

Final Research Project: Crystal Palace Exhibition: Siena College Edition



Source: Britannica

Purpose & Assignment: This semester, we have focused on situating Victorian works in their historical contexts. From our artifact close readings on the first day of class, to our Sutori “timeline” of Victorian events, to our “Victorian Literature in Context” presentations on topics ranging from nineteenth-century marriage laws to Victorian medicine, to the primary sources we read (including Mrs. Beeton’s *Book of Household Management*, Mayhew’s *London Labour and the London Poor*, and T.N. Mukharji’s *A Visit to Europe*), we’ve spent most of the semester thinking about nineteenth-century history and literature *together*.

We have also talked a lot this semester about how the Victorians were fascinated by *exhibition*. From the rise of institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum (1852) and Natural History Museum (1881), to the Crystal Palace exhibition (1851) and the Colonial and Indian Exhibition (1886), the Victorians often sought to make sense of their world by collecting, preserving, and displaying artifacts that reflected their culture and their time.

For your final project, you will **create your own virtual “exhibits” about a Victorian topic of your choice**. (You may choose the same topic you selected for your context presentation or an entirely different topic). This topic can be as broad or as narrow as you like (e.g. “Victorian marriage” or “The 1857 Indian Mutiny”). Feel free to choose something about which you are genuinely curious!

This assignment has two parts:

PART A: YOU AS CURATOR

Your exhibit (submitted as one big Word Doc or PDF document) will consist of the following:

1) Exhibit Introduction: You should open your exhibit with an **introductory essay (2 pages)** that does the following:

- a) Gives an overview of your topic, with historical details (cited)
- b) Introduces the “artifacts” you include (see below) and gives a rationale for why you included them



2) Virtual exhibit: You will then include a collection of **at least eight “artifacts” with captions (approx. 1 paragraph long)**. The exhibit should consist of the following:

-Three literary artifacts: Please include three different quotations from literary works we have read that reflect your topic, with captions explaining *how* they reflect your topic. You may simply type out the quotations and then “caption” them with text beneath the quotation.

(For instance, if you choose “industrialization,” you could include the “fluff” quotation from Gaskell and then include a caption about how it reflects industrialization).

-Three cultural objects or artifacts: These can be photographs, advertisements, or screenshots of larger documents (like newspaper articles) – whatever you find! – again, with captions that explain the artifact and show how it reflects your topic. You may copy and paste these items into your Word doc.; they’ll all likely be open source since they’re from the nineteenth century.

(For instance, if you choose “Victorian zoos,” you could include the hippo image that we looked at on the first day and caption it with details about the London Zoological Gardens).

Some places to look for your artifacts:

-British Library Victorians Collection (over 100+ digital “artifacts” about a wide array of topics relating to Victorian life):

<https://www.bl.uk/victorian-britain/collection-items>

-National Archives “Victorian Lives” page (photos and artifacts organized by topic):

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-lives/>

-COLLAGE: London Picture Archive (tons of galleries with images):

<https://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/>

-Victoria & Albert Museum catalogue: <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

-British Newspaper Archive (Victorian newspapers, search by date):

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

**Let me know if you need help accessing – I have a login.*

-Archive.org

-Two “present day” artifacts: These can be images or links to articles that reflect your topic’s ties to “present-day” concerns and show its enduring relevance, again with captions that reflect the connections between your Victorian artifact and present-day issues.

(For instance, if you choose “industrialization,” you might include an article about Amazon warehouses and reflect on how they resemble/do not resemble Victorian factories. If you choose the Cholera Outbreak of 1854, you might reflect on how epidemiological concerns from the Victorian period resemble those we see today with COVID-19).

3) **Works Cited** with the sources you consulted, MLA format 8th edition. This might be a much *longer* Works Cited than you are used to creating, since you’re looking at a variety of sources rather than simply close reading one.

Your exhibit is due on Monday, 5/4, before class time (2:40 pm EST). You may submit it as a Word Doc or PDF via Canvas.



PART B: YOU AS MUSEUM VISITOR

You must also “visit” your peers’ exhibits. After you submit your exhibits, I will gather them in a folder on Canvas (under “Files”). You must “visit” two peers’ exhibits and write a brief, 1-page reflection essay in which you answer the following question:

How did these exhibits expand your understanding of Victorian life?

Victorian Literature
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Make sure to draw on specific, concrete details from your peers' exhibits.

***Your reflection on your peers' exhibits is due Wednesday 5/6 by 11:59 pm EST.
Submit via Canvas as a Word Doc.***

Rubric:

This project is worth 100 points:

- Exhibit (80 points):
 - 40 points for artifacts (5 for each artifact)
 - 35 points for introductory essay
 - 5 points for Works Cited
- Reflection on two peers' exhibits (20 points)

Due Dates:

Again, you have **two due dates** to pay attention to for this assignment:

- 1) Your exhibit: due Monday 5/4 before class time (2:40 pm EST)**
- 2) Reflection on peers' exhibits: due Wednesday 5/6 by 11:59 pm EST**

**Remember that I cannot accept any late work for this class after Friday 5/8 at 11:59 pm EST.*