Many books have been written about William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge that cover their biographies and make critical assessments of their work. In Adam Sisman’s *The Friendship*, for the first time the bond between these two poets is given center stage. The friendship flourished in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The poets met in 1795 when both were in their early twenties, two young idealists disappointed by the lack of expected change in their world following the revolution. They wanted to write a poem that would change the world, that would be accessible to all and would fire the imagination of the most humble. This desire led to the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, the beginning of the English Romantic movement, which included Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and Wordsworth’s *Tintern Abbey*. How did their friendship affect their work? Sisman shows the ways that their bond created competitive tension and fueled their creativity to even greater poetic achievement than might have been achieved alone. The political and social situation of the time was very influential on them, as well as their individual families and romances. They were passionate in all regards, reaching great heights and great depths of feeling. Ultimately, the two men became estranged, and then effected a tenuous reconciliation—one much talked about among their friends and acquaintances, because they had both become famous. Although Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy despaired of Coleridge, believing that he would never stop drinking and taking opium, and though their professional differences came to separate them, while they collaborated they created poems of great beauty, encouraging one another to reach lofty heights in the realms of literary expression. For these two, for a glorious time, the whole was greater than the sum of its parts. --Valerie Ryan

My Personal Review:
Its been a long time since I picked up a book on literature that I loved as much as this one. I originally had a major in English Literature, and spent four years of studying most British writers, with an emphasis on the poets
and the prose of the time from John Donne to the end of the 19th century. I loved the British romanticist that included both Coleridge and Wordsworth, but I didn't realize how deeply entwined their lives were, and how much their poetry owed to this friendship of theirs.

This book brings to life the poetry they wrote and their relationship during their time together. Two different men who placed such a deep importance on literature to change and effect society. We seem to have lost our respect for the ability of words to heal, even though now we know they can do deep harm whether in music or literature or conversation. These two men lived at a time when life was changing from an agrarian society to one that depended upon industry and many were leaving the land and going to cities to find work. The time period also saw the Revolution in the U.S. and then the one in France, and many British were hoping to see changes in politics and other parts of life, in which people would have more say and more freedom. Unfortunately, the French Revolution did not proceed the way that many expected it to, away from the monarchy and towards freedom, but it fell in on itself probably because of the violence. It left a very bad taste in the mouths of young men like Wordsworth and Coleridge, who hated the violence that the Revolution spawned.

These men wanted to see a return of man to his roots, to understanding and admiring and valuing the natural world around them. They felt that a simple life without dependence upon things or money was of more worth than the lives so many led in the cities or towns of England and other European countries. I think these two men would be horrified at how far we've left behind the simple life and our dependence upon material things has led towards endangering the natural world that we live on. These men were actually early ecologists...

This book was extremely poignant and sad, mainly because Coleridge like many in the early 19th century was introduced to laudanum, an opium drug, that was used widely as aspirin is used now. It was not understood how addictive it was at that time period, though as Coleridge aged he knew he depended too much upon the drug and on alcohol which was their primary drink of that time period because water was considered unsafe. This addiction caused him to lose not only his family and his friends, but Coleridge's ability to write was lost as he became more addicted and sick due to the drug. It was amazing that he lived as long as he did, and it was due to the care that others took of him including Wordsworth and his sister. It must have been horrible for those who loved him to watch his descent into addiction and to watch him lose his great abilities. It was devastating to him and to his ego to lose his brilliant mind and ability to write, and left him jealous of Wordsworth, who was unable to help his friend.

This is an exquisite book looking into the relationships of these two poets and their lives. It brings back a time long lost both in England and in the U.S. where we put as much emphasis on the ability to write well, and
society paid more attention to men of learning and ability than to sports heroes and celebrities of little worth...

Karen sadler

For More 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price:
The Friendship: Wordsworth and Coleridge by Adam Sisman - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!