

In response to the coming bicentennial of the death of the poet John Keats, a class was created to study his life and his works. Throughout this semester they began to delve into not only the works that he wrote but also exploring the letters and the people that influenced him. This was to prepare the class for trips to the private collections where they would first hand discover the processes of creating and accumulating works of the romantic era.

The first trip the class went on was to the New York Public Library where, the class was given an exclusive presentation by Elizabeth Denlinger, curator of the *Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle*. During this presentation, the students were able to get up close to many of the original publishings of both Percy and Mary Shelly, as well as the work as Mary Wollstonecraft. After her presentation, the students were then given a small presentation of Dr. Isaac Gewirtz, the curator of The *Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature*. During his presentation, the students were for the first time exposed to original publishings of John Keats.

The following week the class made their way to the New York University's *Fales Library of English and American literature*, where a presentation was prepared by the curator of the collection Charlotte Priddle. During this presentation students not only got to see and look through a copy of Chapman's translation of Homer's epic poems, which the class had learned was a major influence on John Keats. The students were also able to see other books of writers from the romantic period, including a rebound Jane Austin collection, as well as arguments written within the pages of the various owners who had read them. Students were also given a background or a behind the scenes of literary history. This includes the manufacturing, marketing and the social ramifications of bookmaking.

The last trip the class went on was to the *Firestone rare books library* at Princeton University. The curator at this library Eric White gave the students a presentation, which included the life mask of John Keats, and works by the legend himself, which were presented to his idol, William Wordsworth. One of the more interesting things that were found on this particular trip was the comment found in Keat's book of poetry which was written in Wordsworth's own hand which read "pretty Paganism" to show the difference in religious view between the two. Other highlights of this trip also included Robert Hayden's written comment on his poem Endymion.

Like Keats and those who came before them, the class now gathers inspiration from the works that were left to them. To take, adapt and to create something new, to add to the literary history, and keep driving it forward in the future without forgetting the past.