



# The Victorians

*Jeremy Paxman*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

# The Victorians

*Jeremy Paxman*

## The Victorians Jeremy Paxman

In *The Victorians*, Jeremy Paxman offers his personal take on the most important and influential period of our national past. Using the paintings of the era as his starting point - in his view, the one mode of Victorian art yet to be rescued from indifference - Paxman explores themes of family, urban life, industry, empire, and imagination to uncover truths (and explode some myths) about Victorian Britain.

To Paxman, these paintings were the television of their day, immensely popular visual narratives that attracted crowds by the hundreds of thousands: a single picture show featuring Elizabeth Butler's *Balaclava* (depicting survivors of the Charge of the Light Brigade) drew 50,000 viewers, some of them openly weeping. *The Victorians* shows how artists like Butler, William Powell Frith, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Luke Fildes, and Ford Madox Brown were chronicling a world changing before their eyes, and his overview ranges across the whole of Victorian life and culture: from high gothic architecture to the birth of the football league, from the novels of Dickens to the technological marvels of Brunel.

Published to coincide with a landmark BBC series, *The Victorians* is an opinionated, informed, surprising, and hugely enthusiastic appraisal of the birth of modern Britain - a glorious reminder of how the Victorians made us who we are today.

## The Victorians Details

Date : Published February 12th 2009 by BBC Books

ISBN : 9781846077432

Author : Jeremy Paxman

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Art, Historical, Victorian, Literature, 19th Century, European Literature, British Literature

 [Download The Victorians ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Victorians ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Victorians Jeremy Paxman**

---

## From Reader Review The Victorians for online ebook

### Anna says

I loved this: A history book with pictures or an art book with history. Either way it worked perfectly. It made me look again at a few paintings I already knew, introduced me to lots of others I hadn't seen, made me think about the impact of the art as a mass media form and consider more carefully how it reflects/depicts/constructs our view of culture and society. Great to see the John Martin exhibition at the Tate in Dec 2011 having read the book. (ie Art as a public spectacle). The one thing I would say is don't be tempted to buy the paperback: I had to return mine - it is half the size of the hardback and loses the image quality. Great supplementary text if you are looking at Victorian Literature.

---

### John Manley says

My first thoughts on entering the pages of this book was that I had bought the wrong book, and that my interest in art history was not strong enough to justify the read.

I loved it however, the mix of art, history and social commentary made a great read.

My main disappointment was the ability to see the pictures in my Kindle edition as I read the text. Once the book was finished, I did some googling and put together some Pinterest images on my 1863 board.

<http://pin.it/rfSGidR>

---

### Sasha says

"Victorians" by Jeremy Paxman is an interesting look at a certain era when paintings were reflecting & shaping public opinions. In the days before TV, paintings were re-printed and sold by thousands, some gaining such notoriety, fame and success that people lined up in front of museums and galleries to see them. It is a very interesting book, discussing how public taste slowly changed and whatever effect Charles Dickens had achieved with his books, some painters helped with their art, pointing at less fortunate members of society. Some of these paintings were perhaps milking too much of sentiment but there were quite a few that actually honestly reflected reality. Very interesting read.

---

### Mary Montgomery Hornback says

Love, love, loved this book. If you have interest in Victorian history and you appreciate art...this is the perfect book for you. JP adeptly shows how history and society shaped art, as well as, how art was used as a tool to shape public opinion and drive policy changes. It is fascinating material and of course it is delivered with JP's informative and sometimes witty journalistic style.

---

## Charolotte says

I love reading about art and history, especially when the two are combined, but I have two main criticisms with this book. Because the images of the paintings are lumped together into two sections, there is a lot of flipping back and forth while reading, which really disrupts the flow. Second, there are a substantial number of paintings that are discussed but not pictured, which I found incredibly frustrating.

A more even spacing of the images, and the inclusion of images of ALL the paintings covered would have gotten a higher mark from me; but what should have been an interesting read turned out to be a frustrating chore to get through.

---

## Terri says

What drove me mad about this art book was the way the art was presented to the reader: the paintings were too small and much of the art work discussed was not in the book! (That is why it got three stars.) However, I found what he wrote fascinating and it did make me appreciate the Victorian art and culture even more. Artists represented are: Marie Euphrosyne Spartali, William Powell Frith, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, Luke Fildes, William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens, Thomas Woolner, Ford Madox Brown and many more. Three star book review.

---

## Sarah says

An interesting look at Victorian history through the art of the day. Unfortunately not all the pictures mentioned are plates in the book. Of those that are; some are too small to see the details mentioned or spread over two pages with the central detail lost in the central fold.

