CAPITOLO

13

Rebels in Italy: Byron, Shelley and Keats

"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever: / Its loveliness increases; it will never / Pass into nothingness" — John Keats, Endymion I.1–3 (1818)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe Regency Britain and Restoration Europe — the Luddites, Peterloo, the Carbonari, the Greek War of Independence — and place them on a timeline.
2. I can explain the lives and main works of Byron, Shelley and Keats and the forms they used: the Spenserian stanza, ottava rima, terza rima, the ode.
3. I can analyse "Ozymandias", two stanzas of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and Byron's address to Rome, and compare their views of art, time and power.
4. I can talk about destiny and expectation in the past with *was to*, *was to have done* and *be supposed to*.
5. I can discuss a literary topic in a mock oral exam and write a personal statement.
6. I can explain what the English Romantics borrowed from Dante, Pulci and Ariosto, and connect them with Foscolo's exile and Belzoni's Egyptology.

INDICE DEL CAPITOLO

13.1 History and Society: Regency Britain and Restoration Europe 2
13.2 Literature: Byron, Shelley and Keats 6
13.3 Texts: a Ruined King, an Urn and the City of the Soul 11
13.4 Language: Destiny and Expectation in the Past 17
13.5 Skills: the Oral Exam and the Personal Statement 20
13.6 Connections: the English Romantics' Italy 25

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Capitolo 13: Rebels in Italy: Byron, Shelley and Keats · pagine 445–478 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

On 16 August 1819 a cavalry charge broke up a peaceful meeting for parliamentary reform in Manchester, and people died under the sabres. The news reached Percy Bysshe Shelley in Italy a few weeks later, and in a burst of anger he wrote a long political poem that no editor in England dared to print. Shelley was not the only English poet living south of the Alps: Lord Byron was in Ravenna, and a year later the young John Keats, already very ill, would sail for Naples and Rome. The three poets of the "second generation" of English Romanticism spent their best years, and their last ones, in Italy.

This chapter follows them from Regency England to Venice, Pisa, Rome and the Gulf of La Spezia, and on to Greece. You read Shelley's sonnet "Ozymandias", two stanzas of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and Byron's address to Rome from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*; you learn how English talks about destiny and expectation in the past (*Keats was to die in Rome*; *we were supposed to meet at noon*); you prepare for an oral exam and write a personal statement; and you discover how much these English rebels borrowed from Dante, Ariosto and Pulci — and what an Italian strongman from Padua had to do with an Egyptian king.

13.1 History and Society: Regency Britain and Restoration Europe

Chapter 12 ended with the long war against Napoleon. This chapter covers the years from about 1811 to 1824: a decade of victory abroad and of hunger, protest and repression at home, while across Europe the kings restored by the peace of 1815 tried to stop the clock. Figura 13.1 sets the lives and works of Byron, Shelley and Keats against the events of their time.

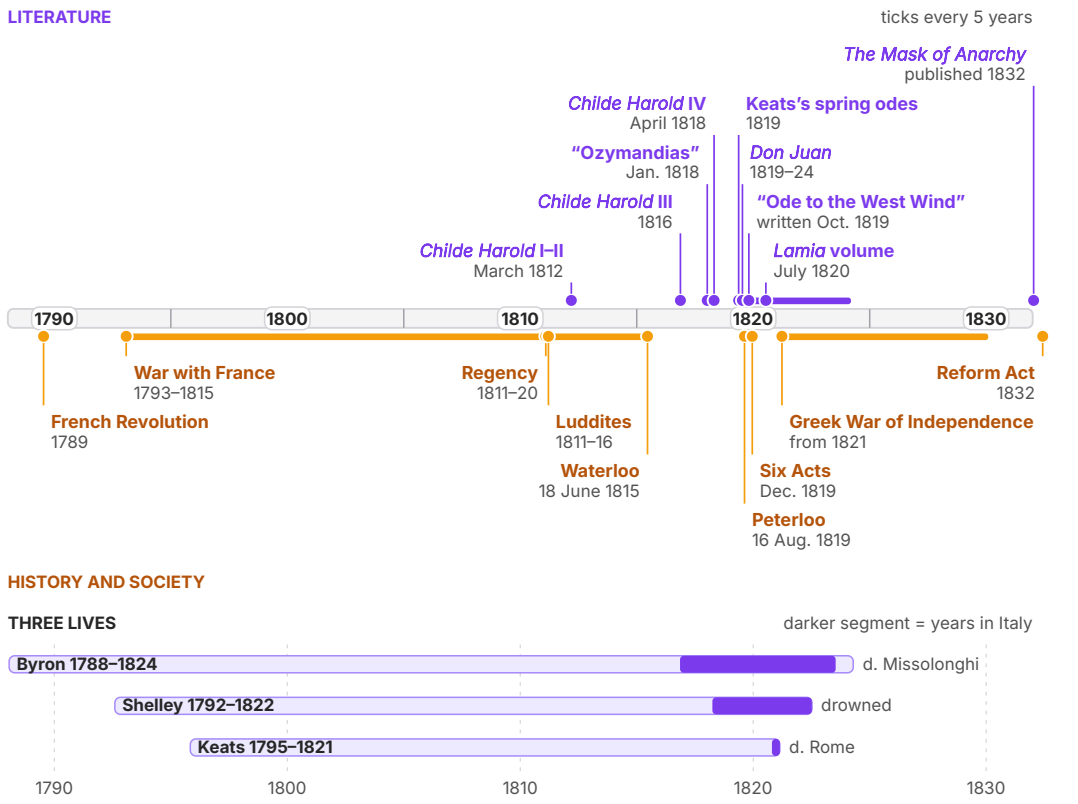

Figura 13.1 Byron, Shelley and Keats, 1788–1832, on a proportional time axis (ticks every 5 years). Above the axis, literary works (violet; dates of first publication, except where "written" is stated); below it, history and society (amber). At the bottom, the three lives, with the years each poet spent in Italy in a darker shade. Bars show events that lasted more than a year.

13.1.1 The Regency

In February 1811 King George III, who had suffered several attacks of mental illness, was judged unable to rule, and his eldest son became **Prince Regent** (Italian *principe reggente*): he governed in his father's name until the old king died in January 1820, and then reigned as George IV (1820–1830). The years 1811–1820 are called the **Regency**, and the name is often stretched to cover the whole period to 1830. The Prince Regent was clever, extravagant and very unpopular: he spent huge sums on palaces such as the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, while the country carried the debts of more than twenty years of war. For the wealthy, the Regency meant elegant squares, balls and fashion; for the poor, it meant high prices and low wages.

13.1.2 Machines, bread and the Luddites

The war ended in victory — Wellington's army and its Prussian allies defeated Napoleon at Waterloo on 18 June 1815 — but peace brought an economic crisis. Thousands of soldiers and sailors came home without work; the Corn Law of 1815 kept the price of bread high to protect landowners; new machines were replacing skilled workers in the textile trades. From 1811 groups of workers in Nottinghamshire, and then in Yorkshire and Lancashire, broke into workshops at night and smashed the knitting frames and the cloth-finishing machines that were taking their jobs. They signed their letters with the name of an imaginary leader, "General" or "King" Ludd, and became known as the **Luddites** (Italian *luddisti*). In 1812 Parliament made frame-breaking a crime punishable by death. In his first speech in the House of Lords, on 27 February 1812, the young Lord Byron spoke against that law and defended the starving weavers of his own county, Nottinghamshire. Today "Luddite" is used, often unfairly, for anyone who dislikes new technology.

13.1.3 Peterloo and the Six Acts

In these years only a small minority of adult men could vote, and great industrial towns such as Manchester had no member of Parliament at all. Radicals — reformers who wanted to change the system "from the root" (Latin *radix*) — organised mass meetings to demand the vote for all men. On Monday 16 August 1819 a crowd of around 60,000 people, many in their best Sunday clothes and with women's reform societies among them, gathered in St Peter's Field, Manchester, to hear the radical speaker Henry Hunt. The local magistrates sent in the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, a volunteer cavalry force, to arrest Hunt; then they ordered regular hussars to clear the field. In a few minutes eighteen people were killed, according to modern research, and between 400 and 700 were injured. A radical newspaper, the *Manchester Observer*, called the event the **Peterloo Massacre** (Italian *massacro di Peterloo*): a bitter blend of "St Peter's Field" and "Waterloo", the victory of four years before, as if the army now fought the British people.

The government answered with more repression. In December 1819 the **Six Acts** limited public meetings, raised the tax on cheap newspapers and pamphlets and made it easier to prosecute writers for "seditious libel". This is why Shelley's Peterloo poem, *The Mask of Anarchy*, written in Italy in the autumn of 1819, was not printed until 1832: his friend the editor Leigh Hunt (no relation of Henry Hunt), who had already been to prison for insulting the Prince Regent, judged it too dangerous to publish.

13.1.4 Europe after Vienna

At the Congress of Vienna (1814–15) the victorious powers redrew the map of Europe and gave back their thrones to the old dynasties: the period is called the *Restoration*. Italy was divided again. Austria ruled Lombardy and Venetia directly and dominated the rest; the Kingdom of Sardinia, with its capital at Turin, gained Genoa and Liguria; the Pope ruled central Italy; a

Bourbon king ruled Naples and Sicily. Opposition went underground, into secret societies such as the **Carbonari** (literally "charcoal burners"), who prepared risings for constitutional government. Revolutions broke out in Naples in 1820 and in Piedmont in March 1821, and both were crushed with the help of Austrian troops. In Ravenna, Byron was close to the Carbonari through the family of his companion, Countess Teresa Guiccioli, and stored their weapons in his house.

In March 1821 the Greeks rose against the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled them for nearly four centuries. All over Europe **philhellenes** (from Greek, "lovers of the Greeks"), educated in the classics, collected money and volunteered to fight for the land of Homer and Plato. Byron sailed for Greece in July 1823 as an agent of the London Greek Committee, spent his own fortune on the Greek fleet and soldiers, and died of a fever at Missolonghi on 19 April 1824. Greece became independent in 1830.

