

# Happy Birthday, Frances Wright!

Post by “Joshua” of September 7, 2021 at 7:27 PM

Regarding her age, it's not at all historically unusual for British education to produce prodigies.

John Milton:

## Quote

Milton's first datable compositions are two psalms done at age 15 at Long Bennington. One contemporary source is the Brief Lives of John Aubrey, an uneven compilation including first-hand reports. In the work, Aubrey quotes Christopher, Milton's younger brother: "When he was young, he studied very hard and sat up very late, commonly till twelve or one o'clock at night". Aubrey adds, "His complexion exceeding faire—he was so faire that they called him the Lady of Christ's College

Alexander Pope:

## Quote

Pope's formal education ended at this time, [age 12] and from then on, he mostly educated himself by reading the works of classical writers such as the satirists Horace and Juvenal, the epic poets Homer and Virgil, as well as English authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare and John Dryden. He studied many languages, reading works by French, Italian, Latin, and Greek poets. After five years of study, [age 17] Pope came into contact with figures from London literary society such as William Congreve, Samuel Garth and William Trumbull.

Thomas De Quincey:

## Quote

In 1800, De Quincey, aged 15, was ready for the University of Oxford; his scholarship was far in advance of his years. "That boy could harangue an Athenian mob better than you or I could address an English one", his master at Bath had said.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

## Quote

Tennyson and two of his elder brothers were writing poetry in their teens and a collection of poems by all three was published locally when Alfred was only 17.

John Keats:

Quote

However, at 13 he began focusing his energy on reading and study, winning his first academic prize in midsummer 1809.

William Wordsworth:

Quote

However, [his father] did encourage William in his reading, and in particular set him to commit large portions of verse to memory, including works by Milton, Shakespeare and Spenser. [...]

Wordsworth made his debut as a writer in 1787 [age 17] when he published a sonnet in The European Magazine.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

Quote

In one of a series of autobiographical letters written to Thomas Poole, Coleridge wrote: "At six years old I remember to have read Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe, and Philip Quarll - and then I found the Arabian Nights' Entertainments - one tale of which (the tale of a man who was compelled to seek for a pure virgin) made so deep an impression on me (I had read it in the evening while my mother was mending stockings) that I was haunted by spectres whenever I was in the dark - and I distinctly remember the anxious and fearful eagerness with which I used to watch the window in which the books lay - and whenever the sun lay upon them, I would seize it, carry it by the wall, and bask, and read.

J.R.R. Tolkien:

Quote

Tolkien could read by the age of four and could write fluently soon afterwards. [...] While in his early teens, Tolkien had his first encounter with a constructed language, Animalic, an invention of his cousins, Mary and Marjorie Incledon. At that time, he was studying Latin and Anglo-Saxon. Their interest in Animalic soon died away, but Mary

and others, including Tolkien himself, invented a new and more complex language called Nevbosh. The next constructed language he came to work with, Naffarin, would be his own creation. Tolkien learned Esperanto some time before 1909. [Age 17] Around 10 June 1909 he composed "The Book of the Foxrook", a sixteen-page notebook, where the "earliest example of one of his invented alphabets" appears. Short texts in this notebook are written in Esperanto.

Percy Bysshe Shelley:

Quote

At age six, he was sent to a day school run by the vicar of Warnham church, where he displayed an impressive memory and gift for languages. [...] In 1802 [age 10] he entered the Syon House Academy of Brentford, Middlesex. [...] Shelley developed an interest in science which supplemented his voracious reading of tales of mystery, romance and the supernatural. During his holidays at Field Place, his sisters were often terrified at being subjected to his experiments with gunpowder, acids and electricity. Back at school he blew up a paling fence with gunpowder.

Oscar Wilde:

Quote

Later in life he claimed that his fellow students had regarded him as a "prodigy" for his ability to speed read, claiming that he could read two facing pages simultaneously and consume a three-volume book in half an hour, retaining enough information to give a basic account of the plot. He excelled academically, particularly in the subject of Classics, in which he ranked fourth in the school in 1869. His aptitude for giving oral translations of Greek and Latin texts won him multiple prizes, including the Carpenter Prize for Greek Testament.

John Stuart Mill:

Quote

He was given an extremely rigorous upbringing, and was deliberately shielded from association with children his own age other than his siblings. His father, a follower of Bentham and an adherent of associationism, had as his explicit aim to create a genius intellect that would carry on the cause of utilitarianism and its implementation after he and Bentham had died.

Mill was a notably precocious child. He describes his education in his autobiography. At the age of three he was taught Greek. By the age of eight, he had read Aesop's Fables, Xenophon's Anabasis, and the whole of Herodotus, and was acquainted with Lucian,

Diogenes Laërtius, Isocrates and six dialogues of Plato. He had also read a great deal of history in English and had been taught arithmetic, physics and astronomy.

At the age of eight, Mill began studying Latin, the works of Euclid, and algebra, and was appointed schoolmaster to the younger children of the family. His main reading was still history, but he went through all the commonly taught Latin and Greek authors and by the age of ten could read Plato and Demosthenes with ease. His father also thought that it was important for Mill to study and compose poetry. One of his earliest poetic compositions was a continuation of the Iliad. In his spare time he also enjoyed reading about natural sciences and popular novels, such as Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe.