

The Victorian Age

1832-1900



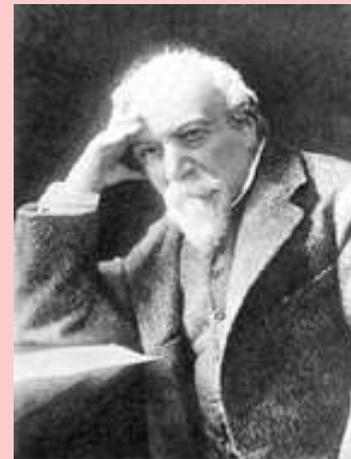
Introductory Notes
British Literature

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”

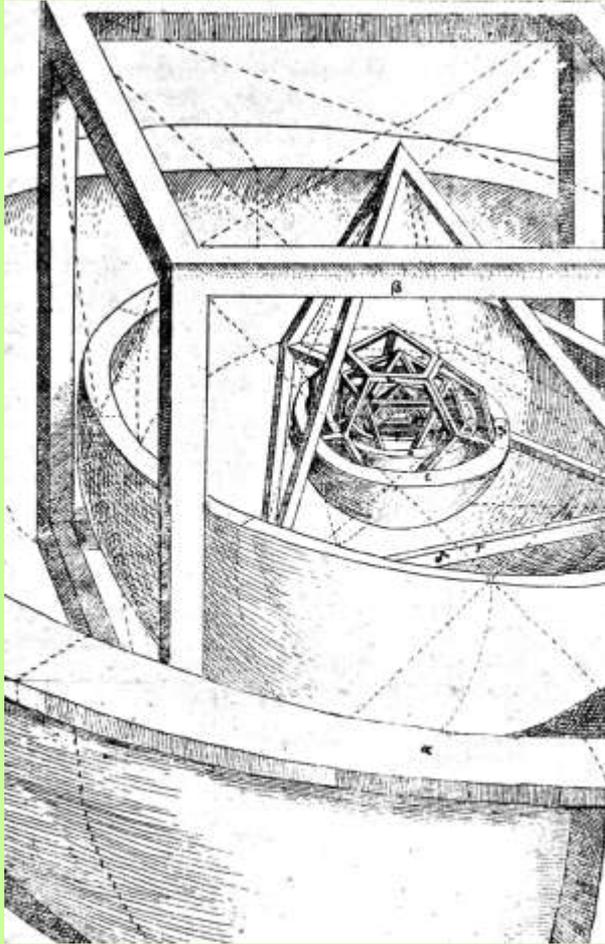


Tennyson



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

