



## William Morris

**Designer's full name:** William Morris

**Designer's pseudonym/nickname:** None

**Gender:** Male

**Year Born:** 1834

**Country Born:** United Kingdom

**Year Died:** 1896

**Country Died:** United Kingdom

**Religion | Political Alignment:** Protestant is how he was raised, but his poetry suggested that his mind was moving away from his religion.

---

**How did any of the above affect either his/her life experience or work because it/they provided a challenge at the time?**

None of the above qualities of the designer provided a challenge for the time.

**Did this designer do notable work in fields other than what would TODAY be considered graphic design?**

William Morris was a man of many talents. Not only did he design intricate textiles; he also wrote poetry, fiction, philosophical work, and became a Socialist Journalist later in life.

**For what is this designer most noted in relation to design? EXPLAIN.**

In relation to design, William Morris was very important because of his ideologies. He believed that an object would have more value and better quality if it were made by hand rather than poorly constructed by a machine.

**Is there anything controversial about this designer? Explain.**

It's more of a scandal than a controversial matter, but the lady he loved was most likely having an affair with another artist.

**Explain this designer's education/training, including academic, apprenticeships, and /or mentorships.**

He attended a small school for young men in his earlier years, went to Marlborough College, and another school that was dangerous and not well-managed. Then, he learned under a clergyman named Reverend Frederick Guy. Later, he began attending Oxford and thriving in a group of men called the Set.

**Did this designer promote a specific ideology in his/her work? Explain.**

Some believed he was enabling his socialist beliefs in the interweaving and repetition of his works.. He was called a paradox by many due to his progressive as well as "antique" ideals.

**Why is this designer viewed as iconic in the history of graphic design?**

William Morris is known for leading the Arts and Crafts Movement.

**Is there any other important information to know about this designer?**

No.

---

**Student:** L. Elizabeth Vansandt

**State and explain the one most important effect that your assigned artist and the quality/importance of his/her work had on the history of graphic design.**

William Morris was an esteemed designer whose ideologies formed the basis for the Arts and Crafts Movement. His adoration for older art forms of the Medieval time period are shown through his patterns and projects. He did not enjoy the Industrial Revolution, and felt that people had lost the art of craft. He believed that a chair is much more meaningful when it is handcrafted personally and not mass-produced by machinery.

He came from a wealthy family and was able to have a substantial education. Morris earned a degree in architecture, fueled from his love for the medieval era and its artistic values. His path of education led to meeting John Ruskin, who influenced Morris and his philosophical ideas about craft. Morris's philosophies eventually influenced Arthur Machmurdo, who would be another heavy influencer of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Morris also tried painting and joined with others in the Pre-Raphaelite group. After that, Morris began to expand his artistic abilities. He made work in many media, from textiles to paintings to drawings to beautifully crafted furniture. Being able to explore his own creative mind is how he formed his ideologies that had such a huge impact on the Arts and Crafts Movement.

William Morris was a lover of the medieval histories, which explains his lavish designs. He created beautiful textiles and furniture that he hand-crafted and hand-designed. He was motivated to create his masterpieces because when furnishing his own home, the Red House, he was very displeased with the poor quality of the machine-made items and decided to create his own. William Morris also made and owned the Kelmscott Press, which was used to print his own works as well as works he idolized himself. He produced works that held a specific quality and aesthetic, and there was only one ever work that was printed twice. His machine could produce three fonts which he personally designed, used expensive and high quality paper, and had a very specific size. This was a great influence to early typographers during the Arts and Crafts Movement.

His life exploded with potential, and he flourished in the arts with his unique and highly appreciated ideologies. One of his most famous was the rejection of the Industrial Revolution's machine-made craze. Morris made it clear that the machine-made and mass-produced items (specifically furniture) were cheap and made poorly. He believed that the value of something came from its craft and the person who made it. This meant that something personally created had personal value, which made it more valuable in and of itself.

Most items handmade this way also tended to be of higher quality, which is why Morris started one of his own companies in 1861. The company produced furniture, textiles, and other products.

The Arts and Crafts Movement wouldn't have had a solid foundation of ideologies and values without the influence of William Morris. He was a revolutionary artist who gave his ideals to the art world and changed it for the better, giving artisans, and other experts of craft a reason to call themselves artists and enjoy the work that they do.

## **Bibliography**

Meggs, Phillip B. and Alston W. Purvis. *Meggs' History of Graphic Design, 5th Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Haworth-Booth, Mark. "WILLIAM MORRIS: THE EARTHLY PARADOX." *Aperture*, no. 146 (1997): 74-77. Accessed September 21, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24472554>

Horowitz, Sarah. "The Kelmscott Press and William Morris: A Research Guide." *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 25, no. 2 (2006): 60-65. Accessed September 23, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27949442>

Miller, Elizabeth Carolyn. "William Morris and the Form and Politics of Replication." In *Replication in the Long Nineteenth Century: Re-makings and Reproductions*, edited by Codell Julie and Hughes Linda K., 144-61. Edinburgh University Press, 2018. Accessed September 21, 2020.

Robertson, Michael. "William Morris's Artful Utopia." In *The Last Utopians: Four Late Nineteenth-Century Visionaries and Their Legacy*, 78-130. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press, 2018. Accessed September 24, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctt1x3s3gr.7.

