A Chronology of the 1820s

This selective chronology places texts and issues discussed in the essays in the context of a larger range of key political, social and cultural events.

1819 ‘Six Acts’ restricting rights of assembly and freedom of the press passed. Foundation of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society. Thomas Pringle’s ‘The Emigrant’s Farewell’ appears in *The Harp of Caledonia* (1819). Leigh Hunt’s *Indicator* launched. Publication of Byron’s *Mazeppa* and first two cantos of *Don Juan*; William Hazlitt’s *Lectures on English Comic Writers*, *Political Essays* and *Letter to William Gifford*; William Hone’s *Political House that Jack Built*; Washington Irving’s *Sketch Book* (in New York); John William Polidori’s *The Vampire*; Walter Scott’s *Bride of Lammermoor* and *A Legend of Montrose* (third series of *Tales of My Landlord*); and William Wordsworth’s *Peter Bell* and *The Waggoner*.

February Stamford Raffles establishes Singapore as a British trading post.

June Sarah Siddons makes her last appearance on stage.

August Peterloo Massacre (16 August); Théodore Géricault’s painting ‘Raft of the Medusa’ causes a sensation at the opening of the Paris Salon.

December Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* published.

1820 Revolution in Spain, Portugal and the Kingdom of Naples. Trial of Queen Caroline. Robert Owen’s *Report to the County of New Lanark* offers a vision of co-operative communities as a solution to the crisis in poor relief. Foundation of the Royal Society of Literature. Publication of Maria Edgeworth’s *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth*; James Hogg’s *Winter Evening Tales*; Melville
Horne’s *The Moral and Political Crisis of England*; John Keats’s *Lamia, Isabella, the Eve of St Agnes and Other Poems*; John Clare’s *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*; Thomas Robert Malthus’s *Principles of Political Economy*; Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*; William Wordsworth’s *The River Duddon*; Walter Scott’s *The Monastery*; Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*; and Robert Southey’s *Life of John Wesley*.

**January**  

**February**  
Exposure of the Cato Street Conspiracy to assassinate the prime minister Lord Liverpool and his cabinet (23 February).

**March**  
Foundation of the Royal Astronomical Society.

**April**  
Radical War in Scotland.

**August**  
Publication of ‘Recollections of the South-Sea House’ in *The London Magazine*, the first of the essays of Elia (Charles Lamb).

**December**  
Launch of the *John Bull* newspaper (19 December) with Theodore Hook as editor.

**1821**  
Greek War of Independence begins. The instrument maker Philip Carpenter begins selling his Improved Phantasmagoria Lantern. Publication of Pierce Egan’s *Life in London* (as a single volume); James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Spy*; John Galt’s *Annals of the Parish*; James Mill’s *Elements of Political Economy*; Robert Southey’s *A Vision of Judgment*; William Cobbett’s *Cottage Economy*; Byron’s *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, *Cain* and Cantos III–V of *Don Juan*; Thomas Chalmers’s *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*, first volume (vol. 2 1823 and vol. 3 1826). Joanna Baillie’s *Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters* published; her *De Monfort* produced at Drury Lane.

**January**  
Henry Colburn relaunches the *New Monthly Magazine* under the editorship of Thomas Campbell; Scott’s *Kenilworth: A Romance* published.

**February**  
Duel between John Scott (*The London Magazine*) and James Christie (16 February); John Keats dies in Rome (23 February).
May  | Death of Napoleon (5 May).
June | Paddle steamer *James Watt* launched to take passengers between London and Edinburgh.
July | Coronation of George IV (19 July).
August | Death of Queen Caroline (7 August).
September | The first part of Thomas De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* published in *The London Magazine*.
October | The School of Arts for educating mechanics opens in Edinburgh with financial support from Walter Scott.

1822 Publication of *Sketch of the Mosquito Shore, including the Territory of Poyais*; the first iteration of Rudolph Ackermann’s annual *Forget Me Not, a Christmas and New Year’s Present*; Jeremy Bentham’s *Influence of Natural Religion upon Temporal Happiness*; Marguerite Blessington’s *The Magic Lantern*; Allan Cunningham’s *Traditional Tales of the English and Scottish Peasantry*; Thomas Love Peacock’s *Maid Marion*; William Wordsworth’s *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* and first standalone version of his *Guide to the Lakes* (to which Dorothy Wordsworth also contributed). *The Liberal* – the periodical collaboration between Byron, Shelley and John and Leigh Hunt – begins its short existence.

