



# The Victorian Age (1830-1901)

Sambourne House, London.

# 1. Queen Victoria



Franz Xavier Winterhalter, *Family of Queen Victoria*, 1846

- ❑ Daughter of George III's fourth son
- ❑ She came to the throne at 18
- ❑ She reigned longer than any English Monarch
- ❑ She was independent and strong willed
- ❑ She had a great sense of duty and dignity
- ❑ She married Albert of Saxe Coburg Gotha, after his death (1861) she mourned him for 40 years
- ❑ The marriages of her 9 children established links with the main European Royal families

## 2. A Troubled Age



- ❑ Social unrest: many packed urban agglomerates with serious health problems
- ❑ Diseases and epidemics in slums caused by filth and bad air
- ❑ Wages were low and food expensive
- ❑ The Corn Laws kept the price of bread artificially high
- ❑ The Luddite Riots 1811-13

## 3. An age of social and political reforms

### The situation before the Victorian Age

- The British aristocracy suspected any social reform, because of the effects of the French Revolution
- To prevent disorders, public meetings of workers were made illegal
- **1811-12** workers attacked factories and destroyed machines = **Luddite Riots**
- **1819** British army called in to disperse a meeting of workers calling for parliamentary reform. 11 people killed and hundreds injured = **Peterloo Massacre**

# 3. Victorian Political Parties



- ❑ The TORIES wanted to defend the established order and oppose constitutionalism
- ❑ Around 1830 they changed their name to “CONSERVATIVES”
- ❑ They become the party of landowners

# 3. Victorian Political Parties



- ❑ The WHIGS advocated constitutionalism and the emancipation of Catholics
- ❑ During the Victorian Age they changed their name to LIBERALS, promoting the interests of Industrialists and tradesmen

# 3. Victorian Political Parties



- ❑ The RADICALS were no members of a real party
- ❑ They fought for universal suffrage and the inalienable rights of the individual
- ❑ In 1906 they joined in the LABOUR party: the workers' party

### 3. An age of social and political reforms

- **1824**: The first **Trade Unions** were founded
- **1830**: **Robert Owen's** Socialist reform at **New Lanark**
- **1832**: The **First Reform Act** granted the vote to almost all male members of middle-class.
- **1833**: The **Factory Act** regulated child labour in factories.
- **1833**: Abolition of slavery and slave trade in all British colonies
- **1834**: **Poor Law Amendment** established a system of workhouses for poor people.

# 3. Chartism

## **The Six Points OF THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER.**

- 1 A VOTE for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
- 2 The BALLOT – To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
- 3 NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament – thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.
- 4 PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.
- 5 EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same numbers of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of the large ones.
- 6 ANNUAL PARLIAMENT, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituencies as now.

- ❑ Disappointed by the parliamentary reform of 1832, Radicals battle for further reform and the extension of suffrage
- ❑ Between 1839 and 1848 they drew up 3 petitions, signed and supported by huge masses of people
- ❑ All three were scornfully rejected

### 3. An age of social and political reforms

- **1867**: The **Second Reform Act** gave the vote to skilled working men.
- **1871**: **Trade Union Act** legalised trades unions.
- **1884**: The **Third Reform Act** granted the right to vote to all male householders.

# 4. The woman's question

- **Women's suffrage** did not happen until **1918**.



Suffragettes



*The Rights of Women or Take Your Choice* (1869)

# 5. Child Labour



Down in coal mines they pushed coal trucks or were employed in jobs that required crawling along on all four

Their limbs and skeletons were Damaged forever

It was one of the greatest evils of Victorian England

Children were forced to work in mines, mills and factories

They offered their services as errand boys or apprentices to trades



# 5. Child Labour



Children worked on Saturdays and on Sundays they cleaned their tools or the machines.