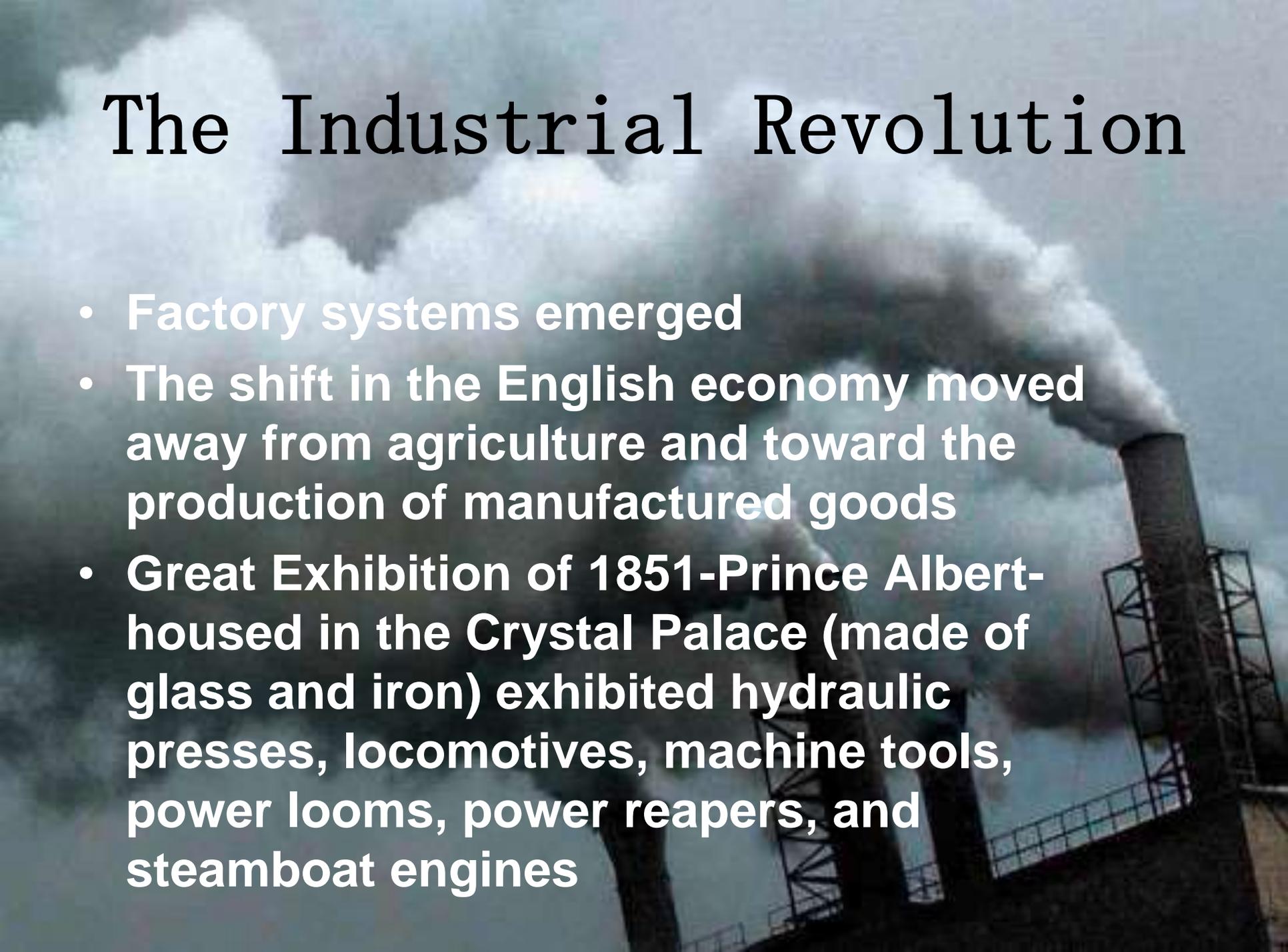
- England grew to become the greatest nation on earth
- Empire included Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, Kenya, and India
- England built a very large navy and merchant fleet (for trade and colonization)



The Growth of the British Empire (continued)

