Romanticism Texts 2: Nature (again) name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**TEXT 1: excerpts from "Thanatopsis" by William Cullen Bryant**

**What does it mean to “hold communion” with nature (1-2)? What is the speaker talking about?**

**Lines 3-8 sound an awful lot like things Emerson has said. Find the lines in Emerson’s essay that contain similar statements.**

**What are “thoughts of the last bitter hour” about? What does the speaker suggest you do when you have these thoughts?**

**How will the earth “claim thy growth” (18-19)?**

**What does it mean to be “brother to the rock and clod” (23-24)? And why do trees “pierce thy mold” (26)?**

**What is the “resting-place” Bryant describes in the final stanza (27)? Does it sound like a nice place to rest?**

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

5 And eloquence of beauty, and she glides

Into his darker musings\*, with a mild

And healing sympathy, that steals away

Their sharpness, ere\* he is aware. When thoughts

Of the last bitter hour come like a blight\*

10 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 listen

15 To Nature’s teachings, while from all around—

Earth and her waters, and the depths of air—

Comes a still voice— [ . . . ]

Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim

Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,

20 And, lost each human trace, surrendering up

Thine individual being, shalt thou go

To mix forever with the elements,

To be a brother to the insensible\* rock

And to the sluggish clod\*, which the rude swain\*

25 Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak

Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mold\*.

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place

Shalt thou retire alone. [ . . . ]

The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,

30 Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,

All in one mighty sepulcher\*.   The hills

Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun,—the vales

Stretching in pensive quietness between;

The venerable woods—rivers that move

35 In majesty, and the complaining brooks

That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,

Old Ocean’s gray and melancholy waste,—

Are but the solemn decorations all

Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,

40 The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,

Are shining on the sad abodes of death,

Through the still lapse of ages.

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| Communion (2): here meaning to "enter into a conversation with" | musings (6): thoughts, here especially troubling thoughts | ere (8): before | blight (9): a sickness or disease | shroud, pall, narrow house (11-12): When you die, you are covered with a shroud, put in a coffin, a pall (or cloth) is put over the coffin and your remains are carried to the narrow house to be buried |
| insensible (23): here meaning literally to be without senses | clod (24): dirt | swain (24): farmer | "thy mold" (26): your corpse. Fun! | sepulcher (31): a crypt or a grave |

**TEXT 2: excerpts from *Flower Fables* by Louisa May Alcott**

*Background:* Flower Fables*was the first work published by*[*Louisa May Alcott*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisa_May_Alcott)*and appeared on December 9, 1854. The book was a compilation of fanciful stories first written six years earlier for Ellen Emerson (daughter of*[*Ralph Waldo Emerson*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Waldo_Emerson)*). The collection of poems and short stories are "told" by fairies and elves during a dinner feast in nature—sorry,* N*ature.*

CH. I: "Flower Fables"

THE summer moon shone brightly down upon the sleeping earth, while far away from mortal eyes danced the Fairy folk. Fire-flies hung in bright clusters on the dewy leaves, that waved in the cool night-wind; and the flowers stood gazing, in very wonder, at the little Elves, who lay among the fern-leaves, swung in the vine-boughs, sailed on the lake in lily cups, or danced on the mossy ground, to the music of the hare-bells, who rung out their merriest peal in honor of the night.

5 Under the shade of a wild rose sat the Queen and her little Maids of Honor, beside the silvery mushroom where the feast was spread.

"Now, my friends," said she, "to while away the time till the bright moon goes down, let us each tell a tale, or relate what we have done or learned this day. I will begin with you, Sunny Lock," added she, turning to a lovely little Elf, who lay among the fragrant leaves of a primrose.

10 With a gay smile, "Sunny Lock" began her story.

CH. X: "Fairy Song"

The moonlight fades from flower and tree,  
 And the stars dim one by one;  
 The tale is told, the song is sung,  
 And the Fairy feast is done.  
  
5 From bird, and blossom, and bee,  
 We learn the lessons they teach;  
 And seek, by kindly deeds, to win  
 A loving friend in each.  
 And though unseen on earth we dwell,  
10 Sweet voices whisper low,  
 And gentle hearts most joyously greet  
 The Elves where'er they go.  
  
 When next we meet in the Fairy dell,  
 May the silver moon's soft light  
15 Shine then on faces gay as now,  
 And Elfin hearts as light.  
 Now spread each wing, for the eastern sky  
 With sunlight soon will glow.  
 The morning star shall light us home:  
20 Farewell! for the Elves must go.