

# Victorian Poetry

(Part-1, Paper-1)

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Victorian poetry is the poetry written during the period of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901). During The Victorian age, numerous poetic ideals were developed, such as the increased use of the sonnet as a poetic form. Victorian poetry resembles the works of the Romantics, as such Romantic writers as William Blake, Keats, W. Wordsworth and Shelley had an immense impact on the Victorian poets. These two periods have a lot in common: scepticism, interest in everything mysterious, distrust of organized religion.

Victorian poetry moves away from the Romantic poetry. One such characteristic is the Victorian interest in Medieval legends, myths and fables over the classical legends and mythology embraced by the preceding Romantic poets. In Victorian poetry, we find a more realistic and less idealized view of nature. Another is a change of emphasis on what types of common people and common language is emphasised in poetry. Whereas for Romantics it was the country rustic, for the Victorians it is more often the common urban dweller. One of the main defining characteristics of Victorian poetry is that it is pictorial (Pre-Raphaelite Poetry), which means it uses detailed imagery to convey thoughts and emotions. While many poets use imagery, the Victorians took this a step further. They used sensory elements to describe abstract ideas such as the struggles between religion and science.

One of the most significant accomplishments of the Victorian Era is the appearance of female poets. There were few female poets before, as poetry was considered predominantly male occupation. Despite these views, works of such poets as Elizabeth Browning, Christina Rossetti, and the Bronte sisters became famous during The Victorian Age.

Some of famous male poets include Alfred Tennyson, Matthew Arnold and Robert Browning and others. Among the Victorians, **Alfred Tennyson** (1809-1892) enjoyed the greatest popularity. He wrote on a variety of topics, including religion and ethics. His poetry responded to all the issues and concerns of the Victorian society and reflected moods and attitudes of the Britons.

**Matthew Arnold** (1822-1888) has never been as popular as Tennyson. He did not feel a part of the time in which he lived, and in his non-fiction, works ("Culture and Anarchy", "Literature and Dogma") sharply criticized the British Society for immorality and lack of culture, idealizing ancient civilization.

**Robert Browning** (1812-1889), too, felt like a stranger in Victorian England. Together with his wife Elizabeth Barrett Browning, also a recognized poet, he lived in Italy for a long time, and even when he returned home, he did not write about England. His style of writing is easily recognizable: complex poetic language, abrupt changes of rhythm, syntax and mood. He put the freedom and spiritual emancipation of the individual above all and was interested in moral and spiritual conflicts.

We find many types of poetry during Victorian Era. Prominent of these include lyric poems, sonnets, narrative poems, lyrical monologue/dramatic monologue by Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning and others, Pre-Raphaelite poetry by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, George Meredith, William Morris, Algernon Charles Swinburne and few others.

Victorian Poetry was a very crucial period in the history of poetry, as it linked Romanticism and Modernism of the 20th century. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to identify to which epoch this or that poet belongs, as it is not easy to categorize them all in these broad movements.