



Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Poet, Critic, Philosopher

Explore the life and works of one of England's most influential Romantic poets, whose contributions to literature, philosophy, and criticism continue to resonate today.

Early Life & Education

Birth & Childhood (1772-1781)

Born 21st October 1772 at Ottery St Mary, Devon, the youngest of ten children. Adored his father John, an Anglican vicar and grammar school headmaster, who died when Coleridge was nine.

Cambridge University (1791-1794)

Entered Jesus College on scholarship. Engaged with radical politics, supporting suspended anti-Anglican tutor William Frend, causing problems with both College and family.

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Christ's Hospital School (1782-1791)

Sent to Christ's Hospital Charity Boarding School in London, which he disliked. Introduced to works of Plato, Virgil, Milton, Shakespeare, becoming a self-styled 'library cormorant'.

Radical Beginnings



Political Awakening

As a senior 'Grecian' during the French Revolution (1789), Coleridge began engaging with radical politics and became a Unitarian.



Meeting Southey

Met like-minded poet Robert Southey at Oxford in 1794. Together they planned 'Pantisocracy', an egalitarian community in Pennsylvania, USA.



Early Publications

Co-wrote *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794) and published *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796) with Bristol publisher Joseph Cottle.

The Nether Stowey Years

Domestic Life

Married Sara Fricker in 1795. Their first child, Hartley, was born in 1796, followed by Berkeley (1798), Derwent (1800) and Sara (1802).

Lyrical Ballads

Published *Lyrical Ballads* with Wordsworth in 1798, now considered a landmark in English poetry despite initial negative reception.



The Wordsworths

Friendship with William and Dorothy Wordsworth from June 1797 became a dynamic triad of mutual admiration, inspiring some of his finest work.

Creative Peak

Composed 'Conversation Poems', 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', and 'Kubla Khan' during this highly productive period.



Personal Struggles

Opium Addiction

Initially used opium for physical ailments, but it became a habitual problem, leading to guilt, shame and night-terrors described in 'The Pains of Sleep' (1803).

Unrequited Love

Met Sara Hutchinson ('Asra') in 1799 and fell deeply in love, causing strain in his marriage. His despair pours from 'Dejection: An Ode' (1802).

Marital Breakdown

Relations with wife Sara deteriorated, leading to informal separation in 1806. They would not meet amicably again until November 1822.

Travels & Journalism

Malta & Mediterranean (1804-1806)

Seeking warmer climes for his health, Coleridge took administrative posts at the British High Commission in Malta and travelled extensively through Italy and Sicily.

Journalism in London

Contributed to the *Morning Post* since 1798 and later *The Courier* (1808-1817). Editor Daniel Stuart valued him enormously and offered him a share in the paper.

The Friend (1809-1810)

Produced his own weekly paper, *The Friend*, an eclectic mix of 'Literary, Moral and Political' essays that became popular after revision.

Lectures & Literary Success



Public Lectures (1808-1819)

Delivered seven series of lectures on Belles Lettres, European Literature, Shakespeare, and Philosophy, attracting widespread attention and helping spark a revival in Shakespeare studies.



Theatrical Success

His tragedy *Remorse* ran for twenty nights at Drury Lane (January-February 1813), achieving notable success.



Major Publications

Published influential works including *Biographia Literaria* and *Sibylline Leaves* (1817), *Aids to Reflection* (1825), and *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829).

Later Years at Highgate



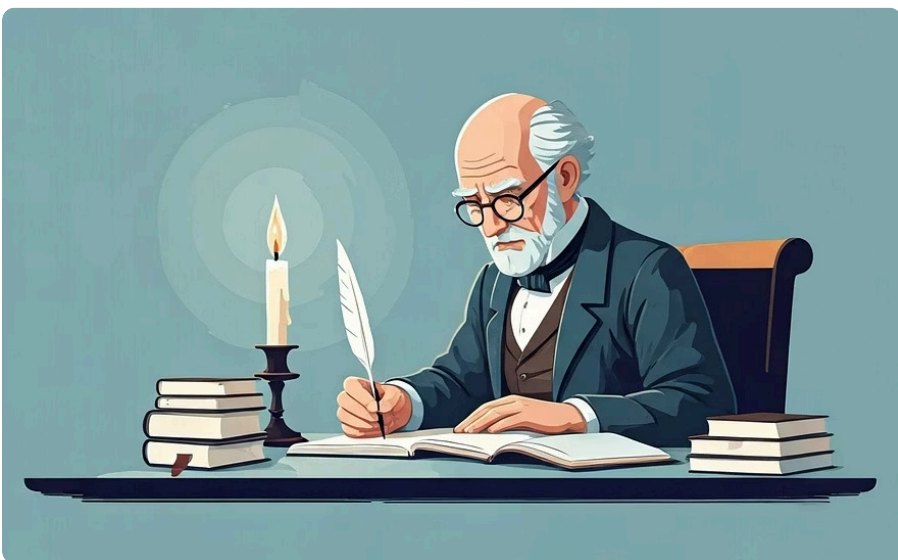
The Gillman Household

In 1816, Coleridge moved into the London home of Dr and Mrs James Gillman, with whom he remained for the rest of his life, receiving medical care and mental stimulation.