13.1.5 The English Romantics in Italy

In English 2 (Unit 12) you met the Grand Tour and the dates of Byron, Shelley and Keats in Italy. Now look at the map in Figura 13.2. Byron left England in April 1816, after the scandal of his separation from his wife, and never returned: he lived in Venice (1816–1819), Ravenna (1819–1821), Pisa (1821–1822) and Genoa (1822–1823). The Shelleys arrived in March 1818 and moved restlessly from city to city — Venice and Este, Naples, Rome, Livorno, Florence, Pisa — until in 1822 they rented Casa Magni, a house on the shore at San Terenzo, near Lerici. On 8 July 1822 Shelley sailed from Livorno for home in his small boat, the *Don Juan*; a storm sank it and he drowned, a month before his thirtieth birthday. Keats came last and stayed least. Ill with tuberculosis and advised to spend the winter in a warm climate, he sailed in September 1820 with his friend, the painter Joseph Severn; after ten days of quarantine in the port of Naples he reached Rome in November and lodged in a house at the foot of the Spanish Steps, where he died on 23 February 1821. He was twenty-five.

Why Italy? It was cheap, and it was sunny; it was full of the art and the ruins that a classical education had taught them to love; and for Byron and Shelley it was also an escape from English society, its judges and its gossip. Their Italy was not only the museum of the Grand Tour, however: they read Italian poets, learnt from them, and watched with sympathy the first Italian struggles for freedom.

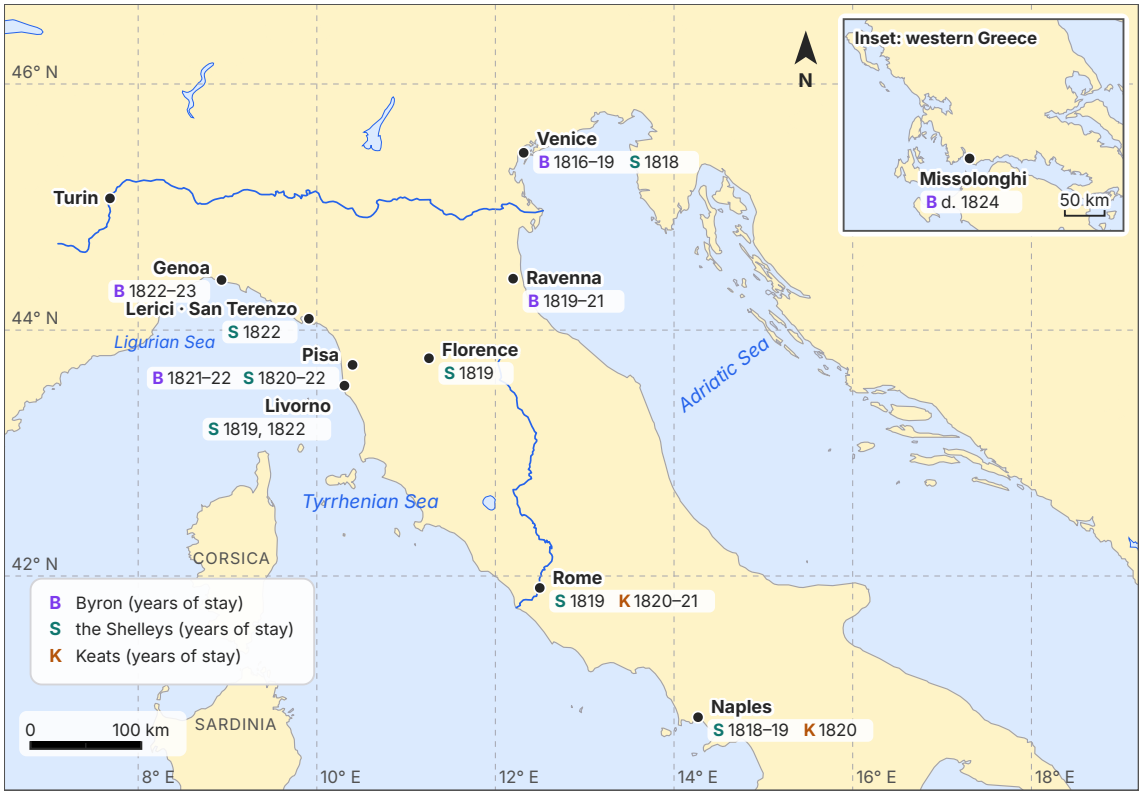

Figura 13.2 The English Romantics' Italy, 1816–1824. Places where Byron (B), the Shelleys (S) and Keats (K) lived or stayed, with approximate years; Turin, the starting point of the trip in the Skills section, is also shown. Inset: western Greece and Missolonghi, where Byron died in 1824. Modern coastlines; the political borders of the time are not shown.

DA RICORDARE

1811–1824 at a glance. The **Regency** 1811–1820 (George IV king 1820–1830). **Luddites** 1811–1816 (frame-breaking a capital crime, 1812; Byron's speech, 27 February 1812). Waterloo, 18 June 1815; the Corn Law, 1815. **Peterloo**, Manchester, 16 August 1819; the **Six Acts**, December 1819. The Congress of Vienna (1814–15) and the Restoration; the **Carbonari**; revolutions in Naples (1820) and Piedmont (1821). The Greek War of Independence from 1821; Byron dies at Missolonghi, 19 April 1824.

13.2 Literature: Byron, Shelley and Keats

The poets of chapters 11 and 12 were born in the 1750s and 1770s; Byron, Shelley and Keats were born between 1788 and 1795 and all died before Wordsworth had reached the age of fifty-five. The label "second generation" is a teaching convenience, not a group they belonged to:

Byron admired Pope (chapter 5) more than Wordsworth, and he mocked the Lake Poets; Shelley and Keats knew each other but were never close; Keats and Byron never met. What they share is youth, rebellion against the authorities of their time, and a passion for the classical and Italian past.

13.2.1 George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824)

Byron inherited his title and an old, debt-ridden estate, Newstead Abbey, at the age of ten. He was born with a deformed foot, and his limp made him sensitive and proud all his life. After Harrow and Cambridge he travelled for two years (1809–1811) through Portugal, Spain, Albania, Greece and Turkey, and turned the journey into a long poem, ***Childe Harold's Pilgrimage***. (A *childe* was a young nobleman who had not yet become a knight.) When the first two cantos appeared in March 1812, they made him the most famous poet in Britain. Cantos III (1816) and IV (1818) followed him into exile, through the battlefield of Waterloo and Switzerland to Venice, Florence and Rome; in canto IV the pilgrim almost disappears and the poet speaks in his own voice. The poem is written in Spenserian stanzas (English 3): eight lines of iambic pentameter and a final alexandrine, rhyming *ababbcbcc*.

Harold, and the heroes of the "Oriental tales" that followed (*The Giaour*, 1813; *The Corsair*, 1814), created a new type: the **Byronic hero** (Italian *eroe byroniano*). He is proud, moody and isolated; he has a mysterious past and a secret guilt; he despises society and its rules, travels restlessly, and is both attractive and dangerous. Readers loved to identify the hero with the author, and Byron encouraged and resented it at the same time. The type went on to live in European fiction and opera — and you will meet its descendants next year, in Victorian novels.

In Italy Byron found a new voice: comic, conversational, ironic. He discovered it in the Italian **ottava rima** (Italian *ottava*), the eight-line stanza of Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto and Tasso, which rhymes *abababcc*: six lines in alternate rhyme build up a story or an argument, and the final couplet turns it upside down with a joke. He used it first in *Beppo* (1818), a Venetian tale, and then in his masterpiece, ***Don Juan*** (cantos I–II 1819; sixteen cantos written by 1824, unfinished at his death). Here the legendary seducer becomes an innocent young man pursued by women from Seville to a Greek island, Constantinople, the Russian court and an English country house, while the narrator digresses about everything. The opening shows the method — an anti-epic beginning, colloquial English and comic rhymes:

> I want a hero: an uncommon want,
> When every year and month sends forth a new one,
> Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
> The age discovers he is not the true one;
>
> Byron, *Don Juan* I.1, ll. 1–4 (1819)

Cloying the gazettes with cant means "filling the newspapers with hypocritical praise until readers are sick of it". Two lines later the stanza rhymes *new one* and *true one* with the hero's name,

which Byron pronounced in the English way, "Joo-un": the rhyme itself is a joke.

13.2.2 Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

Shelley, the eldest son of a rich Sussex landowner, was expelled from Oxford in 1811 for publishing a pamphlet called *The Necessity of Atheism*. He believed in the power of reason, love and poetry to free humanity from tyranny, and his life was a series of scandals: an early marriage, then an elopement in 1814 with Mary Godwin, the sixteen-year-old daughter of the philosopher William Godwin and of Mary Wollstonecraft (chapter 9). They married in 1816; as Mary Shelley she wrote *Frankenstein* (chapter 14). In Italy Shelley wrote his greatest works: the lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), the tragedy *The Cenci* (1819), set in sixteenth-century Rome, short lyrics such as "To a Skylark" (1820), and *Adonais* (1821), an elegy on the death of Keats.

"**Ode to the West Wind**", written in October 1819 in a wood beside the Arno near Florence, as Shelley explained in a note, asks the autumn wind to scatter his words among mankind like "Ashes and sparks" from a hearth and to carry a prophecy of political spring. Its form is a homage to Dante. Each of the five sections is made of four tercets and a final couplet in **terza rima** (Italian *terza rima* or *terzine incatenate*): three-line stanzas linked by a chain of rhymes, *aba bcb cdc ded*, in which the middle line of each tercet gives the rhyme of the next one. Figura 13.3 shows the chain in Dante and in Shelley. In English, which has fewer rhyming words than Italian, the chain is hard to keep, and Shelley sometimes uses a **half-rhyme** (Italian *rima imperfetta*), a pair of words whose sounds are close but not identical, such as *thou* and *low*.

