Friday 5th June 2020

LI: To learn about an influential designer

William Morris
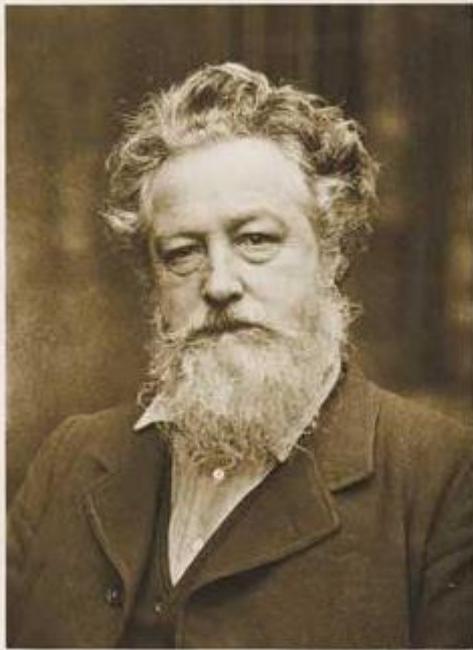
"MY WORK IS THE EMBODIMENT OF DREAMS" William Morris 1858

What type of era, would you guess, William Morris belongs to?

William Morris was an influential designer in the nineteenth century (Victorian era)

What type of art would you expect from this era?

Art of the nineteenth century

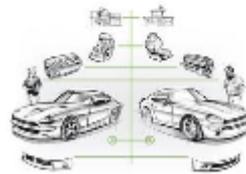- What do you notice about the art?
- What do you like/dislike about it?

What type of art does a designer create?
What jobs have you heard of with 'designer' in?

Graphic Designer

Industrial Designer

Interior Designer

Landscape Designer

Fashion Designer

Architectural Designer

Creative Designer

- English Textile Designer
- 1834-1896
- Associated with English Arts and Crafts movement
- Influenced the decoration of churches and houses
- Influenced fantasy writers such as Tolkien.
- One of the founders of 'The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings'
- Morris was a medievalist
- Artist, author and poet
- Founded a design firm with Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti

What type of designer was William Morris? What makes it art?

- William Morris (24 March 1834 – 3 October 1896) was an English textile designer, artist, writer, and socialist associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the English Arts and Crafts Movement.

- He founded a design firm in partnership with the artist Edward Burne-Jones, and the poet and artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti which strongly influenced the decoration of churches and houses into the early 20th century.

- As an author, illustrator and medievalist, he helped to establish the modern fantasy genre, and was a direct influence on post-war authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien (Lord of the Rings). He was also a major contributor to reviving traditional textile arts and methods of production, and one of the founders of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

- Morris wrote and published poetry, fiction, and translations of ancient and medieval texts throughout his life.

- His best-known works include *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (1858), *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–1870), *A Dream of John Ball* (1888), the utopian *News from Nowhere* (1890), and the fantasy romance *The Well at the World's End* (1896).

- He was an important figure in the emergence of socialism in Britain, founding the Socialist League in 1884, but eventually leaving the organisation over goals and methods by the end of the decade.

- He devoted much of the rest of his life to the Kelmscott Press, which he founded in 1891. Kelmscott was devoted to the publishing of limited-edition, illuminated-style print books. The 1896 Kelmscott edition of the *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* is considered a masterpiece of book design.

- William Morris (1834–1896) was the single most influential designer of the nineteenth century. Morris was a political theorist, scholar, translator and publisher, an environmental campaigner, writer and poet as well as an outstanding designer. Under his direction Morris & Co. grew into a flourishing and fashionable decorating firm renowned for its wallpapers and textiles.

- Today Morris & Co. guarantees authentic versions of those designs alongside new interpretations, using innovations in printing and weaving technology to create up-to-date fabric and wallpaper designs with timeless appeal.

- William Morris was the single most influential designer of the nineteenth century, and remains today one of the best known of all British designers. This is due to his extraordinary talent as a pattern designer, his colourful and inspiring life story and his forceful intellect and personality. Morris was much more than a designer; he was a socialist, scholar, translator and publisher, an environmental campaigner, writer and poet.

- William Morris was born in Walthamstow in 1834 to a well-off middle class family, the son of a wealthy city stockbroker.

- At the age of fourteen he was sent to Marlborough College and was much impressed by the High Church Oxford movement. With this in mind, he entered Exeter College, Oxford in 1853, studying theology as he intended to enter the Church. During this time he met Edward Burne-Jones who was taking Holy Orders, but would later become one of the great Pre-Raphaelite artists and remained Morris's closest friend for life.

- William Morris was a remarkable man, whose accomplishments were great. In his own lifetime, he was a well-known poet, an accomplished businessman, a Socialist, a conservator of historic and ancient buildings, as well as a designer of tiles, tapestries, carpets, linoleum, stained glass, and furniture.

- Today, he is best known as a designer of wallpaper and fabric, and by extension, of notecards, gift wrap, scarves and more. His wallpaper and fabric designs have never been out of production since he produced his first wallpaper in 1864.

- His designs are timeless. Based on natural forms and patterns, Morris wallpapers and fabrics appeal to a wide range of people, and are as suitable for an historic house as a modern one.

"MY WORK IS THE EMBODIMENT OF DREAMS" *William Morris* 1858

What are your opinions about this piece?

The Victorian era saw a lot of advancement – in particular art became romantic and mystical and embraced ornamentation.
(Largely it was a period of peace).

Think/Pair Share: Does William Morris' piece reflect the era? Why?

Do you think this links to the Victorian era? Why?

TASK

- Use all of the information we have read about William Morris and write down 5-10 key facts about William Morris (e.g. Morris lived in the Victorian era, an era well known for...)

- You could present your facts as a fact file about William Morris and include a picture that you have printed or drawn.

Challenge yourself!
How is a designer different from an artist?