Other 19th Century British Writers and the Theme of Poverty

After discussing the theme of poverty in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* in class the other day, I began thinking about how much of 19th century Victorian-era literature is heavily influenced on the terrible living conditions of the time. The British Victorian era gave us some of the most beloved novels and poetry of all times, including Charles Dickens, The Bronte's, William Thackeray, Robert Browning, and Alfred Tennyson, to name a few. It was then that I came to the realization just how heavy of an influence the living conditions at the time influenced such esteemed writers. I traveled around England for three weeks two years ago, and visited countless museums and went on many tours of different places in England. I found that it wasn't only London that was a disgusting and horrible place to live, but many other towns in England, too. Along with that, Dickens was not the only writer to be influenced by the horrible living conditions of the 1800's. Take for example, The Bronte sisters. On my travels, I went to Haworth, home of the Bronte's. I learned about how the little town once stank with the stench of disease, and sewers would run out into the streets. The drinking water was so dirty that 1/3 children in Haworth under the age of ten would die. This includes the Bronte's own older sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, whose death inspired Charlotte Bronte's novel, *Jane Eyre*. It astonished me that Patrick Bronte lived to see his wife and all six of his children die before himself, due to these terrible living conditions and disease. It was hard for me to believe that the beautiful little town of Haworth (see picture below) I was standing in was once so disgusting and deadly.

Moving on from the Bronte's, William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* is a novel that satires society in 19th century Britain. Elizabeth Gaskell wrote novels that painted pictures of people living in poverty during the Victorian era. Dickens, The Bronte's, Thackeray, and Gaskell all had underlining themes about poverty, society, and living conditions in the 19th century.

I then found an article, [http://www.arlde.com/dickenslondon.htm](http://www.arlde.com/dickenslondon.htm), which explains how London's living conditions inspired Charles Dickens' most famous works, including *A Christmas Carol*. It was very interesting reading more on sanitation, disease, the law and poverty in London at the time in which *A Christmas Carol* takes place. In conclusion, I just found it very interesting that Charles Dickens was not the only 19th century major author to write about the many themes such as poverty, living conditions, and the law, in their classic novels that we still treasure in the literary society today.