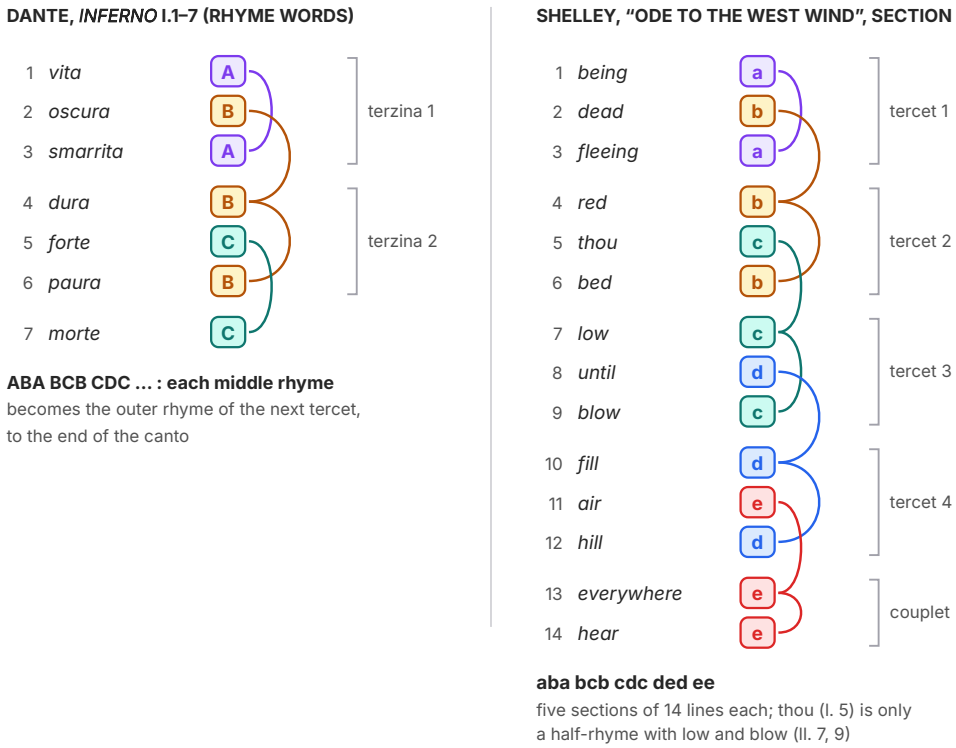

Figura 13.3 Terza rima. Left: the rhyme words of *Inferno* I.1–7, where each middle rhyme (B, then C) becomes the outer rhyme of the next tercet. Right: the rhyme words of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", section I (text of the 1820 edition as printed by T. Hutchinson, 1914): four tercets in the same chain and a closing couplet. Arcs join the lines that rhyme.

Shelley's political poems are just as direct. *The Mask of Anarchy* imagines the murderers of Peterloo as a procession of masked figures — Murder wears the face of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Castlereagh — and ends with an appeal to the workers of England to resist without violence:

> 'Rise like Lions after slumber
> In unvanquishable number,
> Shake your chains to earth like dew
> Which in sleep had fallen on you—
>
> Shelley, *The Mask of Anarchy*, ll. 151–154 (written 1819, published 1832)

In 1821 Shelley wrote *A Defence of Poetry*, an answer to an essay by his friend Thomas Love Peacock, who had argued, half seriously, that poetry was useless in an age of science. Shelley replied that poetry is the imagination at work, and that the imagination is the source of all moral and social progress. The essay ends with his most famous sentence: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World." It was published only in 1840.

13.2.3 John Keats (1795–1821)

Keats was the son of a London stable-keeper; his father died when he was eight and his mother, of tuberculosis, when he was fourteen. He trained as a surgeon and apothecary, studied at Guy's Hospital in London and qualified in 1816, then gave up medicine for poetry. His first books, *Poems* (1817) and the long mythological poem *Endymion* (1818), were attacked by the conservative reviews, which mocked Keats and his friend Leigh Hunt as the **Cockney School** — London poets of low birth who dared to write about Greek gods. In 1818 he nursed his younger brother Tom, who died of tuberculosis in December. In the following year, 1819, in about nine months, Keats wrote almost all the poems for which he is remembered: "The Eve of St Agnes", "La Belle Dame sans Merci", the narrative poem "Lamia" and the great **odes**. They were collected in *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (July 1820). By then he was coughing blood, and with his medical training he knew what it meant.

An **ode** (Italian *ode*) is a serious, elevated lyric poem, usually addressed to a person, an object or an abstract idea, and often written in long, complex stanzas; the word comes from the Greek for "song", and the models are the Greek poet Pindar and the Latin Horace. Keats wrote five odes in the spring of 1819 — "Ode to Psyche", "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode on Melancholy" and "Ode on Indolence" — and "To Autumn" in September. For most of them he invented a ten-line stanza that joins a Shakespearean quatrain to a Petrarchan sestet (Figura 13.4). Each ode meditates on the same contrast: the beauty of a moment — a bird's song, a work of art, a season — against the fact that human beings grow old and die.

Keats never wrote a treatise, but his letters to friends and family are full of ideas about poetry. In a letter to his brothers of December 1817 he described the quality that makes a great writer like Shakespeare: **negative capability** (Italian *capacità negativa*), "that is, when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason". The great poet, in other words, does not hurry to explain the world; he can live with mystery and let opposite feelings stand side by side. The idea has influenced readers and critics ever since.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *Keats morì per una recensione negativa.* ✓ Keats morì di **tubercolosi**, la malattia che aveva già ucciso sua madre e il fratello Tom. La leggenda nasce dagli amici (Shelley in *Adonais*) e da una battuta di Byron in *Don Juan* XI, secondo cui Keats fu «spento» da un articolo.

✗ *Byron morì combattendo per la Grecia.* ✓ Byron morì di **febbre** a Missolonghi, il 19 aprile 1824, senza aver mai partecipato a una battaglia.

✗ *Ode* = una poesia qualunque. ✓ L'*ode* è una lirica solenne, rivolta a una persona, a un oggetto o a un'idea, con strofe elaborate. E l'*ottava rima* (*abababcc*) non va confusa con la *terza rima* (*aba bcb…*).

IN SINTESI

Form	Lines and rhyme	Italian model	Used by
Spenserian stanza	9 lines: 8 pentameters + 1 alexandrine, *ababbcbcc*	— (Spenser, 1590)	Byron, *Childe Harold*
ottava rima	8 lines, *abababcc*; comic final couplet	Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto, Tasso	Byron, *Beppo*, *Don Juan*
terza rima	tercets *aba bcb cdc…*, closed by a single line or a couplet	Dante, *Commedia*	Shelley, "West Wind"; Byron, *The Prophecy of Dante*
ode stanza (Keats)	10 lines: quatrain *abab* + sestet on three rhymes	Petrarch's sestet	Keats, the odes of 1819
sonnet	14 lines; octave + sestet or three quatrains + couplet	Petrarch	Shelley, "Ozymandias"

13.3 Texts: a Ruined King, an Urn and the City of the Soul

The three texts are three meditations on the same question: what survives of human beings — their power, their love, their empires — when time has done its work? Shelley answers with a broken statue in the desert, Keats with a Greek vase in a museum, Byron with the ruins of Rome.

13.3.1 T1 · Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ozymandias"

Context. At Christmas 1817 Shelley and his friend Horace Smith agreed to write rival sonnets on the same subject: a colossal Egyptian statue described by the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus, whose inscription read, in Diodorus's version, that if anyone wanted to know how great the king was, he should surpass his works. Ozymandias is the Greek form of one of the names of the pharaoh Ramesses II (thirteenth century BC). Shelley's sonnet appeared in Leigh Hunt's weekly *The Examiner* on 11 January 1818, under the pen name "Glirastes".

Tabella 13.1 T1 — Shelley, "Ozymandias" (1818), complete. Text of *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. T. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1914), as given in Project Gutenberg eBook #4800; the dots in line 3 are Hutchinson's.

I met a traveller from an antique land	
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone	
Stand in the desert...Near them, on the sand,	
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,	
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,	5
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read	
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,	
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:	
And on the pedestal these words appear:	
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:	10
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'	
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay	
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare	
The lone and level sands stretch far away.	

Glosses. *antique*: ancient · *trunkless*: without a body (trunk) · *visage*: face · *sneer*: a proud, contemptuous smile · *read*: understood (past tense) · *stamped*: printed, carved · *mocked*: imitated in art, and also ridiculed · *fed*: nourished (the passions) · *pedestal*: the base of a statue · *beside*: besides, apart from it · *wreck*: ruin · *lone*: lonely, empty.

Analysis

Form. "Ozymandias" is a sonnet in iambic pentameter, but an unusual one. The volta comes at line 9, where the poem turns from the broken face to the words on the pedestal, as in a Petrarchan sonnet; the rhyme scheme, however, follows neither Petrarch nor Shakespeare: the poem rhymes *ababacdcedefef*. Rhymes run across the break between octave and sestet (*things / kings*), and some are only half-rhymes (*stone / frown*). The form itself looks slightly "ruined", like its subject.

Voices. The poem is a chain of reported voices, one inside the other: the poet ("I met") reports the traveller ("Who said"), who describes the sculptor's work, which shows the king's passions, and the king's own words carved on the pedestal. The most powerful voice, the king's, is the most distant from us, and it reaches us only through a stone, a sculptor and a stranger.

Language and irony. The king's command, "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!", was meant to say: "You will never equal what I have built." Now it says something else: "Look how everything you build will disappear." This is situational irony: the words have survived, but they mean the opposite of what the king intended. The last lines answer the inscription with emptiness, through alliteration ("**b**oundless and **b**are", "**l**one and **l**evel") and long open vowels. Notice also who survives: not the king, but the sculptor who "read" his passions and "mocked" them — art outlives power.

Themes. The poem is about time and tyranny. For a radical in Regency England, a sonnet about a proud king whose empire has become sand was not only about ancient Egypt.

1. How many different speakers or voices can you find in the poem? Who speaks the words in lines 10–11?
2. Which three details of the face show the king's character? Which adjectives describe it?
3. Explain the two meanings of "mocked" in line 8.
4. Why is the inscription ironic today? Rewrite its message in your own words, first as the king meant it, then as a reader in 1818 might understand it.
5. Which sounds dominate the last two lines? How do they help the meaning?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

A PEE paragraph on "Ozymandias". Question: *How does Shelley show that power does not last?*

- **Point.** Shelley shows the end of power through the contrast between the king's proud words and the empty landscape around them.
- **Evidence.** The inscription orders the powerful to "Look on my works … and despair!", but the next sentence answers: "Nothing beside remains."
- **Explanation.** The short, flat sentence after the exclamation works like a silence. The "works" the king boasted about have disappeared, so his command now has an ironic meaning: the mighty should despair because their own works will also turn to dust. The alliteration of "boundless and bare" and "lone and level" stretches the desert to the horizon, and the poem ends, appropriately, with "far away".

13.3.2 T2 · John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", stanzas 1 and 5

Context. Written in the spring of 1819 and published in the volume of 1820. The urn is imaginary: Keats combined scenes he had seen on Greek vases and sculptures, some in the British Museum. In stanza 1 the speaker looks at the figures painted round the urn and fills the poem with questions; in stanza 5, after imagining a love scene and a sacrifice (stanzas 2–4), he steps back and looks at the whole object.

