

Victorian Poetry: Introductory Notes

1. The term 'Victorian Poetry' designates the English poetry written during the reign of Queen Victoria which extends from 1832-37 (the date of Reform Bills and Railways) to 1901 (death of Queen Victoria) or 1914 (WWI).
2. Poetry was not the ultimate literary genre in the Victorian age. This was the golden age of the novel.
3. Although the Victorian age was a time of material progress and scientific frame of mind, poetry was able to survive and flourish as hundreds of poets (major and minor) appeared and produced vast poetic output of mixed quality.
4. Unlike Romantic poetry, Victorian poetry was not unified as a literary movement nor has a systematic theory of poetry. Victorian poetry covers a vast stretch of time which is typically divided into early (1830s-1850s), High (1860-187s), and late (1880s-1890s). Each stage marks a new phase of development of Victorian poetry.
5. The poetry of the early Victorian age was deeply influenced by Romantic poetry. The poetry of the high victorian age was mature with a distinctive Victorian tone. The poetry of the late Victorian age was decadent and lacks vitality.
6. Victorian poetry can be defined in terms of three topical issues:
 - A. The Victorian poets' partial acceptance and modification of their Romantic inheritance.
 - B. The Victorian poets' reaction to the social, religious, and philosophical problems of a progressive, skeptical, and scientific age.
 - C. The Victorian poets' conception of the place and function of the poet, in the modern world, and the aims and qualities of the poetic art.