Orphans from workhouses were put up by the factory owner and slept in shifts: when a group of children were in bed, the others were obliged to work

They often worked by night as well till 1831

# 5. Children Working Days

- 1800: No limit to daily work
- 1802: 12 hours for age 14-18  
8 hours for age 9-13
- 1831: No night work for children  
1833: No one under 9 to work
- 1842: No work underground under 10  
1847: 6,5 hours

# 6. The Workhouse System



In England and Wales a **workhouse**, colloquially known as a **spike**, was a place where those unable to support themselves were offered accommodation and employment.

Life in a workhouse was intended to be harsh, to ensure that only the truly destitute would apply.



Free medical care and education for children were provided

Members of families were separated, as women lived with one another, the same applied to men and children.

# 5. Positive aspects of the age



Workers in a Tobacco Factory

***Industrial revolution:*** factory system emerged; for the first time in Britain's history there were more people who lived in cities than in the countryside.

***Technological advances:*** introduction of steam hammers and locomotives; building of a network of railways.

# 5. Positive aspects of the age



Workers in a Tobacco Factory

***Economic progress:*** Britain became the greatest economic power in the world; in 1901 the Usa became the leader, but Britain remained the first in manufacturing.

# 6. Crystal Palace

Crystal Palace was built for the **Great Exhibition** of **1851**; it was **destroyed** by fire in **1936**.



The Crystal Palace

# 6. Crystal Palace

It was **made of iron and glass**, exhibited hydraulic presses, locomotives, machine tools, power looms, power reapers and steamboat engines.



The Crystal Palace

# 6. Crystal Palace

It had a **political purpose** → it showed British economic supremacy in the world.



The Crystal Palace

# 7. Negative aspects of the age

**Pollution** in towns due to factory activity.



Homeless Boys (1880)



London in 1872

# 7. Negative aspects of the age

**Lack of hygienic conditions:** houses were overcrowded, most people lived in miserable conditions; poor houses shared water supplies.



Homeless Boys (1880)



London in 1872

# 8. The “Great Stink”

- **Epidemics**, like cholera, thyphoid, caused a high mortality in towns. They came to a peak in the **Great Stink** of 1858.
- This expression was used to describe the terrible smell in London, coming from the **Thames**.
- The **“Miasmas”**, exhalations from decaying matter, poisoned the air.



Caricature appearing on the magazine «Punch» in 1858

# 9. The Victorian compromise

- The Victorians were great **moralisers** → they supported: personal duty, hard work, decorum, respectability, chastity.



W. H. Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853-4, London, Tate Britain.

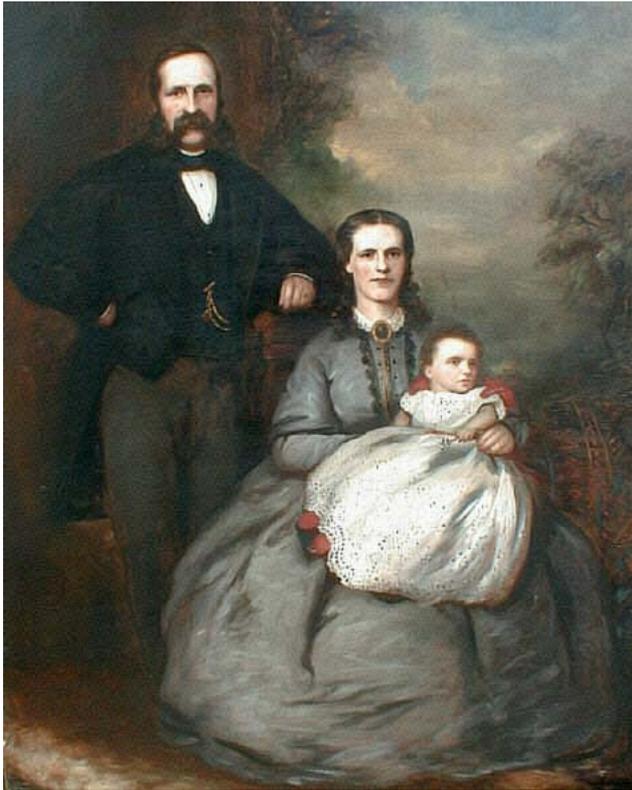
# 9. The Victorian compromise

- ‘**Victorian**’, synonym for **prude**, stood for extreme repression; even furniture legs had to be concealed under heavy cloth not to be “suggestive”.
- New ideas were discussed & debated by a large part of society.