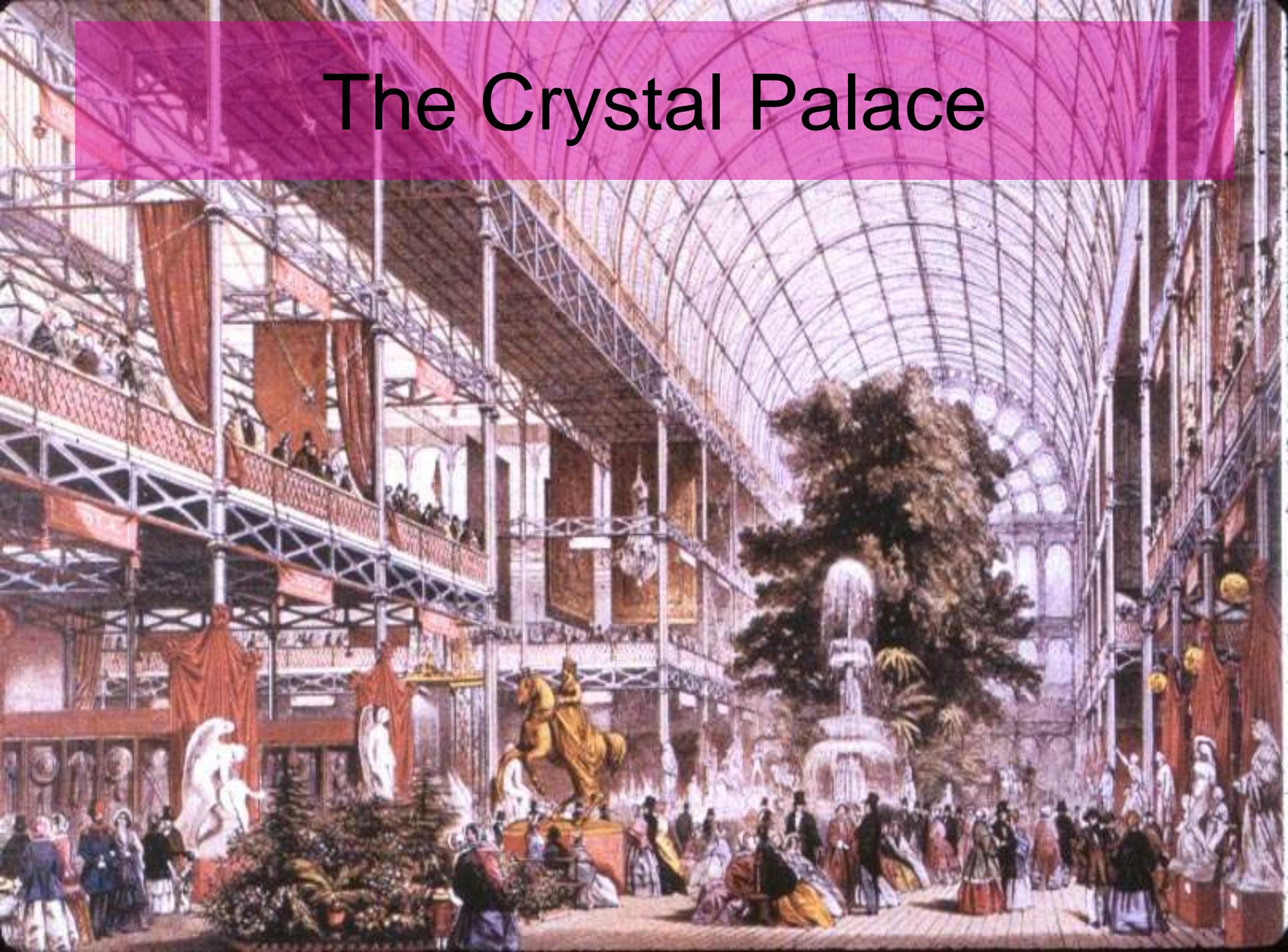
- Imported raw materials such as cotton and silk and exported finished goods to countries around the world
- By the mid-1800s, England was the largest exporter and importer of goods in the world. It was the primary manufacturer of goods and the wealthiest country in the world
- Because of England's success,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

The Industrial Revolution

A photograph of a factory with several tall smokestacks emitting thick white smoke into a cloudy sky. The smokestacks are dark and industrial, with metal ladders or scaffolding visible on their sides. The sky is filled with large, billowing clouds of white smoke, creating a hazy atmosphere. The overall scene depicts the scale and environmental impact of the Industrial Revolution.

- **Factory systems emerged**
- **The shift in the English economy moved away from agriculture and toward the production of manufactured goods**
- **Great Exhibition of 1851-Prince Albert-housed in the Crystal Palace (made of glass and iron) exhibited hydraulic presses, locomotives, machine tools, power looms, power reapers, and steamboat engines**

The Crystal Palace



The Early Victorian Period

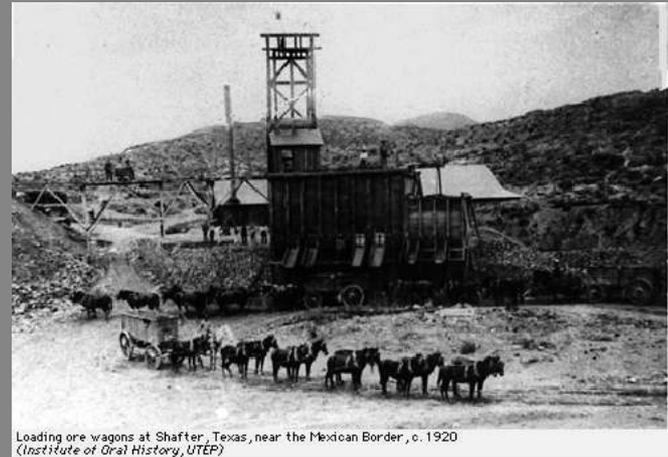
1830-1848

- In 1830, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened, the first public railway line in the world.
- By 1850, railway lines connected England's major cities
- By 1900 , England had 15,195 lines of railroad and an underground rail system beneath London.
- The train transformed England's landscape, supported the growth of commerce, and shrank the distance between cities.