Although split into sections it still felt a bit chaotic/disordered - I hadn't originally realised this was a TV series - I'm left wondering if there was a degree of repetition that worked in an ongoing series but is less effective in book format.

---

## Bloodorange says

I wonder how many other passages in the book are plagiarized. Here is the one I found:

Paxman, *The Victorians*, p. 215:

"Victoria died at Osborne on 22 January 1901 and, when the immediate shock had passed (after all, practically no one, except the very old, could recall what life was like without her), there came amid all other feelings a sense of relief, the prospect of a new sovereign and of a new century. As Virginia Woolf, emancipated from the Stephen family when she moved to Bloomsbury in 1904, put it: 'Everything was going to be new, everything was going to be different(...)' etc."

David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture* (1997, p. 246):

"When the old Queen died, and the immediate shock had passed (after all, practically no one, except the very

old, could recall what life was like without her), there came - according to E.E. Kellett, 'amid all the other things a sense of relief'<sup>10</sup> - the prospect a new century, and a new sovereign. As Virginia Woolf put it, emancipated from the Stephen family home in Kensington when she moved to Bloomsbury in 1904: 'Everything was going to be new, everything was going to be different(...)'

I understand this book was "just" a companion piece for a BBC series, but I've expected more from a journalist of this stature (or his ghostwriter).

---

## **Durba says**

'The Victorians' by Jeremy Paxman, a BBC journalist, is a historic account of art, primarily canvas paintings, that takes us through the social, economic and political tides of the Victorian era. With Paxman's journalistic background, the book is a great attempt at weaving a beautiful story around art and artists as a means to reflect on the Victorian society in the period 1830 - 1900.

In an era when television and social media was unheard of, Art had an important role to play in capturing the mood and the tone of the times. As such, this book is an impressive chronicle of Industrial revolution, Social Class system, the evolution of women's role in the Victorian Society, Britain as the mighty empire, War times, Imperialism and Influence on Britain of its varied colonies such as India and Africa.

Paxman talks about societal influence on paintings like the 'Derby Day'; 'Angel in the house'; 'the railway station'; 'work' etc., with some incredible facts which otherwise aren't very obvious to the viewer.

I was amazed to note the transition from portrait paintings to still photography and how people would use snakes and guns to hold the subject still for a clear photographic shot. A section of the book is dedicated to various wars fought by Britain including the Crimea War and the use of art in recording history. Similarly, the society's outlook towards prostitution or fallen women and their plight, double standards towards men and women, life in the workhouses (which apparently influenced Charles Dickens to write Oliver Twist), invention of the railways and its positive influences on social mobility, life in the factories, emerging cities and social classes as a result of the industrial revolution and a host of other elements of society at that time captured in oil paintings and frozen in time for posterity. It made me sit up and take notice of the art forms more curiously.

While it is a very interesting read, the paperback version does not do justice to the paintings and the minute details that Paxman has referred to. With so many facts packed into the pages, chances are that the interested reader would have to go back and forth between internet and this book to understand the references. It may also take you to a few art galleries to look at the paintings.

Overall an interesting take on some of the popular paintings of the bygone Victoria era. I sure look forward to visiting art galleries with an eye for greater detail now. I have rated it at 4 stars for the paperback version which fails to create the visual impact for the paintings, other than that I immensely enjoyed reading this book and may even read it a second time in the future.

---

## **Matilda says**

It's just one of the best and most complete book I've ever read about the Victorian Era.

---

### **Johanne says**

Interesting romp through Victorian paintings - the downside being that not all the paintings discussed were illustrated and those that were although inserted as plates, were squashed two or more to a page so that you couldn't see much of the detail referred to.

---

### **Louise says**

Interesting stuff! I don't think I will look at another piece of art from Victorian times again the same way...

---

### **gigireads says**

I think this book was extremely interesting, despite being challenging, and was a nice introduction to how history and art intertwined in the Victorian era. It was interesting how the author described each painting and piece of artwork, and gave context, explaining part of the complicated thought process of the artist. Additionally, it was intriguing to hear about the various symbols within the art, that can be blind to the untrained viewer. However, one key issue I had, as with other reviews I've read, was the lack of chronological order, which meant we jumped from topic to topic, and from year to year, with no warning. It made it slightly difficult to fully absorb everything, however I learned a lot and appreciated art much more than I initially did.

Would recommend to aspiring art-historians or anyone with an enthusiasm for the Victorian era, it is amazing how much we've become shaped by them. (see the thought provoking afterword) !!

---

### **Jude Brigley says**

Extremely interesting. I like the use of paintings but you may have to look some of them up as only a few reproduced in the book itself.

---

### **Paolo Nardi says**

<http://speloncalibro.blogspot.it/2014...>

---