

THE **Oomph!** DIGEST

An Oomph! Digest Special: William Morris



William Morris is one of Britain's best known and most beloved designers and is credited with helping start the British Arts and Crafts Movement in the late 19th Century.

Despite his status as one of the preeminent artists of his time, as a young man William Morris intended to join the clergy, ultimately studying Theology at Exeter College, Oxford. It was whilst traveling around Northern France studying Medieval and Gothic Cathedrals that Morris' childhood love of design returned and he vowed to become a designer.

William Morris secured his place in art history because of his close association with the pre-raphaelite Brotherhood, a group of artists known for their lush paintings and elaborate style.

William Morris' textiles, furniture, architecture, poetry and novels have survived the ages, leaving an enormous body of work for future generations to enjoy. In 1865, Morris was commissioned to design a room for the Victoria & Albert Museum, beginning a long relationship. The Green Room can still be seen at the museum today!

William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement



The Arts and Crafts Movement, thought to have started in earnest in 1861. It emphasised functional design which reflected the aesthetic values of the natural world and the virtues of the English Countryside. This is often thought to reflect the growing concerns surrounding industrialisation in the late 19th Century, as well as the public's desire to return to a previous natural idyll.

This art movement was named after The Arts and Craft Exhibition Society and influenced almost every aspect of design at the time. Inspired by William Morris, The Arts and Crafts aesthetic was interested in the quality of material and emphasised artistic vision over the uniformity of manufactured design at the time. Morris was also invested in the idea that his pieces could be used everyday, marrying utility and aesthetics.

Did you know...

William Morris' most famous textile design, *The Strawberry Thief*, was inspired by his view from his home. The piece was initially intended to be used as a wall hanging or curtains. Despite being one of the most expensive designs, *The Strawberry Thief* was a client favourite and helped save the company from financial ruin.



William Morris and The Pre-Raphaelites



The Pre-Raphaelites were world renowned for their love of vibrant colour, detailed designs and fantastical landscapes. William Morris became associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood through his friendship with the dashing Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who painted over 30 portraits of his wife, Jane Morris. Although they produced very different work, Rossetti and Morris were admirers of each other's output and both were advocates of beautiful design.

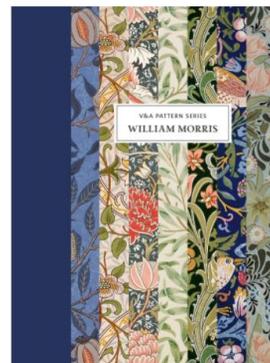
William Morris' Childhood



William Morris was born to Emma and William Morris Snr. Morris Snr was a businessman and banker who, due to investments in a Devonshire mine, was able to provide a comfortable upper middle class existence. In later life, William Morris would draw inspiration from the land surrounding his large childhood home in Epping.

William Morris' Writing

Despite the fact he is best known to us as an artist, William Morris was perhaps equally popular as a writer in his lifetime. His first collection of poetry was published when he was 24 years old and his novel *The Wood Beyond The World* is seen as hugely important in establishing fantasy fiction as a genre. He was in the middle of completing his novel *The Sundering Flood* when he died in 1896.



An Artist Joke

Q: Why shouldn't you ever date and artist?

A: I don't know... They always seem sketchy.

Word Scramble Puzzle

Can you unscramble this selection of scrambled terms related to **ART**?

1. ELALGOC
2. WINGDRA
3. HCTESK
4. EUSTAT
5. TROPRIAT
6. MISILTNPOI
7. GTINPANI
8. CTARSTBA
9. MISLREA
10. TISART

Quiz Answers:
1. a) 2. b) 3. b) 4. c) 5. a)

Word Scramble Answers:
1. COLLAGE 2. DRAWING 3. SKETCH 4. STATUE
5. PORTRAIT 6. POINTILISM 7. PAINTING
8. ABSTRACT 9. REALISM 10. ARTIST

William Morris Quiz

1. Which museum was Morris commissioned to design a room for in 1865?

- a) Victoria & Albert Museum
- b) Natural History Museum
- c) Science Museum

2. What was the name of the artwork which helped save Morris' company from financial ruin?

- a) Peacock and Dragon
- b) The Strawberry Thief
- c) Cabbage and Vine

3. Which movement was William Morris a part of?

- a) Cubist Movement
- b) Arts & Craft Movement
- c) Screen Print Movement

4. Which of Morris' novels is seen as hugely important in establishing fantasy fiction as a genre?

- a) News from Nowhere
- b) The Sundering Flood
- c) The Wood Beyond The World

5. What profession did William Morris Snr have to make his living?

- a) Businessman and banker
- b) Farmer and butcher
- c) Haberdasher