Tabella 13.2 T2 — Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", ll. 1–10 and 41–50. Text of *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (1820) as reprinted in *Keats: Poems Published in 1820*, ed. M. Robertson (Oxford, 1909), Project Gutenberg eBook #23684; indentation as there.

1	
Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,	
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,	
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express	
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:	
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape	5
Of deities or mortals, or of both,	
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?	
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?	
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?	
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?	10
[…]	
5	
O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede	
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,	
With forest branches and the trodden weed;	
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought	
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!	45
When old age shall this generation waste,	
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe	
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,	
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all	
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.	50

Glosses. *still*: (1) motionless, (2) even now · *unravish'd*: untouched, not violated · *foster-child*: a child brought up by people who are not its parents · *Sylvan historian*: a historian of the woods, because the urn tells a country story · *leaf-fring'd*: with a border of leaves · *Tempe*: a valley in Thessaly · *Arcady*: Arcadia, the ideal land of shepherds · *loth*: unwilling · *timbrels*: tambourines ·

Attic: Greek (from Attica, the region of Athens) · *attitude*: pose · *brede*: embroidery, here a carved decoration · *overwrought*: decorated all over (today also "too agitated") · *tease us out of thought*: puzzle us until thinking stops · *Pastoral*: a scene of country life · *waste*: destroy.

Analysis

Form. Figura 13.4 shows Keats's ten-line stanza: a quatrain rhyming *abab*, then a sestet on three new rhymes (*cdedce* in both stanzas printed here), all in iambic pentameter. The ode is a long apostrophe: the speaker talks to the urn as if it were a person ("Thou … Thou … thy shape").

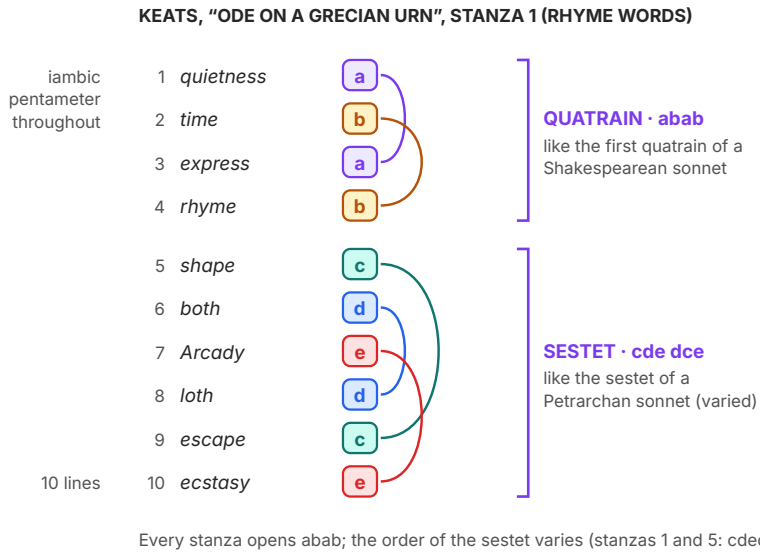

Figura 13.4 The ten-line stanza of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn": rhyme words of stanza 1 (1820 text). A Shakespearean-style quatrain (*abab*) is followed by a sestet on three rhymes, as in the second part of a Petrarchan sonnet. Arcs join the lines that rhyme.

Language. Stanza 1 opens with three metaphors for the urn — a bride, a foster-child, a historian — and closes with seven questions that the urn cannot answer. The poem is full of paradox: the urn is a "historian" who cannot speak, its music is "unheard", its pastoral world is "Cold". A poem that describes a work of visual art is an example of **ekphrasis** (Italian *ecfrasi*), a practice as old as Homer's description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*.

Themes. The figures on the urn are frozen at the most intense moment of their lives: the lovers will never kiss, but they will never grow old either. Art gives permanence and takes away life. In stanza 5 the speaker calls the urn "Cold Pastoral": its eternity is beautiful but also inhuman. Yet it is "a friend to man", because it will speak to future generations when ours has gone, and what it says is the most discussed sentence in English Romantic poetry.

1. Find the three metaphors in lines 1–3. What does each one suggest about the urn?

2. Line 1: explain the two meanings of “still”.
3. Why are there so many questions in lines 5–10? What is the speaker’s state of mind?
4. In line 45 the urn is “Cold Pastoral!”. Is the speaker praising it, criticising it, or both?
5. Who says the words in lines 49–50, in your opinion: the urn, the speaker, or both? Read the Approfondimento below before you answer.

APPROFONDIMENTO

Who speaks the last two lines? In the volume of 1820 the quotation marks enclose only five words: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”. On this reading the urn speaks the motto, and the poet then comments, either to the reader or to the figures on the urn: “that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.” But the copies of the poem made by Keats’s friends from his manuscript have no quotation marks at all, and some editors therefore give the whole two lines to the urn. The punctuation changes the meaning: is the final sentence wisdom for human beings, or the limited wisdom of a work of art, which knows nothing of pain and death? Critics have argued about it for two centuries — a good example of negative capability in the reader. The poet T. S. Eliot found the lines a serious blemish; other critics consider them the perfect, dramatic end of the ode. Whatever you decide, say which text you are quoting.

13.3.3 T3 · Lord Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* IV.78

Context. Canto IV (1818) brings the pilgrim to Rome. In the dedication to his friend John Cam Hobhouse, Byron admitted that in this canto the pilgrim is hardly separated from the author speaking in his own person. Stanza 78 is his first address to the city.

Tabella 13.3 T3 — Byron, *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, canto IV, stanza 78 (1818). Text of *The Works of Lord Byron*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, *Poetry*, vol. 2 (London, 1899), as transcribed on Wikisource.

Oh, Rome! my Country! City of the Soul!	
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,	
Lone Mother of dead Empires! and control	
In their shut breasts their petty misery.	
What are our woes and sufferance? Come and see	5
The cypress—hear the owl—and plod your way	
O’er steps of broken thrones and temples—Ye!	
Whose agonies are evils of a day—	
A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.	

Glosses. *orphans of the heart*: people who have lost those they love, emotional exiles · *control*: hold back · *shut breasts*: hearts closed to others · *petty*: small, unimportant · *sufferance*: suffering · *cypress*: the dark tree of cemeteries · *owl*: the bird of ruins and of night · *plod*: walk slowly and heavily · *O'er*: over · *Ye!*: you (plural), addressed to the readers · *clay*: the human body (from the Bible: we are made of earth).

Analysis

Form. A Spenserian stanza: *Soul / control* (*a*), *thee / misery / see / Ye* (*b*), *way / day / clay* (*c*). The final alexandrine, twelve syllables long, slows the stanza down and gives it the weight of a conclusion. Read the stanza aloud and you hear Byron's rhetoric: exclamations, apostrophe ("Oh, Rome!"), imperatives ("Come and see … hear … plod") and dashes that break the lines into gasps.

Language. Rome is personified as a mother — not of children but of "dead Empires" — and as the home ("my Country!") of every exile. The speaker turns to his readers and shrinks their troubles: their sorrows are "petty", their agonies are "evils of a day", compared with the ruins of thrones and temples beneath their feet. The last line holds the whole idea: the world of the ancient empires lies broken at our feet, and our bodies of "clay" are as fragile as it was.

Themes. The stanza shows the Byronic speaker at his most typical: lonely, proud of his suffering, and yet able to step outside himself and see it in the perspective of history. Exile becomes a kind of citizenship — the exile's true country is the city of ruins. Compare "Ozymandias": in both poems a ruin teaches the vanity of power, but Shelley's traveller is cool and distant, while Byron's speaker is passionately involved.

1. List all the names Byron gives to Rome in lines 1–3. What do they have in common?
2. Who are "the orphans of the heart"? Why should they "turn to" Rome?
3. Count the syllables of line 9. What is the name of this kind of line?
4. Find two imperatives and one apostrophe. What is their effect on the reader?
5. Compare the ruins in T1 and T3. Which speaker is more personally involved? Quote one phrase from each text.

13.4 Language: Destiny and Expectation in the Past

Biographies and history books often look at a moment in the past and then at what came *after* it. In English 3 (chapter 9) you learnt the future in the past: *was going to*, *would*, *was about to*. At B2 you need two more structures, very common in formal narrative and in everyday speech: *was / were to*, for what fate had in store, and *be supposed to*, for what was expected or arranged.

13.4.1 *Was / were to*: destiny in the past

Was / were to + infinitive describes an event that happened later than the moment we are talking about, often an important or unexpected one. The writer knows the end of the story; the

people in it did not. It is the structure of biographies: *In September 1820 Keats sailed for Italy. He was to die in Rome five months later.* The negative **was never to + infinitive** is especially common: *Byron left England in April 1816. He was never to see it again.*

Was / were to have + past participle refers to a plan or an arrangement that was *not* carried out: *In early 1824 Byron was to have led an attack on the Turkish fortress of Lepanto, but the expedition was abandoned* (Figura 13.5). The same structure is used for official plans: *The meeting was to have taken place on Monday, but it was postponed.* In the present, *be to* expresses formal arrangements and instructions — *The President is to visit Rome next week*; *You are to report to the office at nine* — and you will often see it in newspaper headlines, where *is* disappears: *PRIME MINISTER TO RESIGN*.

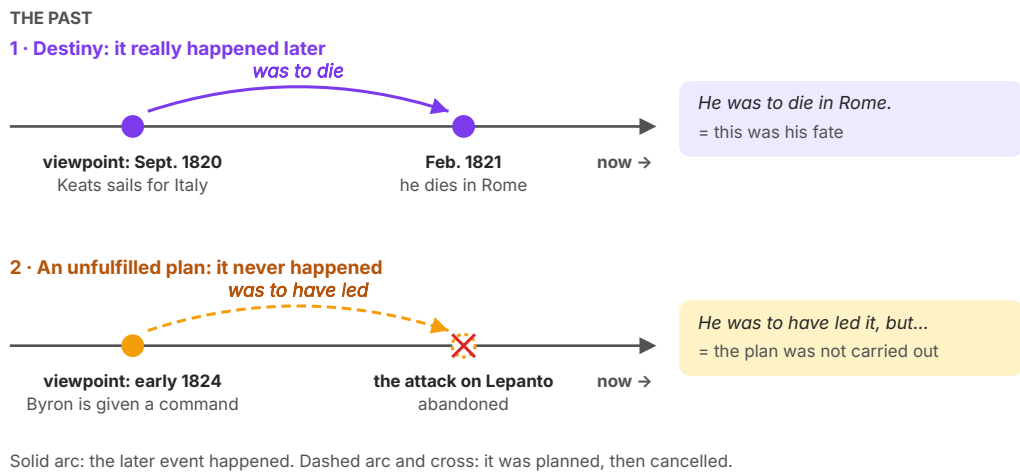

Figura 13.5 *Was to* and *was to have done*. The speaker looks back from a viewpoint in the past (left). Above: what really happened later (Keats was to die in Rome). Below: what was planned but did not happen (Byron was to have led an attack on Lepanto).