Intellectual Pursuits

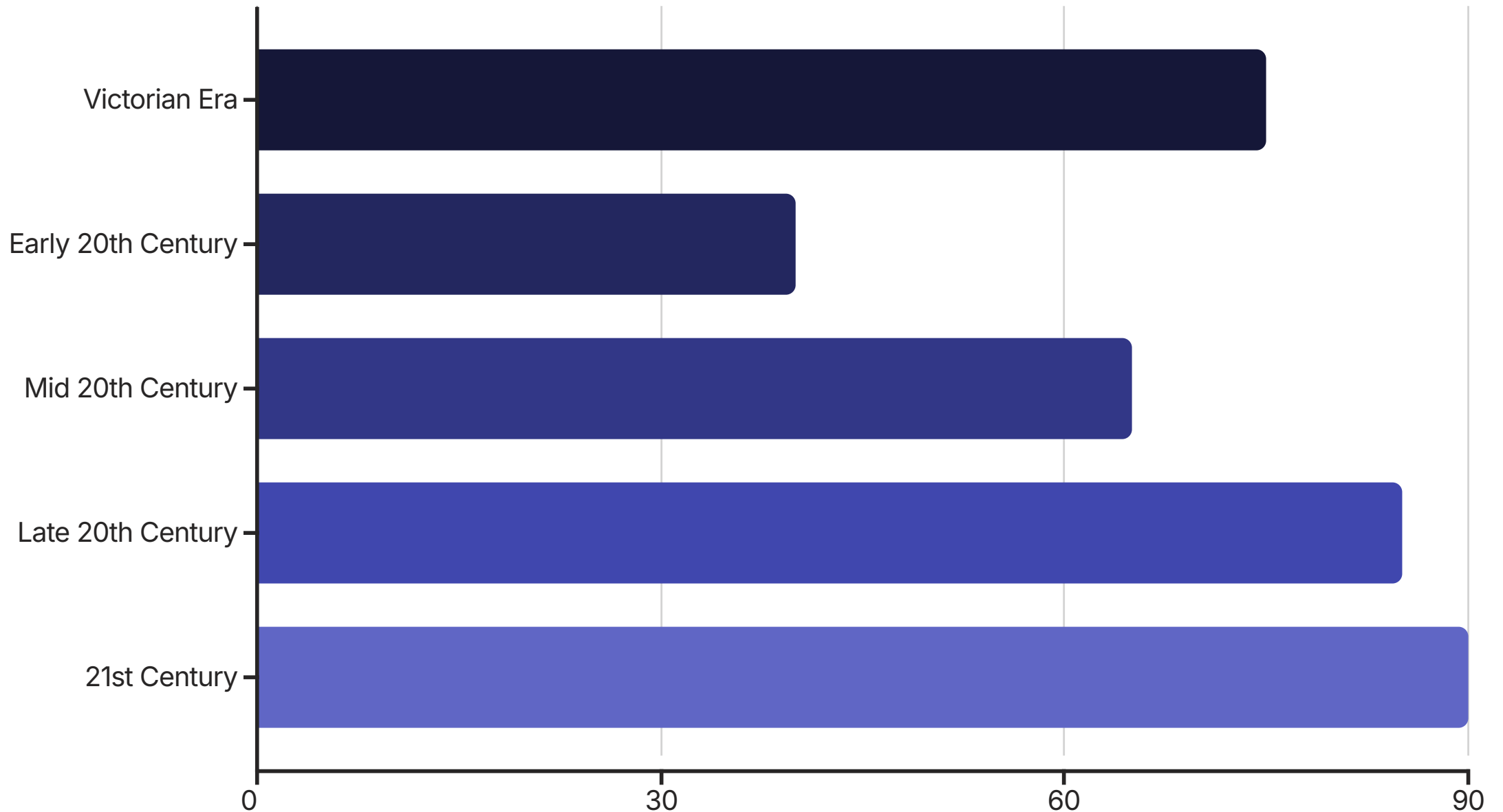
Hosted informal discussions on philosophy, linguistics and religion. Wrote *Theory of Life* (1816) and continued exploring Biblical exegesis and the Trinity.



Final Poetry

Explored his turbulent emotional life in notable poems including 'Limbo' (1817), 'Youth and Age' (1823-1832), and 'Work without Hope' (1825).

Legacy & Critical Reception



Coleridge's reputation has fluctuated over time. Initially controversial, his influence grew throughout the 19th century. Critics like Thomas Carlyle and T.S. Eliot questioned his contributions, while later scholars recognized his profound impact on poetry, criticism, philosophy, and religious thought.