March | *Noctes Ambrosianae* commence in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*.
July | Percy Bysshe Shelley drowns off the coast of Italy (8 July).
August | George IV visits Scotland, choreographed by Walter Scott. Lord Castlereagh commits suicide (12 August).
September | The first emigrants set sail for Poyais, arriving 11 February 1823; survivors return to Britain in August 1823.
November | First weekly number of the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* (2 November).
December | Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society founded at a meeting in the Cutlers’ Hall (12 December).

1823 War between France and Spain. Beginning of the first Anglo-Ashanti War. Members of the African Society, Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce and Zachary Macaulay among them, form the Anti-Slavery Society. ‘Discovery doctrine’ confirming dispossession of Native American peoples confirmed in the United States
Supreme Court. Publication of Thomas Campbell’s ‘The Last Man’; William Hazlitt’s Liber Amoris; Charles Lamb’s Essays of Elia (in book form); Mary Shelley’s Valperga; and Byron’s Don Juan Cantos VI–XIV.

January  De Quincey begins his ‘Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected’ in The London Magazine.

March  Royal Academy of Music opens.

April  Hazlitt’s ‘My First Acquaintance with Poets’ appears in The Liberal.

June  Singapore Institution established (5 June).

July  Transportation Act allows convicts to be employed on public works. Gaols Act passed in response to Elizabeth Fry’s campaigning. Mechanics’ Institution in Glasgow opens after a dispute at Anderson’s Institution.

August  Demerara uprising of 100,000 slaves led by Jack Gladstone and his father Quamina brutally repressed. The missionary John Smith dies in prison after his trial for complicity in the rising.

September  First Burmese War begins; death of David Ricardo (11 September).

October  The Lancet medical journal begins publication.

November  George Birkbeck chairs the inaugural meeting of the London Mechanics’ Institute (11 November).

December  Mary Anning finds the first complete Plesiosaurus skeleton; Sheffield Mechanics’ and Apprentices’ Library inaugurated (27 December); the South African Commercial Advertiser commences.

1824  The National Gallery opens its doors in London. Campaign to erect a statue in commemoration of James Watt begins. Publication of John Banim’s Revelations of the Dead-Alive; Byron’s Don Juan Cantos XV and XVI; Thomas Carlyle’s translations of Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship; The Chimney-Sweeper’s Friend, and Climbing-Boy’s Album arranged by James Montgomery; The Correspondence between John Gladstone, Esq. M. P. and James Cropper, Esq. on the Present State of Slavery; James Hogg’s Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner; Letitia Elizabeth Landon’s The Improvisatrice; Walter Savage Landor’s Imaginary Conversations; P. B. Shelley’s Posthumous Poems (edited by Mary Shelley). Elizabeth Heyrick publishes Immediate, not Gradual
Abolition and sells thousands of copies in Britain and the United States. The first volume of Mary Russell Mitford’s Our Village appears in book form.

January  First issue of the Westminster Review.
February  Theodore Hook, Sayings and Doings (first series).
April  Death of Lord Byron at Missolonghi (19 April).
June  Act for Ascertaining and Establishing Uniformity of Weights and Measures enters the statute books.
October  Mexico becomes a republic.

1825 Banking crash related to speculative investments severely affects the economy, producing a spate of bankruptcies into 1826. Publication of Thomas Campbell’s Letter to Henry Brougham on the Subject of a London University; Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Aids to Reflection; Allan Cunningham’s Songs of Scotland, Ancient and Modern; William Hazlitt’s The Spirit of the Age; James Montgomery’s The Christian Psalmist; Thomas Moore’s Memoirs of Sheridan. John McDiarmaid’s short-lived Dumfries Magazine commences. Thomas Hood’s print The Progress of Cant published.
February  Simón Bolívar takes the title of El Libertador. After a House vote, John Quincey Adams elected sixth President of the United States (9 February).
June  Repeal of the Bubble Companies Act (a failed attempt to avert financial crisis).
August  Scottish adventurer Gregor MacGregor issues a £300,000 loan, with 2.5% interest, for the fictitious Central American republic of Poyais.
September  The Stockton and Darlington railway opens. John Poole’s farce Paul Pry premiers at the Haymarket Theatre, London. It was produced in New York the following year.
December  The lithographers Ingrey and Madeley produce ‘Viaorama, or The Way to St Paul’s’. Decembrist rising in Russia against Tsar Nicholas I.