W. H. Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*, 1853-4, London, Tate Britain.

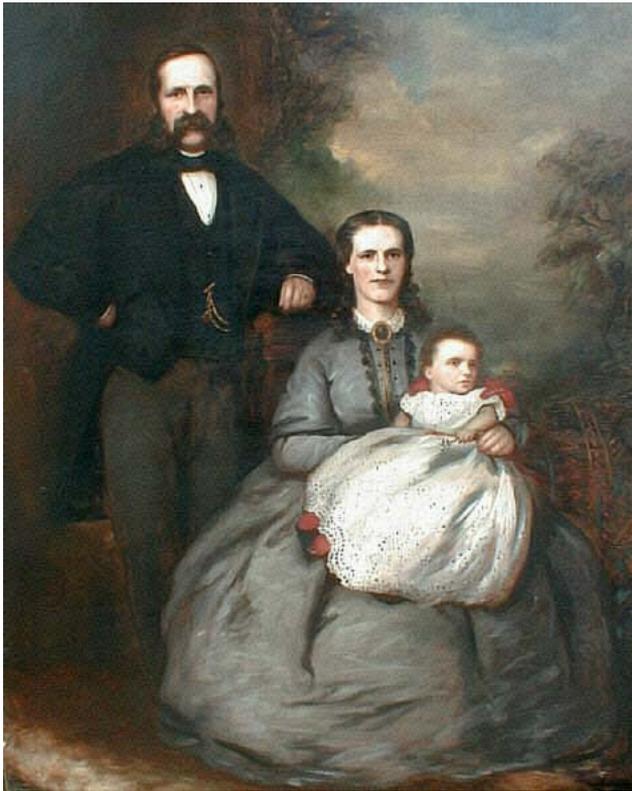
# 9. The Victorian compromise



John Lamb, Victorian family portrait, 1879.

- The middle-class was obsessed with gentility, respectability, decorum.
- **Respectability** → distinguished the middle from the lower class.

# 9. The Victorian compromise

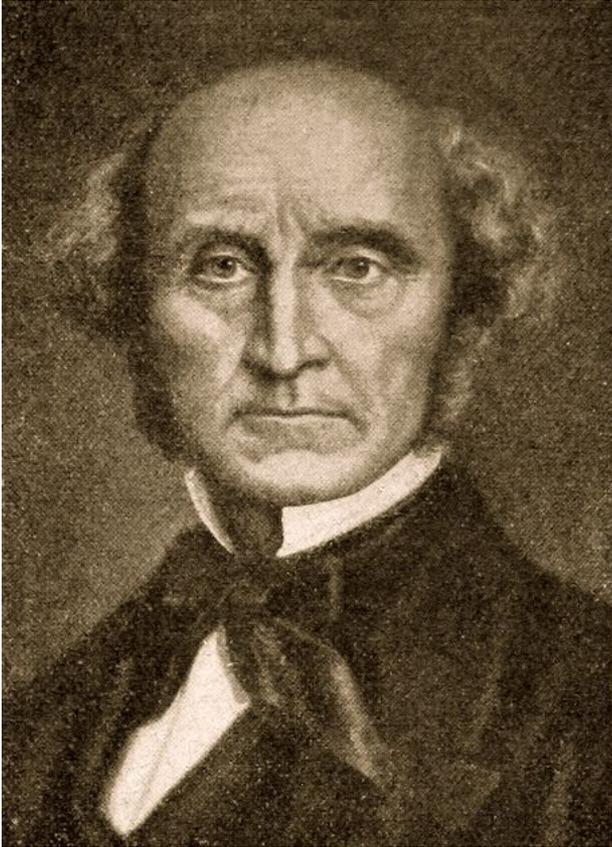


John Lamb, Victorian family portrait, 1879.