The Time of Troubles 1830's and 1840's

- Unemployment
- Poverty
- Rioting
- Slums in large cities
- Working conditions for women and children were terrible



Working Conditions for Women

- Bad working conditions and underemployment drove thousands of women into prostitution.
- The only occupation at which an unmarried middle-class woman could earn a living and maintain some claim to gentility was that of a governess.



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

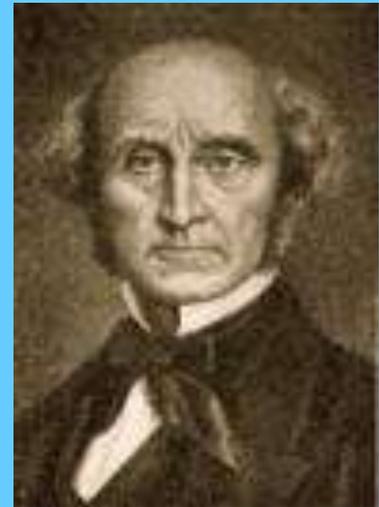
Religious Movement in Victorian England

- 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



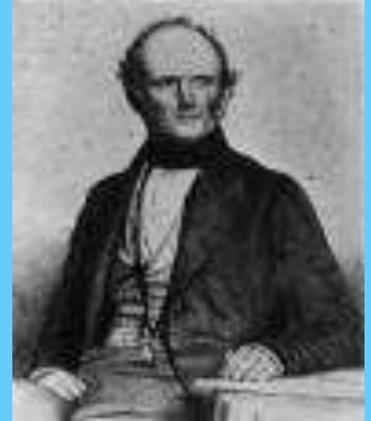
Other Thoughts...

- 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

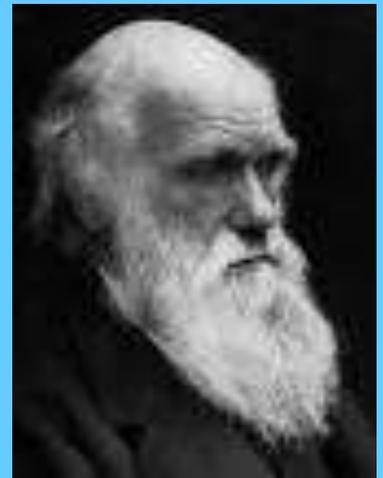


Other Thoughts..

- 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

The 1890's

- Breakdown of Victorian values
- Mood of melancholy
- The beginning of the modern movement in literature
- Aubrey Beardsley's drawings



The Role of Women

- The Woman Question
- Changing conditions of women's work created by the Industrial Revolution
- The Factory Acts (1802-78) – regulations of the conditions of labor in mines and factories
- The Custody Act (1839) – gave a mother the right to petition the court for access to her minor children and custody of children under seven and later sixteen.
- The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act – established a civil divorce court
- Married Women's Property Acts



Educational Opportunities for Women

- First women's college established in 1848 in London.
- By the end of Victoria's reign, women could take degrees at twelve university colleges.



Victorian Women and the Home

- Victorian society was preoccupied with the very nature of women.
- Protected and enshrined within the home, her role was to create a place of peace where man could take refuge from the difficulties of modern life.



Literacy, Publication, and Reading

- By the end of the century, literacy was almost universal.
- Compulsory national education required to the age of ten.
- Due to technological advances, an explosion of things to read, including newspapers, periodicals, and books.
- Growth of the periodical
- Novels and short fiction were published in serial form.
- The reading public expected literature to illuminate social problems.



