

# ENGL 386: Victorian Poetry

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## Course Description

This course aims to develop your knowledge of Victorian poetry and poetics, with a particular emphasis on understanding the genres and movements that characterize the literature of this period (1837-1901). What makes Victorian poetry innovative and provocative? How do Victorian poets adapt inherited literary traditions? How do they experiment with new forms? This period saw much dispute regarding issues such as gender, sexuality, industrialization, imperialism, science, religion, and the visual arts. How does Victorian poetry both respond to and shape the terms of these political, social, and cultural debates?

Our goals will be twofold: 1) to build a critical vocabulary for analyzing the language, verse forms, and sound patterns of Victorian poetry; 2) to situate this poetry in relation to relevant historical contexts. We will practice reading strategies that will increase your confidence in thinking, speaking, and writing about poetry. These strategies will help us to evaluate and appreciate why Victorian poetry mattered and still matters.



Hunt, William Holman. *The Lady of Shalott*.  
c. 1886-1905.

## Proposed Assignments:

**Close reading** [800-1000 words] (20%)

**Research essay proposal** [abstract and short annotated bibliography] (10%)

**Research essay** [8-10 pages] (35%)

**Final exam** (30%)

**Participation** (5%)

## Proposed Reading List:

We will read selections from a wide variety of Victorian poets, including Alfred Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Augusta Webster, Matthew Arnold, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Michael Field.

All poetry readings will come from *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Victorian Era*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edited by Joseph Black, et al., Broadview, 2012.