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Victorian Poetry and Fiction

The years 1837-1901 in which Queen Victoria reigned were highly influential in the development of modern literature; the period absorbed the early-nineteenth century works of the Romantics and the satirical novels of Jane Austen [1], and, in the legacy left behind by the Victorian novelists, paved the way for the creation of twentieth-century Modernist texts. The era saw great change and upheaval in numerous momentous events such as the scientific publication of Charles Darwin?s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and the steady expansion of the British Empire. These influential factors worked their way into the writing of the period, and it is possible to view Victorian literature as a textual catalogue of imaginative responses that answer the shattering, disruptive polemics that raged across the period. The novel became the leading form of literature and realism the predominant literary genre, evident in the immensely popular works of Charles Dickens [2], George Eliot [3], and Thomas Hardy [4].

This collection of Victorian Poetry and Fiction on the Great Writers Inspire site includes a selection of writers we feel to be particularly inspiring in an age dominated by authors and literature. Charles Dickens, champion of realism and the first famous author of the period, whose works helped popularise the serialised form of the novel, is here. George Eliot, the hugely successful female-author with an incredible intellect is also present, as her work directly intertwines with the scientific theories of the era, and thereby demonstrates the importance of context when studying literature. Thomas Hardy, who wrote not only fiction but highly influential poetry too, is part of the collection. His numerous novels, studied in sixth-forms and universities across the country, provide a realistic presentation of rural England and society in the nineteenth century. Robert Louis Stevenson's [5] popular, Gothic-style work is showcased here because it demonstrates the influence of scientific theory and an manipulation of social fears - caused by the advancement of science - that invaded the domestic sphere of late-Victorian England.

Gerard Manley Hopkins and Walt Whitman [6] are the two poets included in the collection. They were chosen because their work did not conform to the standard verse, metre, or conventional poetic form found in other poetry of the Victorian period. The use of free verse, new rhyme schemes, and unusual subject matter found in the work of these two different poets is truly inspiring; it laid the foundation for the poetry that would be written in the trenches of WW1; the form was adopted by modernist poets such as T.S Eliot and Ezra Pound [7]; and the free verse and specific subject matter present in their poetry has influenced the work of contemporary poets today.

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