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

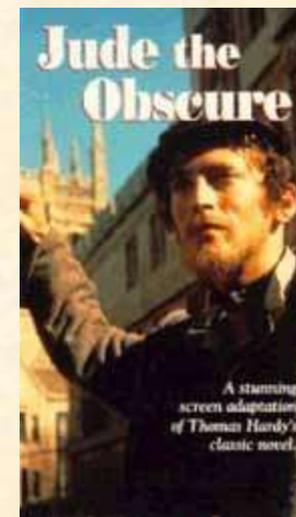
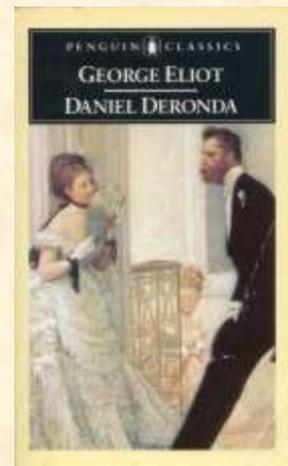
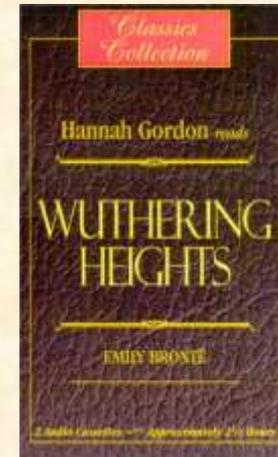
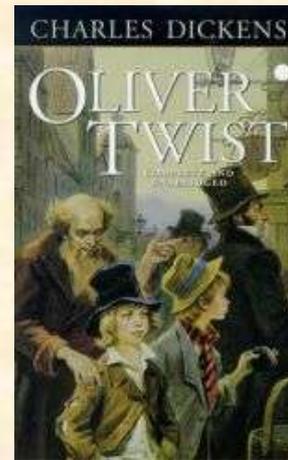
Naturalism



- 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 Victorian Novel

- The novel was the dominant form in Victorian literature.
- Victorian novels seek to represent a large and comprehensive social world, with a variety of classes.
- Victorian novels are realistic.
- Major theme is the place of the individual in society, the aspiration of the hero or heroine for love or social position.
- The protagonist's search for fulfillment is emblematic of the human condition.
- For the first time, women were major writers: the Brontes, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot.
- The Victorian novel was a principal form of entertainment.



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



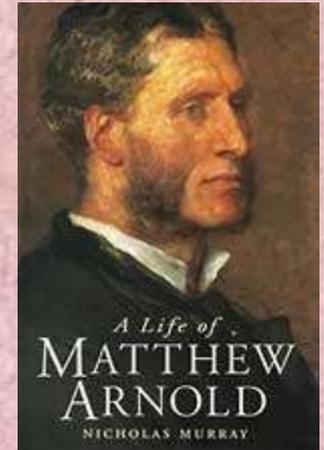
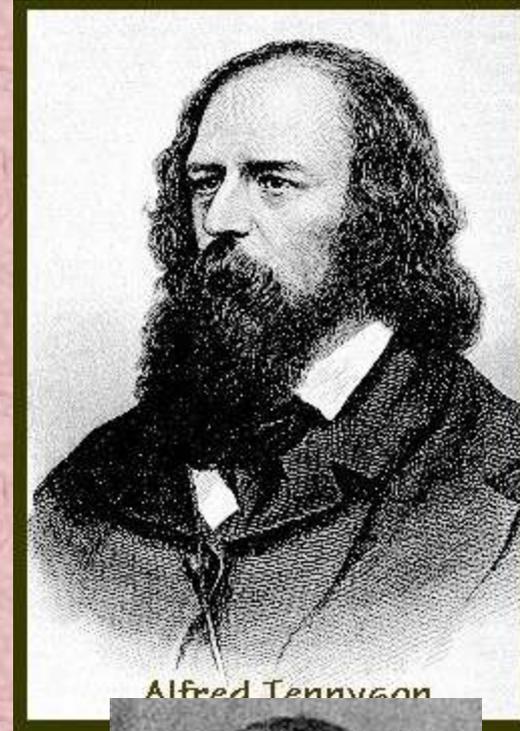
Charlotte Bronte



Charles Dickens

Victorian Poetry

- Victorian poetry developed in the context of the novel. Poets sought new ways of telling stories in verse
- All of the Victorian poets show the strong influence of the Romantics, but they cannot sustain the confidence the Romantics felt in the power of the imagination.
- Victorian poets often rewrite Romantic poems with a sense of belatedness.
- Dramatic monologue – the idea of creating a lyric poem in the voice of a speaker ironically distinct from the poet is the great achievement of Victorian poetry.
- Victorian poetry is pictorial; poets use detail to construct visual images that represent the emotion or situation the poem concerns.
- Conflict between private poetic self and public social role.



Poetry

- Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892): Most popular Victorian poet. He wrote narrative poems
- Robert Browning (1812-1889): raised the 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 love affairs. 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

Images of the Victorian Period

