

LWC English graduate Kylie Jackson draws a line from Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Taylor Swift

A recent Lindsey Wilson College graduate made a literary connection that might escape many people, even the most diehard Swifties.

Kylie Jackson, who graduated from Lindsey Wilson in December with a bachelor of arts degree in English, argues that many of the lyrics written by modern-day pop music sensation Taylor Swift are an inheritor of poetry's Romantic movement from the 19th century.

To illustrate her point, Jackson's senior thesis combined two of her favorite topics – the poetry of the Romantics and Swift's lyrics. In her senior thesis, Jackson connected Swift's song "The Albatross" from her 2024 double-album, The Tortured Poets Department, with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," first published in 1798. An albatross is central to Coleridge's famous verse.

"Taylor Swift is misunderstood," said Jackson, a Columbia resident and 2021 Green County High School graduate. "A lot of people are kind of baffled with how popular she is, but I think one of the many reasons Taylor Swift is so popular is because, like the Romantics did with their work, she does not definitively give meaning to her songs. That was a very important ideal to Romantics like Coleridge as well – if you give a text definitive meaning, then you have shut down infinite meaning, and you have shut down the opportunity for the reader or the listener to connect with what the author is trying to convey."

Allowing listeners a broad range of freedom to discover their interpretation of her songs has helped fuel Swift's popularity, said Jackson. "She lets her listeners connect and attach certain songs to certain events in their own lives," said Jackson. "She does not say, 'This is what my song

is about or this is the event my song is about.' As a result, Taylor Swift doesn't exclude listeners from attaching their own personal meaning to her music."

Jackson said she didn't instantly make a connection between Swift and Coleridge when she first heard the singer's "Albatross." But then the dots were connected after a conversation with English professor Karolyn Steffens.

"When I first listened to 'The Albatross' it immediately clicked that it was something I'd read, but I didn't connect it with 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' until I had a conversation about it with Dr. Steffens," said Jackson. "Then I sort of had a eureka moment about connecting the two."

As Jackson writes, "for both Coleridge and Swift, emotional authenticity is vital in an artificial world continually ruled and traumatized by technology." For Coleridge and other Romantics, trauma was a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, whereas in Swift's era trauma has been caused by technological developments such as artificial intelligence and the collapse of human relationships caused by other digital phenomenon. "These revolutions in lyric poetry that begin with (William) Wordsworth and Coleridge and which Swift continues today, respond to what can be understood as traumatic events, both collectively and individually," Jackson writes.

Discovering English

Jackson started at Lindsey Wilson with the goal of becoming an English teacher, partly because she comes from a family of educators. But as she progressed in her English major, Jackson said she had another eureka moment.

"I was thinking, 'I really like English, this is my strong

suit,'" said Jackson. And people outside of Lindsey Wilson have also recognized Jackson's strong suit. Later this year, she's going to present a paper titled "Paradise and the Societal Complications of Ruby" at the national meeting of Sigma Tau Delta, the international English honor society. The paper explores Nobel laureate Toni Morrison's 1998 novel, Paradise.

Jackson also discovered that an English major could also be ideal preparation for law school. "My professors were very encouraging, they helped me realize that I am capable of going to law school with a degree in English," she said.

Jackson has already been accepted into a couple of law schools for fall 2025. She is interested in practicing criminal or elder law, in no small part thanks to her work with Adair County Attorney Jennifer Hutchison-Corbin.

"She's been amazing to work for," said Jackson. Equally influential on Jackson have been her Lindsey Wilson professors. In addition to Steffens, Jackson said that fellow English faculty members Rachel Carr, Kerry Robertson and Allison Smith have helped guide her career path. "I can't say enough good things about my professors, they were phenomenal," said Jackson, who graduated a semester early and delivered a student address at Lindsey Wilson's winter commencement. "They always pushed me and were there to support me. I was telling my friend who goes to another college in Kentucky that I had emailed three of my professors asking for help on an essay for one of my law school applications. On that day, I heard back from all three of them. And I said to my friend, 'Do you get that at your school?' She said, 'Absolutely not.'



Photo submitted

Kylie Jackson, a recent Lindsey Wilson College graduate and Green County High School alumni, combined two of her favorite topics – the poetry of the Romantics and Swift's lyrics - in her senior thesis.



"I owe the world to my English professors, because the education they've provided

me is priceless, and I feel like it has prepared me to take the next step to law school.

... I can confidently say that the Lindsey Wilson English major prepares you for life."

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Givens

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-Participating in Executive Committee sessions and business meetings at the Southern Legislative Conference (SLC),

-Reviewing and voting on the annual budget, operational concerns, and programmatic updates for CSG South,

-Facilitating discussions on state tax policies, financial oversight, and economic growth, and

-Engaging in CSG South's financial poli-

cy briefings, webinars, and fiscal development programs.

Givens will serve a two-year term ending Dec. 31, 2026.

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