

## The Victorian age

The long reign of England's Queen Victoria, from 1837 to 1901, was a time of great progress in technology and industry. Great Britain built up a vast empire in all parts of the world. But many people remained poor. Writers reflected the concern that the human spirit might be destroyed by the machine age.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson was the leading poet of the Victorian Age. Some of his poems deal with conflicting scientific and social ideas. Others address patriotic subjects. Matthew Arnold wrote poetry and critical essays about literature and society. Robert Browning wrote dramatic monologues—poems in the form of speeches by imaginary characters—such as *My Last Duchess* (1842).

Many great novels were written in the Victorian period. Charles Dickens' works are still widely read today. His most famous novel is probably *A Christmas Carol* (1843), which tells of how hard-hearted Ebenezer Scrooge is touched by the Christmas spirit. Another great fiction writer was William Makepeace Thackeray, whose *Vanity Fair* (1847–48) closely observed the manners and morals of his day. Charlotte Brontë and Emily Brontë were sisters who wrote powerful and personal stories about characters isolated from the rest of the world. Charlotte is most famous for *Jane Eyre* (1847), while Emily wrote *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

Some novelists examined their characters to reveal their motives. This was the beginning of the psychological novel, as seen in such works as Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) and Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903).

Other novelists turned their skills to adventure and romance: Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the exciting pirate tale *Treasure Island* (1881); Rudyard Kipling wrote the tales of *The Jungle Books* (1894, 1895); and Lewis Carroll wrote the fantasy *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865).