

## The Aesthetic Movement

**Leggi il brano, prepara un riassunto orale da dire alla Prof in classe, e svolgi le attività richieste dagli esercizi.**

The Aesthetic Movement in Britain (from 1860 to 1900) aimed at escaping from the ugliness and materialism of the Industrial Age, by focusing on producing art that was beautiful, without a political or a social meaning. The Aesthetic motto was 'Art for Art's sake'. The artists and designers created some of the most sophisticated and beautiful artworks of the Western tradition and, through this process, codified the rules of the domestic world of the British middle-class. Oscar Wilde, its main protagonist, said that:

*Beauty has as many meanings as man has moods. Beauty is the symbol of symbols. Beauty reveals everything, because it expresses nothing. When it shows itself, it shows us the whole fiery-coloured world.*

The artists found beauty in Renaissance paintings, ancient Greek sculptures and in the art forms of the Orient, especially Japanese prints. Being eclectic is one of the Aesthetic Movement's most intriguing characteristics. The new Aesthetic painters, architects and designers included romantic bohemians such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones.



The Hay Field, painting, by Thomas Armstrong, 1869, England. Museum no. P.9-1917. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

A few key members of Rossetti's circle took a deep interest in interior and textile design, seeking to transform banal and pretentious furniture of the middle-class home in something beautiful to see and to experience. In the case of William Morris, there was a feeling for natural ornament and harmonious colours. These designers aimed at producing chairs and tables

called 'Art Furniture', and at creating extraordinary ceramics, textiles, and wallpapers.

Manufacturers and new firms responded to the demand, making distinctive items available at various prices, attractive to even a modest budget. The middle-class home became the focus of the Aesthetic movement, and a lot of publications offered guidance on how to achieve the new look.

The flamboyant author Oscar Wilde had a lot to say about creating a beautiful house. He covered each aspect of domestic decoration and gave some common sense advice. For example, "stained glass can reduce the glare from a large window and fill a room with more subtle lighting".



A stained glass window, © Nile Horse Publishing

**Es. 1 - Queste parole si trovano nel testo che hai letto. Inserisci la parola giusta in ogni frase. Usa un dizionario!**

sake; ugliness; advice; wallpaper; furniture

1. A late 18th-century included the use of a plain solid shade of coloring applied to \_\_\_\_\_, usually in green or in blue.
2. Do you think this frame makes the picture show its \_\_\_\_\_ ?
3. I need to go to Ikea to buy new \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. I hope you're not doing this just for the \_\_\_\_\_ of the money.
5. We are here to give people \_\_\_\_\_ about health issues.

**Es. 2- Qual é la caratteristica della parola *advice*? Ha una forma plurale? Quali altre parole si comportano come *advice*? Si tratta di parole numerabili? Fai una piccola ricerca al riguardo, e scrivila sul tuo quaderno.**

**Es. 3 – ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:**

1. IN WHICH PERIOD DID THE AESTHETIC MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN DEVELOP?
2. WHAT DID ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS DO IN THAT PERIOD?
3. WHAT DOES BEAUTY SHOW US, ACCORDING TO WILDE?
4. WHERE DID THE ARTISTS FIND BEAUTY, IN THAT PERIOD?
5. WHO WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT BRITISH ARTISTS OF THAT PERIOD?
6. WHAT DID WILDE DO, IN THE FIELD OF HOME DESIGN?