

The Victorian Age

1832-1900



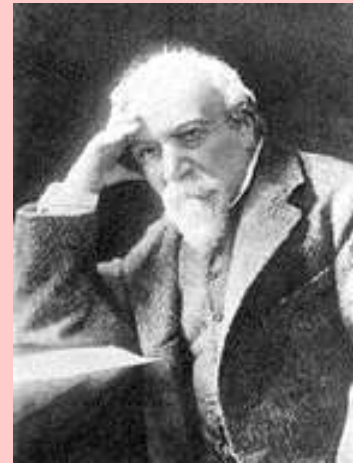
INTRODUCTORY NOTES
BRITISH LITERATURE

Quotes from the Times...

- “Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret”
Benjamin Disraeli, Coningsby
- “’Tis better to have loved and lost/
Than never to have loved at all” Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “In Memoriam, A.H.H.”
- A man’s reach should exceed his grasp,
/ Or what’s a heaven for?”
Robert Browning, “Andrea del Santo”

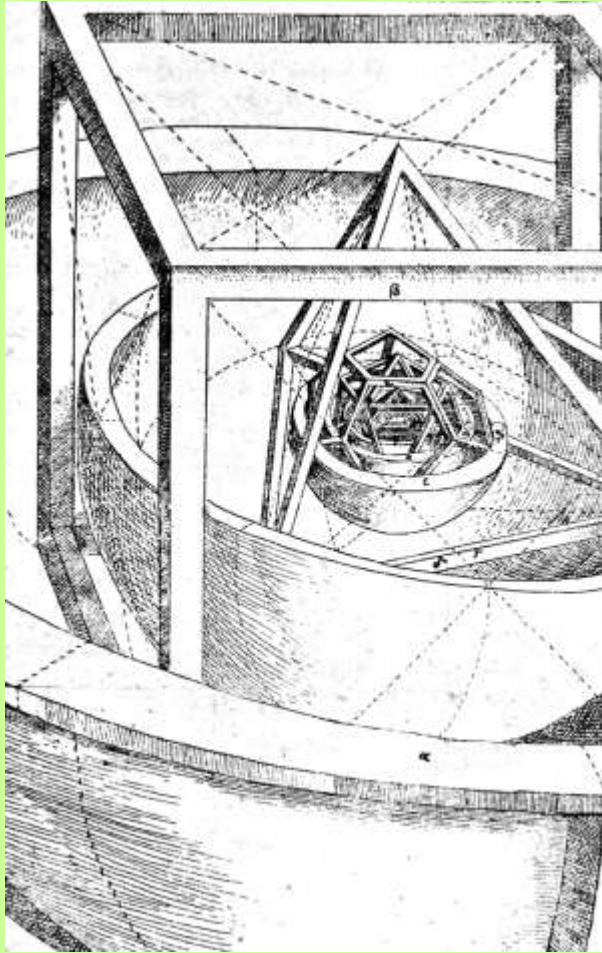


Tennyson



Browning

General Info About the Time



- Enormous changes occurred in political and social life in England and the rest of the world
- The scientific and technical innovations of the Industrial Revolution, the emergence of modern nationalism, and the European colonization of much of Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East changed most of Europe
- Far-reaching new ideas created the greatest outpouring of literary production the world has ever seen

Queen Victoria (1819-1901)

Reign: 1837-1901

- She had the longest reign in British history
- Became queen at the age of 18; she was graceful and self-assured. She also had a gift for drawing and painting
- Throughout her reign, she maintained a sense of dignity and decorum that restored the average person's high opinion of the monarchy after a series of horrible, ineffective leaders
- 1840-Victoria married a German prince, Albert, who became not king but Prince-consort
- After he died in 1861, she sank into a deep depression and wore black every day for the rest of her life



The Growth of the British Empire

- England grew to become the greatest nation on earth
- Empire included Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, Kenya, and India
- England built a very large navy and merchant fleet (for trade and colonization)



The Growth of the British Empire



- Imported raw materials such as cotton and silk and exported finished goods to countries around the world
- By the mid-1800s, England was the largest exporter and importer of goods in the world. It was the primary manufacturer of goods and the wealthiest country in the world
- Because of England's success, they felt it was their duty to bring English values, laws, customs, and religion to the "savage" races around the world



Social and Political Reform



- 1832-First Reform Act-extended the vote to most middle-class men
- 1833-Britain abolished slavery/Factory Act-regulated child labor in factories
- 1834-Poor Law-Amendment applied a system of workhouses for poor people
- 1871-Trade Union Act-made it legal for laborers to organize to protect their rights