Tabella 13.4 Destiny and plans in the past: form and use

Form	Meaning	Example
was / were to + infinitive	destiny: it happened later	*Shelley was to drown off the Italian coast in 1822.*
was / were never to + infinitive	it never happened again	*Keats was never to see Fanny Brawne again.*
was / were to have + past participle	a plan that failed	*The poem was to have appeared in 1819, but Hunt did not dare to print it.*
am / is / are to + infinitive	formal arrangement, order	*All students are to bring their passports.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

***Was to* e il «futuro nel passato».** *Was / were to* + infinito indica che cosa sarebbe accaduto **dopo** un momento del passato: è il destino che il narratore conosce e i personaggi no. In italiano si traduce con il **condizionale passato** (*Keats was to die in Rome* = «Keats sarebbe morto a Roma») o con *era destinato a, doveva* («doveva morire a Roma»). *Was never to* = «non avrebbe mai più...». *Was to have done* = «avrebbe dovuto fare (ma non lo fece)»: *He was to have led the attack* = «Avrebbe dovuto guidare l'attacco». Al presente, *be to* indica un programma ufficiale o un ordine: *You are to stay here* = «Devi restare qui».

13.4.2 *Be supposed to, be meant to, be expected to*

Be supposed to + infinitive describes what is expected because of an arrangement, a rule or what people say. In the present: *We're supposed to be at the station at eight* (that is the arrangement); *You're not supposed to touch the paintings* (it is a rule); *This café is supposed to be the oldest in Rome* (people say so). In the past it very often suggests that the expected thing did *not* happen: *We were supposed to meet at noon, but the train was late*. With a perfect infinitive it criticises: *You were supposed to have finished the essay by now!*

Be meant to is close in meaning and slightly more informal: *The urn is meant to be looked at, not touched*; *I was meant to call her, but I forgot*. **Be expected to** is more formal and is used for duties and predictions: *Candidates are expected to link authors and subjects*; *The Greeks were expected to lose the war*. Compare the meanings and the structures you already know in the table below.

Tabella 13.5 The future seen from the past: English 3 and English 4 compared

Structure	Meaning	Example
was going to (English 3)	intention or prediction at that time	*Keats was going to spend the winter in Italy.*
would (English 3)	future in the past (reported, narrative)	*He hoped the climate would cure him.*
was about to (English 3)	very near future at that time	*The ship was about to leave when Severn arrived.*
was to	destiny: the writer knows it happened	*He was to die in Rome the following February.*
was to have done	official plan that did not happen	*Byron was to have led the attack.*
was supposed to	expectation or arrangement, often not fulfilled	*The group was supposed to leave at five.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

***Be supposed to*.** Non ha niente a che fare con «supporre»: significa «**dovere**» nel senso di ciò che è previsto da un accordo, da una regola o dalla voce comune. *We're supposed to meet at noon* = «Dovremmo vederci a mezzogiorno (così abbiamo deciso)»; *You're not supposed to smoke here* = «Qui non si dovrebbe fumare»; *It's supposed to be good* = «Dicono che sia buono». Al passato (*was / were supposed to*) corrisponde spesso a «avrei / avremmo dovuto» e suggerisce che la cosa non è successa: *I was supposed to call her* = «Avrei dovuto chiamarla». Nella pronuncia, la *d* di *supposed* non si sente: /səˈpəʊstə/.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *Keats would have died in Rome five months later.* ✓ *Keats* ***was to die*** *in Rome…* (oppure *would die*). *Would have died* è un condizionale ipotetico («sarebbe morto, se…»), non il futuro nel passato.

✗ *We supposed to meet at noon.* ✓ *We* ***were*** *supposed to meet at noon.* — senza il verbo *be* la frase non è grammaticale.

✗ *He was never to see England again* usato per un'intenzione («non voleva rivederla»). ✓ *Was never to* indica ciò che **accadde** davvero: non la rivide mai più. Per l'intenzione: *He had decided never to go back.*

✗ *The meeting was to have take place on Monday, but it was cancelled.* ✓ *…was to have* ***taken*** *place…* — dopo *to have* serve il participio passato. (Si dice anche *was to take place, but…*: è il *but* a dire che non accadde; l'infinito perfetto lo rende esplicito già nel verbo.)

13.5 Skills: the Oral Exam and the Personal Statement

13.5.1 Vocabulary: exile, rebellion and art

The lives and poems of this chapter share a vocabulary of exile and rebellion, and Keats's ode adds the words of art and time.

Tabella 13.6 Exile and rebellion, beauty and art

Word	Meaning	Example
exile (n., v.)	living far from your country, by force or by choice; to send someone away	*Byron chose exile in 1816.*
outcast (n.)	a person rejected by society	*The Byronic hero is a proud outcast.*
wanderer (n.)	someone who travels without a fixed home	*Harold is a restless wanderer.*
defy (v.)	refuse openly to obey	*Shelley defied his father and the law.*
uprising (n.)	a rebellion, a revolt	*the Greek uprising of 1821*
restless (adj.)	unable to stay still or calm	*The Shelleys led a restless life.*
legacy (n.)	what someone leaves to later generations	*Keats's legacy is a handful of perfect poems.*
urn (n.)	a tall vase; also a vase for a dead person's ashes	*a Greek urn painted with dancers*
marble (n.)	a hard white or coloured stone used in sculpture	*"marble men and maidens"*
timeless (adj.)	not changed or limited by time	*The urn's beauty is timeless.*

Idioms with *heart*, *mind* and *soul*

The Romantics talked a lot about the heart and the soul, and so does everyday English. Learn these idioms as fixed chunks: *learn something* ***by heart*** (memorise it: ✗ *learn by memory*); ***set your heart on*** *something* (want it very much); *a* ***heart-to-heart*** (a sincere, private conversation); ***change your mind*** (decide differently); ***bear / keep*** *something* ***in mind*** (remember it, consider it); ***have*** *something* ***on your mind*** (be worried about it); ***bare your soul*** (reveal your deepest feelings); ***not a soul*** (nobody at all — Keats writes in stanza 4 of the ode that "not a soul" will return to the empty town); ***soul-searching*** (long, serious reflection on your own motives).

13.5.2 Reading: a trip diary

Before you read. In the spring the Bristol students of the Link Reading Club travelled to Italy with Mrs Hill and met the Turin class. Sam kept a diary for the club blog. Read it and decide which place moved him most, and why.

Reading Sam Taylor, “Italy diary” (Link Reading Club blog)

Day 1 — Turin. Giulia and Marta were waiting for us at the airport with a banner that said “WELCOME, BRISTOL!” in enormous letters, which was very kind and slightly embarrassing. After a morning at their school — we were supposed to give a short presentation on *Frankenstein*, and Callum had learnt his part by heart, then forgot all of it — Prof.ssa Rossi took us to the Egyptian Museum, which was founded in 1824 and is one of the great collections of the world. In one of the galleries there is a seated statue of Ramesses II, in dark granite. Callum stood in front of it for ages. “So this is Ozymandias,” he said at last. “He looks calmer than in the poem.” Nobody sneered.

Day 3 — Rome. The Keats-Shelley House is at the bottom of the Spanish Steps, in the middle of the noisiest square I have ever seen. Inside, everything goes quiet. The guide showed us the small room where Keats spent his last weeks, looking down at the steps and listening to the fountain. When he died, she told us, the health authorities had his furniture burnt, because tuberculosis was thought to be contagious. Mrs Hill read us part of the last letter he ever wrote, and for once not a soul in our group said anything.

In the afternoon we walked to the Non-Catholic Cemetery, next to the white pyramid of Cestius. Keats’s grave is in the old part, in the grass, and his stone does not even have his name on it: only a lyre with broken strings, a bitter inscription added by his friends, and the words he asked for, “Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water”. Giulia noticed that the date of death on the stone is wrong by one day. Marta pointed out the irony: the poet who asked for a stone without a name now has one of the most visited graves in Rome. Shelley is in the newer part, near the wall. His ashes were brought here after his drowning, and the stone says *Cor Cordium*, “heart of hearts”. We were supposed to leave at five, but nobody wanted to go.

Day 5 — Lerici and San Terenzo. Our last stop was the Gulf of La Spezia. The tourist signs call it the “Golfo dei Poeti”, but Prof.ssa Rossi warned us that the poets never used that name: it came much later. In San Terenzo we looked at Casa Magni from the beach, a white house right on the water, where the Shelleys spent the spring of 1822. At the start of July Shelley sailed to Livorno to meet Leigh Hunt, and he was never to come back: on the return journey his boat went down in a storm. Callum sat on the sea wall and drew the bay while the rest of us argued about whether the Romantics were brave rebels or spoilt rich boys. (Marta: rebels. Elena: spoilt. Me: both.)

What I’ll keep. I set my heart on reading English at university two years ago, but I had never really felt why until this week. Before the trip, these poets were names in an anthology. Now they are a room above a staircase, a stone without a name and a house by the sea. Bear that in mind, future Year 13s: go and see the places. And learn at least one poem by heart before you do.

After reading. a Which three places did the group visit? b Why did the health authorities burn Keats’s furniture? c What two details of Keats’s grave surprised the students? d Find one example of *was supposed to* and one of *was never to*, and explain their meaning. e Which place moved Sam most? Justify your answer with a quotation from the text. f **Research (TIC).** On the website of the Keats-Shelley House or of the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome, find one fact about Keats’s or Shelley’s grave that is not in the diary. Check it on a second reliable source and say where you found it.

13.5.3 Speaking: a mock oral *colloquio*

At the end of the liceo, the *colloquio* of the Esame di Stato begins from a prompt chosen by the examiners — a text, an image, a document, a problem — and asks you to build connections between subjects. In English you will need to **introduce** a topic, **link** authors, periods and themes, **support** your points with evidence, and **handle** questions you did not expect. Practise now, in a calm, organised register: neither a recited essay nor a chat.