1826 The British East India Company establishes the Straits Settlements colony. Robert Wilmot-Horton begins chairing a parliamentary committee on emigration. Publication of Edward Baines junior’s Letter to the Unemployed Workmen of Lancashire and Yorkshire;
James Fenimore Cooper’s *Last of the Mohicans*; William Hazlitt’s *The Plain Speaker*; Thomas Hood’s *Whims and Oddities*; and Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*. Collapse of Archibald Constable & Co. results in Scott’s public unveiling as the Author of Waverley.

**January**  
Thomas Telford’s Menai Suspension Bridge is opened, linking Anglesey to the Welsh mainland.

**February**  
University of London founded.

**June**  
The Pan-American Congress of Panama fails in its attempt to unify the republics of the Americas.

**August**  
Alexander Gordon Laing becomes the first European to reach Timbuktu.

**1827**  
Publication of John Clare’s *The Shepherd’s Calendar*; Elizabeth Fry’s *Observations on the Siting, Superintendence and Government of Female Prisoners*; Reginald Heber’s *Hymns, Written and Adapted to the Weekly Church Service of the Year*; Thomas Hodgskin’s *Popular Political Economy*; James Montgomery’s *The Pelican Island*; Walter Scott’s *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*; and Alfred Tennyson’s *Poems by Two Brothers*. Metropolitan Improvements by illustrator Thomas Hosmer Shepherd and writer James Elmes begins publication. *The Blunders of a Big-Wig; or Paul Pry’s Peeps into the Sixpenny Sciences* performed.

**March**  

**April**  
George Canning succeeds Lord Liverpool as Prime Minister (10 April). John Galt founds the town of Guelph in Canada.

**June**  
J. R. McCulloch’s influential essay on cotton manufacture appears in the *Edinburgh Review*.

**August**  
Death of George Canning (8 August). Death of William Blake (12 August).

**October**  
Battle of Navarino, a key conflict in Greek War of Independence, the last in which the Royal Navy fought only with sailing ships (20 October).

**November**  
Robert Owen uses the term ‘socialist’ in *The Co-operative Magazine and Monthly Herald*.

**1828**  
Zoological Society in London opens its doors to the public.  
Publication of Edward Bulwer Lytton’s *Pelham*; John Keble’s *The Christian Year*; Humphry Davy’s *Salmonia*; Leigh Hunt’s *Lord
Byron and Some of his Contemporaries; Letitia Elizabeth Landon’s The Venetian Bracelet; and Jane C. Loudon’s The Mummy!

January  The Duke of Wellington becomes prime minister.
April  Noah Webster registers his American dictionary for copyright.
June  Death of Dugald Stewart (11 June).
May  Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.
December  Andrew Jackson elected seventh President of the United States.

April  The Roman Catholic Relief Act, also known as the Catholic Emancipation Act, receives royal assent.
June  Sir Robert Peel introduces the Metropolitan Police Act.
September  The first Metropolitan police appear in London.
October  The Rainhill Trials conducted to test George Stephenson’s claim that locomotives would provide the best motive power for the nearly complete Liverpool and Manchester Railway.
December  Britain outlaws ‘suttee’ in India (widow burning).

1830  Wellington’s ministry falls and Earl Grey becomes prime minister. Publication of William Cobbett’s Rural Rides; Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s On the Constitution of Church and State; Humphry Davy’s Consolations in Travel; Charles Lyell’s Principles of Geology; Thomas Moore’s Life of Byron; and Alfred Tennyson’s Poems, Chiefly Lyrical.
February  Greek Independence confirmed in Treaty of London.
June  Death of George IV (26 June). William IV accedes to the throne.
July  July Revolution in France.
November  *Blackwood’s* publishes Edward Stanley’s ‘Railer’ essay.

December  Death of Simón Bolívar (17 December).

**1831**  Publication of Ebenezer Elliott’s *Corn Law Rhymes* and Thomas Love Peacock’s *Crotchet Castle*.

June  Death of Sarah Siddons (8 June).

September  First meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in York. Coronation of William IV and Queen Adelaide (8 September).

December  Christmas rebellion of Jamaican slaves led by the Baptist preacher Sam Sharpe begins (27 December).

**1832**  Representation of the People Act (Great Reform Bill) passed at the third attempt by Earl Grey’s government.