Religious Movement in Victorian England

- Evangelical Movement: emphasized a Protestant faith in personal salvation through Christ. This movement swept through England. Led to the creation of the Salvation Army and YMCA.
- Oxford Movement (Tractarians): sought to bring the official English Anglican Church closer in rituals and beliefs to Roman Catholicism

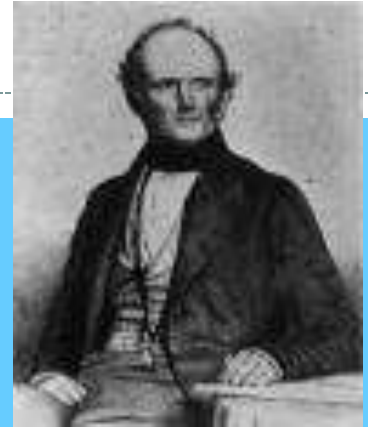


Other Thoughts...

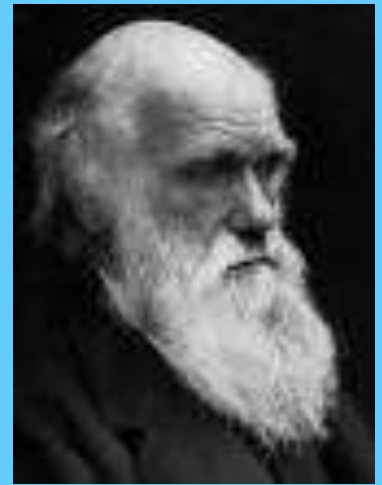
- John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)-philosopher who created two ideas
- Utilitarianism: the object of moral action was to bring about the greatest good for the greatest amount of people
- Liberalism: governments had the right to restrict the actions of individuals only when those actions harmed others, and that society should use its collective resources to provide for the basic welfare of others. Also encouraged equal rights for women

Other Thoughts..

- Charles Lyell (1797-1875):
- Showed that geological features on Earth had developed continuously and slowly over immense periods of time
- Charles Darwin (1809-1882):
Introduced the survival of the fittest theory



Lyell



Darwin

Other Thoughts...



- Herbert Spencer (1820-1903): Applied Darwinism to human society: as in nature, survival properly belongs to the fittest, those most able to survive. Social Darwinism was used by many Victorians to justify social inequalities based on race, social or economic class, or gender
- Adam Smith- 18th century economist, held that the best government economic policy was to leave the market alone—to follow a laissez faire or “let it be” policy of little or no gov’t intervention

Victorian Literature

- Four types of writing were popular during the Victorian Era:
- Realist
- Naturalist
- The Novel
- Poetry

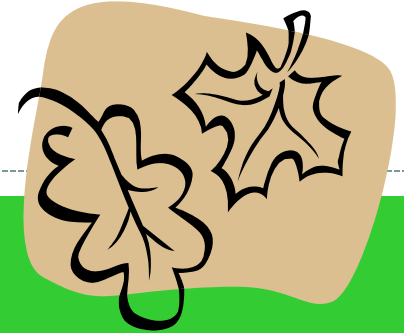


Realism



- The attempt to produce in art and literature an accurate portrayal of reality
- Realistic, detailed descriptions of everyday life, and of its darker aspects, appealed to many readers disillusioned by the “progress” going on around them.
- Themes in Realist writing included families, religion, and social reform

Naturalism



- Based on the philosophical theory that actions and events are the results not of human intentions, but of largely uncontrollable external forces
- Authors chose subjects and themes common to the lower and middle classes
- Attentive to details, striving for accuracy and authenticity in their descriptions

The Novel

- Emily Bronte: Wuthering Heights
- Charlotte Bronte: Jane Eyre
- Charles Dickens: Many of his novels were published in serial form. His comic and sentimental descriptions of the lives of people in diverse occupations and social classes made Dickens the most popular Victorian novelist. A Christmas Carol, Great Expectations, David Copperfield



Emily Bronte



Charlotte Bronte



Charles Dickens



- Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892): Most popular Victorian poet. He wrote narrative poems
- Robert Browning (1812-1889): raised dramatic monologue to new heights—making it a vehicle for deep psychological probing and character study
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861): with Robert, one of literature's greatest poets. Wrote love sonnets valued for their lyric beauty



Interesting Facts

- 1848: Women begin attending University of London
- 1850: Life Insurance introduced
- 1851: Gold discovered
- 1860: Florence Nightingale founds school for nurses
- 1876: Alexander Graham Bell patents the telephone
- 1877: Thomas Alva Edison patents the phonograph
- 1886: Wimbledon opens
- 1888: Jack the Ripper stalks London's East End
- 1901: Queen Victoria dies