



Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Poet Laureate

Resident at Farringford House, Freshwater

Tennyson was born in Lincolnshire in 1809 and attended Trinity College, Cambridge in 1827 where he received The Chancellor's Gold Medal (a prestigious award given for poetry) in 1829. His first solo collection of poems were published soon after. Poetry writing was important to Victorians as there was no recorded music at this time.

When Tennyson's poem 'Maud' (written in 1854-55) became a firm favourite with British Society, Alfred Lord Tennyson was able to buy Farringford House (which is now a hotel), on the Isle of Wight, which he initially rented with his wife from 1853. In 1850, he was made Poet Laureate and he held this post for forty years. Heralded as one of the greatest poets in British History, he died, at the age of 83, in 1892. The monument which stands at the top of Tennyson Down (renamed in his honour) was erected after his death.

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2. Build a timeline of Tennyson's life which includes his major life events (you could use this as a basis to produce a biography of the poet).
3. Look at a couple of poems by Tennyson e.g. *The Eagle*, and *Break, Break, Break*. There are online analysis notes for both poems.
4. Poets and writers in the Victorian era experienced a similar type of fame to that of pop stars today. As Tennyson became more popular with the public, he was often pursued by admirers of his work. They would often congregate at the door to his house and Tennyson often found this kind of attention stifling. It is believed that he built a bridge from his property to the downs so that he could escape the attention. Compare Tennyson with JK Rowling, both driven to move house as a result of media attention (use the tables on page 2 to help you).
 - ▶ Imagine that you are Tennyson, and plagued by admirers of your work. Consider the negatives of this situation and consider your feelings (e.g. frustration, being crowded, being constantly pestered etc). Jot them down. Draft a diary entry from Tennyson's perspective, expressing the negative side of being a famous individual. Alternatively, you could write a diary entry as a celebrity expressing their concerns for their family, etc. How has the intrusion into privacy changed over time? What is being done to protect victims? Research the "Leveson Enquiry".

You might want to consider researching the following:

- ▶ Look at the history of the Pop Festival from Woodstock to the Isle of Wight, to the present day. Who were the major artists at the largest Isle of Wight Festival in 1970? Investigate the influence of musicians such as Joni Mitchell and Jimi Hendrix. In 1970, nearly 600,000 people descended on an Island with a resident population of less than 100,000.
- ▶ Consider the implications of this and the reason for the subsequent act of Parliament: "Isle of Wight Act" preventing gatherings of more than 5,000 people on the island without a special licence.



Invading Privacy - how has this changed over time?

Complete the table, identifying ways fans and journalists spy/spied on celebrities. Remember in Tennyson's day, there were no photographs as we know them today, no telephone tapping etc.

Tennyson	Modern Celebrity

Other ideas for activities:

- ▶ You may want to research the negatives of fame from the perspective of a celebrity. Understand that success also takes away a sense of freedom. Redraft your diary entry so that it reflects the darker side of being a 'celebrity'.

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- ▶ Research what celebrities have to do in our current society to protect themselves.
- ▶ Perhaps you can find examples of the lengths that famous people have to go to in order to protect their families. This could be a mini-project which outlines that 'all that glitters is not gold'.
- ▶ Identify and consider things celebrities and their children cannot do, e.g. go shopping or to the cinema without their bodyguards, etc.

Negatives of Fame





TENNYSON'S POETRY

Nature, views, landscapes and settings were important to Tennyson and he would often walk for long periods of time, using his appreciation of nature as an inspiration for his poems.

A couple of examples of his poems, based on nature, are below:

The Eagle by Alfred Lord Tennyson

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

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Live thy Life,
Young and old,
Like yon oak,
Bright in spring,
Living gold;

Summer-rich
Then; and then
Autumn-changed
Soberer-hued
Gold again.

All his leaves
Fall'n at length,
Look, he stands,
Trunk and bough
Naked strength.

ACTIVITY:

- ▶ Sit and observe the natural world around you. You may want to focus on flowers/trees/birds/the seascape/the landscape.
- ▶ Use the poems above to inspire your own composition.
- ▶ See if you can use the same rhyme scheme as Tennyson (this may have to be refined when you return to school).



Tennyson Monument

At the monument...

Sit by the monument. You could sketch the monument itself, or focus on parts of it. You could also sit on one of the benches and sketch the views which you see from this point. Why did this area inspire Tennyson? Have a go at drafting some poetry.

Back at school...

Use the internet to research different photos of the monument. Some create very different moods. Recreate the images

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Dimbola Lodge

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Near to Farringford is Dimbola Lodge which was the residence of the Victorian photographer, Julia Margaret Cameron. She hosted many famous people here, including Tennyson, Lewis Carroll and Charles Darwin.

After being given a camera as a present by her daughter, she became interested in photography and she was known for making her subjects sit for hours whilst she photographed them. Indeed Tennyson would often refer to her subjects as her 'victims' due to the length of time that they would have to pose.

Dimbola Lodge is now a museum which has a permanent exhibition of Cameron's work, alongside exhibitions from global artists. You may visit the museum to discover more about Cameron and her pioneering work.

Activities you might enjoy...

- ▶ If you visit Dimbola Lodge, write a review for a tourism website. You'll need to research the features of this style of writing prior to embarking upon this task. You may want to use quotations from visitors (look on review websites such as 'TripAdvisor' for this type of content).
- ▶ Look at the Victorian photographs at Dimbola lodge. Take some pictures of the area that could be used to promote Freshwater Bay, making links to its heritage.
- ▶ Experiment with different methods of editing the photographs taken.
- ▶ Use the photographs in a package of promotional material that makes links with the heritage of Freshwater Bay.
- ▶ Some of Cameron's works represented oil paintings from the same period. Find a painting of a famous artist of choice and stage a photograph so that it reflects the painting as closely as possible.





Applying Cameron's Style

Other activities for back at school...

Often, Cameron would try to capture innocence, virtue or wisdom which made her subjects examples of religious or literary figures.

Look at the photographs 'I Wait' (she often depicted children as angels) and 'Iago' (a Shakespearean character from Othello), seen below.

- ▶ Choose a character from a religious story, or from one of your favourite novels. Stage a photograph to try to capture the traits of the character

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- ▶ Make a collage of a variety of Cameron's photographs. See if you can recreate some of her examples.
- ▶ You could use photography or perhaps turn one of her photographs in to an oil painting (reversing her method of working).