

# Critical Realism (19<sup>th</sup>-beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.)



- 1. Victorian Age**
- 2. Critical Realism and Chartist Literature**
- 3. The poetry and drama**
- 4. Critical Realism at the Turn of Ages**
- 5. Naturalism**
- 6. Neoromanticism**
- 7. Estheticism**



# 1. Victorian Age

- **Victoria became queen of Great Britain in 1837- the longest reign in English history (until 1901);**
- **Great economic, social, and political changes;**
- **The English Empire covered a fourth of the world's land;**
- **Industry and trade expanded rapidly;**
- **Railroads and canals crisscrossed the country;**
- **Science and technology made great advances;**
- **The middle class grew enormously;**
- **By the 1850s more people were getting an education;**
- **The government introduced democratic reforms (the right to vote);**

# Victorian Age

- **Factory and farm workers lived in terrible poverty (England as two nations – one rich and one poor);**
- **The second half of the 1800s – new scientific theories challenged many religious beliefs – Charles Darwin “The Origin of Species” – traditional values could no longer guide people’s lives;**
- **Writers dealt with the contrast between the prosperity of the middle and upper class and the wretched condition of the poor;**
- **The late 1800s – the analysis of the loss of faith in traditional values.**

# **2. Critical Realism and Chartist Literature**

- **The novel – is the leading form of literature;**
- **The novel is a medium for a communication both intimate and public; a medium of a personal point of view;**
- **New models of interaction between authors and the public – giving public readings, receiving prestigious prizes, giving interviews in the media;**
- **Novelist is a public figure;**
- **Writers are concerned to meet the tastes of a large middle class reading public than to please aristocratic patrons;**
- **Long works with numerous characters; actual events of the day.**

## 2. Charles Dickens

- **Confirmed the trend for serial publication;**
- **His works are accessible to readers of all classes;**
- **The “Pickwick Papers” – is a masterpiece of comedy;**
- **“David Copperfield” – is judged to be his autobiographical novel;**
- **He gave his public readings in GB and the USA;**
- **The theatre is an escape from the world – “Nickolas Nickleby”;**
- **The characters are among the most memorable in English literature;**

## 2. Style of writing

- **He used his rich imagination, detailed memories of his childhood to enliven his fiction;**
- **The technique of writing in monthly /weekly installments – to analyze his relationship with his illustrators;**
- **Exposure to the opinions of his readers – to witness the public reaction and alter the story depending on those public reactions.**

# Victorian fiction

- **William Makepeace Thackeray** created a masterpiece in “Vanity Fair”;
- The **Bronte** sisters – **Emily**, **Charlotte**, and **Anne** – created emotionally powerful works (psychologically tormented characters); Emily’s “Wuthering Heights” and Charlotte’s “Jane Eyre” are ranked among the greatest works of the period.



# Nonfiction

- Writers dealt with the ills of the time;
- **Thomas Carlyle** attacked the greed and hypocrisy in society – “Sartor Resartus”;
- **John Stuart Mill** discussed the relationship between society and the individual – “On Liberty”



# Leading late Victorian novelists

- **George Eliot's (Mary Ann Evans)** novels are held in the highest regard for their combination of literary detail with an intellectual breadth; depiction of social and moral problems – “Middlemarch”;
- **George Meredith's** novels are noted for their sophisticated psychological treatment of characters – “The Ordeal of Richard Feverel”;

# Leading late Victorian novelists

- **Anthony Trollope**'s novels are gentle satires of life in rural England; they tell of conflicts within the Church – “Barchester Towers”;
- **Thomas Hardy** wrote realistic stories in which the characters are defeated by a hostile fate - “Jude the Obscure”

# Chartist Literature

- **Chartism – is the consequence of the social and historical development of England and the struggle between upper and middle classes;**
- **It was the early revolutionary and democratic stage of struggle; preparation for a social revolution;**
- **Chartists fought for franchise;**
- **Representatives – *Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, Thomas Hood, George Harney,***

***Ernest Jones***

# 3. Poetry

- A pessimistic tone- *Lord Alfred Tennyson* – intellectual and religious problems of the time – “In Memoriam”; *Mathew Arnold* – doubts about modern life – “The Scholar-Gypsy”;
- *Robert Browning* – ‘dramatic monologues’ – a real or imaginary character narrates the story – “The Ring and the Book”;
- *Elizabeth Barrett-Browning* – love poetry – “Sonnets from the Portuguese”;

