



# A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England

*Julie E. Fromer*

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## **A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England** Julie E. Fromer

Tea drinking in Victorian England was a pervasive activity that, when seen through the lens of a century's perspective, presents a unique overview of Victorian culture. Tea was a necessity and a luxury; it was seen as masculine as well as feminine; it symbolized the exotic and the domestic; and it represented both moderation and excess. Tea was flexible enough to accommodate and to mark subtle differences in social status, to mediate these differences between individuals, and to serve as a shared cultural symbol within England.

In *A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England*, Julie E. Fromer analyzes tea histories, advertisements, and nine Victorian novels, including *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Portrait of a Lady*. Fromer demonstrates how tea functions within the literature as an arbiter of taste and middle-class respectability, aiding in the determination of class status and moral position. She reveals the way in which social identity and character are inextricably connected in Victorian ideology as seen through the ritual of tea.

Drawing from the fields of literary studies, cultural studies, history, and anthropology, *A Necessary Luxury* offers in-depth analysis of both visual and textual representations of the commodity and the ritual that was tea in nineteenth-century England.

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