

ENGL 3316: Literature of the Victorian Period  
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This course serves as an introduction to a rich variety of Victorian texts and to the social and cultural contexts that produced them. Students will gain interpretive and analytical skills to enhance their understanding of novels and poetry written during one of the most complex and challenging periods in modern history. At the heart of the course lie several questions that were as critical for Victorian readers as they are for us today: in an industrial, consumerist society, what is the purpose of art and literature? How does literature offer writers and readers ways to understand and even critique their society? What kinds of (necessary?) escape does art offer? What purpose does fantasy serve? What kinds of truths can only be told through creative forms?

To explore these questions, we will be reading novels, short fiction, prose essays, and poetry that represent the major literary tendencies of the period: narrative realism, psychological and moral inquiry, social critique, and aestheticism.

Key authors include: Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot, Christina Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Meredith, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Augusta Webster, Michael Field, and Oscar Wilde.