Tabella 13.7 Useful language — discussing a literary topic with an examiner

Function	Useful language
Introducing the topic	*I'd like to start from… · The prompt made me think of… · What strikes me first is…*
Placing it in context	*This poem was written in…, at a time when… · It belongs to the second generation of…*
Linking and comparing	*This connects with… · A similar idea can be found in… · Unlike Shelley, Byron… · Whereas…, …*
Giving evidence	*For example, in line 11… · As the text says, "…" · This is shown by…*
Opening to other subjects	*From a historical point of view… · In science, a similar question is… · This also reminds me of…*
Buying time, asking for clarification	*That's an interesting question — let me think. · Do you mean…? · Could you rephrase that, please?*
Concluding	*To sum up… · What I find most relevant today is…*

1. **Task 1 (pairs, 4 minutes).** Student A is the examiner and shows a photograph of a ruined classical statue. Student B starts from the image, talks about "Ozymandias" and CHP IV.78, and links them to one other subject (history, art or Latin). The examiner asks two follow-up questions.
2. **Task 2 (groups of three, 6 minutes).** Prompt: "Art outlives its maker." Each student links the prompt to a different author of this book (Keats, Shakespeare in English 3, or Wordsworth) and the group decides which link is the strongest.

13.5.4 Writing: a personal statement

A **personal statement** (Italian *lettera motivazionale*) is a short text in which you present yourself to a university, a school or a programme and explain why you want to study a subject and why you are a good candidate. Universities in the United Kingdom ask for one in every application, organised in recent years around three questions: why you want to study the subject, how your studies have prepared you, and what else you have done outside school. Italian students write

similar texts for exchange programmes, summer schools and universities abroad. Read Sam's model.

Tabella 13.8 Model text — a personal statement (Sam Taylor, application to read English; 230 words without the bold labels)

Why English? I first understood what literature can do when I read "Ozymandias" in Year 11: fourteen lines that turn a king's boast into its opposite. Since then I have been fascinated by how writers make words mean more than one thing at once, and I want to spend three years studying exactly that.
How my studies have prepared me. My A levels in English Literature, History and Biology have taught me to read closely, to place texts in their context and to use evidence. In History I wrote an extended project on the Peterloo Massacre, comparing newspaper reports with Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy*; it showed me how much a poem can tell us about the politics of its time. Biology has trained me to observe carefully and to accept uncertainty, a quality that Keats called negative capability.
Beyond the classroom. For two years I have co-organised the Link Reading Club, an online club shared with a liceo in Turin. We read the same novels, write a shared blog and, this spring, travelled together to Rome and Lerici in the footsteps of Keats and Shelley. Writing for readers whose first language is not English has made my own style clearer and more precise. I also volunteer at a primary school reading scheme on Saturday mornings.
I am curious, organised and ready to be challenged. I would welcome the chance to study literature in depth and, one day, to teach it.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

How the model works.

- **A specific opening.** No "I have always loved reading": Sam starts from a precise moment and a precise text.
- **Three clear parts**, following the three questions: why the subject, how studies prepared him, what else he has done.
- **Evidence, not adjectives.** Every quality is proved by an activity: the extended project, the club, the volunteering. The adjectives come only at the end, when the reader already believes them.
- **Links between subjects** (History and Shelley, Biology and Keats): exactly what an examiner — or an admissions tutor — wants to see.
- **Register.** Formal but personal: first person, full forms, no slang, no exaggeration ("I would welcome the chance", not "It would be my dream come true!!").

Checklist. ✓ a specific, personal opening · ✓ a clear reason for choosing the subject · ✓ two or three activities that prove your skills · ✓ what each activity taught you · ✓ links between subjects · ✓ a short, confident conclusion · ✓ formal register, no contractions · ✓ 220–260 words.

Task. Write a personal statement (220–260 words) for one of these: a an application to a one-month summer school in English literature at a British university; b a place on a European ex-

change programme in a scientific subject you would like to study (physics, biology, engineering…). Use at least one structure from this chapter (*was to*, *was supposed to*) and one idiom with *heart*, *mind* or *soul*.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Build your own study path (*percorso*) for the oral exam. Choose **one author** you really like (for example Keats), **one theme** his work illustrates well (art and time), and **three links to other subjects**: Italian (Foscolo's *Dei Sepolcri*: poetry as memory beyond death), science (Keats's medical training and the history of tuberculosis), history of art (Greek vases and the British Museum). Write the path on one page: a short text quotation, two key dates, three key words for each link. Then practise moving from any prompt to your path in three sentences. The same method works in Italian and Latin: a theme like "time and memory" connects Horace's *Exegi monumentum*, Foscolo and Keats.

13.6 Connections: the English Romantics' Italy

13.6.1 Terza rima, from Dante to Shelley

Shelley read Dante in Italian, and he borrowed from the *Commedia* the form of "Ode to the West Wind". Here are the first lines of the poem, in which every reader of Italian hears the beginning of the chain:

> Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
> mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
> ché la diritta via era smarrita.
>
> Dante, *Inferno* I.1–3 (text of the Petrocchi edition)

In the middle of the journey of our life / I found myself in a dark wood, / for the straight way was lost (translation by the editors). *Vita* and *smarrita* rhyme; *oscura*, the middle rhyme, returns in the next tercet (*dura*, *paura*), and so on to the end of each canto. Dante's chain carries a narrative forward for a hundred cantos; Shelley compresses it into five sonnet-like sections, each closed by a couplet. Byron also tried terza rima in *The Prophecy of Dante* (1821), written in Ravenna, where Dante is buried; and Keats, who did not read Italian well, carried a pocket edition of Dante in Henry Cary's English translation on his walking tour of 1818.

13.6.2 Ottava rima, from Pulci and Ariosto to Byron

Byron's comic ottava rima comes from the Italian Renaissance: from Luigi Pulci's *Morgante* (fifteenth century), a mock-heroic poem full of giants and jokes, which Byron translated (canto I, published 1823), and from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, which you met in chapter 7. What Byron

took from them is the tone: the narrator who interrupts the story, the sudden change from the serious to the absurd, the punch line in the final couplet. Italian readers will also recognise in Byron the irony of their own narrators: when Byron digresses about his hero, he is doing what Ariosto does when he opens a canto with a moral reflection or breaks off a story at its most exciting moment.

13.6.3 Ugo Foscolo in London

The traffic also went the other way. In 1816, the year Byron left England, the poet Ugo Foscolo (1778–1827), who refused to swear loyalty to the Austrians in Milan, arrived in England as an exile. He spent the last eleven years of his life in London, admired in society and always in debt; he wrote essays on Dante and Petrarch for English readers and contributed to the great British reviews. He died at Turnham Green, near London, on 10 September 1827, and was buried in Chiswick; in 1871 his remains were taken to Santa Croce in Florence, the church he had celebrated in *Dei Sepolcri* as the home of Italy's great dead. His novel *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* (1802), the letters of a young exile in despair, is often compared with the Byronic hero: two romantic outcasts, both in love and both in revolt, written in two languages within a few years of each other.

13.6.4 A strongman from Padua and the head of a king

Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823) was born in Padua and worked as a strongman in London theatres before he went to Egypt in 1815, hoping to sell a water-raising machine to the ruler of the country. The British consul hired him instead to move a colossal granite head and torso of Ramesses II from the Ramesseum, the king's temple at Thebes, to the Nile, and from there it travelled to London. It is now in the British Museum, where it is known as the "Younger Memnon". News of Belzoni's feat may have reached London while Shelley and Smith were writing their sonnets, but the head itself arrived in England only after "Ozymandias" was published; Shelley's direct source was Diodorus Siculus. It is a likely context for the poem, not its proven inspiration.

COLLEGAMENTI

Archaeology and physics: moving a colossus. The Younger Memnon is about 2.7 metres high and weighs about 7.25 tonnes. Belzoni had no cranes and no engines. His team raised the block with long wooden **levers**, slid it onto a wooden platform and pulled it with ropes over **rollers**, moving the rollers from the back to the front as it advanced; it took them more than two weeks to cover a few kilometres to the river. The physics is the same as in ancient Egypt: a lever multiplies the force of the workers (the force × its distance from the fulcrum must equal the load × its distance), and rollers replace sliding friction, which is large, with rolling resistance, which is much smaller. Egyptian tomb paintings show colossal statues dragged on wooden sledges by teams of men, with a worker pouring liquid in front of the sledge, probably to wet the ground and reduce friction.

Egyptology. In 1822, a year before Belzoni died on an expedition in West Africa, the French scholar Jean-François Champollion announced that he had deciphered Egyptian hieroglyphs with the help of the Rosetta Stone. For the first time, the inscriptions on statues like Ozymandias's could be read in the original — and Turin's Egyptian Museum, founded in 1824, soon became one of the centres of the new science.

COLLEGAMENTI

Medicine: Keats and tuberculosis. Keats studied medicine at Guy's Hospital, and he read his own illness with a doctor's eye: according to his friend Charles Brown, when he coughed blood in February 1820 he recognised it at once as "arterial blood" and a sign of death. Tuberculosis (then called *consumption*) killed his mother, his brother Tom and Keats himself. Its cause, a bacterium, was identified only in 1882 by the German doctor Robert Koch, and an effective cure arrived only with antibiotics in the mid-twentieth century. Keats's own treatment in Rome — bleeding and an almost starvation diet — probably made him weaker. Discuss with your science teacher: why was tuberculosis so common in crowded nineteenth-century cities?

- **Discuss.** Byron and Shelley chose Italy; Foscolo was forced to leave it. Is there a difference between the exile of a rich English lord and that of an Italian patriot? Which modern exiles or migrants could you compare them with?
- **Compare.** Read Foscolo's sonnet "A Zacinto" in Italian. Like Byron in CHP IV.78, Foscolo speaks of a homeland he cannot reach. Write five sentences in English comparing the two speakers.

