

## ROMANTICIZATION

Humans like to know why things happen, especially why  
**REALLY BAD THINGS HAPPEN**



*She Never Told Her Love*, by Henry Peach Robinson, 1857.  
Public Domain. Hosted by <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/283090>

However, before people understood that TB came from bacteria, before there was any treatment, it was very hard to trace the reasons people got TB. Old people, young people, healthy people, unhealthy people, rich people, poor people, people in cities, people in rural areas, all kinds of people got TB.

**How have you seen tuberculosis portrayed in literature and art?**

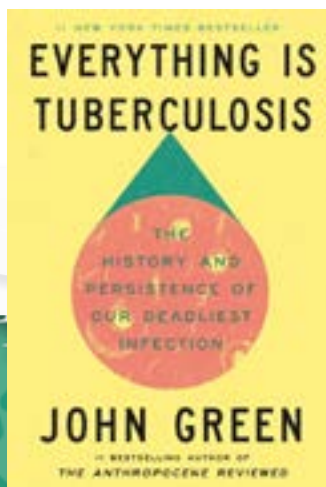
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So, in an attempt to explain the disease and because it affected so many people, Europeans in the 18th and 19th centuries romanticized the disease, seeing the effects of the illness as beautiful and noble.

**What impacts beauty standards/ expectations today?**

People attributed the disease to artists and creative geniuses. "Consumptive chic" had taken over European beauty standards. Women were discouraged from physical activity and too much time in the sun."

A 19th Century painting of Marie Duplessis by Edouard Viénot. Marie Duplessis was a courtesan with tuberculosis whose beauty contributed to romanticizing the infection. Public domain digital image. Hosted by <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/31/3/23-1581-f4>



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2026/2027 BOOK SELECTION:**

**EVERYTHING IS  
TUBERCULOSIS**