**Decorum** meant:

- a. Victorian private lives were dominated by an **authoritarian father**.
- b. Women were subject to **male authority**; they were expected to marry and make home a “**refuge**” for their husbands.

# 10. Key thinkers

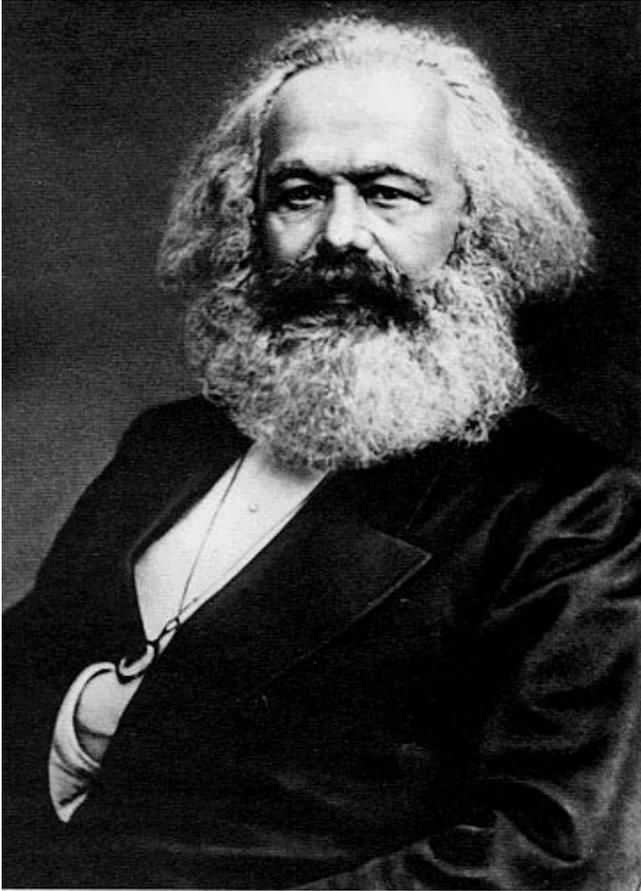


John Stuart Mill

**John Stuart Mill** and his ideas based on Bentham's Utilitarianism.

- Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness
- “The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others”.
- The legal status of women is like the status of slaves: equality in marriage and under the law