# Poetry

- **John Ruskin, Dante Rossetti** – were multi-disciplinary talents;
- **Edward Lear** – was a precursor of surrealism, wrote nonsense verse;
- **Gerald Manley Hopkins** wrote experimental religious verse; a ‘sprung rhythm’ style – unusual word combinations – the ‘Terrible’ sonnets;

# Groups of poets

- The ‘Yellow Book’ poets – *Algernon Charles Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symons*;
- The ‘Rhymer’s Club’ group – *Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, William Butler Yeats*;
- W. B. Yeats reflected his fascination with Irish folk tales, with symbolism and the supernatural – “The Wanderings of Oisín”;
- W. B. Yeats won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923

# Drama

- **By 1900 playwrights revived the English theater – witty comedies and realistic dramas;**
- **W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory helped establish the Irish National Theatre Society in 1901;**
- **The Abbey Theatre – world famous; dramas by *Sean O’Casey, John Millington Synge, W. B. Yeats;***
- **John M. Synge was a master of ‘dark comedy’.**



## 4. Critical Realism at the Turn of Ages

- 1901-1914 – novels and plays of social criticism; later in the period – writing verse in the style of romantics;
- The leading Edwardian novelists – *Arnold Bennett* and *Herbert George Wells*;
- H. G. Wells became famous for “The War of the Worlds”;



# 4. Critical Realism at the Turn of Ages

- The literature became intellectualized, more psychological; novels became more dramatic, tragic, full of bitter satire;
- The realists of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. considered realistic description to be the main thing;
- *George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde* gained their reputation with witty comedies for the English theatre

# The Modernist Movement

- **20<sup>th</sup> c. writers felt alienated from mainstream, responded by writing more intellectually challenging works or by pushing the boundaries of acceptable content (*Rudyard Kipling*);**
- **An esthetic movement (*Virginia Woolf, James Joyce*);**
- **Rejection of Victorian notions of art: its formal features, its relationship to the audience;**
- **The emphasis is on the individual experience and perception; concern with how the world is experienced rather than what the world is;**

# Modernist movement

- **Stream-of-consciousness writing;**
- **Movement away from fixed narrative point of view – an omniscient narrator;**
- **Interest in blurring the boundaries between poetry and prose;**
- **Blurring of the boundaries between popular art forms (photography, film) and ‘high art’ categories;**
- **‘disorder’ becomes a major fear: things that aren’t rational, ethnical.**

# 5. Naturalism

- The trend developed on the basis of democratic ideas;
- Writers depicted the life of the working class;
- **George Gissing's** writing is characterized by the sharp perception of modern reality, interest to people's life;
- **Ethel Lillian Voynich, Arthur Morrison, George Moore**

## 6. Neoromanticism

- **Writers contradicted a strong and bright personality to the evils of bourgeois society;**
- **Writers recreated the tradition of adventure literature: the dream of faraway lands, exotic places was a contradiction to reality;**
- ***Robert Louis Stevenson* – “Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”, “Kidnapped”;**
- ***Joseph Conrad* – “Lord Jim”(guilt, heroism, honour)**

# Trends

- **‘Bloombury Group’** – a group of writers and artists discussed intellectual questions – *Virginia Woolf* used a technique ‘stream of consciousness’ to reveal the inner thoughts of her characters – “Mrs. Dalloway”;
- **The ‘Georgians’** – a group of poets wrote romantic poetry about nature and the pleasures of rural living – *Rupert Brooke*,  
*John Masefield*;

# Scottish literature

- The 'Kailyard tradition' – elements of fantasy and folklore – **James Matthew Barrie** is an example of mix of modernity and nostalgia – Peter Pan series;
- A Scottish intellectual tradition is reflected in the “Sherlock Holmes” books of **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**



# 7. Estheticism

- The head of the movement was **Oscar Wilde**;
- Writers went into beautiful life from the society where evil and injustice reigned;
- Writers pointed to the cult of beauty;
- They refused to follow the ideas of realism.