

Popularity... and then?

D. Facing Facts in Fiction

Nineteenth-century America was riven by the issue of slavery. Lincoln reportedly praised the novelist **Harriet Beecher Stowe** as a major force in ending it. The British reformer **Charles Kingsley** turned his attention to another form of compelled labor: the use of children as chimney sweeps and in the mines. Both expressed their views in powerful novels.

- **Stowe:** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, summary
- **Stowe:** *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, excerpts from the 1987 movie.
- **Film:** *The Water Babies* (1978), excerpts
- **Kingsley:** *The Tide River* (Oliver Peirce)

Cecil Frances **Alexander** (1818–95, *British hymnodist*), Philip Hermogenes **Calderon** (1833–98, *British painter*), John **Collier** (1850–1934, *British painter*), William Holman **Hunt** (1827–1910, *British painter*), Charles **Kingsley** (1819–75, *British writer and reformer*), William Holmes **McGuffey** (1800–73, *American educator*), John Everett **Millais** (1829–96, *British painter*), John **Newton** (1725–1807, *British hymnodist*), Coventry **Patmore** (1823–96, *British poet*), Dante Gabriel **Rossetti** (1828–82, *British painter and poet*), Ira **Sankey** (1840–1908, *American hymnodist*), Harriet Beecher **Stowe** (1811–96, *American writer and reformer*), William Frederick **Yeames** (1835–1918, *British painter*)



Millais, by Holman Hunt

7. The Moral View

SOMETIMES ARTISTS BECOME POPULAR BECAUSE THEIR ART appeals to contemporary concerns; they then go out of fashion for precisely the same reason. This class is about painters, writers, and hymnodists—all highly skilled in their own right—who managed to speak to the mid-nineteenth-century appetite for moral exploration. Many of these well-known figures have been forgotten, and if such names as **John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, Cecil Frances Alexander, and Harriet Beecher Stowe** remain on the tongue, it is more as a matter of honor than active devotion.

Our first hour will consist entirely of Victorian British painting, from the Pre-Raphaelites onwards. Some of it is explicitly Biblical, some addresses secular moral themes, and towards the end of the century some is simply designed to keep the beholder guessing. For whatever reason, there was no close equivalent in America, but there was a strong evangelical fervor and one enormous moral issue—slavery—that engaged artists of many kinds. *rb.*

A. Reading a Picture

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood aimed to bridge the gap between the sister arts of painting and poetry. So a painting that has a narrative or implied verbal content is no longer merely a design, but requires *reading*.

Millais: *A Child's World* (1886), now *Bubbles*

Millais: *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1850, London Tate)

↗ **Millais:** *Christ in the House of His Parents* (SmartHistory video)

Millais: *The Woodman's Daughter* (1851, London Guildhall)

Millais: *Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind* (1892, Aukland)

Hunt: *The Shadow of Death*, (1873, Manchester)

Hunt: *Christ and the Two Marys* (1847/97, Adelaide)

Hunt: *The Light of the World* (1854, Keble College, Oxford)

Hunt: *The Hireling Shepherd* (1851, Manchester)

B. Solving the Puzzle

While the moral content of didactic paintings in the third quarter of the 19th century was generally obvious, the last quarter saw a fashion for “problem pictures” that would keep their audience guessing.

Hunt: *The Awakening Conscience* (1853, Tate Britain)

↗ **Hunt:** *The Awakening Conscience* (SmartHistory video)

Calderon: *Broken Vows* (1856, Tate Britain)

Yeames: *And When Did You Last See Your Father?* (1878, Liverpool)

Yeames: *Defendant and Counsel* (1895, Bristol)

↗ **Collier:** *The Sentence of Death* (1908, Wolverhampton)

C. Opening Young Minds

We turn now to evangelical hymns in both Britain and America, and to one pioneering educator. What they have in common is a knack for presenting complex truths in simple terms that a child can understand.

↗ **Film:** *Amazing Grace* (2006), Wilberforce/Newton scene

↗ **Alexander:** *All things bright and beautiful*

↗ **Alexander:** *Do no sinful action* (Ian McKellar)

↗ **Alexander:** *Once in Royal David's City* (King's College)

↗ **Sankey:** *The Ninety-and-Nine* (Dave Willetts)

↗ **Video:** McGuffey Readers (Henry Ford Museum)

↗ **Video:** McGuffey Readers in home-schooling