# 10. Key thinkers



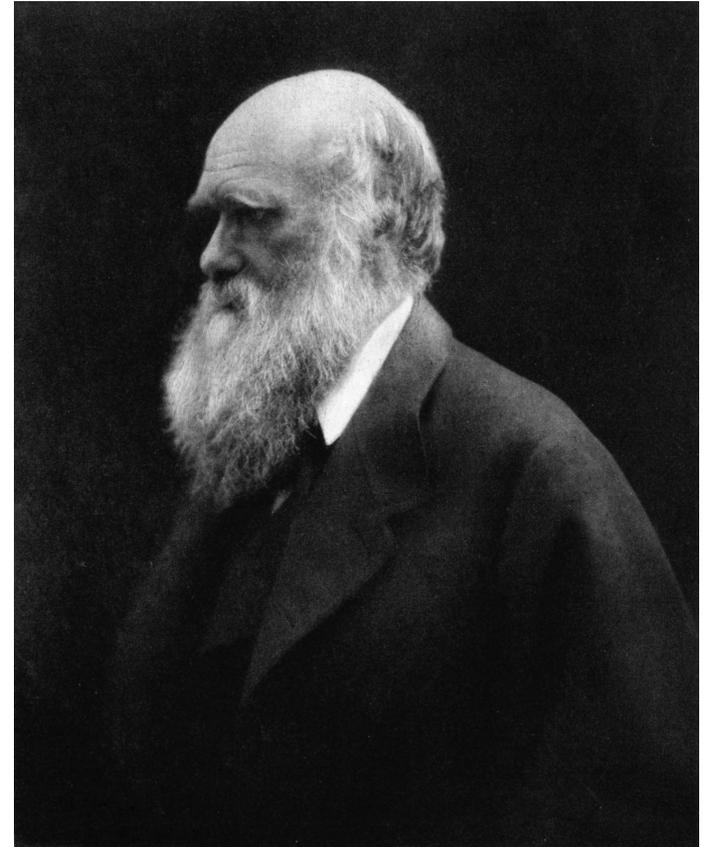
Karl Marx

**Karl Marx** and his studies about the harm caused by industrialism in man's life.

# 10. Key thinkers

**Charles Darwin** and the theory of natural selection.

**Creationism** suffers a tremendous blow, an entire generation suffers from a deep crisis of identity



Charles Darwin

# 11. The rise of the novel

- There was **a communion of interests and opinions** between the writers and their readers.
- The Victorians were **avid consumers of literature**. They borrowed books from circulating libraries and read various periodicals.

# 11. The rise of the novel

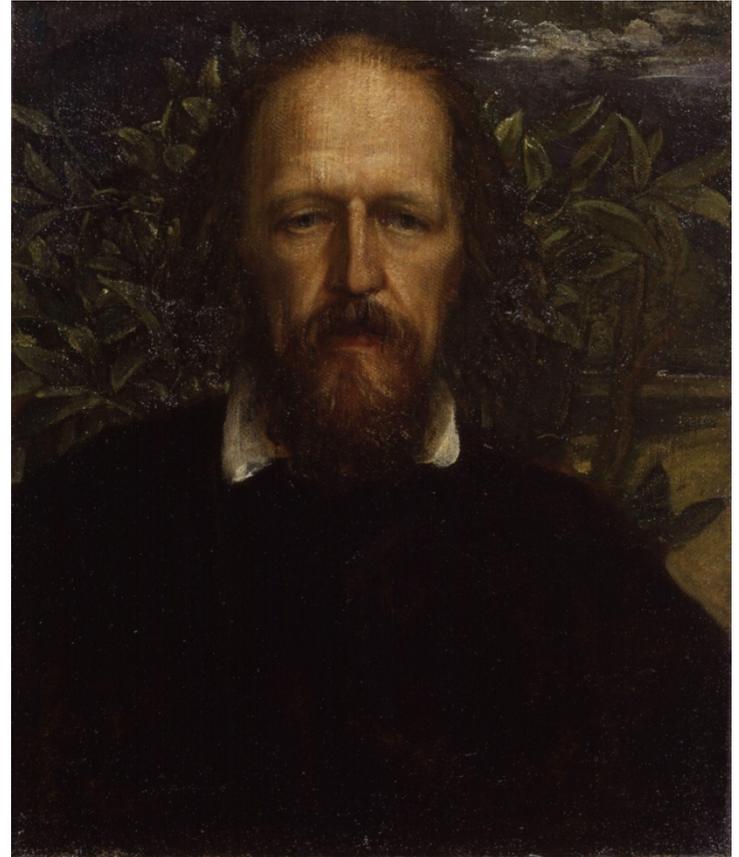
- Novels made their first appearance in **instalments on the pages of periodicals**.
- The voice of the **omniscient narrator** provided a comment on the plot and erected a rigid barrier between **«right»** and **«wrong»**, light and darkness.

# 11. The rise of the novel

- The setting chosen by most Victorian novelists was **the town**.
- Victorian writers concentrated on the creation of **characters** and achieved a deeper analysis of their **inner life**.

# 12. Poetry

**Alfred, Lord Tennyson:**  
the most popular  
Victorian poet. He wrote  
narrative poems.



*Alfred Tennyson, 1st Baron Tennyson*, by George Frederic Watts (died 1904), given to the National Portrait Gallery, London in 1895.

# 12. Poetry

**Robert Browning:** he raised the dramatic monologue to new heights making it a vehicle for a deep psychological study.



Robert Browning

# 12. Poetry

**Elizabeth Barrett Browning:**  
she wrote love sonnets valued  
for their lyric beauty.



Elizabeth Barrett Browning