

SHQ: Who was William Morris?

In our creative lessons in weeks 7 and 8, we have looked at some aspects of Victorian Art. This week, we are looking at the work of another artist who was alive during the reign of Queen Victoria : **William Morris**.

Here are some key facts about William Morris, telling you a little about his life and what he was famous for?

- Born in 1834 into a wealthy middle class family.
- Lived in a mansion in Essex which had large areas of parkland and a farm next door.
- As a boy spend much time exploring nature, particularly plant life, in his surroundings – this would later prove to be a huge inspiration to his designs.
- Went to Oxford in 1853 – originally intending to work in the church following his interest for medieval art and architecture.
- Met Edward Burne-Jones – one of the most famous painters of that time – he became a life-long friend to Morris.
- Left university in 1856. Followed different career paths; changed from architecture to painting and became known for his poetry.
- 1859 married Jane Burden. Moved to Kent. Had 2 daughters.
- 'The Firm' was conceived originally called Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co (later just Morris & Co.)
- Soon the company were receiving important orders for stained glass windows and room designs. Also produced individual pieces of furniture, wallpaper designs and textiles (Morris is most famous for the latter two).
- Morris disliked harsh synthetic dyes so he explored use of natural dyes and studied other cultures to inspire his designs.
- *Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful...* This was Morris's golden rule.
- One of Morris's daughters developed into a talented textile designer. Morris died in 1896 but the firm 'Morris & Co.' continued to prosper well into the 20th century and some of his textile and wallpaper designs are still being produced today

William Morris's work is very different to that of Clarice Cliff in that he used subtle, natural colours in intricate designs whereas Clarice Cliff's work was very bright and colourful in more simple designs.

Your task throughout worksheets 11 and 12 is to mix the two styles and create a piece of artwork which is based upon an element of William Morris's design, but uses the bright colours of Clarice Cliff.

See page 2 of this worksheet for details of how this will work:

Firstly, you will need to visit the William Morris design Website referenced below

<https://www.stylelibrary.com/morris&co/>

Here you will see tabs to look at a range of designs on wallpaper, fabric and homeware.

Have a look through the designs (there are many examples) and choose one that has ONE small element that you would like to recreate.

For example, in the designs below, I might choose one flower, or one leaf, or if I was feeling more adventurous, a more complex flower:



Remember – you are not going to be reproducing the whole design – just one small element of it (you will notice that most William Morris designs are a repeating pattern so choose one part that is repeated lots of times in the sample that you choose)

Once you have chosen your design. You will need to sketch it out in pencil on a piece of A4 paper if possible. Try to fill the whole piece of paper if you can.

Do not include any detail (such as the veins on the leaves) as this will be added later.

Change the shape of the leaf or flower that you use if you wish – but use the William Morris design as a guide.

To help you, I have chosen a more complex flower off the first design above and a simple flower off the second design and sketched these. See Worksheet 11 resource for my designs. Hopefully this will help you when you are choosing yours.

In worksheet 12, you will be thinking about the colours for your design, including a background colour.