandering through a number of European countries, "Childe Harold's pilgrimage" uses Spenserian stanzas consisting of nine lines each to tell the story of a young male aristocrat who has fled his native land and the life of sensuous excess he enjoyed there for a seemingly aimless tour of Europe. The circumstances of his flight are left unclear, though the text indicates that he was motivated by psychological reasons, perhaps relating to his involvement with a socially unattainable romantic partner. Byron always denied what critics at the time of this work's publication claimed, that it was an example of veiled autobiography. Nonetheless, Byron makes regular authorial intrusions in the text, and his voice is therefore at times hard to distinguish from that of Harold.

The first [canto](#) describes Harold's journeys in Portugal and then in Spain, especially his visits to the towns and battle fields where the armies of Napoleon clashed with the British and Spanish forces during the war that would eventually bring about the collapse of the French empire. Byron spends time discussing the women of Aragon, whose endeavor in fighting the French alongside their male counterparts leads him to compare them to the amazons of ancient Greek mythology, though he finds them still more impressive since they did not receive military training and yet found the strength and courage to conduct themselves as warriors. An [atmosphere](#) of melancholy and futility haunts the first canto. Harold's past sufferings make it difficult for him to enjoy human festivities, an inability that Harold realizes most keenly when attending a bull fight in Spain. During the second canto, Harold visits Greece, a country then under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. When contemplating what remains of Greece's, specifically Athens' famous buildings and landmarks, Byron draws comparisons between the fall of such structures and the Greek people's fall into subjection by a foreign power. He then describes in vivid detail his travels in Albania, a country of which British audiences knew little during Byron's lifetime.

He published the third canto of this work some time after the first two, and its tone, which is more somber and reproachful than in the previous cantos, reflects the low ebb of the Poet's emotions, a consequence of his now being in exile from his homeland and separated from the person he loved best. Increasingly, Harold finds consolation in nature, especially in grand and sublime settings such as the ocean and the mountains. However he still finds time to visit the occasional battlefield, notably Waterloo in Belgium, where Napoleon was ultimately defeated, to reflect on how the emperor's extremism led to the perversion of the French revolution's lofty ideals. Proceeding then to Switzerland, Byron engages with, and subsequently rejects the theory of the French philosopher Rousseau, as well as those of his contemporaries, Wordsworth and Shelly. The canto ends in mildly optimistic fashion, with the poet insisting that despite his melancholy, he still believes that goodness and happiness are attainable, if not common phenomena in the human world.

The fourth canto sees Harold visiting Italy and the city of Venice which, like Athens, is only a shadow of its former self. The canto is dominated by Byron's remorse and longing for his homeland England, especially for the society of his daughter, from whom he has now been separated for some years. He speculates that his ghost will one day return to England, in the event of his death. The work concludes with Byron speaking directly to the ocean, commenting on its constancy and inscrutability, in contrast to which all human power is petty and meaningless.