

Although Rousseau's "Fifth Promenade" **briefly described certain aspects**

associated with the Enlightenment, the overwhelming tone of the essay ✓
proclaims Romanticism. Rousseau described in detail the Romantics' views of
Nature, taking great delight in the uncivilized Lake of Bienne and its two islands.
The activities in which Rousseau occupied himself revolved around solitary
pursuits favored by Romantics: walking, boating, sitting quietly, and observing
the natural setting around him. Finally, Rousseau's essay explains the
preeminence placed on his ability to dream, to imagine, and to fantasize about
his ideal existence. Although composed by "one of the most eloquent writers of
the Age of Enlightenment", Rousseau's writing serves as a prelude to the
Romanticism developing in the late Eighteenth Century. (Encarta, 2/12/03)

good
start!

While the earlier age of the Enlightenment sought to understand Nature
through close scientific study, and in orderly, cultivated venues, such as formal
✓ gardens; Romantics desired to experience nature in the wild, unspoiled by the
hand of man. (Rousseau, 81) The description of the Lake Bienne area, with its
rocky and wooded shores, meadows and secluded nooks, and its dramatic
scenery, illustrated Rousseau's Romantic view of a desirable landscape.

(Rousseau 81) One definition given for Romanticism involves a view of reality
that is idealized, sentimental, and remote from experience. (Hawkins, 1253)

Rousseau's descriptions of the island could well serve as the example for this
definition with the calm, pleasant days, and only an occasional shower of rain. ✓

(Rousseau, 85) Only the delights of singing birds, blooming wildflowers, bountiful

harvests, and the lapping of quiet waters proved to be the subjects of Rousseau's reverie; harsher realities did not find a place in his writing. ✓
(Rousseau, 81, 84, 85)

Rousseau showed leanings towards the Enlightenment view of Nature when writing of his classification of flora on the island. Using a reasoned and orderly approach, dividing the island into small, uniform sections, Rousseau utilized a rational and analytical approach to his study, typical of Enlightenment values. He attempted to understand Nature in a scientific sense, to see cause and effect, patterns and sequences. However, even in this scientific study of nature, tendencies toward a Romantic view were present. Rousseau spoke of his enthusiasm for the subject of botany, the "raptures and ecstasies" he experienced, the interest that turned to passion, and the joys and delights of his discoveries. (Rousseau, 84) The emotions described were those valued by the Romantics, and viewed as extreme and unreliable by earlier proponents of the Enlightenment. Rousseau's study of the island's flora took the form and content of the Enlightenment, while his emotions and expressions reflected Romantic ideas. ✓

Another defining aspect of Romanticism involves the artist viewing himself as "an isolated misunderstood genius", and Rousseau demonstrated this mindset throughout his writing. (Hawkins, 1253) He came to the island with the belief that he was an "unfortunate man who [had] been excluded from human society". ✓
(Rousseau, 89) Rousseau believed, with Romantics, that a happy existence

Good summary

^{long} existed apart from society in solitary pursuits: walking in the woods, rowing on the lake, contemplating the shoreline, or sitting on a riverbank or alongside a stream. (Rousseau 84-85, 88-89) The focus of all Rousseau's activities revolved around nature rather than his books and the world of the salon from his earlier experiences. Rousseau embraced the Romantic idealism of Nature in its perfect state, and the need to experience it in solitude to achieve happiness. ✓

Rousseau believed that happiness occurred when idyllic surroundings created a pleasant view of the world, when conversations did not distract him from concentrating on his own internal landscapes, when a lack of conflict ✓ allowed him to achieve a calm and serene disposition, and when the solitude of his existence led to undisturbed reveries. (Rousseau, 85-87) As the Romantics placed high esteem on dreaming, fantasizing, and remembering an idyllic past, ✓ so too did Rousseau reflect years later that on the island, "I fused my imaginings with these charming sights". (Rousseau, 90)

The "Fifth Promenade" exhibits several tenets of Romanticism in the late Eighteenth Century: a view of Nature preferred in its wild state, a respect for emotion and sentimentalism, a preference for the solitary over the social existence admired during the Enlightenment, and a desire to use the intuitive portions of the brain for dreaming, imaging, and creating an idealized existence. ✓

Rousseau lived in an age of historical transition, and his writing of the "Fifth Promenade" eloquently illustrates his literary movement from the Age of Enlightenment to that of Romanticism.

Excellent +
little essay
that is very well
written and
that makes good
solid points
you express yourself
very well - clear and
elegant.
your interpretation
is solid and
generally interesting.
Good job!
A.