

## William Blake A True Visionary



By Thomas Phillips (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons

**William Blake in 1807**

Generally speaking, a visionary is a person who sees possibilities where others do not. Usually, visionaries are leaders in some way. William Blake, the artist and poet, is considered a visionary of the Romantic era for a number of reasons.

Throughout history, there have been many different eras. An era is a period of time and the era we now live in is often referred to as the Information Age. That is because it is popular to use technology and science to find out how things work. People who are considered visionaries in the Information Age include Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. Steve Jobs helped start Apple Computers and had the idea for the iPad and iPhone. Bill Gates started the giant software company called Microsoft.

The Romantic era started in the late 1700s and lasted until around the 1850s. During the Romantic era, many artists and writers created work about feelings and nature. Writers wrote about romance, love, and fantastical creatures like fairies or monsters.

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# William Blake

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By Caspar David Friedrich [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

**“Wanderer Above the Sea” by Caspar David Friedrich**

William Blake was one of the first people to write and paint in the Romantic style. He is called a visionary for this reason, but he was also quite literally a visionary! The word visionary can also describe a person who sees visions. William Blake claimed to see visions many times over the course of his life, which is probably why no one appreciated Blake's work until after he died—the people who knew him while he was alive seemed to think that he was a bit crazy.

William Blake was born in 1757 and began to show artistic talent from a very young age. When he was 10, he began to go to art school. He became a talented painter and artist. He also became an engraver. He carved images onto a flat piece of copper, then he put ink on them and printed the images. Engraved images can be reproduced over and over.



By Autopilot [Own work] via Wikimedia Commons

**This shows an engraving (left) and a print from the engraving (right)**

Blake was also a printer and inventor. He invented new ways to print books, including a way to print books in color. In this way, he printed many of his own stories and poems.

When it comes to his visions, Blake claimed to have had a lot of them. He said that he had his first vision when he was four years old. At age 10, Blake claimed to have seen a tree full of angels. When his brother died, Blake claims to have seen his brother's spirit rising from his body. Later, he created many

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“Ghost of a Flea” by William Blake

paintings of people long dead or of unreal creatures. He claimed that they appeared to him in his visions. He said they posed for him while he painted the pictures. Some of them were really weird. Like this one, which he said was a painting of the ghost of a flea.

Over the course of his life, Blake wrote and illustrated a number of books. He also wrote a lot of poetry. Many people consider his poem *The Tyger* to be his best-known poem.

William Blake did not become famous during his lifetime. He became famous after his death. It was only after his death that he began to become famous. His art and writing inspired many other artists and writers of the Romantic era. Only then did people begin to see William Blake as a true visionary.



“The Tyger” by William Blake