





And if the house was designed to be looked at from the garden, so the garden forms pictures from different windows of the house. From the dining room window, gardeners doing what must have been the last mow of the season and a round window on the top landing offered a little square of plain glass to look out from a surrounding circle of hand-painted flowers and fruits.

Just the week before I visited Red House, I set my students the task of writing about the view from a character's bedroom so they could understand him or her better. Framed in his bedroom window, William Morris would have woken up to a tree with outstretched, even branches and a path leading beyond the lawn outside. On a windy night, Morris would have lain in bed listening to the creak and whistle of this tree.

The house has been taken back by the National Trust and is dedicated to the time William Morris spent there, but it has escaped feeling too much like a museum. It was good - if surprising - to see potatoes and apples on sale in the vegetable patch. How could I resist taking some home? William Morris loved his food so I think he would have approved. In fact, his greed led to a spectacularly good practical joke by his friend, Edward Burne-Jones, who had the sides of Morris's waistcoat secretly sewn up to persuade him he was putting on weight.

Perhaps this was the cause of the famous apple fight in the Red House Drawing Room which apparently left Morris with a black eye.

SAMPLE PAGES