SINTESI

- The **Regency** (1811–1820): George III was unable to rule and his son governed as Prince Regent; he reigned as George IV from 1820 to 1830.
- After Waterloo (18 June 1815) Britain faced unemployment, high bread prices (the Corn Law of 1815) and machine-breaking by the **Luddites** (1811–1816); Byron spoke against the death penalty for frame-breaking in 1812.
- At **Peterloo** (Manchester, 16 August 1819) cavalry charged a peaceful reform meeting; the government answered with the **Six Acts**. Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy* (1819) was published only in 1832.
- After the Congress of Vienna the old dynasties returned; the **Carbonari** led failed revolutions in Naples (1820) and Piedmont (1821); the Greeks rose in 1821 and Byron died at Missolonghi on 19 April 1824.
- Byron lived in Italy from 1816 to 1823, the Shelleys from 1818 (Shelley drowned on 8 July 1822), Keats from late 1820 to his death in Rome (23 February 1821).
- **Byron**: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–1818, Spenserian stanzas), the **Byronic hero**, *Don Juan* (1819–1824) in comic **ottava rima**.
- **Shelley**: radical and atheist; "Ozymandias" (1818), "Ode to the West Wind" (1819) in **terza rima**, *Prometheus Unbound*, *A Defence of Poetry* ("Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World").
- **Keats**: trained in medicine; the **odes** of 1819 in a ten-line stanza; **negative capability** (letter of December 1817); he died of tuberculosis, not of a bad review.
- T1 "Ozymandias": a chain of voices and an ironic inscription; art outlives power. T2 "Ode on a Grecian Urn": ekphrasis, paradox and the debated final lines. T3 CHP IV.78: Rome as the home of exiles; a Spenserian stanza closed by an alexandrine.
- *Was / were to* + infinitive = destiny (it happened later); *was never to*; *was to have done* = a plan that failed; *be to* = formal arrangement.
- *Be supposed to* = arrangement, rule or reputation; in the past, often not fulfilled; *be meant to* (less formal), *be expected to* (more formal).
- Terza rima from Dante, ottava rima from Pulci and Ariosto; Foscolo, exiled in London, and Belzoni, who moved the "Younger Memnon".

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● How did Byron die?
   - **A.** in battle against the Turks at Lepanto
   - **B.** of a fever at Missolonghi
   - **C.** in a shipwreck near Lerici
   - **D.** of tuberculosis in Rome

2. ● The name "Peterloo" was…
   - **A.** the name of the field where the meeting took place
   - **B.** the name of the cavalry officer who gave the order
   - **C.** a newspaper's ironic blend of "St Peter's Field" and "Waterloo"
   - **D.** the title of a poem by Shelley

3. ● Which of these poems is written in ottava rima?
   - **A.** "Ode to the West Wind"
   - **B.** *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*
   - **C.** "Ozymandias"
   - **D.** *Don Juan*

4. ● True or false? Correct the false statements. a The Regency began when George III died. b The Luddites destroyed machines that were taking their jobs. c Keats was trained as a surgeon and apothecary. d Shelley's *Mask of Anarchy* was published immediately after Peterloo. e Byron never returned to England after 1816. f Keats and Byron were close friends in Rome.

5. ● Match each work with its author and its date. Works: *Childe Harold* I–II · "Ozymandias" · *Don Juan* I–II · "Ode on a Grecian Urn" · *Adonais* · *A Defence of Poetry*. Authors: Byron · Keats · Shelley. Dates: written 1819 · published 1812 · published 1818 · published 1819 · published 1821 · written 1821.

6. ●● Explain each term in one or two sentences and give an example from this chapter: a Byronic hero · b terza rima · c negative capability · d ode.

7. ●● Short answer (50–70 words). Why did Byron, Shelley and Keats go to Italy, and what did Italy give to their poetry? Give at least two different reasons.

Text Analysis

8. ● In T1, whose words are carved on the pedestal?
   - **A.** the traveller's
   - **B.** the sculptor's
   - **C.** the king's
   - **D.** the poet's

9. ● T1. Answer briefly. a Where is the statue? b What is left of it? c What does the face express? d What surrounds the ruin?

10. ●● T1. Write out the rhyme scheme of "Ozymandias". Where is the volta? Find one half-rhyme and say why the form is unusual for a sonnet.

11. ●● T2. Paraphrase in modern, simple English: a "Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness" b "Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought / As doth eternity" c "When old age shall this generation waste, / Thou shalt remain".

12. ●● T3. Mark the stresses of line 1 in CAPITALS and count the syllables of line 9. What are these two kinds of line called?

13. ●● T2 and T1. Both poems describe a work of art that has survived its maker. Compare them in about 80 words: what has survived, what has been lost, and how does each speaker feel about it?

14. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (100–120 words) on T3: *How does Byron make the reader's personal suffering seem small?*

Language

15. ● Keats left England in September 1820. He ___ die in Rome five months later.
   - **A.** would have
   - **B.** was to
   - **C.** was supposed to
   - **D.** was about to

16. ● We ___ meet the Turin group at noon, but our flight was late.
   - **A.** were supposed to
   - **B.** were to have met
   - **C.** would
   - **D.** were about

17. ● The ceremony ___ place in May, but it was cancelled because of the rain.

A. is to take

B. will take

C. has taken

D. was to have taken

18. ● Complete with *was / were (never) to* + the verb in brackets. a In 1816 Byron left England; he ___ (return). b Shelley sailed from Livorno in July 1822; he ___ (drown) on the way home. c In 1814 Mary Godwin eloped with Shelley; she ___ (write) *Frankenstein* four years later. d The Greek rising began in 1821; it ___ (last) almost ten years. e Keats said goodbye to Fanny Brawne in September 1820; he ___ (see) her again.

19. ●● Rewrite each sentence with *was / were to have* + past participle. a The plan was that Byron would lead the attack on Lepanto, but it was abandoned. b The arrangement was that Leigh Hunt would publish the poem in 1819, but he did not. c It was planned that the exhibition would open in March, but it opened in May. d The students were going to present their project on Monday, but the school was closed.

20. ●● Write a sentence with *be supposed to* for each situation. a The rule says no photographs in the museum. b People say this restaurant is the best in Trastevere. c You agreed to send me the notes yesterday; you didn't. d The train should leave at 9.15 according to the timetable. e The guide expected us to wait at the entrance, but we went in.

21. ●● Error correction. Find and correct the mistake in each sentence. a ✗ We supposed to be there at eight. b ✗ Byron would have died at Missolonghi in April 1824. c ✗ Keats was never to seeing England again. d ✗ The conference was to have take place yesterday, but it was postponed. e ✗ You are not suppose to run in the corridors.

22. ●● Choose the best form: *was going to*, *would*, *was about to*, *was to*, *was supposed to*. a When Severn arrived, the ship ___ leave: there was no time to say goodbye. b In 1821 Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt, hoping that his friend ___ come to Italy soon. c The young poet who published *Poems* in 1817 ___ become one of the greatest names in English poetry. d I ___ revise last night, but my cousins arrived. e Keats ___ spend the winter in Italy; it was his doctors' advice.

23. ●● Translate into English. a Keats lasciò l'Inghilterra nel 1820: non l'avrebbe mai più rivista. b Avremmo dovuto incontrarci alla stazione, ma il treno era in ritardo. c Il poema avrebbe dovuto essere pubblicato nel 1819, ma l'editore ebbe paura.

24. ●●● Sentence building. Use the notes to write a short biographical paragraph (50–70 words) with at least one *was to*, one *was never to* and one *was to have*: *Belzoni — born Padua 1778 — London: strongman — Egypt 1815 — hoped to sell a machine to the ruler, plan failed — moved the head of Ramesses II, 1816 — 1823: set out for Timbuktu — died in West Africa (Benin) on the way, never got there — the head in London: did he see it?*. Leave out any fact you cannot be sure of.

Vocabulary

25. ● Complete with the words in the box in the correct form: *defy · exile · legacy · marble · outcast · restless · timeless · uprising · urn · wanderer*. a Keats's ___ is a small number of perfect poems. b The Greek ___ against the Ottomans began in 1821. c Shelley ___ his father and the university. d From 1816 until his death Byron lived in ___ in Italy and Greece. e The Grecian ___ is decorated with figures of men and women. f The statue was carved in white ___. g After the scandal Byron felt like an ___ in English society. h The Shelleys were ___ and never stayed long in one place. i Harold is a lonely ___ across Europe. j Great art can seem ___.

26. ●● Complete the idioms with *heart*, *mind* or *soul*. a She learnt the whole ode by ___. b He had set his ___ on studying in London. c I was going to stay in, but I changed my ___. d The streets were empty: there wasn't a ___ outside. e We had a long heart-to-___ about the future. f Bear in ___ that the museum closes at six. g In his letters Keats bares his ___ to his friends. h You look worried — have you got something on your ___?

27. ●● Collocations. Match the verbs with the nouns and use three of the pairs in sentences about this chapter: *lead · leave · defy · go into · break · learn + exile · an uprising · a legacy · a poem by heart · the law · a promise*.

Writing and Speaking

28. ●● Write a personal statement (220–260 words) for a summer school or an exchange programme of your choice, following the model and the checklist in the Skills section. Include one structure from the Language section.

29. ●● Mock *colloquio* (3 minutes). The examiner shows you this prompt: "Ruins". Start from "Ozymandias" or CHP IV.78, place the text in its period, and make at least two links with other subjects.

Towards B2

30. ●● Multiple-choice cloze. Choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) for each gap.
When Keats sailed for Italy in 1820, his friends hoped the warm climate (1) ___ cure him. The voyage was slow, and the ship was (2) ___ in quarantine in Naples for ten days. In Rome, his doctor put him (3) ___ a strict diet. Keats knew he was dying; he asked for his name to be (4) ___ off his gravestone. He (5) ___ to become one of the most loved poets in the language.
1 A will · B would · C should · D might have
2 A kept · B stayed · C waited · D remained
3 A in · B at · C on · D under
4 A taken · B left · C put · D gone
5 A was · B had · C would · D did

31. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap.
Byron's first speech in the House of Lords was (1) ___ defence of the Nottinghamshire weavers. He was (2) ___ leave England four years later, and he never came back. In Italy he wrote *Don Juan*, (3) ___ comic poem in ottava rima, and by the time he left (4) ___ Greece in 1823 he had written sixteen cantos. He was supposed (5) ___ lead an attack on Lepanto, but he fell ill and died in April 1824.

32. ●● Word formation. Use the word in capitals to form a word that fits the gap. a The Romantics admired the ___ of the Greeks. (FREE) b Peterloo caused great public ___. (ANGRY) c Keats's odes were not ___ received in his lifetime. (WIDE) d Shelley believed in the ___ power of poetry. (REVOLUTION) e The urn's figures are frozen in a moment of ___. (INTENSE) f The Six Acts limited the ___ of the press. (INDEPENDENT)

33. ●●● Key-word transformations. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals. Use 2–5 words, including the word given. a The plan was that Byron would lead the attack, but it did not happen. HAVE — Byron ___ the attack, but it did not happen. b According to the rules, visitors must not touch the urn. SUPPOSED — Visitors ___ the urn. c Shelley left Livorno in July 1822, and he never reached home. WAS — Shelley left Livorno in July 1822; he ___ home. d People say the house is haunted. SUPPOSED — The house ___ haunted. e I had planned to call you, but I forgot. MEANT — I ___ you, but I forgot.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [BUT] M. Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*: the chapters on the second generation and on the culture of Byron and Shelley in exile.
- [WU] D. Wu (ed.), *Romanticism: An Anthology*: the selections from Byron, Shelley and Keats, with the texts of "Ozymandias", the odes and *A Defence of Poetry*.
- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. D: the introduction to the Romantic period and the selections from Keats's letters.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on the Romantic poets.
- [MOR] K. O. Morgan (ed.), *The Oxford History of Britain*: the chapter on the age of revolution (Luddites, Peterloo, the Regency).
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "ode", "terza rima", "ottava rima" and "negative capability".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on *be + infinitive* and on *supposed to*.
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on the future seen from the past and on *be to*.

Glossario del capitolo

Byronic hero
eroe byroniano — a proud, moody, isolated hero with a mysterious past and a secret guilt, who rejects society; from Byron's heroes.

Carbonari
Carbonari — Italian secret societies of the Restoration that worked for constitutional government and national independence.

Cockney School
"scuola cockney" — a hostile label given by conservative reviews to Leigh Hunt, Keats and their London friends.

Ekphrasis
ecfrasi — a literary description of a work of visual art, such as Keats's urn.

Half-rhyme
rima imperfetta — a rhyme in which the sounds are similar but not identical (*stone / frown*).

Luddites
luddisti — workers who smashed textile machines in 1811–1816; today, people who distrust new technology.

Negative capability
capacità negativa — Keats's phrase for the ability to live with uncertainty and mystery without forcing an explanation.

Ode
ode — a serious, elevated lyric poem addressed to a person, object or idea, often in complex stanzas.

Ottava rima
ottava (rima) — an eight-line stanza rhyming *abababcc*, used by Ariosto and Tasso and, comically, by Byron.

Personal statement
lettera motivazionale — a short text in which an applicant explains why they want to study a subject and why they are suitable.

Peterloo Massacre
massacro di Peterloo — the cavalry attack on a peaceful reform meeting in Manchester, 16 August 1819.

Philhellene
filelleno — a lover of Greece; especially a supporter of the Greek War of Independence (from 1821).

Prince Regent
principe reggente — a prince who rules in place of a monarch unable to reign; George, Prince of Wales, 1811–1820.

Regency
Reggenza — the period 1811–1820, when the Prince of Wales governed for George III; often extended to 1830.

Terza rima
terza rima, terzine incatenate — tercets linked by rhyme, *aba bcb cdc…*; Dante's form, used by Shelley.

Was to
condizionale passato, "era destinato a" — *was / were to* + infinitive: an event that happened later than a past moment.

Soluzioni

1. B (fever at Missolonghi, 19 April 1824; the attack on Lepanto never took place).

2. C (coined by the *Manchester Observer*).

3. D (*abababcc*; "West Wind" is in terza rima, *Childe Harold* in Spenserian stanzas, "Ozymandias" is a sonnet).

4. a F — it began in 1811, when George III was judged unable to rule; he died in 1820. b T. c T. d F — written in 1819, it was published only in 1832, because Leigh Hunt feared prosecution. e T. f F — Keats and Byron never met; Byron was not in Rome in 1820–21.

5. *Childe Harold* I–II — Byron — published 1812 · "Ozymandias" — Shelley — published 1818 · *Don Juan* I–II — Byron — published 1819 · "Ode on a Grecian Urn" — Keats — written 1819 · *Adonais* — Shelley — published 1821 · *A Defence of Poetry* — Shelley — written 1821 (published 1840).

6. a A proud, moody, isolated hero with a mysterious past and a secret guilt, who rejects society: Harold, the Corsair. b An Italian form of tercets linked by rhyme, *aba bcb cdc…*: Dante's *Commedia*, Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind". c Keats's phrase (letter of December 1817) for the ability to live with "uncertainties, mysteries, doubts" without forcing an explanation: Shakespeare had it. d A serious, elevated lyric addressed to a person, object or idea, in complex stanzas: "Ode on a Grecian Urn".

7. *Traccia:* Italy was cheaper and warmer (Keats hoped the climate would cure his tuberculosis); Byron and Shelley also escaped scandal and English society. Italy offered ruins and art (Rome in CHP IV, Shelley's Florence), Italian poetry and forms (Dante's terza rima, Pulci's and Ariosto's ottava rima) and political causes they sympathised with (the Carbonari, then Greece).

8. C (the king's, reported by the traveller).

9. a In the desert ("an antique land", Egypt). b Two legs standing and, half buried in the sand nearby, the broken face. c Pride and cruelty: a frown, a "wrinkled lip" and a "sneer of cold command". d Endless, empty, level sand.

10. *abababcdcdedefef* (land, stone, sand, frown, command / read, things, fed / appear, kings, despair, decay, bare, away). The volta is at line 9 ("And on the pedestal…"). Half-rhyme: *stone / frown*. The scheme follows neither the Petrarchan nor the Shakespearean model and rhymes run across octave and sestet (*things / kings*).

11. a You are still untouched and pure, like a bride who has not yet been made a wife, married to silence (and you are "still" = motionless). b You puzzle us so much that we stop thinking, as eternity does. c When our generation has grown old and died, you will still exist.

12. Line 1: oh, ROME! my COUNtry! CIty OF the SOUL! (iambic pentameter, ten syllables; the stress on "of" is light). Line 9: A / world / is / at / our / feet / as / fra / gile / as / our / clay = 12 syllables: an alexandrine. The first is iambic pentameter (accept small variations in the stresses).

13. *Traccia:* In T1 the statue survives only in pieces, but the sculptor's art still shows the king's passions; the king's power has disappeared. In T2 the urn survives whole and its figures are eternally young, but they cannot live, love or speak. Shelley's traveller is detached and ironic; Keats's speaker is fascinated, questioning, and in the end ambivalent ("Cold Pastoral!"). Both suggest that art outlasts human life and power.

14. *Model:* Byron makes personal suffering seem small by setting it against the ruins of history. After addressing Rome as "Lone Mother of dead Empires!", he tells his readers to "Come and see" and to "plod" over "steps of broken thrones and temples".

Their troubles are “petty misery” and “evils of a day”, while the city has seen whole empires die. The contrast is completed in the alexandrine, “A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay”: the long, slow line reminds us that we, too, are made of fragile earth.

15. B.

16. A (an everyday arrangement that did not happen; B would give **were to have met meet*, C and D do not fit the gap).

17. D (a plan that was not carried out; A, B and C are present or future forms that do not fit a past plan).

18. a was never to return · b was to drown · c was to write · d was to last · e was never to see.

19. a Byron was to have led the attack on Lepanto, but it was abandoned. b Leigh Hunt was to have published the poem in 1819, but he did not. c The exhibition was to have opened in March, but it opened in May. d The students were to have presented their project on Monday, but the school was closed.

20. Model answers: a You aren’t supposed to take photographs in the museum. b This restaurant is supposed to be the best in Trastevere. c You were supposed to send me the notes yesterday! d The train is supposed to leave at 9.15. e We were supposed to wait at the entrance, but we went in.

21. a We **were** supposed to be there at eight. b Byron **died** (or **was to die**) at Missolonghi in April 1824. c Keats was never to **see** England again. d The conference was to have **taken** place yesterday, but it was postponed. e You are not **supposed** to run in the corridors.

22. a was about to · b would · c was to · d was going to (or was supposed to, was about to) · e was to (or was going to; *was supposed to* is also possible: it was the plan his doctors had made).

23. a Keats left England in 1820: he was never to see it again (or *he would never see it again*). b We were supposed to meet at the station, but the train was late. c The poem was to have been published in 1819, but the publisher (editor) was afraid.

24. *Model:* Giovanni Battista Belzoni was born in Padua in 1778 and worked as a strongman in London. In 1815 he went to Egypt, where he was to have sold a water-raising machine to the ruler, but the plan failed. Instead he moved the colossal head of Ramesses II to the Nile in 1816. In 1823 he set out for Timbuktu, but he was never to get there: he was to die in West Africa on the way. (The question mark in the notes: we cannot be sure whether he saw the head in London, so the fact is left out.)

25. a legacy · b uprising · c defied · d exile · e urn · f marble · g outcast · h restless · i wanderer · j timeless.

26. a heart · b heart · c mind · d soul · e heart · f mind · g soul · h mind.

27. lead an uprising · leave a legacy · defy the law · go into exile · break a promise · learn a poem by heart. Examples: *Byron went into exile in 1816. Keats left a legacy of six great odes. The Luddites defied the law and smashed machines at night.*

28. Assess: content (a specific opening, reasons, evidence from activities, links between subjects), organisation (three parts and a conclusion), register (formal, personal, no contractions or exaggeration), language (range and accuracy, at least one structure from the chapter), length (220–260 words).

29. Model answer: “I’d like to start from ‘Ozymandias’, a sonnet Shelley published in 1818. A traveller describes a broken statue in the desert and the king’s inscription, ‘Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’, which now sounds ironic, because nothing remains. The poem was written in Regency England, at a time of repression after the Napoleonic Wars, so the fall of a proud tyrant also had a political meaning. This connects with Byron’s stanza on Rome, where ruins make personal suffering seem small. From a historical point of view, I would link it to Egyptology: Belzoni moved a head of Ramesses II to the British Museum around that time. In Italian, Foscolo’s *Dei Sepolcri* also asks what survives of the dead: for Foscolo, memory and poetry.”

30. 1 B (future in the past) · 2 A · 3 C (*put sb on a diet*) · 4 B (*leave off*) · 5 A (*was to become*).

31. 1 a (or *in*) · 2 to · 3 a (or *his*) · 4 for · 5 to.

32. a freedom · b anger · c widely · d revolutionary · e intensity · f independence.

33. a was to have led · b are not supposed to touch (aren't supposed to touch) · c was never to reach · d is supposed to be · e meant to call (or was meant to call).